



Mastering What Transforms: Dream the Impossible Dream and Go for It

Charles E. Smith

Institute for Advanced Freedom, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

“Most civilization is based on cowardice. It’s so easy to civilize by teaching cowardice. You water down the standards that could lead to bravery. You restrain the will. You regulate the appetites. You fence in the horizons. You make a law for every movement. You deny the existence of chaos. You teach even the children to breathe slowly. You tame.”

– Frank Herbert

Abstract

For a long time, we have been operating in ways that are used up and do not adequately address contemporary issues and concerns. People everywhere know it. This bankruptcy calls for a new code—a new Magna Carta, denying the rights given by the old social and economic order and declaring a new platform for the rights of men and women. Taken from fifty years of observation and experience in both successful and unsuccessful efforts to help individuals and organizations reach seemingly impossible goals, the article presents counter-intuitive roadmaps for leaders, teachers and students, grounded in what is real for them. This ‘kaleidoscope’ of choices from points of view other than one’s own often helps individuals and systems move from cultures of bureaucratic complexity to cultures of human mutuality and extraordinary performance.

1. The Problem

At this extraordinary time, the most important question we can ask is how to deal with massive disruption. The challenge is in how to change the nature, appearance, character or function across business, education, community, leadership, governance, and relationships. The intent is to foster cultures of mutuality and bravery while succeeding in this new world, delivering on essential expectations and achieving performance excellence.

Three friends, each leaders in their fields, independently said to me recently that they attend many conferences about innovation, collaboration, and consciousness, but little actual innovation, collaboration, or consciousness happens. Somehow language, linearity, cognitive and analytic conversations, or what is missing in their relationships keeps them from finding what they are looking for. Perhaps, in the search for answers, we should stop looking for them under the streetlight and look instead in the dark, where we lost them.

Chinese Philosopher Lao Tzu tells us that the ‘Tao’ is the natural order within which human intuition must discern, in order to realize the potential for individual wisdom. This intuitive

‘knowing of life’ cannot be grasped as just a concept, but through the actual living experience of one’s everyday being.¹ From that viewpoint, I have been inspired by:

- Teaching my children to think for themselves in home schooling by honoring their own bliss in that to which they were naturally drawn and wanted to excel.
- A client’s success in helping bring peace between warring nations at a Middle-East Peace Conference, by capturing people’s hearts as well as minds with a counter-cultural, uncharacteristic approach.
- Winston Churchill leading England through its Darkest Hour in World War II, with the force of his own will, in the face of massive disagreement.
- Leaving planet Earth and going to the Moon in 1969; a stellar example of turning the impossible into the possible.
- Franklin Roosevelt welcoming and defying his opposition and staying true to his principles in emerging from the Great Depression.
- An energy company’s CEO who continuously makes fundamental life changes by recognizing what is no longer working and choosing new, unknown paths.

“Self-importance is a primary barrier to innovation, teamwork and collaboration.”

2. The Tao of what Transforms

“The words of truth are always paradoxical.”

– Lao Tzu

Mastering the Tao of What Transforms in life requires a myriad of choices from counter-intuitive points of view that allow systems to move from cultures of bureaucratic complexity to cultures of collaborative innovation and commitment. It offers a Philosopher’s Stone of values, abstractions and intentions that can transform the base metal of human behavior into the gold of human passion, mutuality and high performance.

The Tao Te Ching is a short text of 81 brief chapters or verses. (There is some evidence that chapter divisions were added later, and that the original text was more fluidly organized and read.) The ideas are complex and often poetic. The style of writing encourages varied, even contradictory interpretations, and is the model for what follows.

(Note: It is often useful to read a few lines and contemplate on one or two that attract or seem most relevant, rather than approaching the whole as a single piece.)

- From the wisdom of Albert Einstein: “I believe that we do better to try to understand things with the help of concepts we have formed for this purpose—but being conscious every minute that these concepts are our poor inventions which will never enable us to draw final conclusions about the ‘nature of ultimate reality’ whatever this may mean.”

