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Prologue

A man found an eagle's egg and put it in the nest of a backyard hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them.

All his life, the eagle did what the backyard chickens did, thinking he was a chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. He thrashed his wings and flew a few feet into the air.

Years passed, and the eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty on powerful wind currents, with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," his neighbor answered. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth — we're chickens."

So, the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was.

Have you ever felt that unexpected urge to soar but kept your feet on the ground because that's where you thought you belonged?

Then this book is for you.

It's about making the choice to fly, to transform, even when

everything in your experience and everyone around you try to discourage you from taking off.

My mentor, the late philosopher Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman, said we are made for creative transformation much like a bird is made for flight. And, just as a bird confined too long to a cage seems to forget the desire to fly freely, so we forget the joy of transformation if we remain confined too long by the monotony of our lives.¹

Suppose the allegory above had a different ending. What if the old eagle decided not to listen to the chickens and followed his urge instead?

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The old eagle paused for a long while in reflection. Deep within him stirred an unexpressed instinct, remaining only as a longing.

Suddenly, he knew. He knew that he longed to soar majestically, too. He knew he had a choice to make, a choice that would change his life forever. At that moment, the old eagle was determined to be who he was meant to be. He chose to soar.



As you picture the old eagle pondering the possibility of flight, you might sense in yourself a similar longing to soar, to become aware of your true and original self. If so, it’s a good idea to map your route and check the flight conditions before you take to the sky. This book will help you frame your flight plan and get in shape for the journey. So, go ahead. Look up!

¹Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman, *Man’s Ultimate Commitment* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958)

Introduction

It was an exceptionally hot summer night, so hot that my father was planning to sleep outside on an old Army cot. Before going in to bed, I stood by his side in the backyard of our modest house, looking up at the night sky. It was mid-August. The stars cast a brilliance that would make Fourth of July fireworks pale in comparison. My father told me we were looking at the Milky Way. Then he asked me a question that would change my life forever. He asked me if I thought there was life out there among the stars. I had no answer, but the mere notion that there might be was exhilarating. It ignited my lifelong passion for exploring why things are the way they are. The door of my imagination flung open, and I was convinced that something “out there” was part of who I was inside. I felt intimately connected to the vastness of the universe and somehow important in the grand scheme of things.



Something was indelibly etched in my soul that August night. It convinced me I had dual citizenship and that somehow, I belonged to the everyday consciousness of childhood and to a sage-like awareness beyond my years. What I didn't know then, but have come to understand, is that all of us have dual citizenship. We all are connected to our present reality and to something larger, outside of our current comprehension. This understanding came as I traveled to five continents, working with thousands of people

of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and ethnicities. From these encounters, I discovered three fundamental values that I believe are the heart and soul of our collective human experience. These three values are the pillars on which this book is based:

1. All people have intrinsic worth.
2. Satisfaction is a life goal.
3. Innovative InterChange leads to satisfaction.

Value 1: All people have intrinsic worth.

In more than 50 years of studying human behavior, I have been struck by how unfavorably people react to rejection. I have yet to hear from anyone that it doesn't hurt to be rejected.

When people describe how rejection feels, they talk about being angry, disappointed, and depressed; having a sinking feeling in their stomachs; being uncomfortable and dissatisfied. What keeps us from feeling good about rejection? What makes it so painful? Why do we go to such great lengths to avoid it? It's because rejection tries to short-circuit our hardwired sense that we are worthy. What in you rebels against being worthless? What insists on your innate value? It's not your environment. The pain of rejection comes when the external message that you're worthless conflicts with an intrinsic sense that you are worthwhile.

Why do we find ourselves mired in this conflict so often? In our culture, we have come to believe more in the extrinsic worth that must be earned than in the intrinsic worth we were born with, the value that no one can give to or take from us. We'll discover later that when we act from our original self, we experience intrinsic worth. When we act from our created self, our extrinsic worth ebbs and flows with the whims of those from whom we seek approval and acceptance.

Value 2: Satisfaction is a life goal.

If you dig deeply enough for the ultimate purpose of anything you want to do or stop doing in your life, you will find you're motivated by very few core purposes: happiness, peace, and satisfaction. Case in point: Think of a habit you'd like to break. Then ask yourself, "What is the purpose of that?" Keep asking yourself that until you can't think of anything further to say or until you're repeating the same answer over and over. I've done this exercise repeatedly in workshops over the years, and no two people ever start from the same place. But 97 percent of them arrive at or near the same destination: They're all looking for satisfaction.

So what's the big deal? Many conflicts arise from differences that, ironically, originate in a universal effort to reach the same outcome. We tend to differ in our approaches and strategies, not in our ultimate destination. In our attempts to experience satisfaction, we often behave in ways that block the fulfillment of others seeking their version of the same result. We reject each other's worth, and we all experience dissatisfaction.

Value 3: Innovative InterChange leads to satisfaction.

So the challenge of life is to discern how to live in a way that honors one another's worth so that we can experience our highest level of satisfaction. This kind of satisfaction differs radically from ordinary, temporary pleasures. We experience our worth and highest satisfaction through a specific kind of process or relationship. Worth is the basis for that relationship, and satisfaction is the result. The process is Innovative InterChange, the third value.

What is Innovative InterChange? Simply put, it is a process in which human beings are working together at their best. When you choose to communicate and transform using Innovative InterChange, you start with the idea that all people have equal worth. From that central belief, you are able to say what you

mean; you listen to and value diverse perspectives; you're eager to imagine creative ways to solve problems; and you're willing to put in the effort to make this way of communicating a habit.

This book will help you transform through Innovative InterChange — a natural, four-phase process that allows you to communicate with integrity, think and work efficiently and creatively, manage change and differences effectively, and find the satisfaction you're seeking.

