

Integrating Polarities and Finding Common Ground

December Membership Call



“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”



AUDRE LORDE — COURTESY OF THE SPELMAN COLLEGE ARCHIVES

- Audre Lorde

“Aggression is inherently destructive of relationships.

People and ideologies are pitted against each other, believing that in order to survive, they must destroy the opposition.”

– Margaret J. Wheatley

Like Solar Panels ...

Tools that help you **take in the light**, and **fuel loving, life-affirming changes** in yourself, your relationships and your lives



Welcome

- What are polarities and how do they work?
- What's the benefit of integrating opposites and finding common ground?
- How to help ourselves and others be more integrated, connected and whole.
- How to work with the tension between competing needs that show up in our personal and professional lives

“When we polarize, we create blind spots for ourselves and others. We think we are seeing the whole, but this is an illusion created by our ego and the way we are making sense of the polarities.

If we want to work with more of the whole, as today’s global challenges are challenging us to do, we best learn how to come together with others to see and share the wholeness of our experience.

Learning how to identify and integrate polarities within ourselves, in our relationships with others, and in the deeper dynamics at play in whole systems is a necessary capacity for navigating the future in healthy and resilient ways.”

~ Ash Buchanan, Benefit Mindset work

Journal/Dyads

- What polarities are “up” for you right now? Inner or Outer Conflict?
- What aspects of your work/self or relationships are you hoping to focus on this month?
- Briefly share a personal or professional situation that you struggle with or that you want to expand your thinking around

Polarity: Definition

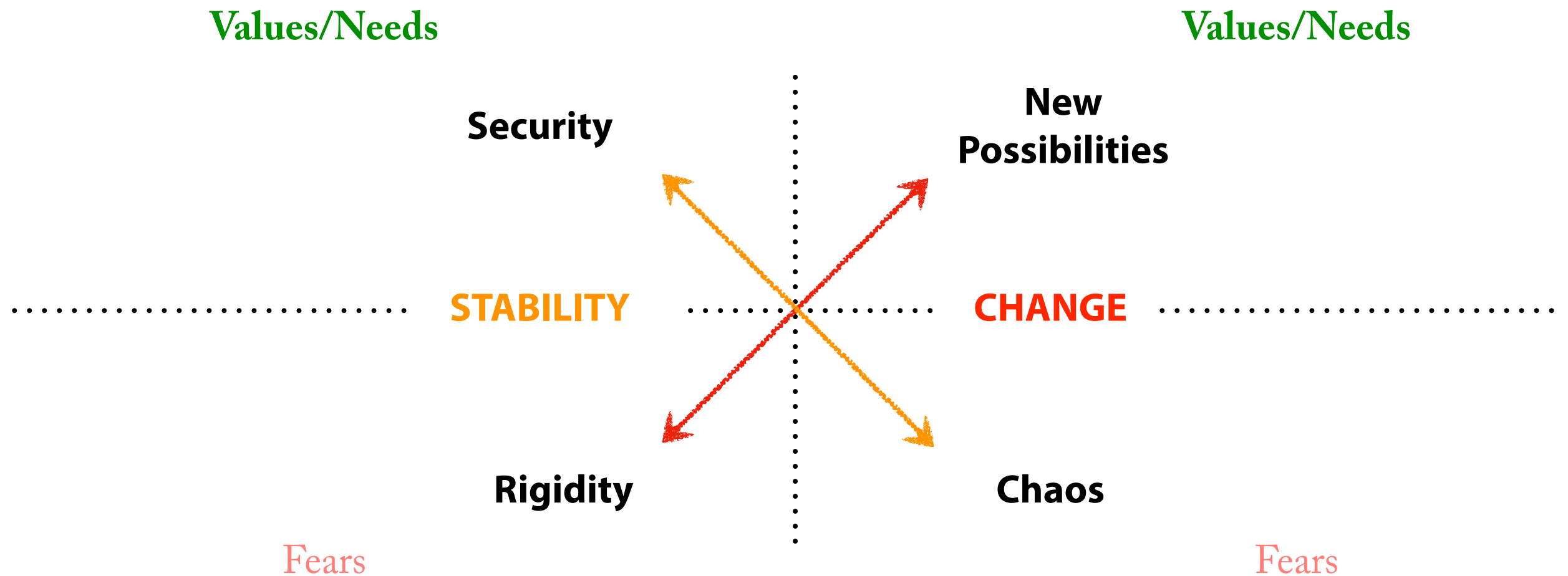
A **Pair of Interdependent, Positive Opposites**

Both strengths, needs or values that we need over time. We circle back and forth between them.



