

The background of the image is a dark blue gradient. Overlaid on this is a dense, intricate network of glowing light blue lines and nodes. The nodes are small circles of varying sizes, some of which are brighter than others, creating a sense of depth and activity. The lines connect these nodes in a complex, web-like pattern that fills the entire frame, suggesting a global or systemic interconnectedness.

INTERDEPENDENCE

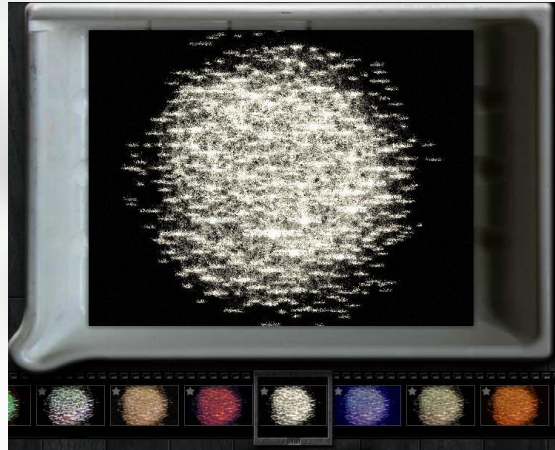
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Interdependence is about life.
It's about the big changes shaking our world,

in technology,
the environment,
education,
economy,
culture,
society,
people...

everything.



Depression, stress, drug abuse, divorce, suicide, crime, terror, war, poverty, social anxiety, food insecurity, unemployment, economic inequality, pollution, waste, natural disasters, climate change,... the more we upgrade our technologies and policies, the more the overarching trend is one of decline.

This raises a lot of questions. It awakens uncertainty about where we are, where we're headed, and what, if anything, can be done to impact a positive shift heading into the future.

Interdependence aims to find answers to these questions.

Interdependence examines what it means to live in today's world. It aims to clarify our nature, motivations, emotions and feelings as part of today's changing conditions.

But most importantly, **Interdependence** aims to answer:

How should we deal with all kinds of people, at home, at school, at work, on the streets, at parks, in malls, at concerts, sporting events, restaurants, with family and friends, on the Internet, and build a better situation: where we can feel happy, comfortable, confident and secure?

Also, **Interdependence** aims to answer why today's tougher conditions place us at a crossroad: either we continue along the same decline, or change direction to an incline.

Either we continue trying to deal with increasing amounts of problems using all kinds of temporary band-aid solutions, and continue bearing witness to global deterioration. Or, we use today's accumulation of difficulties as a means to revise the way we approach everything: to seek deeper causes behind the wide variety of problems, and their solutions.

The way **Interdependence** aims to answer these questions is through a prism, summarizing:

Causes of the world's problems: personal, social, global, economic and ecological

Conditions of a perfect world

Solutions to the world's problems: What's needed to shift from world crisis to world harmony?

Here's how this prism looks:

Causes of the world's problems: personal, social, global, economic and ecological

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Conditions of a perfect world

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Solutions to the world's problems: What's needed to shift from world crisis to world harmony?

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

1. Interdependence

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

How much are you connected to other people?

Happiness, sadness, anger, depression, feeling good or bad... how much are these feelings outcomes of being connected to other people?

How much are your feelings outcomes of being connected to people **you don't know**?

Can you be happy and successful by being detached from other people?

What does it even mean to be happy and successful? Are your ideas, examples, visions and dreams of what it means to be happy and successful intrinsically tied to society?

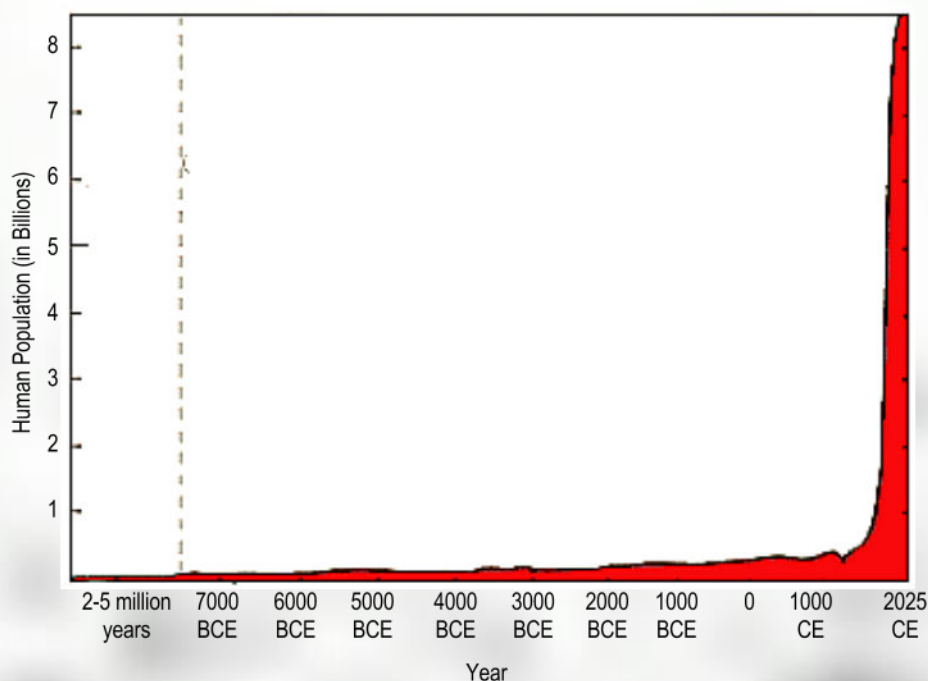
Education and parenting is largely focused on how to find our individual and independent ways in life.

Our interdependence—the situation we're constantly dealing with—is mostly an untouched subject.

Therefore, instead of learning how to become happy and successful people in this interdependent society we're parts of, we learn how to struggle and compete as "independent individuals," and to be parts of a system of struggle and competition.

As humanity's population exponentially increases at rates far beyond what we've ever experienced before, and as many of the world's systems stress under the strain of our fast-growing global interdependence, we need to ask ourselves some serious questions heading into the future...

Human Population Growth



What Is Interdependence?

Interdependence means that everybody and everything is intertwined as a single system.

It means that every action you make, even every thought and feeling you have, exerts its influence on this system.

Likewise, interdependence also means that every action, thought and feeling of every person is influencing everybody simultaneously.

Therefore, interdependence has enormous implications.

1. Appreciate the Scope of Global Interdependence

To appreciate the wide scope of global interdependence, first take this interdependence exercise:

What country was the screen you're looking at now made in?

The last car you saw. What country was it made in? What countries were all its parts made in?

The oil in cars, buses, trains, planes, tires, water pipes, refrigerators, heaters, phones, toilet seats, clothes driers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap and food preservatives. What countries is all that oil from?

Your clothes. What countries are your clothes from?

Your coffee...

You get the point.

Exercise: Awareness of Your Dependence on People Worldwide

STEP 1:

Look around the room you're in.

STEP 2:

Note the country where everything you see was made.

If possible, note where the components of all the things within those things were made.

By now, you should be seeing the influence of dozens of countries in your room.

STEP 3:

Note what countries your friends, followers and people you follow on your social media are from.

STEP 4:

Note what countries all your friends' friends, followers and people they follow on their social media are from.

STEP 5:

Review everything you've noted.

Without leaving your room, you should be able to see that you're being influenced by the whole world.

However, interdependence is not just about acknowledging countries where things are made. Interdependence is also not just easy communication with people worldwide.

What's the big deal with interdependence then?

2. The Interdependence of Your Thoughts and Feelings

We are not only interdependent among our countries, cultures, technologies, communications, economies and industries.

Our interdependence extends to our thoughts and feelings.

To see how we are interdependent in our thoughts and feelings, let's look at this example from neuroscience...

Neuroscience presents a certain aspect of interdependence in our thoughts and feelings through its findings on mirror neurons.

Mirror neurons are certain sets of neurons that fire when we do, see or imagine different kinds of activities. Therefore, when we see or imagine people doing some activity, we sense that activity's touches and pains. As neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran, advocator of the importance of mirror neurons, states:

[Mirror neurons] are neurons which fire when I reach out and grab a peanut, another set of neurons which fire when I reach out and pull a lever, other neurons when I'm pushing something, other neurons when I'm hitting something. These are regular motor command neurons, orchestrating a sequence of muscle twitches that allow me to reach out and grab something or do some other action.

A subset of these neurons also fire when I simply watch another person—watch you reach out and do exactly the same action. So these neurons are performing a virtual reality simulation of your mind, your brain. Therefore, they're constructing a theory of your mind—of your intention—which is important for all kinds of social interaction.

—Interview with V.S. Ramachandran, "[Do Mirror Neurons Give Us Empathy?](#)" *Greater Good. University of California, Berkeley.*

Social sciences also provide us with examples of how people are interdependent at the level of thoughts and feelings. The most well-known research was published in Dr. Nicholas Christakis' and Dr. James Fowler's book, [Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives](#).

One aspect of Christakis' and Fowlers' research was on the contagious nature of happiness.

By analyzing data from a heart study (the Framingham heart study), Christakis and Fowler investigated the happiness of nearly 5,000 individuals over a 20-year period.

Their findings show that happiness spreads like a virus.

They found that happiness spreads not only among people who are close to each other, but also among people who have no direct contact with each other.

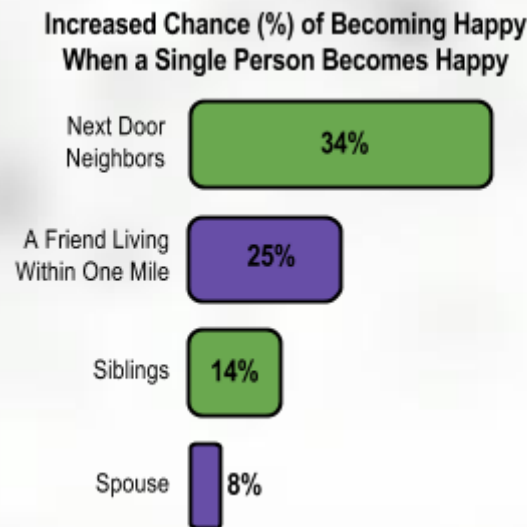
Here's what they found when a single person becomes happy:

- Next door neighbors have a **34%** increased chance of becoming happy
- A friend living within one mile has a **25%** increased chance of becoming happy
- Siblings have a **14%** increased chance of becoming happy
- A spouse has an **8%** chance of becoming happy

Dr. Fowler summarized this point as follows...

We found that happiness can spread like a virus through social networks. In fact, if your friends' friends' friend becomes happy, it significantly increases the chance that you'll be happy.

–Dr. James Fowler, in [“Happiness Is... – MSNBC.”](#)



These examples from neuroscience and social sciences just scrape the surface of showing our interdependence at the level of our thoughts and feelings.

3. The Evolution of Interdependence

Adding to the discussion about our thoughts' and feelings' interdependence, we can also ask:

Why are we even talking about interdependence today to begin with?

