

Using Depth Intuition in Creative Problem Solving and Strategic Innovation

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INTRODUCTION

Intuition is widely known to be an essential ingredient in strategic vision, creativity, and problem solving. It is often difficult to know just what to do in order to effectively actualize intuition however. In fact, the well-known four-step formula for creativity (preparation, incubation, inspiration, verification), set forth by Wallas (1926), indicates that once you have “done your homework,” you should simply wait for a flash of intuitive insight. Might it be possible to access the intuitive depths in a more systematic and sustained fashion? Recent writings indicate that this is both possible and practical (Rockenstein, in press).

Described below are four of the more useful methods by which to awaken, facilitate, and apply your intuitive capacities for problem solving and innovation—whether personal or organizational—that this author has found in more than a decade of search and exploration. Depending on how they are adapted and used, these methods are particularly suitable for three broad classes of applications:

1. In *creative problem solving* and *psychotherapy*, these methods are useful for circumventing “resistance” and similar obstacles, and for producing helpful insights that can be problem-oriented, opportunity-oriented, or both.
2. In *strategic planning*, they are useful in developing an inspiring sense of vision, statement of mission, and innovative strategies that fit current and emerging conditions.
3. In *policy analysis* and *futures research*, they are useful for exploring possible, probable, and preferable future conditions, using a type of thinking relatively free from biases that are either ideological or that result from past experiences irrelevant to future situations involving a different context.

These methods employ what may be called “visionary” and “transpersonal” knowledge processes in order to gain access to relatively deep levels of intuition. *Visionary* processes use imagistic (as contrasted with rational/analytic) thinking as a principal mode of expression. *Transpersonal* knowledge processes, more difficult to define, generally involve ego transcendence and expanded awareness of preceptual¹ thought. Several recent books (Vaughan 1979, 1985; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980) provide a good introduction to readers unfamiliar with these concepts – and describe as well a number of useful methods for both beginners and more experienced practitioners.

¹ The term “preceptual” is used here to connote two different, but related meanings, both of which are different from either perception or conception: 1) that which precedes perception; and 2) that which guides perception (as in “preceptor”).

Successful use of these procedures requires skills not commonly encouraged by most schools or workplaces. First is the ability to voluntarily suspend judgement or evaluation of whatever is being considered. Second is the ability to use what in biofeedback training is termed “passive volition” (essentially, letting go and allowing the desired phenomena to happen) as contrasted with “active volition” (where you try to *make* it happen). Although such modes of thinking are used by everybody on occasion, few people have trained themselves to do so “on call,” “on target” and for sustained periods of time, such as we are trained in school to do using rational/analytic models of thought for reading, writing or arithmetic. Therefore, in order to use the methods which follow, it is necessary either: (a) to have an experienced, skilled, and flexible guide; or (b) to learn these skills and practice them until your proficiency becomes such that you can follow the methods as written, even though you may deviate from specific suggestions of any step that don’t fit your immediate situation.

METHOD ONE. *FOCUSING ON CURRENT CONCERNS*: A Procedure for Need Finding

In his book *Focusing* psychologist Eugene Gendlin (1981) recounts how, during years of research on effectiveness in psychotherapy, he discovered that “insights” that occur solely at the level of thought rarely result in behavior change. Insights experienced as a “felt shift” in the mind *and* body, on the other hand, often lead to immediate and lasting changes. This is the “Aha!” sort of feeling that comes with the remembering of a telephone number or name that has been mentally blocked, bringing a shift from inner tension to a feeling of relief or peacefulness.

Gendlin developed a step-by-step approach, called “Focusing,” to help people experience this felt-shift regarding things that may be bothering them at any particular time. Though originally developed for use by people in psychotherapy, Focusing has proven effective for a variety of purposes outside of clinical settings. One of these, “Need Finding,” concerns the precise identification of where and how “the shoe pinches,” so that appropriate, rather than inappropriate relief is easier to find.

The step-by-step process shown below is based on Gendlin’s method and can be used safely in a wide variety of settings. The instructions should be paced in a relaxed way, allowing enough time to comply with each one before going on to the next. The instructions can be given by another person (preferably one who has experienced the focusing process for him- or herself), or they can be dictated into a tape recorder, and then played back, one instruction at a time, using a “pause” control to ensure that the amount of time between instructions will be as long as needed when doing the method.