Both are needed for a healthy self, healthy relationship or healthy system

Simple Map



Simple Map

Values/Needs

Upside
Wisdom

..... POLE

Fears

Downsides
Dysfunction

Values/Needs

Upside
Wisdom

POLE

Fears

Downsides
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Example

Values/Needs

**Authentic Self
Individuation
Uniqueness**

Values/Needs

**Belonging,
Community &
Equality**

..... **Individuality**

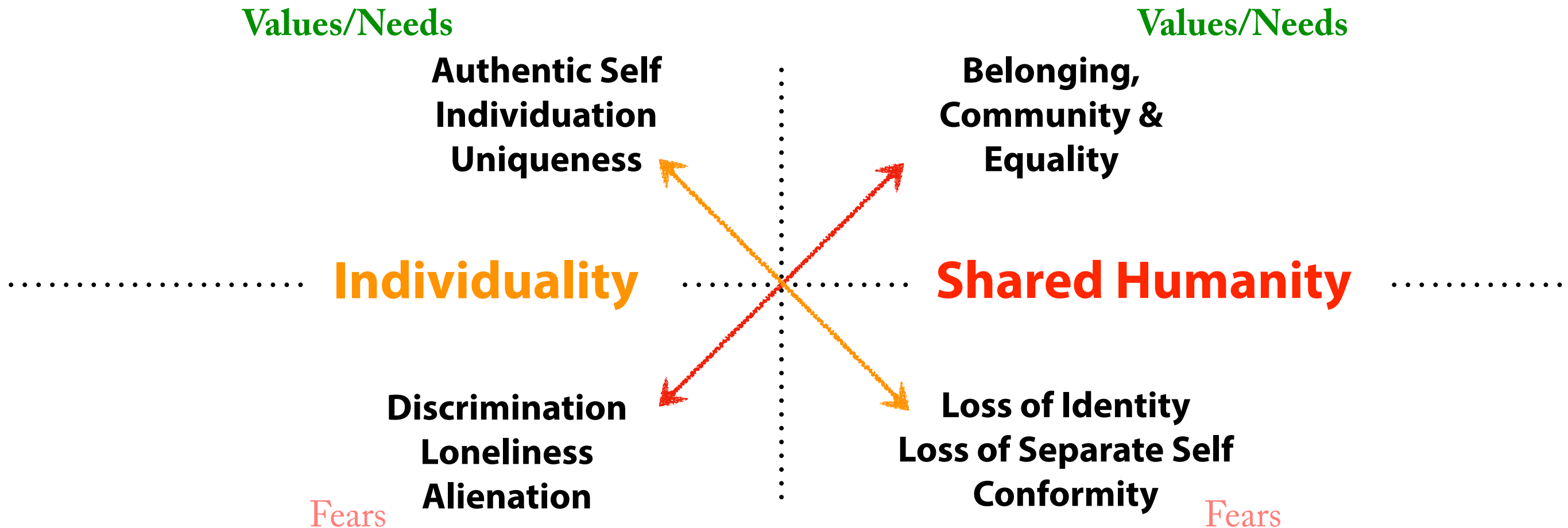
..... **Shared Humanity**