What is urging scientists today to study our interdependence?

Why are we, specifically today, finding out more about our interdependence?

The more we look into the history of our interdependence, the more we find that we have been exponentially growing more interdependent since our beginnings.

From...

families and tribes, to
towns and cities, to
developing countries,
empires,
systems of exchange (money, trade, commerce),
systems of conquering and defending lands and properties (armies),
systems of public service, health and emergency service (police, hospitals, fire fighters),
systems that govern those systems (governments),
transportation systems (wheels, carts, trains, cars, planes), and
communication systems (language, printing, the telegraph, telephones, radio, TV, the Internet).

Interdependence has developed throughout history to a point where today our interdependence is clearly global and tightening in on us.

4. Interdependence in Nature

Evolutionary biology takes the evolution of our interdependence a few steps further back. Research in evolutionary biology discovered interdependence before humans, animals and plants had come into existence, when ancient bacteria covered our planet.

Microbiologist Lynn Margulis, in her book [*Symbiosis in Cell Evolution: Microbial Communities in the Archean and Proterozoic Eons*](#), described how ancient bacteria underwent a process of so-called "awakening": waking up to their interdependence, similar to how we humans are waking up to our interdependence today.

She described an evolutionary story where around 2 billion years ago, ancient bacteria had completely covered our planet. Through processes of how bacteria survive in their environment (photosynthesis, respiration and fermentation) the bacteria continually consumed their available "resources."

Notable to this consumption was that the bacteria initially didn't "wake up" to the fact that they were interdependent. Therefore, their consumption of the planet's resources was competitive: each bacterial colony "fought" for its resources against the other bacterial colonies.

When there was enough to go around, the bacteria would survive by consuming whatever was available. However, when resources became scarce, the bacteria started becoming increasingly competitive, and they reached a crisis.

As they divided into different bacterial colonies, their attempts to acquire resources became increasingly competitive and exploitative of other bacterial colonies.

As a result, many of those bacterial colonies died.

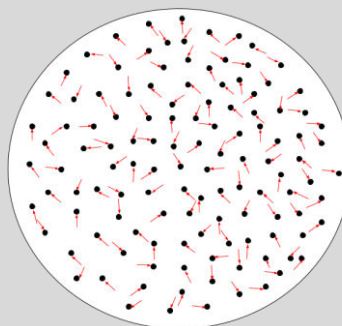
What, then, did the bacteria do in the face of this crisis?

They cooperated. And by cooperating, they survived.

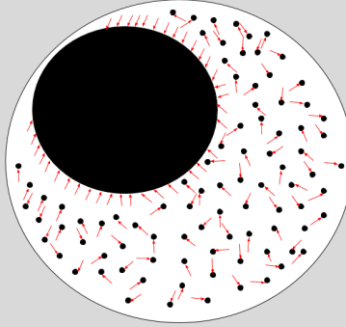
As it became apparent that ultimately none of the bacteria would be able to survive in this increasingly competitive atmosphere, the bacteria as if "woke up" to realize their interdependent situation positively.

They made this positive shift by developing a cooperative system that we now know as the "nucleated cell": a bacterial community where each bacterium only receives what it needs for its sustenance, and gives the surplus to benefit the entire cell.

This story shows us a **5 step process of waking up to interdependence**:



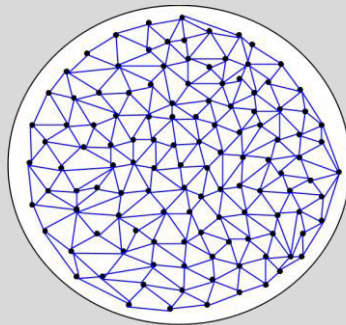
1. Competitive Individualism - a process of spreading and multiplying with a focus on fulfilling self-interests.



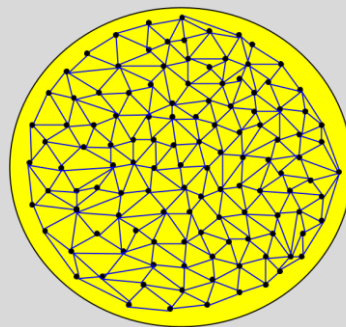
2. Crisis of Competitive Individualism - crisis emerges when the multiplication of self-interested parts reaches a threshold: resources become scarce, and the parts surviving off those resources become more competitive. Many of those parts then get killed off.



3. Awareness - of crisis in competitive individualism while interdependent.



4. Cooperative Mutuality - through awareness that survival of all parts is impossible in the competitive individualistic-while-interdependent situation, a new approach emerges to the interdependent conditions: cooperation for the sake of mutual survival.



5. New Entity - not only does a new approach emerge, but through this new approach emerges a new entity. This new entity is expressed by positive connection and cooperation of all parts, where each part receives what's necessary for its sustenance, and gives any surplus for the benefit of the whole.

5. Interdependence in Nature and Humans

There are over 100 trillion bacteria in the human body.

Imagine if those bacteria were not working for the mutual interest of keeping you healthy and functional. For instance, if they started working for each one's individual self-interest, what would happen to you?

Quite simply, you'd get sick quick. Then you'd die.

To summarize the evolutionary development of the ancient bacteria described above into 3 stages:

i. Increasing individuation and separation

ii. Crisis

iii. Change to a more unified, whole organism out of all the parts that previously acted out of individual interest.

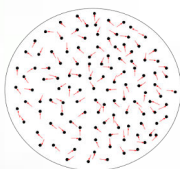
Us people have a lot in common with those bacteria.

We are parts of nature.

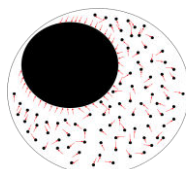
We are also divided into individuals and groups with multiple conflicting interests. Whether it be races, classes, religions, cultures or organizations, as individuals and as groups, we regularly try to gain an advantage of "me" or "my group" over others.

Let's look at an overview of the ancient bacteria's evolution, i.e.

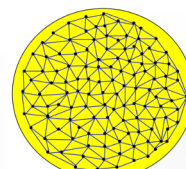
competitive
individualism



crisis



cooperative
mutuality



...and through it, envision a purpose to our current conflicts.

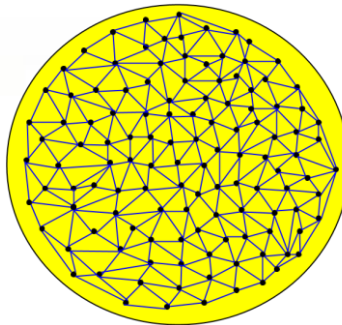
The purpose of our conflicts is twofold:

1 - The Realization of Error in Our Competitive Self-interested Approach to Each Other



While we become increasingly interdependent, the more we relate to each other out of competitive self-interest, with conflicting interests of individuals and groups, the more crises will abound.

2 - Revision of Our Approach: The Development of a Cooperative Mutual Approach to Each Other



Realizing the error in our approach to each other should lead us to revise our approach.

In other words, the realization of error in our approach to interdependence is only half of our conflicts' purpose, like the correct diagnosis of a disease is half its cure.

The other half of our conflicts' purpose is to change our approach to our interdependence.

By replacing our competitive, individualistic approach of conflicting interests to a cooperative, mutual approach, where we merge our interests, we could then realize our interdependence harmoniously.

In other words, changing humanity's mindset from "how to benefit myself" to "how to benefit others" is the key to everyone's happiness.

But, given the world's increasingly opposite looking situation, how could that ever be done?

Interdependence Summary

Our interdependence is global and tightening.

We become more entangled the more we populate the planet, which is happening today at far greater exponential rates than ever before in history.

Today, we're in a very different state to where we were even a few years ago. If we could survive according to a paradigm of competitive individualism in the past, today's situation is very different.

What is today's tightening global interdependence showing us?

1. If we fail to learn how to work together, with mutual interest in achieving a positively connected, harmonious existence, then we will experience increasing pains and hardships heading into the future.
2. If we will learn how to work together, with mutual interest in achieving a positively connected, harmonious existence, then we will be able to create a much better and happier place for us all.

However, this could only happen if we change our attitude to our intensifying interdependent situation.

This social attitude shift depends on focusing on an attitude of cooperation and consideration of everyone's benefit.

If we will succeed in making that shift, it will be the key to **everyone's happiness**.

Interdependence Takeaways

We are globally interdependent:

among our countries, cultures, technologies, communications, economies and industries;
in our thoughts and feelings.

We have been constantly growing more interdependent throughout our history.

Our interdependence today is tighter than ever before.

Our tightening interdependence with our clashing competitive interests brings us to crisis.

If we could change our paradigm of clashing competitive interests to a paradigm of cooperative mutual interests, we could then experience our tightening interdependence harmoniously.

Tightening interdependence evolving through crisis into a new harmonious entity is part of natural evolution.

2. Competitive Self-interests

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

We have seen how we are interdependent.

We have also seen how this interdependence, although more apparent today, is a process that has evolved on our planet since the time of ancient micro-bacteria.

Today, we have reached a state where our interdependence worldwide is tightening more intensely than ever before. Every person is influenced by a global network of billions of people in terms of objects we use, consume and wear, and also in terms of what we think, feel and want.

Now we will look deeper into what is standing in our way of realizing our interdependence harmoniously. It is what we have described as **competitive self-interests**.

Similar to the example of the nucleated cell, a more tangible example for us to be able to understand the first part of the prism is the way cells and organs function in a human body.

The overriding envelope guiding systems of cells, organs, proteins and bacteria in our bodies is harmonious interdependence: cells and organs take only what they need to sustain themselves, and give what they can for the whole body's benefit. If cells take more than what they need for their sustenance, they're considered cancerous, and can lead to disease and kill us.

The body's interdependent systems present a certain kind of functionality, a law, which reflects on nature's connections. The law is that **the stability of life's systems depends on the mutual relations of its parts**. The sustainability of life requires cooperative mutual interests: relations of consideration, mutual concern, balance, altruism and equality.

Examples of the need for cooperative mutual interests to be in place for systems to function can be seen across nature: from the way in which atoms and molecules hold physical "stuff" together, to the way in which plants, bacteria, mammals, animals, insects, vegetative and animate life on land, in sea and air, function according to intuitive give-and-take relations. The kinds of interrelations in these interdependent systems pave way to many opportunities that make our lives here possible.

Dr. Martin Novak, Professor of Biology and Mathematics and Director of the Program for Evolutionary Dynamics at Harvard University, wrote about this...

Creatures of every persuasion and level of complexity cooperate to live. Some of the earliest bacteria formed strings, where certain cells in each living filament die to nourish their neighbors with nitrogen. Some bacteria hunt in groups, much as a pride of lions hunt together to corner an antelope; ants form societies of millions of individuals that can solve complex problems, from farming to architecture to navigation; bees tirelessly harvest pollen for the good of the hive; mole rats generously allow their peers to dine on their droppings, providing a delicious second chance to digest fibrous roots; and meerkats risk their lives to guard a communal nest.