- Self-importance is a primary barrier to innovation, teamwork and collaboration.
- The initial topic, however complex it may be, does not matter because the spirit of something (and the possibility of it), has no perceivable essence; masters of transformation deal rather with specific essences in which they are able to shatter the mirror of self-reflection.²
- Seek to change what people experience rather than what they understand.
- Be willing and trust your capacity to allow someone to share an intense trauma or experience that has caused a fixed point of view.
- Listen in a way to maximize the freedom of others to choose, consistent with what they deeply care about.
- Seek Human Mutuality—the experience that, “We are in this together.”
- Practice ‘Overview Consciousness’—the whole of a situation is always greater than, or other than, the sum of its parts.
- Create ‘Islands of Sanity’—an experience of coherence, safety, and vibrational energy that opens up the capacity to address unasked questions.
- Live from ‘Contemplative Action’—patient consideration over time and action that is concrete, competent, honest, compassionate, forgiving and courageous.
- Trust that ‘Breaking Free’ is possible—energetic, concrete action that breaks the grip of gravity and unwanted constraint.
- Put ‘Dots in the Future’—know that the most reliable predictor in a possible future is what is imagined and acted on now.
- Embrace the reality of a never-ending war between the Force (a universal energy field for compelling action, healing and compassion), and the Dark Side (an opposing force driven by fear, anger, hatred and aggression).
- “There are two kinds of pain in this world: one that hurts, and one that alters.” *
- ‘Not Knowing’ is essential to moments of Advanced Freedom.
- Know that your main job is to expand your own and others’ Energy.
- Accelerate Human Contact—looking, listening, moving, talking, touching, breathing to expand energy.³
- Do not hide from chaos with the false expectation of order.
- Pay attention to your confusion, before your certainty.
- Seek to perfectly integrate Intention and Flow.
- Listen and Speak from the Creative Use of your Present Awareness.
- ‘Connect and Move-on’ as a practice and a gateway to freedom.
- Notice that ‘Consciousness’ and ‘Freedom to Choose’ are the same.

* Denzel Washington in the film, *The Equalizer II*

- Always remember your Primary Intention.
- Now is the Moment of Power.⁴
- Grasping is the source of suffering.*
- Pay attention to ‘Context’—circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea; the terms from which something can be fully understood.
- Always pay attention to your own freedom first.
- Appreciate the extreme power of being single-minded.
(e.g., in one tough-minded business environment:
 - Who are you?
 - Why should I listen to you?
 - How will you make money for me?
 - Who that is truly credible will stand up for you?)
- What is your ‘Dream of the Earth’?
- ‘What is Missing’ that gets what is missing to be missing?
- Never avoid ‘Speaking and Listening From your Heart’.
- If one moment were not connected to the next, what would you do?
- Practice committing yourself to the impossible.
- Recognize and avoid ‘Energy Vampires’.⁵
- Remove blocks to human connection in listening, speaking, avoiding.
- Practice Acknowledging and Acting on what you are afraid of.
- Say ‘What Lies Beneath’.
- Attempt to refrain from Transactional Relationships.
- Don’t Be a Noodle in Someone Else’s Soup.⁶
- Listen to your internal vibrational sense: “If there is any doubt, there is no doubt.”
- Look for the ‘Kairos Point’—moment-to-moment knowing without thought.
- In the vast emptiness of Creation, awesome Creator and Creation are one.
- Be Silent.
- Stop seeking agreement for who you are.
- Be Curious and collect curious ‘Kindred Spirits’.
- There are an infinite number of possibilities that do not exist until you ask a question.
- Trust that something is not True just because you believe it.
- Practice ‘Causation that Resonates’.[†]

* See [Four Noble Truths](#), multiple versions at Amazon

† Richard Whitehurst’s reference to [Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation](#) by Rupert Sheldrake

