

# Spiral Dynamics Integral (SD<sub>i</sub>)

## - Evolution a Journey of Change

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*'Nothing is permanent but change'* - Heraclitus

It seems as if the whole world is clamouring for change.

But change *from* what *to* what? by whom? for whom? and how?

For each of us the answer is different. Many think they would be happy if others would change. As readers know, we cannot change others, we can only change ourselves. So if we want to improve a relationship - with family, neighbours, business, the world - the best option is to examine our own perceptions and beliefs first.

We all have opinions that we argue strongly for, or against, or choose to remain indifferent to. And never stop to think where we got those ideas. Why should we? They are *ours* so they must be right! All decent people think the same way! Yet nearly all our opinions are inculcated by parents, school, peer group, employers, friends, newspapers, TV, books. We then defend those ideas vigorously - or fight them because we dislike those people or organisations.

Why does most of *our* group think the same way? Because the environment we live in has shaped our thinking. We may well inhabit different vMememes from some of those people we so desire to change.

SD<sub>i</sub> contains comprehensive teachings on change and how to manage it. This article has space only for a brief introduction, offered with the hope that it will encourage readers to focus more intently when they think or talk about change.

SD<sub>i</sub> distinguishes between Horizontal, Oblique and Vertical Change.

### HORIZONTAL CHANGE

- Adjustments *within* an unchanged system, or vMeme.

- 1 Fine tuning or tweaking the system. A new business logo changes nothing, any more than a new dress or a candle-lit dinner can revive a fading emotional relationship.
- 2 Reshuffling the same people and components to meet objectives. Often used as a way to refresh the appeal of a shop window, or government, but it is still the same people thinking the same way.
- 3 Upgrading to a new version of an older process or product. Organic baked beans, new machinery, but the basic assumptions remain the same. Serial marriages and serial business failures show that lessons have not been learned and barriers to understanding have not been dismantled.
- 4 Dropping back to an earlier system temporarily to cope with a crisis. When under pressure we tend to revert to what was once familiar and trusted, though it may not be what is required now.
- 5 Stretching the existing system to achieve a specific temporary objective. This may be stressful, but often carries the seed of what it is possible to achieve.

## OBLIQUE CHANGE

- Adding *selected elements* of more complex thinking but reverting to habit when stressed.
- 6 Removing blockages and barriers, and abandoning rigid positions, represents revolutionary change. Faced with a crisis, people in healthy vMemos (for unhealthy reactions see table at end) will make decisions and take previously unthinkable action to avert a looming catastrophe such as divorce or bankruptcy.

## VERTICAL CHANGE

- Awakening to the *next level* of thinking - to change conditions and expand the conceptual space so far that you cannot move back again.
- 7 The old order is subsumed into the new system. Often sparked by technological advances that seem frightening at first. Purple/Red tribal anarchy yields to Blue law and order. Orange competitiveness and greed open to Green understanding of the interconnectedness of all life.
  - 8 Massive change. Eg. bronze age, iron age, agricultural and industrial revolutions.

With the world around us apparently in turmoil, it is fascinating to observe what is going on through SD<sub>i</sub> lenses. To watch old orders crumbling, the desperation fuelling tribal wars, the disclosure of things that those in power want to keep hidden, and to sense the new incoming energies that can, if we are willing, expand the consciousness of enough people to Second Tier to guide and lead the rest of us into a better future.

So what is required for *VERTICAL vMEME CHANGE* to take place?

There are six crucial conditions:

1. The *POTENTIAL* for more complex thinking in the individual or collective mind/brain.

This can be

*OPEN* - The healthiest form with the most possibilities for adjustment, able to change thinking and move freely as life conditions require. Deals effectively with barriers to further development.

*ARRESTED* - Trapped within the self or the situation, as barriers have not been overcome. These may be commitments to care, a lack of insight, or making excuses to disguise fear. Or rationalising the status quo: 'mustn't rock the boat,' 'that's the way things are', 'one of these days.' Until there is more dissonance, or discomfort, within the situation, there will be no effort to change.

*CLOSED* - May lack the neurological or brainpower, or has closed down as a result of past trauma. Is insatiable for guarantees of love, cares for only a handful of people, and does not even recognise barriers. Feels threatened by change and over-reacts to the prospect. Anyone thinking differently is a fool. Fights to maintain the status quo.

2. *SOLUTIONS* - Must be found to current problems or threats at the present level before change to a new level is possible.

3. *DISSONANCE* - Between present thinking and current reality, ie. when it becomes obvious that something is not quite right and that more of the same no longer works.

4. *BARRIERS* to change (external and internal) - Must be identified and dealt with fully, not denied or brushed under the carpet, or blamed on someone else.

5. *INSIGHT* - Into probable causes and viable alternatives. Until we understand why things went wrong, lasting change is illusory. It is essential to consider different plans and precisely how they can be implemented.

6. *CONSOLIDATION* and *SUPPORT*. Significant change inevitably brings confusion at first, with steep learning curves, false starts and misunderstanding, not to say punishment, from those who do not grasp what is happening and who feel threatened or left out. Support is needed until the transition to the new vMeme is securely consolidated.

The Ageless Wisdom teaches us that our Souls engineer crises to confront us with what we need to understand and to push us out of a situation that we have mastered - and where we are therefore comfortable - into a new way of living on a higher level. Our consciousness is expanded during the struggle between worn-out ideas and new ones, between more of the same that no longer works and entirely new solutions. New energy flows through us opening doorways of opportunity where we least expect them, and we realise that unconsciously we have been preparing for them for years.

In the next paper, we will look at some more aspects of change - specifically how to recognise what is happening in our own lives and all around us.

To end on a light note:

Unhealthy reactions to major crisis:

BEIGE - curls up and doesn't want to know

PURPLE - retreats into fear and superstition, or runs home to Mummy

RED - blames everyone else and fights its corner

BLUE - looks for the guilty party, organising witch-hunts and crusades

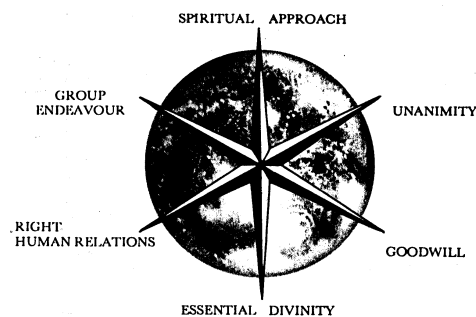
ORANGE - does shady deals if that is what it takes to win

GREEN - assumes holier than thou attitude of political correctness

In contrast, second tier reactions are usually healthy and positive:

YELLOW - evaluates the situation and goes or stays

TURQUOISE - looks for the deeper meaning and global impact



## GLOSSARY

**vMEME** - vMEME reflects a world view, a valuing system, a level of psychological existence, a belief structure, an organising principle, a way of thinking or a mode of adjustment. It represents, firstly then, a core intelligence that forms systems and directs human behaviour. Secondly, it impacts upon all life choices as a decision-making framework. Thirdly, each vMEME can manifest itself in both healthy and unhealthy forms. Fourthly, such a vMEME is a discrete structure for thinking, not just a set of ideas, values or cause. Fifthly, it can brighten and dim as the Life Conditions (consisting of historic Times, geographic Place, existential Problems, and societal Circumstances) change.