**Discrimination
Loneliness
Alienation**

Fears

**Loss of Identity
Loss of Separate Self
Conformity**

Fears



Example

Values/Needs

**Authentic Self
Individuation
Uniqueness**

Values/Needs

**Belonging,
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..... **Individuality**

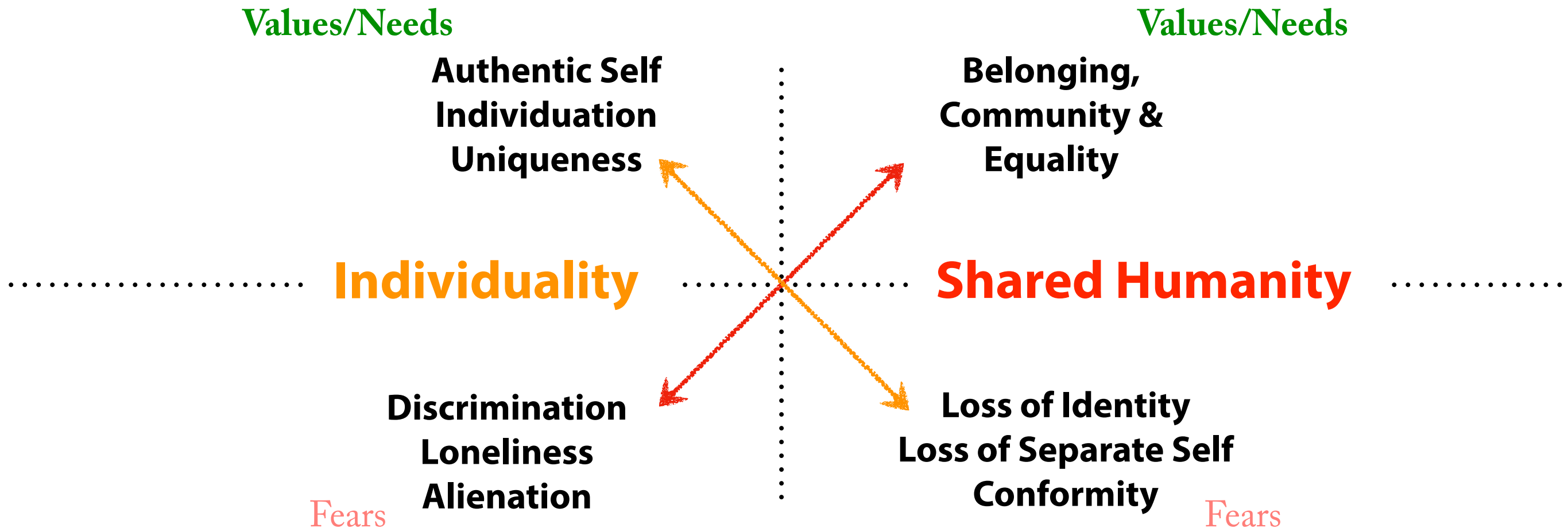
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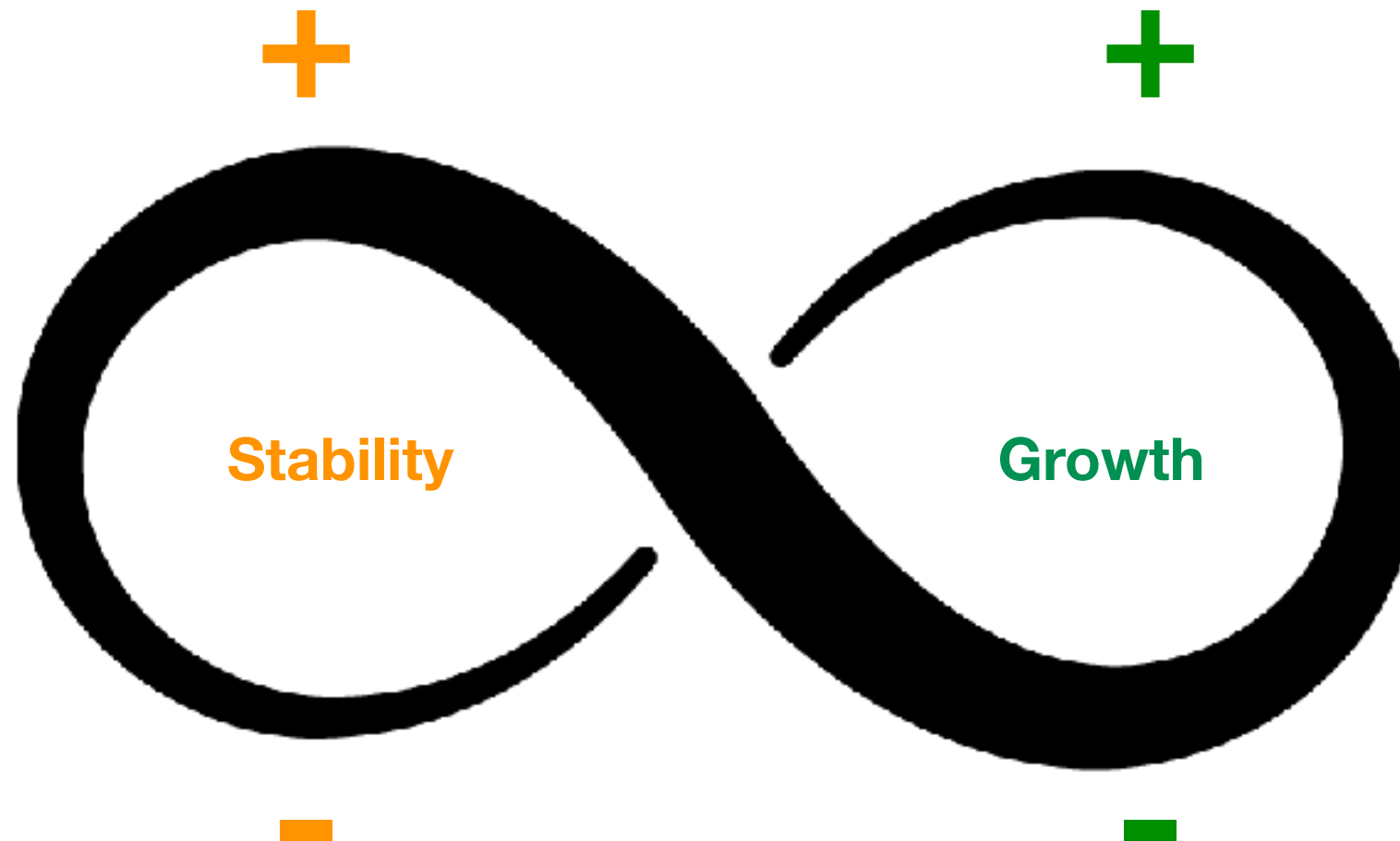
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Fears



