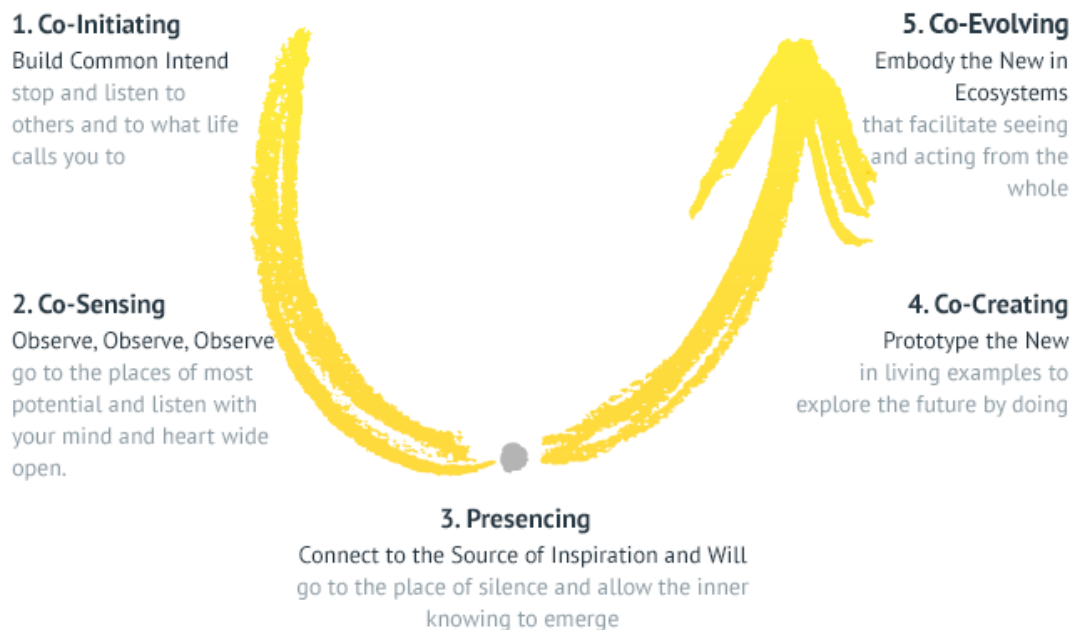


Theory U – Problem-solving in nature

I want to give a shout out to a really useful problem-solving method called Theory U, created by Otto Scharmer. It's not commonly used because it is deep and takes time, while people usually want quick and easy. For the fulsome understanding of Theory U check out the website and books at <http://www.ottoscharmer.com/theoryu>.

It is symbolised by:



<https://www.presencing.org/aboutus/theory-u> another great website

It is drawn in this way as you go deeper into your issue, really deeper, before you come up and focus on solutions.

The deep part of the curve, the presencing part, fits really well with contemplation in nature so we used it as a basis of one of our nature workshops.

Start with a problem – something sizeable that you are stuck on. Over a weekend workshop we looked at three phases; co-sensing, presencing and co-creating:

Phase 1: Co-sensing - Collect data and understanding about the issue.

This is where it is useful to spend time talking with people involved, listening deeply to learn and looking for surprises.

I've got blind spots and biases and I'm guessing you do too. This time of collecting data and understanding is a time to get help to see what you can't see.

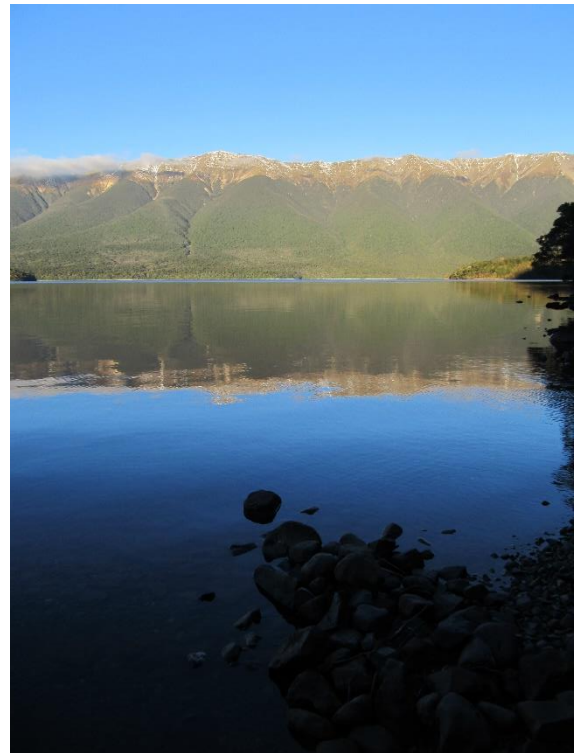
We worked in small groups to explore each other's issues and to help each other see our blind spots. We used the nature of Nelson Lakes National Park as a mirror to explore what we might learn from tuning into the world around us.

What we didn't do was rush to get answers. This phase is all about collect and learn and HOLD OFF ON ANSWERS. Which is the hard part.

Phase 2 – Presencing.

Once you have collected data then this phase is about spending time to let it sink in and percolate. This is best done in nature, in quiet, with some structure to help. It can last from one hour to three days, depending on how deep you want to go. Sometimes it's done solo and other times it can be explored together.

We created our own medicine wheel spaces to sit alone and contemplate in alongside the serene Lake Rotoiti. The medicine wheel is about consciously setting up the mediation space with awareness of what is to the north, west, south, east, up and down. Our facilitator and guide gave us a bit of structure for our time with a set up time, reviewing the issue and what we had learnt, then sit with it and let possibilities bubble up. It was about letting the natural world that surrounded me stimulate my thinking. For me it became about the bark of trees and how was I setting up barriers to ideas – to protect me and also to nurture myself. What is the right bark for me?



Phase 3 - Co-creating

Is about action and what are you going to do with these thoughts and insights. Once again people who can ask curious questions stimulate better plans and the course participants helped me clarify a commitment to action about building strong but permeable boundaries to look after myself.

I loved the deep dive into the issue that was supported and encouraged. I loved the quiet contemplation and the way what was around me helped me see more. I loved the support of others to take all the efforts and turn it into a good plan.

The structure works and I'd love to see more people and organisations explore the depths and power of Theory U. There is so much to explore that sits under the theory and I encourage you to sit in nature and explore it.