—Martin Nowak with Roger Highfield, [*SuperCooperators: Altruism, Evolution and Why We Need Each Other to Succeed*](#). Free Press, 2012: xiii.

What about us, humans?

Do we consider the benefit of others, or do we consider only our own benefit?

Do we consider humanity's benefit, or do we consider the benefit of only one or a few portions of humanity (my family, friends, city, state, country, religion)?

Comparing humans to the rest of nature, only we find enjoyment in others being worse off.

You won't see animals finding enjoyment, beyond their survival needs, in being "better" than other animals. You won't find animals building their identity at the expense of other animals.

For example, when a lion chases an antelope, it is because the lion needs to eat that antelope in order to be fed and keep living. It doesn't chase the antelope thinking, "I'm going to get that damn antelope! I'm going to show it and all those stupid antelopes how much stronger and more powerful we lions are! Everyone's going to see who is king around here!"

In terms of a body's cell and organs, cancer emerges when cells start consuming more than what they need for their survival, when surplus is accumulated at the expense of other cells and organs. Now, what do we see when we take a bird's eye view of human society in relation to this principle? What we see is each person or group focused entirely on fulfilling narrow interests akin to another cancerous cell or organ within a greater cancerous tumor of human society growing worldwide.

The expression of this disease spreading humanity can be seen in what people are suffering from on a daily basis. Below are just some examples of self-interests causing us pains in our daily lives. Some examples are based on raw facts and statistics. Others are simply examples of routine life situations.

Divorce is at an all-time high. There was never a situation in history as in the last 30-or-so years, where divorce rates have been so high. The family used to be one of our most secure and comfortable places. Today, it's a place that often erupts in conflict, leading to its increasing dismantlement.

Trust is at an all-time low. Before we buy some service or product, we usually need to check from a range of sellers to make sure we're getting the best deal. Even after checking, we're still unsure about whether or not we're being manipulated.

In order to reach any kind of agreement, we need lawyers and/or third-party legal agreements. We need to read fine print carefully, to make sure that the other party doesn't get the upper hand in the deal.

Goods and services regularly undergo markups. The markups run across the various stages of a product's manufacturing, distribution and marketing, which lead to constantly rising prices of literally everything. Couple this with debt repayments, interest rates and inflation, and it's a major part of the reason why, for example, today a bottle of Coke costs over 3,000% more than what it sold for about 100 years ago.

On a global scale, the financial crisis of 2008 showed us how one bank falling in one country led to more banks falling in other countries. We then saw the domino effect it had on other areas of life, from falling banks to home foreclosures to a rapid rise in unemployment to worldwide protests, and a truckload of problems stemming from those events, continuing to affect people today.

The events that resulted from the 2008 financial crisis, most notably Occupy Wall Street, also increased public awareness about the 1% and the 99%. Wealth inequality has reached such an extreme today where the richest 1% of the world's population have accumulated more combined wealth than the remaining 99% of the world's population. Couple this with the fact that dozens of thousands of children die due to poverty, 3 billion people live on less than 2 dollars a day, a billion people are going hungry, 20% of the world's population uses 80% of its resources, and that the world spends about 12 times more on military expenditures than on aid to developing countries.

Competitive individualistic relations + many conflicting interests in increasingly interdependent times = a world of distrust and injustice.

To state the obvious: Our competitive conflicting interests are interfering with us living happy lives.

However, a positive note arises out of this darkening picture:

We are developing an awareness of our error in our competitive self-interested approaches to life.

This awareness of error is leading a lot of people to revise the way we conduct our lives. We need to reflect on ourselves and understand that something has to change.

Competitive Self-Interests - Takeaways

Competitive self-interests stand in our way of realizing our interdependence harmoniously.

Nature functions according to a law: a system's sustenance requires cooperative mutual interests among the system's parts.

Nature's still, vegetative and animate parts intuitively abide by cooperative mutual interests.

Humans do not abide by cooperative mutual interests, i.e. we lack mutual relations of consideration, mutual concern, balance, altruism and equality.

Humans are the only parts in nature that find enjoyment in others being worse off.

Competitive self-interests emerge from the natural human tendency to want the upper hand on other people, a tendency that has led humanity to a crisis.

As a result of the crisis, we are developing an awareness of our error in our competitive self-interested approaches to life. More and more people are gaining awareness of the need to revise the way we conduct ourselves in order to survive and be happy.

3. Cooperative Mutual Interests

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

What would happen if we would reconstruct our interdependent situation cooperatively, where we would mutually care for each other?

What would happen if we would work to look beyond our own interests, whether it would be a person's individual interests, or the interests of one's family, culture, nation, religion, and so on, and try to find interests common to all people?

What would happen if we learned how to acknowledge the fact that none of us had any choice in what city and country we were born in, what family, social class, culture and religion we were born into, and sought for a mutual common point that makes us all equally human here on this planet?

What would it be like if we would try to see people as belonging to the same family, in every interaction we have?

Would a mechanic charge his own son as much for a car service as he would a complete stranger?

Would a banker approve a home loan to his mother if he knew in advance that his mother couldn't pay back that loan? Would he put his own mother at risk of losing her home and going homeless?

Would a dairy products manufacturer seek to make milk for his baby daughter with the cheapest chemicals and a gross neglect of the farming conditions, knowing that by feeding that milk to his daughter, he puts her at risk of inheriting serious diseases?

Imagine how much lower costs would be for all kinds of products and services if everyone's calculation across the entire chain of production, distribution and marketing wasn't focused on "How can I reap the most benefit for myself out of this transaction?" but, "How can I give my 'global family' the best possible product or service that they need at the best possible price?"

If we sincerely thought and acted by considering others as if they were our family, we would be actualizing the formula for happiness and abundance in our lives:

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

A lot of progress made in the past 20 to 30 years in science, business and education has pointed to the idea that the better the social connections, the better people's happiness, business' success, and students' learning.

Modern business management today is growing in its understanding of the importance of well-oiled cooperative relations. A company's smartest individual or best manager is becoming viewed as less important as having well connected employees and teams. Many companies are putting into practice the idea of systems thinking, where teams are found to problem solve with greater success than smart individuals or talented managers.

13 Ways Cooperative Work Relations Benefit Businesses

1. Positive social interactions at work are shown to have beneficial physiological effects.

- Heaphy, E. D., & Dutton, J. E. (2008). [Positive social interactions and the human body at work: Linking organizations and physiology](#). Academy of Management Review, 33(1), 137-162.

2. Positively connected people are shown to receive higher job performance assessments from their supervisors.

- Cropanzano, R., & Wright, T. A. (1999). [A 5-year study of change in the relationship between well-being and job performance](#). Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 51(4), 252.

3. Positively connected people are shown to earn higher incomes.

- Diener, E., Nickerson, C., Lucas, R. E., & Sandvik, E. (2002). [Dispositional affect and job outcomes](#). Social Indicators Research, 59(3), 229-259.

4. Acknowledgement and good relations in the workplace prove good for business.

- Ariely, D., Kamenica, E., & Prelec, D. (2008). [Man's search for meaning: The case of Legos](#). Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 67(3), 671-677.

5. When certain organizations successfully engage their customers and their employees, they experience a 240% boost in performance-related business outcomes compared to other organizations with neither engaged employees nor engaged customers.

- Gallup (2013). [State of the American Workplace](#). Washington, DC.

6. Employees have been shown to work for longer hours with increased focus and under more difficult conditions when they have a foundation of positive social interactions.

- Heaphy, E. D., & Dutton, J. E. (2008). [Positive social interactions and the human body at work: Linking organizations and physiology](#). Academy of Management Review, 33(1), 137-162.

7. A study of over 357 employees and 93 managers in 60 business units at a financial service company found that the greatest predictor of a team's achievement was how the members felt about one another.

- Campion, M. A., Papper, E. M., & Medsker, G. J. (1996). [Relations between work team characteristics and effectiveness: A replication and extension](#). Personnel psychology, 49(2), 429-452.

8. US corporations have been shown to lose 360 billion dollars annually due to lost productivity from employees who are dissatisfied with their superiors.

- Gallup (2005, April 15). [The High Cost of Disengaged Employees](#).

9. MIT researchers spent an entire year following 2,600 IBM employees, and found that the more socially connected the IBM employees were, they better they performed, and that every added email between one worker to another was worth \$948 in revenue.

- Wu, L., Lin, C. Y., Aral, S., & Brynjolfsson, E. (2009, February). [Value of social network—a large-scale analysis on network structure impact to financial revenue of information technology consultants](#). In The Winter Conference on Business Intelligence.

10. In a meta-analysis of all the studies conducted on the Social Interdependence Theory, it was found that the average person who cooperated in their setting performed about 2/3 of a SD above the average person within a competitive or individualistic setting.

- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1989). [Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research](#). Interaction Book Company.

11. It has been shown that once teamwork procedures have been mastered, teams outperform individuals working alone in almost every single task.

- Ortiz, A. E., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1996). [The effect of positive goal and resource interdependence on individual performance](#). The Journal of Social Psychology, 136(2), 243-249.

12. For random people to succeed in collaboration, it has been shown that participants need to get to know and trust each other, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and resolve conflicts constructively.

- Johnson, D. W. (1972). [Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization](#).

13. Work teams with cooperative team incentives were found to achieve more accurate work results than work teams with competitive individualistic incentives.

- Adam Grant, ["Givers Take All: The Hidden Dimension of Corporate Culture."](#) McKinsey & Company, April 2013.

In education, countries with the highest ranked students employ cooperative modes of learning. For example, the country currently with the highest ranked students in the world, Finland, applies cooperation and mutual help as a matter of policy. Opposite to the competitive, test-based accountability, standardization and privatization common to many of the world's education systems, including the United States', students in Finland teach each other in class. Each student gains personal attention until s/he is at the same level as other students. Moreover, integrated systems are in place for teachers to learn from other teachers, and schools to learn from other schools. Isolation is treated as the enemy of improvement in Finnish education. As a result, Finland's education system has become renowned for producing the world's highest ranked students. (Anu Partanen, "[What Americans Keep Ignoring About Finland's School Success](#)." *The Atlantic*.)

Imagine how much better, happier, more secure and peaceful the world would be if we started trying to replace our current competitive self-interests with cooperative mutual interests.

When the detriments of living according to competitive self-interests compared to the benefits of living according to cooperative mutual interests become increasingly clearer, then why don't we change our approach already?

What's standing in the way of us making a much better life for everyone?

Cooperative Mutual Interests - Takeaways

If people related to each other with cooperative mutual interests, we would live harmonious, happy and abundant lives.

Relating to everyone with cooperative mutual interests can be likened to relating to everyone as if they are your own family.

Recent progress in science, business and education has shown that the more cooperative the social connections, the better people's happiness, business' success and students' learning.