Polarities



- Acknowledge the needs and values you are keeping
- Acknowledge the fears and downsides
- Enjoy the energy between the interdependent, positive opposites
- **Enjoy the back and forth flow between them!**

Problems vs Polarities

- To Be Solved and Fixed
 - Not ongoing, has endpoint
 - Solvable
 - Independent alternatives
 - Stand alone
 - Do not need to include alternatives for solution to work
 - Contain mutually exclusive opposites
- To Be Managed and Integrated
 - Ongoing, no endpoint
 - Unsolvable
 - Interdependent Alternatives - go together
 - Cannot stand alone
 - Need each other to optimize each others' strengths
 - Contain mutually inclusive opposites

Problems vs Polarities

- Interviewing for a job candidate
- Choosing a partner
- Do I take care of myself or you? (need to do both)
- Do I sleep or stay awake? (need to do both)

Problems vs Polarities

- Is the difficulty ongoing? (Breathing in, breathing out)
- Are the alternatives interdependent? (energy in, energy out)
- Are there 2 or more necessary upsides? (rest and movement)
- Will over-focus on one aspect undermine the greater purpose you are after?

Example

	4	2
	1	3

Demo/Example

	4	2
<i>Sometimes I think I am too ...</i>	1	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thematically connected• Something you've been struggling with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• self-critical• improvement focused• driving and striving• unable to take in the good	

Demo/Example

At those times, I'd like to be more...

- able to enjoy the good that IS there
- kind and forgiving of myself
- self-accepting
- appreciative of what's working
- focused on what's good

