

# GUIDE

## UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATING INNER TRANSITION: CREATING HEALTHY HUMAN CULTURE

People:	Ideally everyone in your group
Time:	1hour 30minutes to read and discuss guide
Resources:	This activity sheet and a place to meet

### *How can this help us?*

Unlike most movements for change, Transition has focused on the need for both inner and outer change from the outset. For many involved in Transition this is a core reason for getting involved. Saying that, the inclusion of "inner" is also not uncomplicated as for some it feels unnecessary and/or too fluffy, hippy or touchy-feely or feels too abstract and hard to pin down. It is really useful to understand Inner Transition in more depth and this guide will help your group to do this.

### *The guide:*

#### Contextualising Inner Transition within Transition

The model below shows how the various dimensions of Transition can fit together.

Inner	Outer
Personal (I)	Personal (I)
Inner	Outer
Collective (We)	Collective (We)

#### The polarization of inner and outer change

Transition requires us to pay attention to each of the 4 quadrants and to their inter-dependence. It is very common for us however - both as individuals and as groups, projects, networks and movements, to get fixated on one or two of these quadrants whilst avoiding or neglecting the others.

For example current social, environmental and political movements mainly tend to focus on collective outer change whilst ignoring or dismissing inner and/ personal change (perhaps judging attention to inner to be indulgent 'navel gazing' done by those with unearned privilege who aren't addressing what is going on in the 'real' world).

And similarly there are many other movements for change that concentrate almost exclusively on inner work (psychological, faith based, peace building, healing) which can avoid, disrespect and/or dismiss outer change (claiming the outer world to be an illusion, that only inner experience or consciousness is real and perhaps that "Everything is perfect; nothing needs to be done").

## Integrating inner/outer/personal/collective

There is truth in all of this and everything in the human realm exists in all four quadrants all of the time, and as you enquire into any behaviour, action, project, belief or experience you are likely to find just how inseparable they are.

Most of us, and the work we are doing, would hugely benefit from turning our attention to and including those dimensions of change we have been avoiding, resisting and/or dismissing. Expanding our focus beyond those dimensions of change we have perhaps become fixated on and making efforts to learn from those focusing on different quadrants to us, could catalyse a step change in the effectiveness of our work towards co-creating a more life-enhancing world.

This four quadrant map can help us to check the completeness of our Transition activities – we can ask, is a project, an group, a training addressing all four dimensions of change?

Understanding the process of change

Because Transition concerns the process of moving from one thing to another we also need to work with two lots of four quadrants:

- An unhealthy, dysfunctional one
  - Which is destructive, unsustainable, which creates exclusion, addictions or suffering and
- A healthy one
  - Which is sustainable, resilient, peaceful, inclusive, thriving and life-enhancing

In reality every system, group or activity includes elements of both the healthy and unhealthy quadrants. Rather than asking "is this project good or bad?, it's therefore more useful to ask "how is this project creating health and how is it replicating unhealthy systems?"