4. What's Behind Competitive Self-interests and Cooperative Mutual Interests?

The Desire to Enjoy

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

Whether we try to fulfill our self-interests on account of others, or whether we try to cooperate to merge our interests, what do we ultimately try to do in each situation?

We try to enjoy ourselves.

Every calculation we make, whether to benefit ourselves or others, is a calculation to feel good, happy and satisfied.

We build our lives upon our vision of enjoyment. For one person, enjoyment means living a simple life, finding a suitable partner, raising a family, having a few friends, barbeques on the weekend, watching sports, engaging in a few hobbies, and having it easy going. For another person, enjoyment means complete devotion to a profession, an ideology, a lifestyle or accomplishing lofty goals.

However, there is a lot more going on with our desire to enjoy.

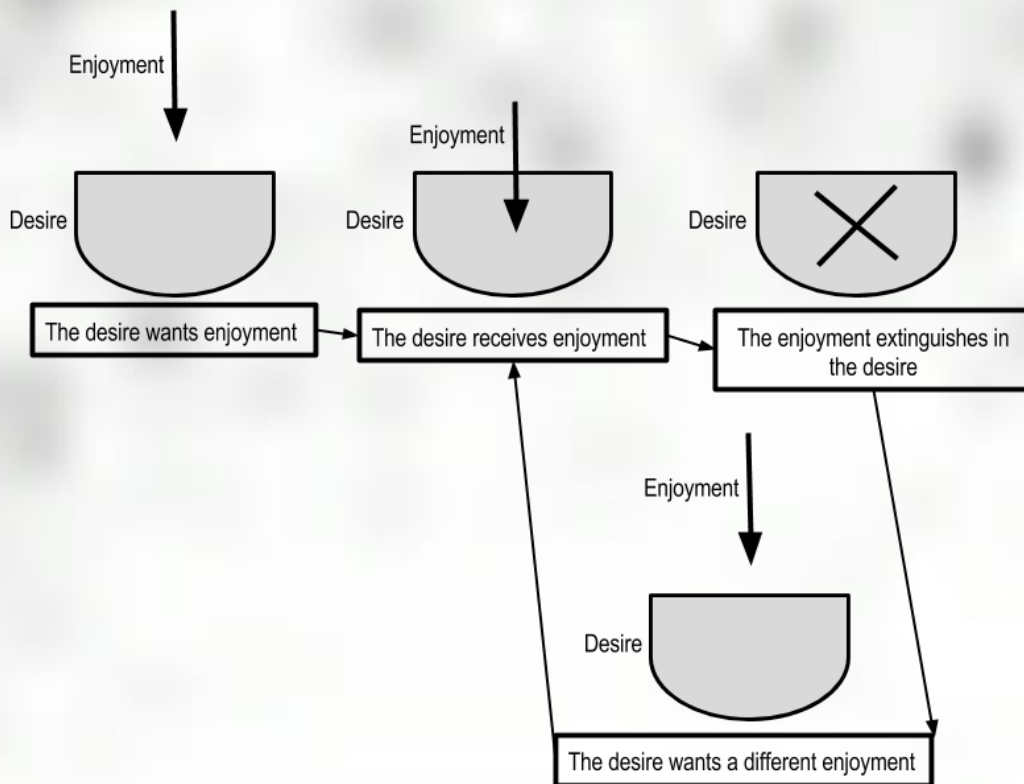
What happens after we enjoy something? After we enjoy something, the enjoyment fades away.



This leaves us constantly wanting, never feeling completely satisfied.

For example, think of your favorite food. Say, pizza. If you're really hungry, then what could be better than your favorite kind of pizza? The moment you take your first bite, it's bliss. The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth bites are also good. You might even eat 2-3 pizzas and still feel great. But at a certain point, you won't want pizza anymore. You'd get full. If you'd continue eating, it'd become torturous. You'd feel sick. Eventually you'd throw up. Then you wouldn't want to even think about a pizza for a few days.

That is an example of how enjoyments (a.k.a. fulfillments, pleasures) become extinguished. The same goes for enjoyments of sex, family, money, control, honor, power and knowledge.



There is no way around it. For instance, we cannot want pain over pleasure. Take even the most extreme example of a person who seemingly wants pain over pleasure: a masochist. A masochist seemingly wants to feel pain over pleasure. However, if we investigate the masochist's motives, we would find the activation of that same desire to enjoy. That is, we would find a justification for why that masochist seemingly wants pain over pleasure. Feeling pain would be found to fulfill a self-justification of the masochist, and that justification is ultimately what gives the masochist the enjoyment.

The masochist example takes it to an extreme, so let's look at a more common phenomenon: people who do some action they don't enjoy. People who do some action they don't enjoy usually do it because they associate it as work that will earn them enjoyment in the future. For example, a person washing dishes at a restaurant for hours would be justifying that work in terms of the paycheck, and what s/he could do with that paycheck. Or a university student choosing to study instead of going out to have a good time with friends would be thinking of the profession and lifestyle that s/he will earn after university as a result of those studies.

Our desire to enjoy can be thought of as our fundamental human nature. It is like a hidden motor motivating our every thought and action. It has been doing so for generations, and it continues to do so today. Even if you move your hand from the chair to the table, it is only because you envision, either consciously or subconsciously, that by having your hand on the table you'd feel more enjoyment and comfort.

Every motion stems from a very simple calculation. There is a constant motor running behind our thoughts, feelings, desires and actions, characterized as:

maximum benefit for minimum effort.

Would what you are now doing bring you benefit?

Will it produce results?

Will it make you feel good?

Will it make you feel better later compared to how you feel now?

If the answer is yes, then you move.

If the answer is no, then you won't be able to move even a millimeter.

Wherever we look, we have the same calculation: Maximum benefit for minimum effort. And at least if there won't be much benefit out of a certain action, then let there be as little harm as possible.

The Desire to Enjoy - Takeaways

The desire to enjoy, i.e. to feel good/happy/satisfied/fulfilled, is human nature.

The problem with the desire to enjoy is that after we enjoy something, the enjoyment fades away. This leaves us constantly wanting, never feeling completely satisfied.

We always want pleasure over pain; we cannot want pain over pleasure.

The desire to enjoy is expressed in the fundamental calculation behind everything we think and do: maximum benefit for minimum effort.

5. Social Influence Part 1: Consumerism

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

So we want to enjoy.

Why then can't we just enjoy all the time?

Positive psychology emerged in the 1990s. In one strand of positive psychology, also referred to as "happiness science," researchers seek to understand why despite having so much more than we had in the past, despite having an abundance of opportunities, foods, drinks, games, movies, music, hobbies, free time, technologies and attractions, why then do people's happiness levels drop?

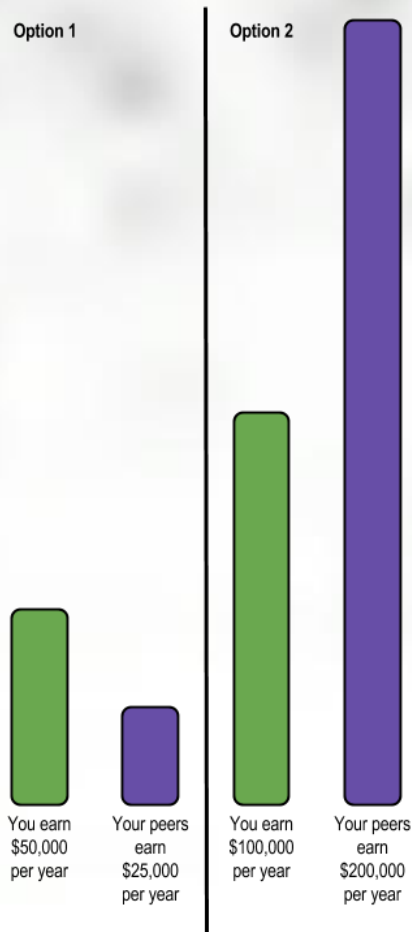
A study that took place on senior staff of Harvard University, illustrated in Sara J. Solnick and David Hemenway's paper ["Is More Always Better? A Survey on Positional Concerns,"](#) provides some clarity on the issue. The participants in this study were requested to select one of two options:

1. To earn \$50,000 per year while their peers earned \$25,000 per year, or
2. To earn \$100,000 per year while their peers earned \$200,000 per year.

You'd think that if you'd offer someone \$100,000 instead of \$50,000 a year, despite what other people around them were making, then they would select the higher earning option, right? It seems logical that with more money, you'd be able to buy more and better things, which would make you happier, right?

What about you? Would you choose to earn \$50,000 a year while others in your workplace earn \$25,000 a year? Or would you choose \$100,000 a year while others in your workplace earn \$200,000 a year?

What Would You Choose?



If you chose the \$50,000/\$25,000 option, then you are among the majority.

In other words, the majority of participants **chose to earn less money on condition that everyone earns less than them.**

The point from this study: We don't just want to enjoy individually, isolated from other people. Our enjoyment is relative to others, to society. We compare ourselves to others. Also, we often want to enjoy more than they do.

Our desire to enjoy, which is often on account of others, leads to the creation of a culture based on competition, envy, tension, stress, and all kinds of calculations where if one person has more than another, or feels that s/he is better than the other person in some way, then s/he feels better and enjoys more.

If you just bought a new car, but your friends and everyone on your block have much more expensive, more powerful, more prestigious and faster cars than you, then you'd feel inferior. If you still have the first or second generation of iPhone, and everyone else has iPhone's most recent models, then you'd feel like you'd need to upgrade. This is how we generate a consumerist tornado that incessantly sucks in "the new and better" and spits out "the old and worse."

This consumerist tornado is further fueled by the powerful influences of mass media and advertising.

Instead of using mass media and advertising to educate about and promote resourcefulness, cooperation and the importance of benefiting and caring about other people, mass media and advertising are used to promote competitiveness, separation and the importance of benefiting and caring about yourself.

Mass media and advertising currently aim to make you feel unhappy with what you have, in order to make you buy all kinds of products and services to keep up with or be ahead of everyone else.

By living in a consumerist society that values "the richest, the strongest and the fastest," our desire to enjoy seeks to find its expression by living up to these social standards.

As a result, since the early 2000s, narcissism has exploded. In today's consumerist society, it is completely normal to think along the lines of: "I want to have more money than others. I want others to respect and appreciate me. I want others to know who I am." Our constant pursuit of what we think of as happiness, which takes the forms of success, fame, recognition, control, more money and higher status, is also most often on account of others.

Narcissism increased just as fast as obesity over the past 25 years, and a study today shows that it is twice that rate since 2002.

- Psychologist Dr. Jean Twenge, co-author of [*The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*](#), taken from "[What Everybody Ought to Know about Narcissism](#)," *Mutual Responsibility*.

How much pressure is there to fit into this mold? How hard is it to be authentic and open, to realize yourself and feel good without feeling like you always have to be on some pursuit or in some competition or conflict?

How much effort do you put into making sure others don't get the upper hand on you? On the Internet, you develop a habit for dodging your way around scams and viruses, and in many everyday life ordeals, you need to check that you're not being taken advantage of.