4

2

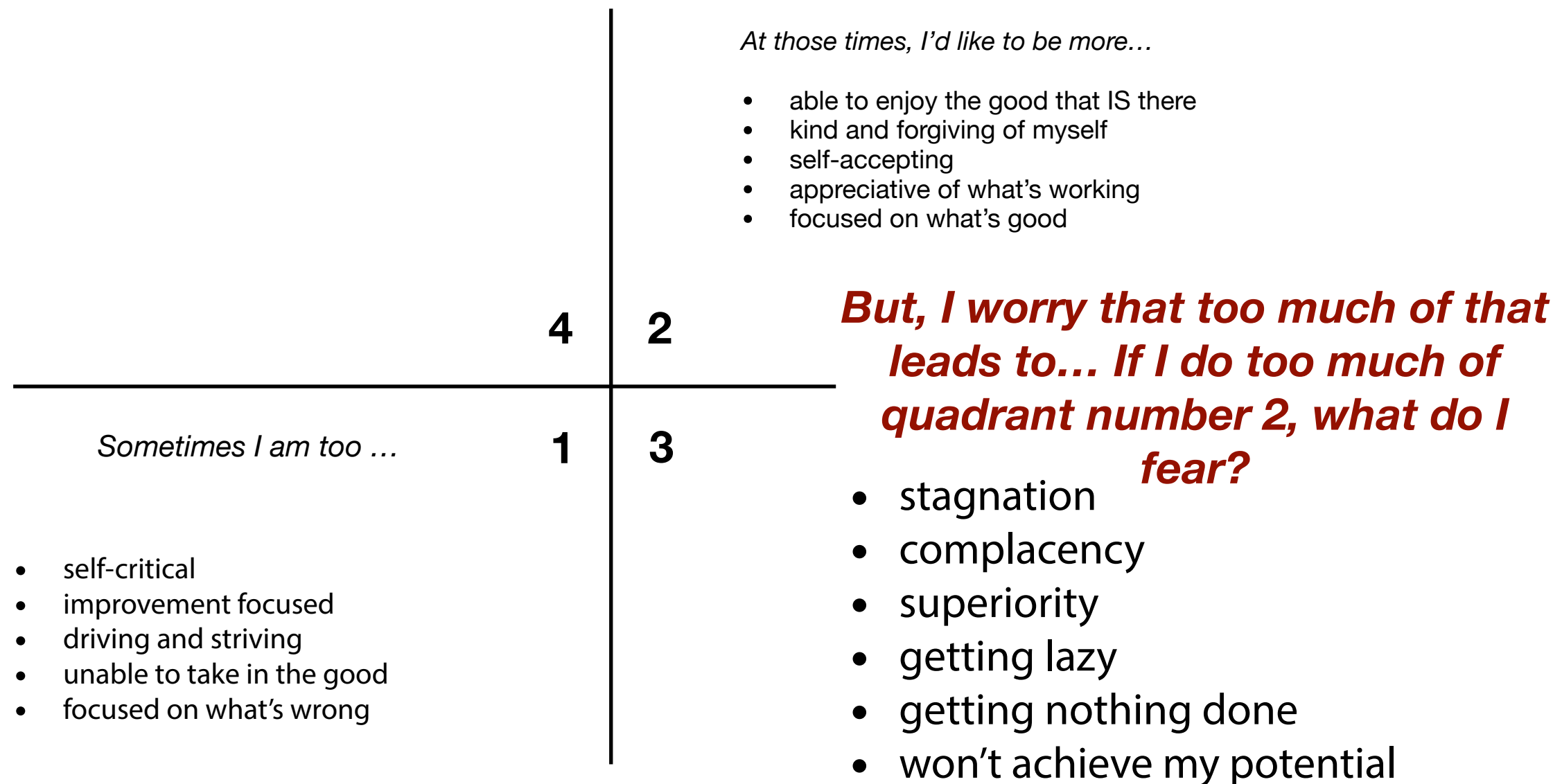
Sometimes I am too ...

1

3

- self-critical
- improvement focused
- driving and striving
- unable to take in the good
- focused on what's wrong

Demo/Example



Demo/Example

*What do I deeply value and believe in
... (too much of which, leads to Q1)*

- growing, learning and evolving
- reaching my fullest potential
- reaching for a higher vision
- self-development

4

At those times, I'd like to be more...

- able to enjoy the good that IS there
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2

Sometimes I am too ...

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- self-critical
- improvement focused
- driving and striving
- unable to take in the good
- focused on what's wrong

3

But, I worry that too much of that leads to...

- stagnation
- complacency
- superiority
- getting lazy
- getting nothing done
- won't achieve my potential

Overall “Story”

I deeply value and believe in ... (which, too much of leads to Q1)

- growing, learning and evolving
- reaching my fullest potential
- reaching for a higher vision
- self-development

4

At those times, I'd like to be more...