1. *Clearing a Space.* Take a deep breath, and relax...pay attention inwardly, in your body, perhaps mostly in your stomach and chest, and see what comes there in answer to the question, “How are you? What’s between you and feeling fine?” (Or, alternatively, depending on the application, ask yourself “How are things around me? What needs concern me right now?” Don’t answer; let what comes in your body do the answering. When some concern comes, DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back and say, “Yes, that’s there. I can feel that there.” Let there be a little space between

you and that. Then ask what else you feel. Wait again and sense. Usually there are several things. (Give at least a minute for this.)

2. *Felt Sense.* From among what came, select one concern to focus on. DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back from it. Of course there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about – too many to think of each one alone. But you can *feel* all of these things together. Pay attention to where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. What do you sense in your body when you recall the whole of that concern? Let yourself feel the murky discomfort or the un-clear body-sense of *all of that*.
3. *Getting a Handle.* What is the quality of this unclear felt sense? Let a word, a phrase, or an image come up from the felt sense itself. Just something that captures the feeling ... a handle you can use to grasp what the feeling is all about.
4. *Resonating.* Go back and forth between the felt sense and the word (or phrase or image). Check how they resonate with each other. See if there is a little bodily signal that lets you know there is a fit. To do it, you have to have the felt sense there again, as well as the word, phrase or image you have as a handle. Go back and forth between the felt sense and the handle; Let the felt sense change, if it does, and also the word, phrase or image until they feel just right – until they match. Then just feel that for a minute.
5. *Asking.* Now ask: “What is it, about this whole problem, that makes things this way?” As you ask this, make sure that the quality of it is sensed again, freshly, vividly (not just remembered from before). When it is here again, touch it, tap it, be with it; if you get a quick answer without a shift in the felt sense, just let that kind of answer go by. Return your attention to your body and freshly find the felt sense again. Then ask it again. Be with the felt sense till something comes along with a shift, a slight “give” or release.²
6. *Receiving.* Receive whatever comes with the “felt shift” in a friendly, welcoming way. Be glad it spoke. It is only one step on this problem, not the last. Now that you know where it is, you can leave it and come back to it later. Trust it as your own wisdom; protect it from critical voices that may not understand.
7. *Return/Reflection.* Does your mind/body want another round of focusing, or is this a good stopping place?³ What ideas, if any, occur to you as to strategies or actions you might wish to undertake to improve things?

² When stuck, ask questions:

- . What is the worst of this feeling?
- . What’s really so bad about this?
- . What does it need?
- . What should happen?

Don’t answer; wait for the feeling to stir and give you an answer.

What would it feel like if it was all OK? Let the body answer: *What is in the way of that?*

³ NOTE: Professor Gendlin, the creator of this approach, emphasizes that “If during these instructions you have spent a little while sensing and touching an unclear holistic body sense of this problem, then you have

METHOD TWO. *REVISIONING CURRENT CONCERNS: A Method For Transforming Perceived Problems Into Opportunities*

Perhaps the single structures psychotherapeutic process I have found most valuable to date – especially when used in conjunction with the “need finding” method described above – comes from a provocative book. *The Spirit Guide Meditation*, by Edwin Steinbrecher (1978). The book originally came to my attention due to the penetrating precision with which it describes *archetypes*.

Steinbrecher describes how, at a deep psychological level, what we originally call perception might more accurately be conceived of as projection. (An alternative view is to consider that perception, footnoted earlier, can also be defined as *the process through which projections shape perceptions*.) The purpose of the procedure described below, is to use depth sources of intuition, to heal (“make whole”) our projections – especially those involving people or things we don’t like. Before detailing this method, however, several ethical and conceptual premises need to be set forth.

Steinbrecher warns that, karmatically speaking, it is more appropriate to change ourselves than it is to try to change others. It is wiser, in other words, to heal our own projections about people or things we don’t like than it is trying to change (heal) them. Therefore, when envisioning what in the following process is called “the target,” it is important that you not visualize actual persons or situations as you consider them to exist in real life, but rather imagine/ask for/invoke some *symbol* of how you currently *project them* to be in relation to yourself. Also, in introducing this process, it is important to discuss “*the energy of higher consciousness*” as an operational equivalent to the source of “depth intuition.” Each of us has some type of projection that embodies our conception of what is highest and best in ourselves and in the universe. Some call this God; some experience a “light within;” some speak of a “higher self” or “hidden observer” within which manifests unconditional love and good will; and so forth. The point here is that in order to use this method satisfactorily, the concept of “higher consciousness” needs to be defined beforehand – and that in each use of the method needs to visualize for yourself what this is.⁴

As with the Focusing method described above, you need to have a suitable place and mood in which to work, preferable with a guide who can translate the suggestions written below into whatever form works best for you. And as before, this may be your own pre-recorded voice, speaking to yourself, instruction by instruction via an audio device.