Couple this increasingly egocentric approach to life in our consumerist society with the fact that we are becoming increasingly interdependent, and things look all the more tense and dangerous if we keep heading down the same path.

Moreover, add to this picture an expected population growth of 2 billion more people (reaching 9 billion people) by 2050, a massive exponential population increase that's never been seen before...

And what will become of us?

What will become of us if we don't make a major revision on how we're going about our lives?

Social Influence Part 1: Consumerism - Takeaways

We can't enjoy ourselves all the time because we compare our enjoyment to others' enjoyment, and often want to enjoy more than others.

Mass media and advertising thrives on this natural tendency we all share, aiming to make us feel unhappy with what we have in order for us to buy all kinds of products and services to keep up with or be ahead of everyone else.

Since society promotes valuing "the strongest, the richest and the fastest" individuals, our desire to enjoy seeks to find its expression—its enjoyment—by living up to these social values.

As a result of our desire to enjoy seeking to find its expression by living up to consumerist values, narcissism and stress have increased in recent years.

6. Social Influence Part 2: Connection/Collaboration/Cooperation/ Contribution

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis
Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony
Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

Competitive self-interests do not mean everyone thinking only about and wanting for themselves.

Competitive self-interests mean wanting for ourselves on account of others.

Moreover, competitive self-interests drive development.

We have been motivated to progress over the generations, conquer lands, perfect our sciences, arts and culture, and work hard to outperform others. Although all kinds of pros and cons can be drawn from this development, what becomes clear is that this development has led to an increasingly interdependent world today.

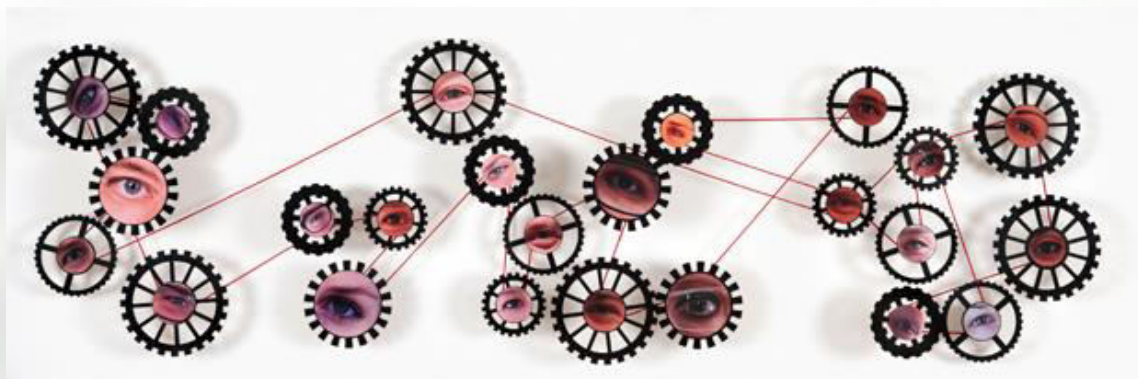
Today, every individual pursuit is linked to an interdependent system of economy, communications, politics, law, industry, trade, business, technology and media, through which we aim to realize our desires.

Our conflicting approaches to each other through these means results in the all the mess.

We have briefly touched on social influence as a player in this game.

Now we will examine social influence more deeply to see what it would mean to change our interdependent situation to a beneficial one.

The Implications of Social Influence



"Everything Is Connected"
Zenita Komad, 2015

We are social creatures.

Thinkers and researchers have been contemplating and writing about our social life for generations. Artists and musicians have been expressing it. And everyone has to deal with it in one way or another.

People need to be connected to society in order to survive. The more isolated people become, the harder their lives. Society's thoughts, i.e. public opinion, are one of the most powerful influences in every person's life. Public opinion transpires through society's culture, values, ideas and commonly held beliefs. The society we are raised in largely molds us into the kinds of people we are.

A person's interests, hobbies, specializations, values and beliefs are determined by a number of socio-environmental factors: the interests, hobbies, specializations, values, attitudes and beliefs of our family, friends, classes, cultures, races, education, media (TV shows, movies, news, games, music, the Internet), as well as the localities, neighborhoods, cities and countries we were raised in.

In simpler terms, we think about and want what society thinks about and wants.

Even if we think and want differently to society's majority, there will still be a smaller segment of society that we connect to in those specific thoughts and wants that we have.

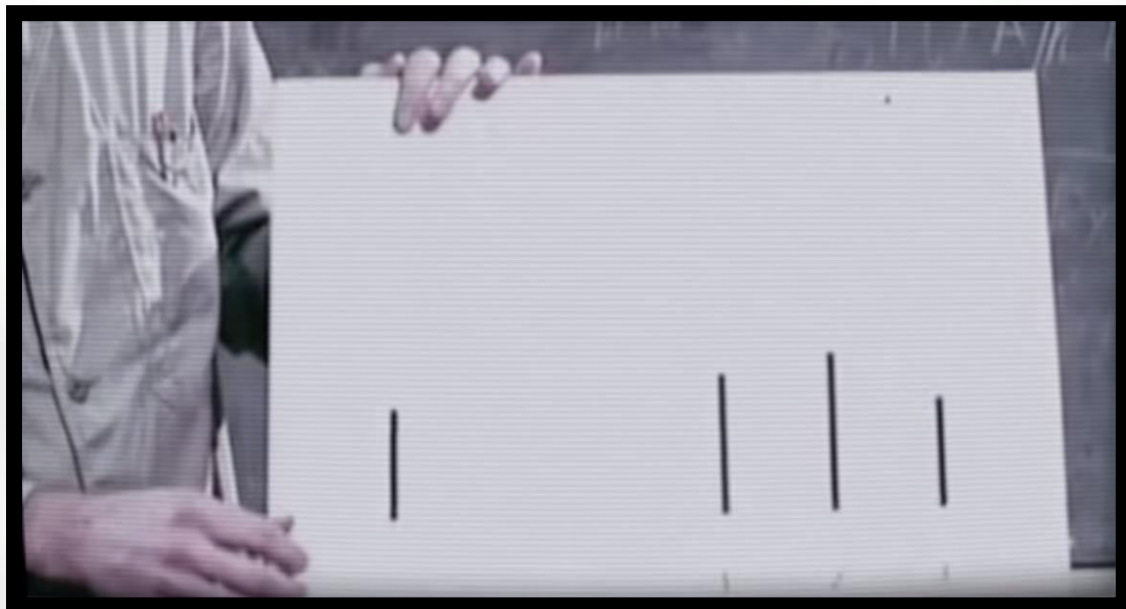
Example: The Asch Experiment

Many behavioral psychology experiments show to what great extent public opinion can affect people.

One of behavioral psychology's most popular experiments, the Asch Experiment, shows how public opinion can completely change a person's perception.

In the Asch Experiment (shown in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA-gbpt7Ts8>), a volunteer subject is placed in a small group of participants. He is told that he is taking part in a visual perception test together with the group. What he doesn't know is that the other participants are actors, and that he is the only subject taking part in the real experiment, which is about group conformity.

The experiment's moderator explains to the group that the participants will be taking part in an experiment of perceiving line length. The moderator explains that their task is to look at a line on the left of four lines, and point out which of the three lines on its right is of the same length. There is one correct answer each time.



"Which of the three lines on the right is of the same line length as the line on the left?"

Taken from the Asch Experiment video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA-gbpt7Ts8>

Before the experiment, however, the actors were told to match the wrong lines. The subject is unaware of this.

The subject is monitored to see how he reacts: whether he gives the correct answer, or whether he conforms to the majority's opinion, giving the wrong answer.

In the first round, the actors unanimously state a wrong answer. The subject takes his time to really make sure of his answer before he states a different answer to theirs, which is the correct answer. He displays unconfident body language, since his opinion, although correct, is different to the group's united opinion.

In the second round, the actors again unanimously state a wrong answer. The subject, looking confused, ends up stating the same wrong answer, conforming to their opinion.

The Asch Experiment has been repeated many times. It has been suggested that the subject's perceptual distortion takes place in three stages:

1. The subject believes the others are wrong, but conforms to their opinion anyway.
2. The subject starts thinking: "Maybe they're seeing something I'm not seeing"?
3. The subject's perception of correct or incorrect becomes distorted by the majority.

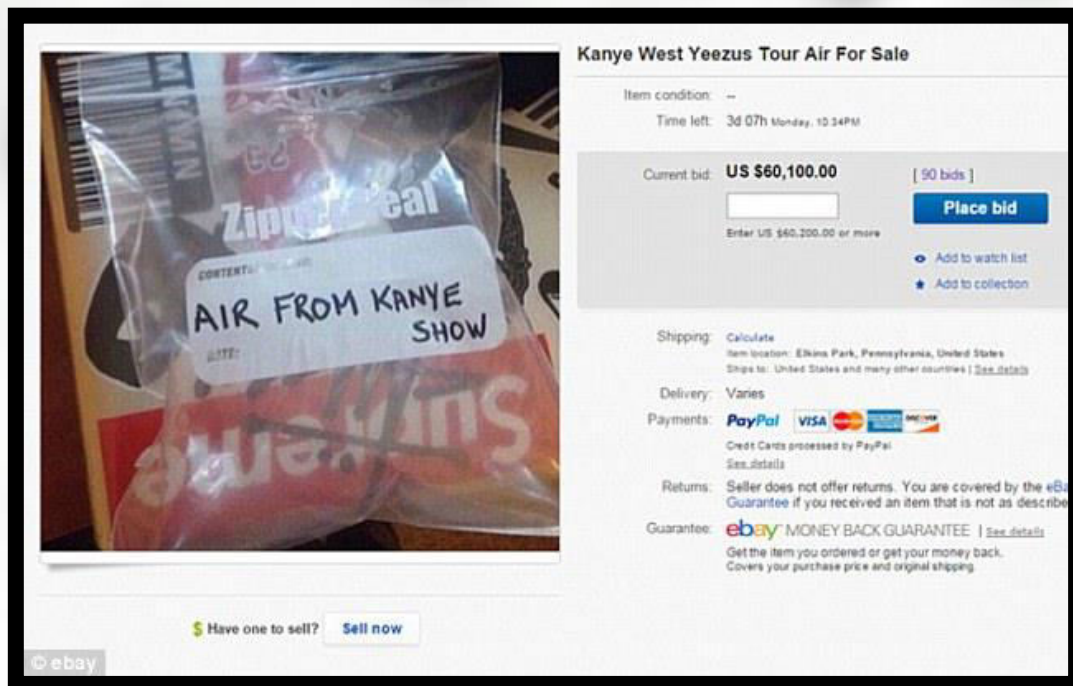
Exercise: Your Opinion vs. Your Friends' Opinions on a Film

Think about how much your opinion on films changes after you hear other people's critiques.