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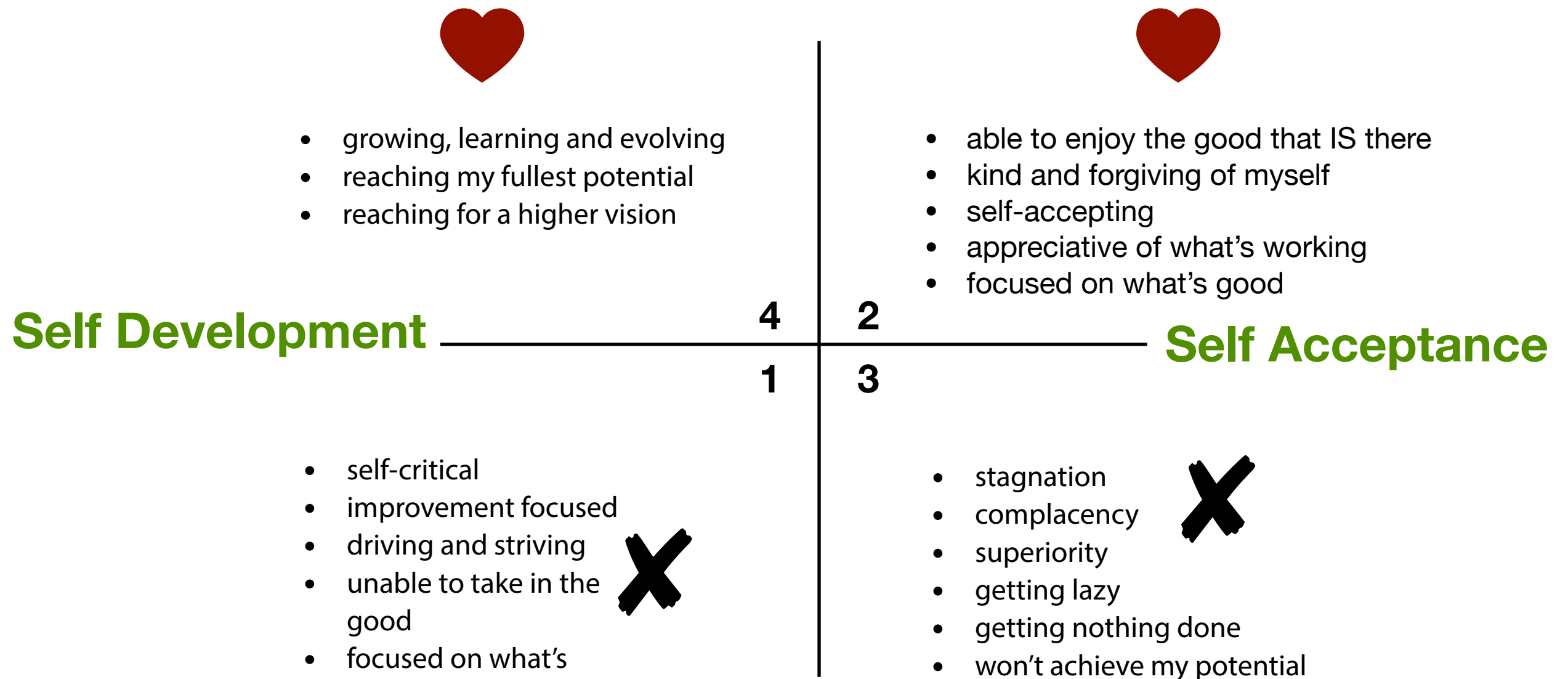
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How to Harmonize



Tell/Write Your Story

Is this more of a problem or a
polarity?

How would you name your polarity?

What I value - too much of which leads to Q1...	At those times, I'd like to be more ...
	
Sometimes I am too ...	I worry that too much of Q2, leads to ...

4 2
1 3

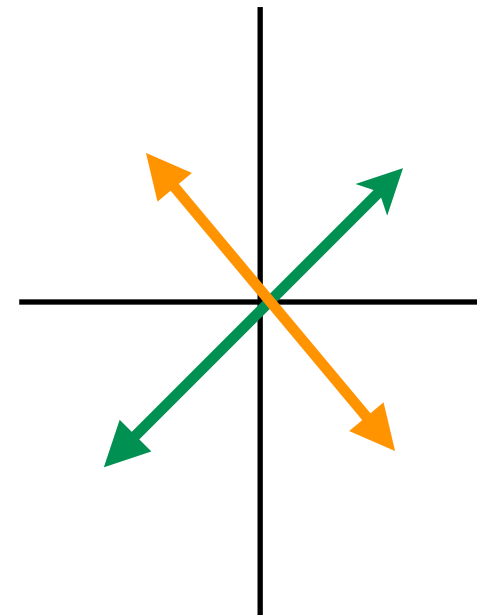
Points of View

"Points of view" combine our attachment to an incomplete value and our fear of the downside of the opposite poles.