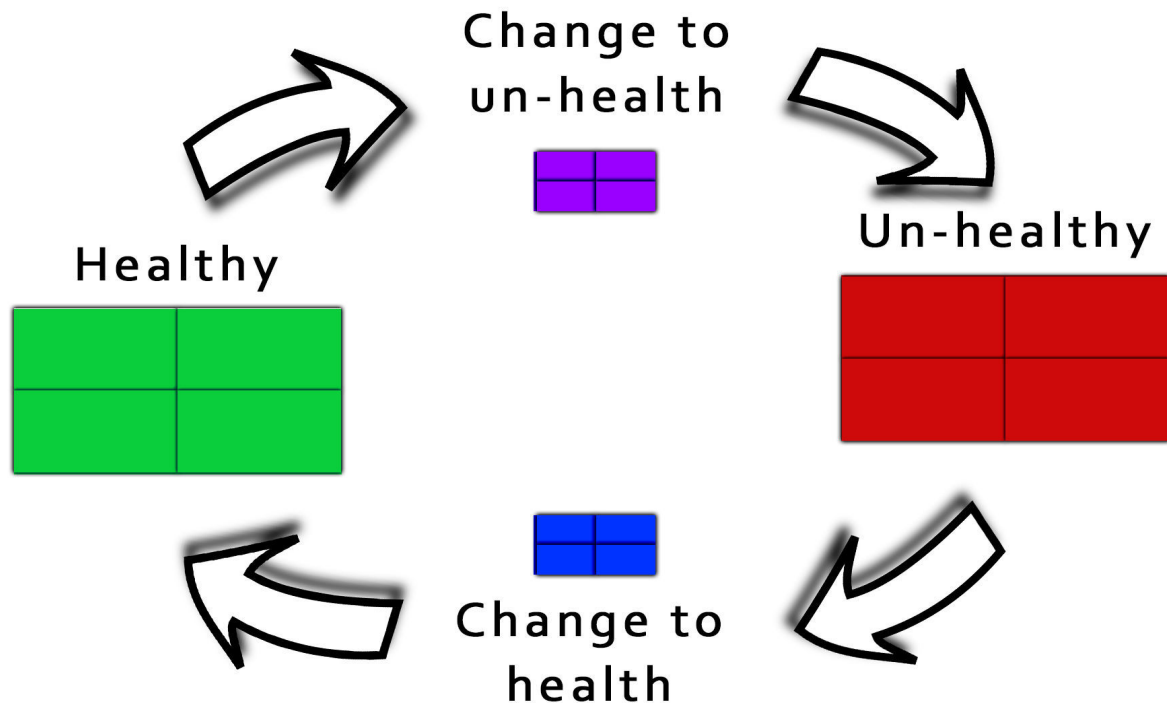
## How is the four quadrant map helpful?

This map shows the current state of something (a person, action, project, movement, society, planet) - and breaks it down into its inner and outer and personal and collective dimensions. It also highlights that it is the processes of change - and their balance of inner/ outer and personal/collective that then shapes to what extent we are transitioning to a healthy or unhealthy culture.

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## A big map of Transition

Healthy and unhealthy four quadrant systems with change processes in both directions



So, I may find myself at the end of a month of travelling, workshops, pressure, with not enough time off, close to the red zone of un-health. What matters most at that point is the direction in which I'm heading. If I'm still piling on more work and additional weeks of relentless scheduling, I'm heading all the way into the red and probably to getting ill. If I'm noticing the overload and cancelling things, putting in more space, prioritising my downtime, I'm engaging the blue part of the system – changing direction towards more balance and health.

Here are some insights from working with this model both at the personal and group level. The direction of change is more important than the fixed state now. You can have a healthy eco-system but if you're progressively stripping it of resources, adding pollution, taking out species, it will degrade. Similarly with a group – you might start full of energy, shared vision and good intentions, but if you set up a culture which uses the group's energy faster than it can replenish, or which only values one half of the action – reflection cycle, the group won't last long. Conversely, you could start with a group of very tired people, but if there's a really good group culture where every meeting or interaction feels nourishing, the group is likely to be a success – and may be a place of great healing for its members.

Every action, project, human being, society, has a mix of all four things going on at once. The question is more about the balance rather than an absolute. There will be personal ego-driven dynamics in groups, we will all bring our fears, our wounding, our power issues, our need to rescue others, or whatever our personal thing is. The most valuable question is – does the group have ways of recognising where it has un-health, and can it do something about it?

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### Feedback Loops: cultivating self-awareness and responding to feedback:

Engineers call this process negative feedback – when a symptom is noticed that's taking the system off its intended course some kind of adjustment reduces whatever's causing the diversion. Like steering when you're riding a bike, or the switch that turns off the kettle, negative feedback stops systems from running "out of control" and hitting disaster. Meditators use the same knowledge for inner work – by giving time and space for observing our inner state – body, mind, feelings or other aspects of consciousness – we can support ourselves to stay well.

Sadly, most of us involved in Transition end up becoming so overwhelmed with having so much to do, that we neglect this feedback and correction process - both at the individual level, which then leads to burnout, and at the group and collective level, which then leads to conflict in groups and destruction of the Earth.