- Eliminate Force from speaking, agenda, process.
- Be Ruthless and Compassionate at the same time.
- Keep looking for what is possible.
- Eliminate Noise.
- Stop Unnecessary Explanation.
- Be ‘Cause’ in the Matter at Hand.
- Grasp and Release at the same time.
- Remember that, “Everything Wonderful is a Surprise”.*
- Bring the ‘Overview Effect’—the awesome astronaut experience of seeing the earth and universe from space—to your immediate situation.⁷
- Consider the physical and relational worlds at the same time.
- Be vulnerable without being weak.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say: Assert, Declare, Request, Promise.
- Fundamental change requires pain, cognitive dissonance, zero gravity, and a warrior’s mentality.
- Allow curiosity rather than current beliefs, opinions and perceptions to shape every engagement.
- Be aware of when one’s agreement and disagreement are blocking new insights.
- Focus on what is minimized or avoided.
- Become aware of what is not yet visible.
- Be inquiring—a conclusion is the place where you stopped thinking.
- Be the Spark: ‘Sparking me, Sparking you’—a living sense that something new is possible.

3. The Next Question

With respect to your own interests and concerns, what alternative models exist or can be conceived of to more effectively pursue the ideals of freedom, competence, security, prosperity, social equality and mutuality?

The premise is that the universe consists of an infinite number of possibilities that do not exist until you ask a question.

- At this extraordinary time, what is the most important question I can ask?
- What is missing/absent which, if it were present, would make a big difference?
- What is missing that gets what is missing to be missing?

* Charles E Smith, Library of Professional Coaching <https://libraryofprofessionalcoaching.com/case-studies/leadership-case-studies/everything-wonderful-is-a-surprise>

- What is impossible, which if it were possible, would create a great leap forward? What could I do just to make it possible?
- Is relationship the foundation of accomplishment?
- Are consciousness and the freedom to choose the same?⁸
- Am I willing to promise what I cannot predict?
- From the Johnny Depp movie, Don Juan De Marco: “There are only four important questions in life”:
 1. What is worth living for?
 2. What is worth dying for?
 3. What is sacred?
 4. Of what is spirit made?

“The time, the need, is Now.”

4. An Alliance of Kindred Spirits

What is next is an Alliance of Kindred Spirits—a movement based on leaders’ existing or aspirational, spiritual, human and pragmatic values and interests. Practically, this looks like the expansion of Present Awareness-based, Conscious Conversation in everyday life and work. This is teachable, accessible, coachable and applicable in strategic visioning, education, conflict resolution, project management, leadership development, family and community.

For individuals and cultures, ‘Mastering the Tao of What Transforms’ is a form of evolutionary activism; a place from which to teach to train, mentor, and support leaders, scientists, teachers, advisors, mediators and coaches who want to create collaborative innovative systems for what is possible. In its absence, we are stuck with what we already have, or forever trapped in the grip of existing character, power, position, and economic interests. The time, the need, is Now.

Author Contact Information

Email: charles.smith1935@gmail.com

Notes

1. Lao Tzu, *The New Translation from Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008)
2. Adapted quote from Carlos Castaneda, *The Power of Silence: Further lessons of Don Juan* (New York : Washington Square Press, 1997)
3. Charles Smith, “In Search of Islands of Sanity,” *Eruditio* 2, no.3(2017):18-27
4. Serge Kahili King, *The Urban Shaman* (New York: Touchstone, 2014)
5. Charles E Smith, *Don't Be a Noodle in Someone Else's Soup* ([S.I.] : BLURB, 2017).
6. Charles E Smith, *Don't Be a Noodle in Someone Else's Soup* ([S.I.] : BLURB, 2017).
7. Frank White, *The Overview Effect* (Reston: American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 2014)
8. Mark Friedman, *The Origin of Consciousness: The Natural Selection of Choice-Making Systems* (North Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012)