They result from an over-focus on the *upside of our preferred polarity* and over-focusing on our fears about *downsides of the other polarity*

This leads to vicious downward spirals

Stability



Change

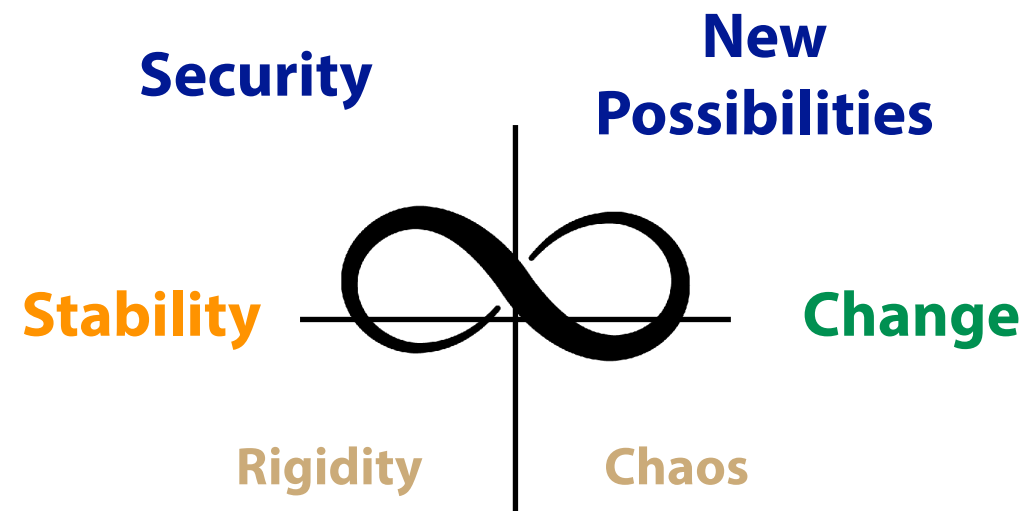
Stability POV: I value security and fear chaos

Change POV: I value new possibilities and fear rigidity

*Integrated Polarities: We seek to **include both security and new possibilities**, while **preventing both chaos and rigidity**.*

Leveraging Polarities

Valuing the upside of both poles,
and addressing the fears associated
with the downsides of each pole



Integrated Polarities:

Seek to **include both security and new possibilities,**
while **guarding against both chaos and rigidity.**

False Choices

- Being asked to choose either this or that, when actually both choices are necessary in order to address the issue at hand
- Recognizing a False Choice is the first step towards wisdom of both/and
- Ex: Should parents be strict or kind?
- What are other examples of false choices?

Polarity: Dynamics

Preferred Poles:

The more I focus on my preferred pole, the more I experience the downsides of that pole. And the more I experience the downsides, the more I tolerate them.

Neglected Poles:

The more I privilege my pole, the more I fear the downside of the opposite pole.

*The greater the value, the greater the fear
The more the privilege, the more the resistance*

One Pole Focus:

- *Inherently unsustainable*
- *Leads to dysfunction*
- *Almost any dysfunction can be traced to a polarity that hasn't been included*

Think in Pairs:

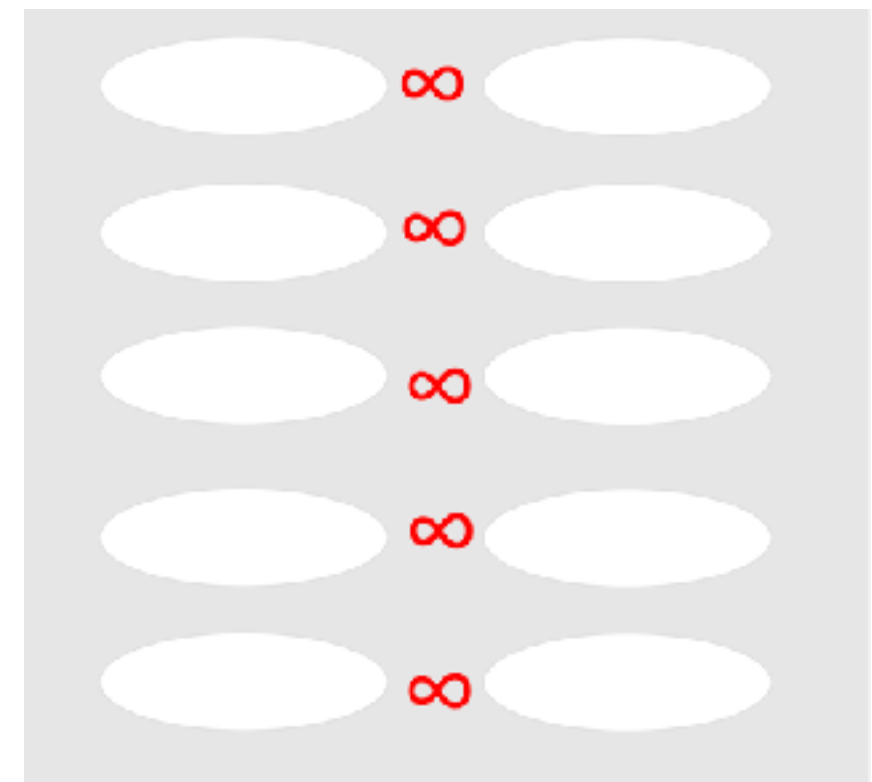
Values come in pairs that need each other for healthy, flourishing, thriving systems