1. *Preparation/Targeting.* Identify the problem, person, or situation (the “target”) that you wish to see differently. (It may be what you ended up with in the “Focusing/Need Finding” method, or it may be something else that you want to “revision.”)

focused. It doesn’t matter whether the body-shift came or not. It comes on its own. We don’t control that” (Gendlin, 1978).

⁴ Readers interested in occult symbolism and procedures may wish to review the suggestions made by Steinbrecher (1978) in this regard.

2. *Preparation/Relaxation.* Relax your body so that no places of tension remain; relax your emotions so that feelings of *calmness and repose predominate*; relax your mind, letting go the tendency to be analytical or evaluative. Be ready to flow with the process of imagistic thinking, as in daydreaming.
3. *Invocation.* Let yourself imagine some *symbolic representation* of the way you currently view the target. Don't worry whether or not you have the "right" representation, but do avoid having an image of the target that looks like the real thing.
4. *Exploration.* Explore the meaning that its *symbolic attributes* have for you; let them make you aware of how you view the target in relation to you. In particular, ask:
 - . What part of you it represents?
 - . What it offers you that you aren't accepting?
 - . What it needs from you in order to be "healed" as a projection that could become more "whole"?
5. *Transformation.* Having chosen how you conceive "higher consciousness" before you started the exercise, now invite the energy of higher consciousness to flow around and into your symbol, transforming it into a new symbol that represents the highest form that is appropriate for you at this time. Watch as it happens, and let it be what ever it becomes without any attempt to change it.
6. *Exploration.* Explore the meaning of the new, transformed symbol, and what its *symbolic attributes* have for you, so as to see how you might *now* view the target in relation to you. In particular, ask:
 - . What part of you this new symbol represents?
 - . What it offers you that you earlier might not have wanted to accept?
 - . What you need to do to keep the symbol at this level, rather than sinking into its previous lower form in you?
7. *Grounding.* Give the new image permission to enter your body, and feel it happening. (You may be surprised at what you experience!)
8. *Return/Reflection.* Return to "normal" awareness, re-explore the target with the new perspective in mind. How does the new image compare with the first view? What strategies or "action items" does it suggest? (And how do they contrast with those you thought of earlier?)

METHOD THREE. *EXPERIENCING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES - I: A Procedure for Assessment of Strategies*

In the emerging field of futures research, there is a general class of work known as "impact assessment" – the use of appropriate methods to explore the types of side effects that might occur when and if a particular technology, strategy, or series of actions is implemented. Of particular importance is the identification of "contingent futures" – future patterns that are expected to occur assuring that certain pre-conditions or actions (the "contingency") have occurred.

This type of fast-feed forward sampling overview is especially useful for exploring transformational situations in which likely future conditions differ significantly from those you or others in your culture have encountered before. Rational/analytic methods are clearly inadequate to this task, at least until intuition-based creativity suggest a “whole” context in which they can work, as in alternative future scenarios.

A method that has proved useful for this purpose is based on ideas and suggestions contained in the chapter entitled “Alternative Presents and Multiple Focus” from the book *Seth Speaks*, by Jane Roberts (1972). It has been previously published in the *Bulletin of the International Association for Impact Assessment* (Markley, 1981). Because of quite different contexts in which the method is useful, it is useful to contrast a simple with a more complex procedure through this type of impact assessment can be accomplished.

