



## How to Promote People-centered and Person-centered Sustainable Relationships

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Sustainable development is just a nice word if it is not people and person-centered, which means that the values and actions taken for a sustainable future need to be based on respect, empathy, equity and responsibility—meaning developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be response-able.

Respect for ourselves includes the awareness and acceptance of the different parts of ourselves, our different needs and way of being. Acceptance brings more capacity of contact, of self-containment and to choose priorities, as internal and external conditions keep changing. People who respect themselves respect other people, more or less are afraid to be spontaneous and are able to establish better working alliances in different settings and cultures.

The capacity for empathy enables us to understand and feel in contact with ourselves, and in so doing to be able to understand other human beings and other forms of life. The capacity for respect and empathy facilitates us to want to establish relationships that are equitable; there are no sustainable relationships without equity. Equity here in terms of equal opportunities, decision-making power, self-determination and self-representation. Equity fosters a more creative, healthy and prosperous society.

We need to apply scientifically validated people and person-centered approaches to sustainability in order to facilitate processes of change that are also the product of change. There are ample scientific proofs that people and person-centered approaches produce results that are more effective and are more cost-effective in the medium and long-term than the other traditional approaches.

In order to survive every life form depends on effective and rapid learning on how to adapt its behaviors to environmental changes. We need to retool and upgrade all levels of our education. Formal and informal education at any level needs to offer us the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable us to survive and even prosper in the present period of change by learning the needed skills for establishing sustainable relationships with ourselves, others and the planet.

In education, person-centered or student-centered learning is more effective than traditional learning. Research studies show that person-centered learning leads to better achievement of educational goals, better attendance, more student satisfaction, better morale, better self-

image, increased critical thinking, better problem solving, better relationships between students in the classroom and also outside school hours and less destructive behaviors or dropouts. Person/student-centered education has positive effects on all levels and grades of education, and also shows excellent results when applied to fields like molecular biology, biochemistry, pharmacology etc; or when one is using the hybrid or e-learning forms of education.

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In leadership training, people-centered and person-centered sustainable leaders are people that excel in listening more than in inflammatory rhetoric; they are masters of empowerment and proud to facilitate their pupils to gain confidence and self-esteem, to develop their potentialities and serve their communities.

In health, protection and promotion of people-centered and person-centered medicine empower people and communities to protect and promote their health and wellbeing where people live and work by promoting knowledge, self-awareness and empowerment and prevent iatrogenic damages.

Personal health cannot be separated from social health and social health cannot be separated from equity in accessing health education and health services. Personal and social health cannot be effectively promoted without giving importance to environmental health. If all those variables are taken into account and managed with a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework and the actions taken are intersectoral and interdisciplinary, then person-people-environmental health protection and promotion produce prosperity. In green and blue economies, circular economies are much more effective than traditional economies.

Communicating these vital issues effectively to the various stakeholders and decision makers is a challenging task. We need to deal effectively with several variables interacting and influencing reciprocally: Lack of a systemic and interdisciplinary understanding of how the barriers to change are created and how to effectively deal with their abatement or mitigation. Most of the presently proposed road maps for the governance of the Anthropocene Era are mainly focused on financial, technological variables, giving little attention to the psychological, social, political, cultural, organizational, and institutional variables.

We not only consume more resources but we also squander and destroy human and natural capital; we are faced with an exponentially growing population with mounting consumeristic lifestyles burning more resources than our planet can regenerate each year. The risk of a

moral and ecological bankruptcy is becoming very real and is a blueprint for a man-made epochal catastrophe.

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The anthropogenic burden has a global impact but it is neither created nor distributed equally around the world as a result of variability in resource availability and access, and of different consumption and pollution patterns among nations. These premises make understandable the reluctance of many developing countries and parts of the population willing and able to make a drastic change and start creating sustainable relationships.

Many stakeholders think and act in denial of the causes of our anthropogenic impact. The mechanistic and reductionist way of perceiving and managing reality generates problems at every level. Psychology shows some of the defense mechanisms used by neurotic people, institutions and cultures when they feel that their self-image is threatened by facing facts, they go in denial, and in so doing create barriers to awareness.

In this way, they disempower themselves from their ability to cope effectively with the threats facing them.

*We need to foster a new psychological literacy and psychological resilience, a sort of psychological compass: a more grounded way of being in order to navigate the rippling currents of change, and cope effectively in the Anthropocene era.*

The capacity to be empathetic and in respectful contact with ourselves, others and the world may be our most precious and needed psychological resource.

WAAS and WUC are leaders in promoting change by promoting epistemic capacities. They are united in diversity, and have been jointly collaborating with stakeholders offering and co-construing effective tools to understand and manage the challenges facing humanity and promoting a sustainable people-centered future.

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