The roadmap

The three parts in this book build on each other, with the ultimate goal of helping you understand why you behave and relate to other people the way you do and giving you skills and tools to change behavior that may be getting in your way as you work toward personal and professional goals.

Part 1 explores the five conditions necessary for Innovative InterChange to work. The first and most fundamental condition is mutual intrinsic worth, the condition created when we understand that our intrinsic worth is equal to the intrinsic worth of another person. Experiencing your intrinsic worth is different from having high self-esteem or feeling good about your performance or status. You can accumulate more knowledge, experience, and influence, and none of it will add to your intrinsic worth as a human being. When you're not experiencing your intrinsic worth, you're vulnerable to losing sight of who you really are and what genuinely satisfies you.

Who you are, who you really are, is what I call the “original self.” It's the self you were born to be and the framework on which you hang the experiences of your life. These experiences lead to the “created self.” The created self, sometimes called the ego or constructed self, comprises the thinking and behaviors fashioned and reinforced by family, culture, and society.

The existence of an original and a created self doesn't mean we have split personalities or that we are duplicitous. Rather, think of the original self like a mannequin fresh from the factory. Once it gets to the department store, someone puts a wig on it, dresses it in the latest fashion, maybe even poses it and puts it in an elaborate window display. This is the created self. You can still see the original mannequin peeking out from beneath the floppy hat and giant sunglasses, but the image it projects is not entirely original. It has been constructed, shaped to fit into and reflect its environment.

Likewise, each of us is a unique mix of original and created qualities; we're individual and collective, personal and social. Ideally, we want to balance these elements of our identity. It's important to understand that creating an image isn't inherently detrimental. Blending in is useful for getting along in the world sometimes. It's when you start to identify more often with your created self than with your original self that problems can start. We do this because our created self feels familiar and safe; it's the self that gets applause and approval—highly prized commodities in our culture. But as you become less aware of your true identity, you have to work harder to maintain the one you've constructed. And this can make your life really stressful.

Making the choice to operate from our original self can feel risky at first, but ultimately, it opens us up to forming richer relationships and having a fuller, less stressful life. Being authentic with ourselves and others transforms us, allowing us to experience our intrinsic worth, which leads to the satisfaction we've been seeking all along.

The other four conditions we explore in Part 1 are:

1. **Trust:** The willingness to risk sharing the best you know, and the humility to be open and receptive to the best others know; the assumption that other people are trustworthy until they prove otherwise.

2. **Curiosity:** Exploring and appreciating new ideas, even if they appear to contradict your own.

3. **Connectivity:** Understanding that your brain operates by discovering and creating links between ideas and that your imagination builds on those connections to create new ideas and solutions.

4. **Tenacity:** The commitment, discipline, and practice it takes to make new thinking and behavior into sustainable habits.

In examining how trust, curiosity, connectivity, and tenacity flow from the experience of intrinsic worth, we'll explore why these natural occurring conditions, present in most of us at birth, were central to our healthy development. When they were challenged and compromised in early childhood, we developed habits that often take years to overcome; some of us may never recapture and cultivate them. As you read this first section, you can look inside yourself and ask where these conditions are in you and make the decision to revisit them.

In Part 2, we will study the Innovative InterChange process, exploring its four phases and how the five conditions in Part 1 are critical for developing them. The phases are:

1. **Authentic Interacting:** To share the best you know with integrity and to listen with humility, understand, and learn from the best someone else knows.

2. **Appreciative Understanding:** To resist your culturally programmed tendency to think in "either/or" terms; to look for the similarities and differences between your perspective and someone else's; and to be willing to understand and acknowledge the context of and value in both points of view.

3. **Creative Integrating:** To absorb the differences you find

between your perspective and someone else's and then to use your imagination to discover new possibilities.

4. **Continual Transforming:** To resist your culturally programmed tendency to become rigid, stubborn, and trapped in the ruts of conventional communication; to have the discipline to practice and develop habits that will lead to new ways of thinking, behaving, and being.

Part 3 is the “how-to” section. It takes you through the eight practical thinking tools and behavioral skills that allow you to re-establish the five conditions discussed in Part 1 and to communicate and transform using the phases of Innovative InterChange discussed in Part 2.

The first two tools help develop the Authentic Interacting phase:

1. **Intent Sharing:** To communicate your intent and your message up front with integrity.

2. **Confirmed Paraphrasing:** To listen with humility to a presenter's message; to restate that message in your own words; and to verify that you understand the message the way the presenter intended.

The third and fourth tools support the Appreciative Understanding phase:

3. **Finding Positives:** To find value in another person's perspective — value that may have been obscured by your differences.

4. **Integrating Differences:** To develop “both/and” thinking by converting “but” to “and”; to recognize that there's enough room for diverse opinions and perspectives to co-exist.

Tools five and six develop the Creative Integrating phase:

5. **Reframing:** To expand your frame of reference to think about a problem, situation, or goal from a different perspective; allows

you to avoid missing ideas, options, and solutions you may never have considered.

6. **Reconfiguring:** To step away from your problem, situation, or goal completely and to use metaphors and outside-the-box thinking to generate new ideas.

Tools seven and eight support the Continual Transforming phase:

7. **Repeating & Observing:** To practice your new behavior, and to catch yourself doing it right.

8. **Positive Reinforcing & Correcting:** The feedback you get from others and yourself that your new thinking and behavior are working; the ability to adjust when you get off track.

As you can see, the Innovative InterChange process is at once simple and complex. It requires you to transform a mindset and habits you have developed over a lifetime. Transformation will not happen overnight. Once you start to make these changes, however, you will likely realize how clear and basic — how utterly natural — the process is. The original self is capable of an on-going process of self-renewal.