You might have been very moved emotionally by a film. It might have made you cry and laugh and you were impressed by its plot. But then you talk to a group of friends who speak negatively about the film. They say how its supposedly funny parts weren't funny, how its emotional parts were too sappy, that the plot had been done a million times before, and that you would have to be pretty dumb if you liked that film.

What do you say then? Would you make yourself look dumb in front of your friends? Moreover, if you go back to watch that film, you would find (either consciously or unconsciously) that their critiques would seep into how you think about the film.

Examples: Banksy's Social Experiment, Joshua Bell's Subway Experiment, and the Kanye West Air Bag



In March 2015, an eBay seller advertised a plastic bag filled with air from a Kanye West concert. 90 bidders pushed the price of the bag to over \$60,000.

In October 2013, Banksy, the world renowned street artist, conducted a part-stunt, part-social experiment that further exemplifies the power of social influence.

He setup a stall for one day in New York's Central Park. There he sold his original works (which sell for \$100,000s to \$1,000,000s in art auctions) for \$60 a piece. Passersby mostly didn't notice the stall. Only a couple of people out of 100s of passersby that day bought some works. They bargained the prices, and also stated their purposes for buying the artwork were to "fill space on their wall" and "buy something nice for their children." They had no idea that they were buying artworks from a world renowned artist worth a few commas in the art world.

Banksy's experiment can be considered an art world mirror of the Joshua Bell experiment run by the Washington Post one weekday morning in January 2007.

Joshua Bell, world renowned violinist, performed violin music by J.S. Bach for 45 minutes in the Washington Metro. Standing there with his violin worth 3.5 million dollars, a world renowned violinist who often earns over \$100,000 per hour for his concert performances, Bell ended his performance making \$32.17. Also, out of 100s of passersby, only a few people paused to listen for a few moments before moving along to do what they needed to do that day.

Continuing along that same line, in March 2015, an eBay seller advertised a plastic bag filled with air from a Kanye West concert, and 90 bidders pushed the price of the bag to over \$60,000. Although eBay ended up removing the item, these examples by Banksy, Joshua Bell, the Asch Experiment and the Kanye West air bag present a common theme:

public opinion determines the value of things.

We are influenced by society to appreciate and depreciate, value and devalue, want and not want according to what society appreciates, depreciates, values, devalues, wants and doesn't want.

Therefore, public opinion and social influence are very powerful forces. They determine what we eat, wear, like, dislike, speak and think.

Moreover, social influence can make feelings and behaviors "go viral."

Christakis' and Fowlers' research exemplifies this:

If your friends start smoking, then the chances of you starting to smoke increase by **16%**.

If your friend is depressed, then it increases your chances of becoming depressed.

Likewise, if you are happy, then you increase your friends' chances of becoming happy by **15%**.

Also, by being happy, you increase the chances of your friends' friends becoming happy by **10%**.

This Is What Our Society Values

What does society value most? If you're part of so-called Western society, then you're part of a society that values the successful individual.

Who do you see talked about the most in the media?

The politician, whose every word warrants a placement under the public's microscope.

The celebrity, whose charisma, charm, looks, talent and skill outshine millions of other people.

The sports star or team that is stronger, faster, more skilled and more talented than other players or teams.

The model who is sexier, prettier or cuter than millions of other people.

The rich and successful entrepreneur who made millions or billions of dollars off executing his/her ideas.



All these individuals reap the public's praise.

When investigating how these values influence us, look at children. One of the most significant parts of a child's upbringing is imitation. A child develops how s/he speaks, sits, stands, learns and behaves by imitating behavior in the child's surrounding social environment.

Children identify how we move our lips, our vocal tone and body language. They learn from the examples that they see from their parents, friends, teachers, who they see on TV, the computer, mobile devices, and so on (for more on children's imitation of their social environment, see: Andrew N. Meltzoff, "[Born to Learn: What Infants Learn from Watching Us](#)," taken from N. Fox & J.G. Worhol (Eds.), [The Role of Early Experience in Infant Development](#), Skillman, NJ: Pediatric Institute Publications, 1999).

Now think about what happens when a child absorbs messages, examples, behaviors and values that are part of the competitive society of conflicting interests we live in today.

Media connects us. Almost everyone in modern society has a computer, a phone and a TV. However, the values we absorb from these media separate us. It is as if we are connected externally, through technology and media, but separated internally, by trying to get the upper hand on other people.

In a world where one culture values career choice, making money and personal success more than taking care of people and making people happy; and where another culture places priority on its own domination with its own values,

customs and beliefs using any means possible, including war, terror and violence... then what future are we heading toward?

When you think of these conclusions on the powerful role of social influence in relation to our lives today, you have to ask:

How are we using social influence?

What values, beliefs, ideas, behaviors and actions are we forming public opinion with? Are they beneficial or detrimental to our lives and to our future generations?

How can we better use social influence?

What kinds of outcomes do we want to see as a result of the social influence we form?

Today, social influence and public opinion points us mostly toward considering our individual success: Take care of yourself, your family at best, maybe give a bit of your money and time to charity to make yourself feel like you're doing something good, especially if it's tax deductible or that you could promote yourself to others as charitable person. But for the most part, the hell with everybody else. Couple this individualized and separated form of social influence with the fact that we're becoming increasingly interdependent, and the outcome is a dead end.

However, with all its complications, today's state holds the keys to change.

It's because, on one hand, we start seeing that the continual attempt to fulfill conflicting self-interests in a growingly interdependent era results in global crisis.

That is, we can now start seeing the first part of the prism:

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis

We also see a lot more examples from research conducted in the last half century: that working to cooperate above differences produces better results, in the workplace, in education, and in people's personal happiness.

That is, we can now start seeing the second part of the prism:

Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony

We also see many examples showing the powerful role social influence and public opinion play in shaping our perceptions.

Moreover, we see how the values ringing through today's machines of social influence and public opinion work to separate us. Reward and praise go to "the strongest, the richest and the fastest."

Therefore, the critical point we have reached today starts showing a clear need to answer:

What would we need to do to impact a positive shift forward for society?

The answer:

We would need to change the public opinion of competitive self-interests to a public opinion of cooperative mutual interests.

In simpler terms, we need to make a shift from "me" values to "we" values.

The means that shape public opinion (i.e. media channels and education programs) need to be activated in order to form that shift.

If we don't participate in that shift, then we agree to let the steamroller of evolution flatten us with its pains.

In other words, we start seeing the solution part of the prism fall into place:

Changing **Competitive Self-Interests** to **Cooperative Mutual Interests** = via **Social Influence**

If we shift our competitive self-interest values to cooperative mutual interest values using media and education programs to educate about and promote the benefits of a life guided by cooperative mutual interests vs. the detriments of a life guided by competitive self-interests, then we pave a faster and more enjoyable path to everyone's harmonious coexistence.

When considering the bulk of competitive self-interest values pumped through today's media, a mass shift to cooperative mutual interests seems impossible. However, if we consider the human potential for creativity when faced with crises on a global scale, then there is hope for change.

World fear is assuredly the most creative of all prime feelings.

—Oswald Spengler, [*The Decline of the West*](#).

Some of the greatest catastrophes in our planet's life history have spawned the greatest creativity. And therein lies my hope for humanity.

—Elisabet Sahtouris, "[The Biology of Globalization](#)."

To insure a happier life for everybody, our thought patterns need to change from "How can I succeed?" to "How can we succeed together?"

...from "How can I create X, Y and Z?" to "How can we create X, Y and Z together?"

How can we make sure people get what they need, and above that, raise their spirits through our work?

How can we positively affect not only a few people, but everyone?

How can we change our approach from "How can I feel good?" to "How can everyone feel good?"

The current competitive self-interest fueled media and education machine cannot continue functioning without exerting its pains on people. From the poor end of the stick, with poverty conditions, long work hours and little pay, to the rich end of the stick, with its depression, stress and emptiness... the time has come where we need to learn how we can work together for us all to become happy.

Social Influence Part 2: Connection/Collaboration/Cooperation/Contribution - Takeaways

We are necessarily connected to society.

Society's influence, or public opinion, is one of the most powerful forces in a person's life.

Society's values, thoughts and desires become your values, thoughts and desires.

Society (i.e. Western consumerist society) values the happy, unique and successful individual, who is in their own unique way stronger, richer and faster than millions of other people.

The focus on individual happiness and success (i.e. competitive self-interests) in an increasingly interdependent world results in crisis.

To impact a positive shift to this situation, we would need to change social values through changing public opinion: from a public opinion educating about and promoting competitive self-interests to a public opinion educating about and promoting cooperative mutual interests.

The change in public opinion should start making people think and want not individual happiness and success, but the happiness and success of everyone.

As a result of everyone's happiness and success, the individual will also become happier and more successful than s/he is today by being a connected/cooperative/collaborative/contributive part of society's happiness and success in his/her own unique way.

A harmonious global society currently seems impossible, but the potential for heightened human creativity in the face of crisis offers hope for change.

7. Changing Competitive Self-interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests Via Social Influence

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis
Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony
Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

We discussed how much today's society influences us with competitive self-interest values. As a result, there is a lot of pressure to keep up with today's social standards. In dealing with this pressure, many people become stressed, depressed and find it increasingly harder to find the motivation to progress.

In order to start speaking about how it should be, let's take a story of a criminal, Baddy Bob, as an example.

Baddy Bob just got caught trying to break into an apartment. Now he's looking at a year's jail time. Let's look at what led Baddy Bob to this point:

Baddy Bob's parents had stealing tendencies. His mother was once caught trying to shoplift.

At school, Baddy Bob was mostly impressed by a kid slightly older than him, Dodgy Dave. The other kids were afraid of Dodgy Dave, because if he picked you out, you'd get bullied. Bob became friends with Dave, and Dave made Bob steal stuff for him from the other kids.

Add to this picture crime computer games, TV shows, movies, and the news featuring crime stories all the time that Baddy Bob constantly encountered.

Also, the fact that Baddy Bob had been unemployed for the last few months before he broke into the apartment, and couldn't find the motivation to find a new job...

After looking into Baddy Bob's influences, we see that he was fed with ideas and examples of theft from a young age. Baddy Bob simply "gave back" what had been given to him much of his life.

Therefore, if we would want to save Baddy Bob from his year of jail time, and ultimately save all the criminals and their victims, we would need to change the values society upholds: from competitive self-interest values to cooperative mutual interest values. We would need an environment that educates about, promotes and praises cooperation, connection, collaboration and altruism.

What would happen if the values promoted through mass media and education programs would change?

Are there already examples of campaigns that used mass media and education programs to change public opinion?

Yes, there are.

One of the most obvious is anti-smoking campaigns.

Anti-smoking campaigns have been largely successful in their use of mass media and education programs to penetrate the idea that "smoking is bad" into public opinion. The results from numerous anti-smoking campaigns show reductions in the amount of youth who start smoking, and increases in the amount of smokers who quit.

If mass media and advertising would be used to educate about and promote anti-separation/alienation/loneliness and pro-connection/collaboration/cooperation, with a focus on building a positive social environment for everyone, then how much would we positively influence our general happiness and health?