Paired Strengths (Exercise)

Go back to your list of strengths and values, convert your linear list into a paired list. (Learning to list your strengths and values in pairs: converting your original linear list into a paired list)

Remember, you are looking for **positive opposites**, not a negative ...

- Growth AND Acceptance
- Task Orientation AND Relationship Orientation
- Intuition AND Logic



Naming Both Polarities (Tips)

- What does it look like when I do too much of that? (*Look for overplayed strengths*)
- What are the downsides of doing too much of what I value?
- Replace “*versus*” with “*and*” (using language to support both/ and instead of either/or; improv practice of “*yes, and...*”)
- Sense into the feelings of more integration, ability to manage complexity

Listening for Poles 1

**I need to keep working here
because I make good money, but
I really feel like I am losing my
soul.**

What polarities are at play here?

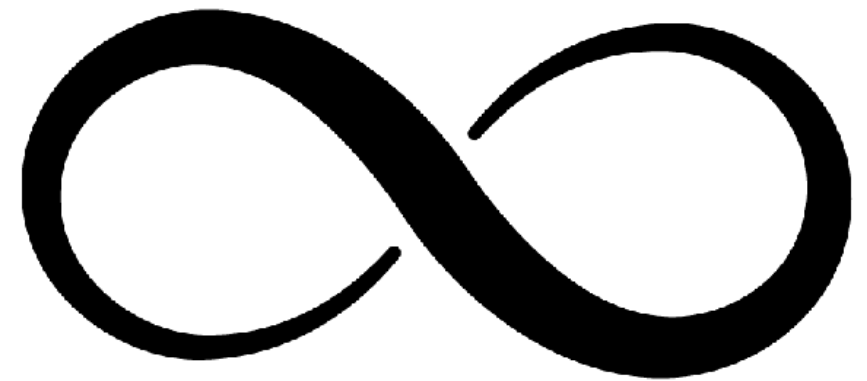


Listening for Poles 1

I need to keep working here because I love making good money, but I really feel like I am losing my soul.

Financial Satisfaction and Soul Satisfaction

Physical Well-Being and Spiritual Well-Being



Listening for Poles 2

**I wish you'd just loosen up -
You're such a control freak!**

What polarities are at play here?



Listening for Poles 2

**I wish you'd just loosen up -
You're such a control freak!**

What polarities are at play here?

Control and Going with the Flow

Tight and Loose



Listening for Poles 3

This new principal is a creative visionary who is out to change the system - that's what we need!

What polarities are at play here?



Listening for Poles 3

This new principal is a creative visionary who is out to change the system - **that's what we need!**

Change and Stability

Creativity and Working with Reality



Listening for Poles 4

**People here are so nice and fake
- I wish people would stop
curating their words and just say
what they really mean.**

What polarities are at play here?



Listening for Poles 4

**People here are so nice and fake
- I wish people would stop
curating their words and just say
what they really mean.**

Diplomatic and Authentic

Tactful and Truthful

**Consideration of others and
honest self expression**



Two Energies at Play

- Maximize the benefit and wisdom of BOTH poles
- Minimize the downside of each pole
- How? You minimize the downside of each pole by embracing the opposite pole
- The strengths of each are maximized when you dance between the emergent wisdom of each

Moving Forward Together

SIGNS OF SUCCESS

- We're curious about alternatives points of view
- We feel seen, known, seen and trust that our values are held by one another
- Our fears are being addressed adequately and are being effectively reassured
- We acknowledge the downsides of our own positions
- We focus on the larger purpose we're serving
- We see each other's sensitivities as a resource instead of a liability.



“Our universe is still unfolding and human beings are active and creative participants.

Creativity is both the universe’s ordering principle and its process, part of the greater creativity of nature.”

– Gregory Cajete



Take-Aways and Learnings?