Groups need time to reflect together, on questions like:

1. How is everyone? What's our balance of giving and taking in this project? How sustainable are we to keep going at our present rate of activity – for another month, 3 months, a year?
2. How are we deepening as a group, building trust and understanding?
3. Do we feel safe to disagree with each other, so we can bring the full wisdom of different viewpoints? How can we increase the level of safety by spending time hearing and listening from the heart instead of from thoughts or the desire for action?
4. What do we know about how we get stressed, and how can we take care of each other when that happens (it will!)? How can we be sensitive to our differences so that we're resilient when things get tough?

The first of these was an enquiry done by Transition Town Totnes at their second Core Group meeting, among people that had been actively leading groups for half a year. Most felt they couldn't go on at current activity levels for more than a few months. They made a decision that they had to either find a way to get some paid support, or would have to scale back. Within 6 months they'd found a way to have a part time admin / coordinator help them out.

### Creating balance within Transition Network:

Within the organisation Transition Network a conflict about balance led us to attend to our own feedback loop – asking how we could improve our own balance (we looked at the balance of "Doing" and "Being") – exploring how to increase the time given to reflection, team building and learning. Here are some of the things that are now a regular part of that practice.

### Alternating Being and Doing Meetings:

In Transition Network we brought in external facilitation to help us with our tension between doing and being. The staff and board, together, spent a day exploring balance. We added "balance as a strategic objective, and started to alternate staff meetings so that one is a "Being" meeting (just looking at process, relationships, organisational culture, wellbeing) and the next a "Doing" meeting focusing on work plans, decisions and so on.

## Meeting Culture and Process:

In Transition Network we've been evolving our meeting culture consciously for several years, adopting good practice that we find in other places, and continually reflecting and improving. Here are some of our regular practices, in addition to the Being and Doing staff meetings:

- Start every meeting with a short silence - time to settle and focus on our purpose together
- Short check-in – “how are you”. If anyone has stuff going on we can be responsive to that
- Allocate 3 roles in addition to the facilitator. These came from National Hubs meetings, and are:
  - o Keeper of the time
  - o Keeper of the record - notes actions and decisions
  - o Keeper of the heart - attends to energy and breaks – and invites the group to pause and reflect if there are strong tensions or charged feelings – or apathy – or something else going on. Also ensures opportunities to celebrate and appreciate successes and contributions are maximised!
- Plan the meeting together – structuring the agenda to take into account any additions and allocating time to each item
- Go through the agenda
- Keep 10 minutes at the end of the meeting to reflect on how the meeting was, celebrate anything that went well, and notice any tune ups for next time

These practices of reflection and attention to dynamics mean we often have meetings that are actually energising! We all know about the magic 5:1 ratio – that teams which share at least 5 positive remarks for every negative, are the ones that people want to be part of (this research also covered marriages and friendships).

## Organisational Retreats:

As an organisation we have semi-residential Awaydays twice a year – two days to reflect on longer term issues and strategy, organisational evolution, culture shift, structure and roles, and so on. We experiment here with different styles of working – using our bodies, art, creativity, fun, skits, and so on.

## 3 year Organizational Development process:

Having been running for almost ten years and still being spearheaded by many of those who founded the original project, it was acknowledged that Transition Network had become somewhat of an unwieldy beast - albeit an incredibly exciting, inspiring and successful one! All of the reflective processes we had put in place allowed us to realise that we actually needed to undergo a longer dedicated process reflecting on our organisational culture along with our strategy, work plan and international structure.

We don't think we've got things perfect, and we're continually reflecting on our organisational culture along with our strategy, work plan and structure. But it's certainly improved a lot – and we have spaces to notice where things are going off track.

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### In summary

Inner Transition is about creating this loop of continuing reflection, discernment, and then response - the commitment and skill to keep noticing where a person, group or organisation is moving away from healthy functioning, and coming back. Embedding these practices in the culture might be the first thing a new group forming establishes, setting a foundation for health later on. Understanding that our culture sets the direction we head in helps us to see that culture is more important than who we are at the outset – with healthy culture we can build the trust, strength, energy and skills we need. Without it we are quickly depleted, in conflict, or simply lost.

### More support:

For more support and information on creating visions and analysing how we see the world go here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/vision/>

For more support and information on developing healthy groups go here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/healthy-groups/>

For more support and information on reflection and celebration go here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/reflect-and-celebrate/>

Check out the 7 essential ingredients of Transition here:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/starting-transition/7-essential-ingredients/>

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