If pro-connection/collaboration/cooperation campaigns would succeed in their creation of a positive social environment, then we would expectedly see resulting higher levels of personal and social happiness, health, confidence, productivity and efficiency (see the examples in chapter 3, "Cooperative Mutual Interests").

In Dr. Martin Nowak's book, [*SuperCooperators: Beyond the Survival of the Fittest: Why Cooperation, Not Competition, Is the Key of Life*](#), Novak shows how human beings are unique specifically in their ability to cooperate. He points out a key conclusion in that we have survived and evolved over generations not as strongest or fittest individuals, but as strongest or fittest **collaborators**. When we cooperate successfully, we feel full of energy, happy and satisfied. Likewise, when we fail to cooperate, it hurts us and leaves us feeling empty.

With all the research on the benefits of cooperative mutual interests, what stands in our way of making a shift in that direction? What is the psychological barrier that doesn't let us make that switch?

It is that same desire to enjoy on account of others.

The desire to enjoy sees only the benefit that is closest to it. But the desire to enjoy is only "substance." It just wants to enjoy. It doesn't actually care about what gives it enjoyment.

The form of the desire's enjoyment is determined by society.

For example, I get thirsty and think of a cold Coke to quench my thirst. My body only needs water. Water is also a lot cheaper and healthier than Coke. How then could it be that I think of Coke when I get thirsty, and not just the water my body needs?

It's because a lot of investment has been made by the Coca-Cola company to influence me so that I think of a Coke when I get thirsty. By consistently advertising on billboards, posters, stickers, videos, banners, mobile apps, websites and the TV over many years, Coca-Cola "educated" me to think that I should enjoy a Coke the next time I get thirsty.

So I get thirsty, and drink a Coke not because that's what I need, but because society tells me that it's one of the most enjoyable ways to take care of my thirst.

Society then starts telling us that "enjoyment means having more money," and "enjoyment means having the latest phone," and "enjoyment means that people will respect you," and "enjoyment means that everyone will talk about you" ... but that is all wrong. We have accumulated enough facts to show us how wrong it is.

True enjoyment, satisfaction and happiness come from a person feeling positively connected to others.

If we would use our desire to enjoy differently—to enjoy by benefiting, connecting to, and cooperating with others—we would then enjoy a lot more.

Suppressing the desire to enjoy is not the solution here either. Many people feel the problematic nature of the desire to enjoy, that any excess of desire to enjoy is bad. For example, an excessive desire for food can make you fat and obese, and an excessive desire for money can make you greedy. Such people often turn to desire suppression techniques, including isolation from society and attempts to apply a "be happy with less" theme to their lives.

Suppressing the desire to enjoy doesn't work anymore. It works like clogging a drain pipe. The water will keep accumulating against the blockage, adding pressure until at a certain point, the water will burst out all over the place. Likewise, by suppressing the desire to enjoy, it will keep growing while we keep trying to suppress it, and at a certain stage, it will let loose, and the ramifications would be much more difficult to deal with at that stage.

Suppressing the desire to enjoy would fail. What would work is to take the reins of the desire to enjoy, get it to do what we want and not what involuntarily surfaces in it, and by doing so, guide it to a worthwhile goal.

In other words, we should take hold of our desires by mobilizing our ability to create and change our social influences. If society appreciates cooperative mutual interests, i.e. respecting each person's efforts to connect, collaborate, cooperate and contribute to society, instead of appreciating competitive self-interests, i.e. respecting individuals who are "stronger,

richer and faster" than the majority, then we would establish the foundations for a harmonious existence. People would think how to better connect, collaborate and cooperate with others, and how they could best contribute to society, in order to gain society's appreciation.

An example of the way in which today's values are centered on competitive self-interests is the Forbes Top 100 lists. These lists rate and measure people purely by how much money each person makes in a certain period. The lists don't take into consideration what kind of contribution a person makes to society, but whoever makes the most is first, whoever makes second-most is second, and so on. That is just one example of how as a society, we currently respect people who make a lot of money. We like to envision ourselves in that position and like to think about what we would do with all that money.

If instead of appreciating those who make the most money, those who run or swim the fastest, those who have the biggest muscles and curviest curves, those who speak with the most charisma, if instead of valuing "the strongest, the richest and the fastest," we would instead value contributions to society's improvement, then we would start seeing a completely different society.

If on TV, in the news, in movies, in music and in our discussions with friends and family, we would praise people who contribute to society in all kinds of positive ways, and sought to think of creative ways to add our own contribution to all kinds of social contribution opportunities, or add more opportunities to contribute, then we would start seeing a completely different society unfold.

Today, we're on the threshold of change. The problem is neither the desire to enjoy nor society. It's how we use them both.

If we would use social influence, all the myriad opportunities to influence public opinion through today's media and culture, we would then be able to navigate our desire to enjoy differently. We would be able to navigate it toward feeling a warm and welcoming atmosphere every time we step out into the street: struggle-free, stress-free, as if everyone is our close family.

Instead of feeling all kinds of tensions, where if you don't act first to get the upper hand on others, then they will get the upper hand on you, we would feel everyone as if close, friendly, honestly willing to reach out and do good to each other. We would appreciate cooperative mutual interest values more than anything else.

If those kinds of relations would start becoming expressed, then just think how much better our lives would be?

How could we do that?

Changing Competitive Self-interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests Via Social Influence - Takeaways

If mass media, instead of regurgitating consumerist values, engaged in educating about and promoting values of cooperative mutual interests (pro-connection/collaboration/cooperation/contribution), we would see far-reaching positive influence in the world.

The psychological barrier that stands in the way of letting us make this switch is our innate desire to enjoy on account of others, which is presently being nourished by consumerist competitive self-interest values.

The desire to enjoy is our "substance" or "matter." It only wants to enjoy. In and of itself, it doesn't care about what it enjoys from. Society determines the form of the desire's enjoyment.

Suppressing desires doesn't work today. The desires will keep growing to a point where they can no longer be suppressed, causing more problems later.

If society respects, values and appreciates not the strongest, richest and fastest individuals, but instead values each person's efforts to connect, collaborate, cooperate and contribute to society, it would lay the foundations for a harmonious social existence.

8. How to Change Social Influence to Value Cooperative Mutual Interests

So far, we have established that our interdependence is a very real situation that's intensifying from one moment to the next.

We have also established that while we become increasingly interdependent, competitive self-interest values and lifestyles are detrimental to us in many ways, which leads to a tangle of crises on personal, social and global scales.

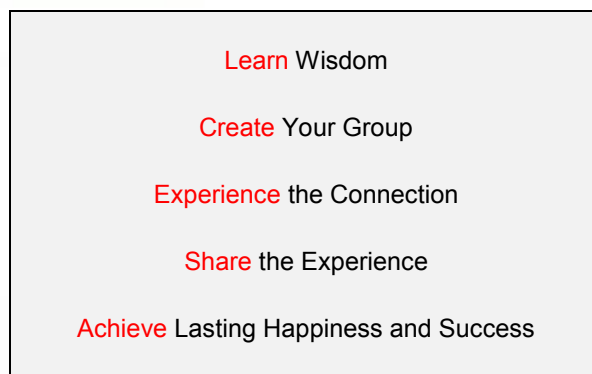
Moreover, we have seen how when cooperative mutual interest values are put into practice, beneficial effects result (e.g. more personal happiness, professional success and higher school grades).

Finally, in the previous chapter, we looked into how deeply social influence determines our values, and that the key to changing competitive self-interest values to cooperative mutual interest values is in changing our social influence. That is, by educating about and promoting cooperative mutual interest values (i.e. connection, collaboration, cooperation, contribution to society) through mass media and education programs, we can pave the path to a harmonious world.

The question then is: How and where do we start?

This chapter offers one method that can be immediately implemented among a small number of people, and which has the potential to expand across society. For simplicity's sake, it's called "the LCESA Method" (LCESA = Learn, Create, Experience, Share, Achieve):

The LCESA Method



The LCESA Method is based on the premise that we need to organize our social influence to be consistently feeding us cooperative mutual interest values (i.e. connection, collaboration, cooperation, contribution to society). When we place ourselves in an environment that nurtures cooperative mutual interest values, we can then spread its influence onward.

If we exit the presence of an environment working on educating about and promoting cooperative mutual interests, then we become infected by the multitude of competitive self-interests in society at large.

The LCESA Method is based on the principle that one's surrounding society determines the types of enjoyments that the person thinks, wants and acts toward. It is all about actively constructing one's society so that cooperative mutual interests are its leading values, and the happiness and success of all people is its common purpose.

The idea is that just by walking into a social environment of people who nurture these values, we would soon feel good as a result of that environment (as shown in chapter 3, we'd feel happier, more successful, more productive and smarter). We would then soon start feeling like we'd want to contribute something to fit in with these people. In return, people in this social environment would appreciate our contribution, appreciating and respecting us for our contribution.

In order for such a setup to work, the following five ingredients need to consistently be part of that society's life:

1. Learn Wisdom

Learning wisdom means learning materials that provide further depth in understanding the principles of the prism:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Interdependence} + \text{Competitive Self-Interests} = \text{Crisis} \\ &\text{Interdependence} + \text{Cooperative Mutual Interests} = \text{Harmony} \\ &\text{Changing } \text{Competitive Self-Interests} \text{ to } \text{Cooperative Mutual Interests} = \text{via } \text{Social Influence} \end{aligned}$$

In a breakdown, this means scientific and factual materials, as well as emotionally-inspiring materials that educate about, raise awareness of and promote:

Humanity's growingly tighter interdependence and interconnectedness;
The detrimental effects of competitive self-interests in an era of tightening global interdependence;
The beneficial effects of cooperative mutual interests being practiced or tested;
Examples of interdependence and cooperative mutual interests in nature (inanimate, vegetative and animate);
Social influence's and public opinion's major role in shaping what people think, want and do.

2. Create Your Group

There is no better social influence than being part of a group of friends who share a mutual goal: to cooperate in creating a harmonious society where everyone feels happy, successful and fulfilled.

A group with such a goal should have a few operatives that let it function toward this goal. Its members should consistently nurture three basic elements:

1. Confidence. When people feel confident among their peers, they feel more willing to experiment, push forward, break barriers and express themselves fully. Therefore, the group should provide each of its members with such a feeling of confidence that they can reach their goal. By contributing more and more to an atmosphere of cooperating toward a mutual goal, they become more and more respected, appreciated and honored, thus making them feel increasingly confident.

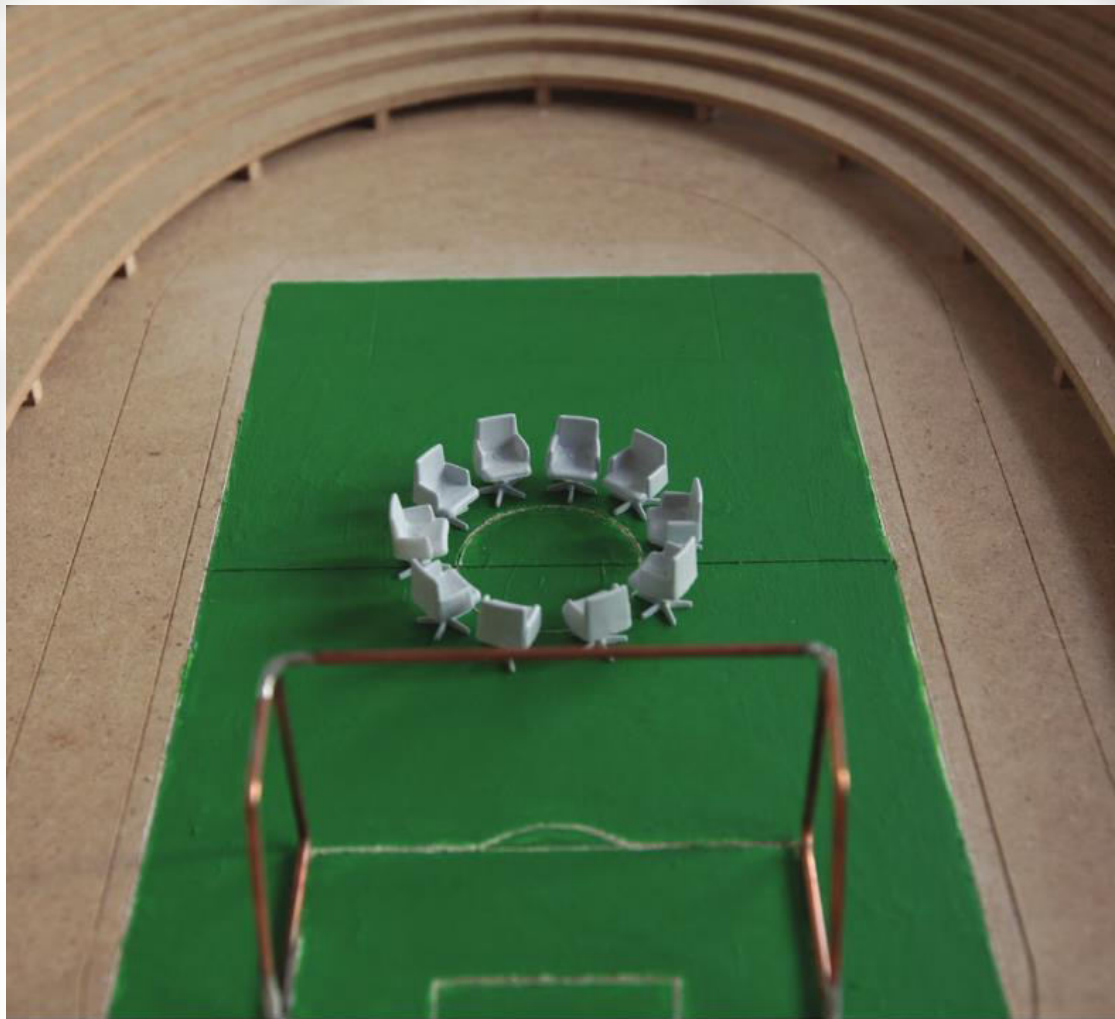
2. Encouragement. Cooperation toward a mutual goal is possible if there is an atmosphere of positivity and encouragement. Therefore, members of a group aiming to bring cooperative mutual interests to the forefront should each continually think and act in a way that positively encourages all the group's members. This is an endlessly creative area that can involve supportive gestures, encouraging words, gifts and creative works to uplift the spirit of the group and its participants.

3. Activity. In order to nurture an environment based on cooperative mutual interests to stand up to the beehive of activity in the wider environment of competitive self-interests, the group's members need to actively add to this environment consistently. There needs to be constant, regular activity in the group: the maintenance of a regular framework for learning, discussions, social activities, as well as sharing its ideas and activities with others, and work in growing the group.

3. Experience the Connection

While a good connection can be experienced by socializing, as well as seeking how to implement the above-mentioned elements in any mutual work, there is a specific technique for experiencing a powerful connection that should become part of any group's regular meetings.

This technique is called the "circle discussion."



"One Goal"
Zenita Komad, 2015

The circle discussion is particularly powerful in creating a connection experience among its participants because it centralizes a complete focus of the conditions necessary to connect people beyond any possible outbursts of separation.

There are a few basic requirements to hold successful circle discussions, as well as five rules for running the discussion.

Circle Discussion Requirements

The full group should be present

A topic of discussion relevant to all participants

Questions for discussion that aim to take the participants through practical and specific points

A skilled moderator whose role is to guide the discussion in a manner that will make the participants create a warm and supportive atmosphere of connection among each other, who will prevent the participants from straying from the topic of discussion or the timeframe allotted to the discussion, and who will help the participants arrive at a concrete conclusion at the end of the discussion

A person to document the views and help form a common view.

Circle Discussion Rules

1. Equality - all participants are equally important

2. Focus - discuss only one topic in the circle

3. Synergy - every participant expresses an opinion

4. Acceptance - no arguments, criticism or judgmental statements

5. Flow - listen to the others in the circle

1. Equality - All Participants Are Equally Important

In the circle, no one holds more or less importance; everyone is equal, and thus every single person is very important.

All participants thus also strive to make all decisions unanimously, out of mutual understanding and connection. This point forms at the end of the discussion, when the personal opinion of each participant joins into a common view.

2. Focus - Discuss Only One Topic in the Circle

In the circle, everyone discusses a pre-chosen topic, is attentive to the questions of the moderator and sticks to the topic of discussion.

3. Synergy - Every Participant Expresses an Opinion

A work or sports team can never be successful if one or more of its members or players just stands there idly doing nothing while the others do all the work. Similarly, in the circle discussion, there can never be a situation where one or more of its participants do not express their opinion.

In this way, everyone adds to the joint decision. When all participants express their views and connect them with the views of others, all are enriched and begin to hear and better understand not only others, but also themselves. A silent person seemingly omits a necessary element from the mix that the participants blend together.

A tactic to help achieve this full participation: The participants speak one at a time around the circle in a way where each participant is followed by the person on their right side. Therefore, each participant knows when it is their turn to speak, and everyone is given an equal opportunity to express their view on the topic.

4. Acceptance - No Arguments, Criticism or Judgmental Statements

In the circle discussion, views of all participants are fully accepted, and each participant's view is added to a single, integral view. There are no arguments among participants. There are no right or wrong views; all opinions are legitimate. Without disparaging the view of any of the participants in the circle, each participant complements the others and acquires new perspectives on the topic by examining it through the eyes of all participants.

Similarly, participants should try and overcome disagreements by looking at the problem through everyone's eyes. Each participant learns to give way to others and enjoys when common growth and progress are achieved.

5. Flow - Listen to the Others in the Circle

In order to achieve a heightened state of sensitivity and communication, participants listen to each other during the discussion. They speak on their turn without interrupting each other's words. Each participant listens attentively to the person whose turn it is to speak and tries to feel, understand, and merge with the view of that person. This is done toward everyone.

A tool for helping achieve this is the "speaking object." That is, the person who speaks holds some kind of object, which can be anything small that is available at hand, like a pen or a folded piece of paper. It psychologically helps when everyone can see that the person who holds this object now has the right to speak, and everyone should listen to what he or she is saying.

In so doing, personal conversation among only a few of the participants also has no place in the circle discussion. While running this format, personal discussions or asking each other questions destroy the circle. They thus need to be avoided. Every participant needs to speak without relating to anyone specifically, but seemingly turn to the center of the circle.

The circle discussion participants thus set before themselves a goal: to create a common field of support, confidence, warmth and concern, like a family.

When listening to the speaker, each participant identifies with him or her emotionally and creates the most comfortable and convenient atmosphere for the person speaking. Top priority is given to creating an air of positive connection.

The circle discussion lets us experience a different world, where we can express an opinion freely and know that it will be regarded and taken seriously. When people become imbued with this special atmosphere, they feel that it holds an inexplicable force and cannot return to their old conduct.

4. Share the Experience

After having created a group, and having iterated points 1-2-3 above to a point where you feel as if you have a structure that's formed, and that you have a well-oiled connection forming and improving among your group's members, then it's time to share this experience.

The objectives of sharing the connection experience are twofold:

- 1.** On face value, it seems as if sharing the experience is all about bringing more people into the connection experience. This is correct, but it is important to think of it as one of two objectives, the second being...
- 2.** By working as a group to share the connection experience, the sharing becomes one of the major activities in further connecting the group's members through giving a constant place for collaboration, cooperation and personal expression of each member's contribution to the sharing.

Using educational and promotional means, you can host events for your group, provide sessions that involve learning wisdom (e.g. screening films, hosting lectures, meetups and gigs), and follow them up with circle discussions on topics raised during the events.

Moreover, members can be engaged online to get updated with social media on the topics discussed (i.e. share a common online group space). From the online engagement, materials that educate about and promote cooperative mutual interest values can be regularly posted, shared and discussed, helping the expansion of the ideas.

5. Achieve Lasting Happiness and Success

By actively engaging a group that nurtures cooperative mutual interest values, you would be participating in establishing the foundations for a harmonious society. Even before a harmonious society is reached en masse, you would feel a constant sense of fulfillment and purpose through your continual contribution to and interaction with a positively setup society.

It might now seem like an impossible utopian fantasy that society would take a turn to live according to cooperative mutual interest values, and that a harmonious existence for society is possible.

However, consider the concept that the spread of an idea to 10% of the human population quickly exponentially expands to the whole population (see Gabrielle DeMarco [2011], "[Minority Rules: Scientists Discover Tipping Point for the Spread of Ideas](#)," Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). Then, the seemingly distant goal of harmonious coexistence already appears a lot closer.

What's important here is that this value shift from competitive self-interests to cooperative mutual interests increasingly spreads throughout our networks, and at a certain threshold, cooperative mutual interests would become appreciated by society at large.

As the pains of living in a paradigm of competitive self-interests hit more and more people from all sides—depression, stress, drug abuse, suicide, obesity, social anxiety, loneliness, divorce, wars, terrorism, corruption, crimes, poverty, negligence, food insecurity, unemployment, debt, economic inequality, and many other problems—these accumulating pains will cause increasing amounts of people to question the reasons for the pains. As a result of these accumulating pains and the questions they'll continue to raise, people will gradually become "softer" and readier to accept a paradigm shift.

However, we shouldn't have to wait for pains to bring people closer.

We have the ability to bypass pains, and provide a positive foundation for people to develop happily, in a more connected, enlightened and complete way, and with a common purpose. It all depends on how and what we decide to learn, create, experience, share and achieve.

Interdependence + Competitive Self-Interests = Crisis
Interdependence + Cooperative Mutual Interests = Harmony
Changing Competitive Self-Interests to Cooperative Mutual Interests = via Social Influence

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