Basic Method. In its simplest forms, the impact assessment method consists of the following steps:

1. Choose several alternative policy options or strategies by which to accomplish some objective of significant concern. (The method does not work well on trivial material.)
2. Pick one strategy for initial exploration.
3. Relax physically, emotionally, and mentally – accepting the suggestion to avoid thinking in rational, verbal, and/or evaluative terms – to a suitable frame of mind for focused imagistic thinking. Imagine that the strategy is *actually* being implemented at the present moment, and that you are going to explore what it leads to in the future.
4. Using passive volition, allow yourself to be carried along into the future as the strategy is implemented across time, simply watching and feeling things as they occur.
5. After scanning to – or beyond – the desired time frame (or event sequence), record the impressions and questions that seem most relevant.
6. Do Steps 3-5 for each strategy or option deemed of interest, including strategies that you may not support or think would work, but which other persons or interest groups are known to advocate.
7. Decide how next to proceed. Typical “next steps” include one or more of the following:
 - (1) Select the option or strategy that seems preferable (often it turns out to be a synthesis of several) on the basis of what you saw and felt.
 - (2) Select particular questions or issues that have emerged and may require further study; use either “visionary/intuitive” or “rational/analytic” modes of thinking, or a combination of both.

- (3) Use what you have learned from the exercise in imagistic thinking to inform whatever decision process is to be used.

Advanced Method. The above procedure, though easy to learn and quick to do once you have the requisite skills, leaves much to be desired where serious analytic impact assessment studies are concerned. In particular, it offers no direct way to focus on particular areas “impact categories” of interest. The following expansion of the basic method does offer this type of flexibility, but takes longer and requires greater ability to focus one’s awareness as needed during a sustained sequence of steps.

In Step 4 of the Basic Method, you are asked to maintain general awareness of all that is relevant as you move through time. In the Advanced Method, you are asked to focus on only one attribute or dimension at a time, repeating your journey as many times as needed in order to cover all areas of interest. The following is a useful sequence for imagistic exploration across system levels:

1. Individual – somatic sensations (i.e., impressions related to bodily well-being).
2. Individual – affective sensations (i.e., emotional feelings).
3. Individual – cognitive sensations (i.e., thought impressions).
4. Primary group or most directly impacted party – general sensations or segmented into the three categories of sensations noted above, done one at a time.
5. Other affected groups or interested parties – general or specific sensations.
6. Groupings at larger levels of aggregation (e.g., nation, society, culture, world, etc.)—general or specific sensations.

NOTE: It is surprisingly both feasible and meaningful to experience “bodily,” affective or cognitive impressions on behalf of a group, a society, a planet...

METHOD FOUR. *EXPERIENCING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES - II: A Procedure for Transcendental Creativity and Exploration*

Each of the three methods described above are presented for practical, extrinsic purposes. (Method One yields a precise identification of a problem or need, and perhaps of problem-oriented responses as well. Method Two helps you transcend fixations or images based on past problems, so as to revision the situation and what is feasible by way of response. Method Three helps you understand likely consequences of undertaking different strategies by intuitively moving through different future histories. In the fourth and final method to be described here, the transcendental dimension of intuition is explored more deeply. It is often useful for reasons that are more intrinsic than extrinsic, leading to effects that may only become apparent long after the procedure is used.

This exercise came to my attention one evening at a conference on consciousness, when I was dining with Ms. Carolyn Myss, a conferee who described herself as a

consulting health practitioner who uses transcendental knowledge processes to assist medical doctors when conventional diagnostic procedures are unsuccessful. As we discussed our professional lives and the tools we find most effective, she told me of a technique given to her by her spirit guide for looking at probabilities. It has proven useful, not only for this purpose, but also for explorations of the creative process, both in general and as applied to specific concerns. I have subsequently used it successfully with a variety of individuals, as well as in group settings which included participants who had little or no prior experience with meditation or related pursuits.

Before doing this exercise, which is described in depth below, choose something about which you have concerns for the future—or about which you wish to expand your sense of foresight. Much as we did in previous methods, we will refer to this focus of concern as “the target.”

When you are ready to proceed, get into a bodily position that you can maintain comfortably for as long as needed. Center your awareness within yourself and relax...

1. Imagine that you are standing at the bottom of a long circular stairway...a circular staircase ... that leads upwards. As you stand there at the bottom of the stairs, let yourself feel weighed down by all of the cares, concerns and unfinished business that we normally carry around with us in our day-to-day lives. Feel this sense of heaviness in your body and in your mind. Imagine what it would be like to let these cares fall away for a while, and to feel free as you rise above them.
2. Then take a first step up the stairs, symbolically stepping away from POSSESSIONS...rising above any sense of having possessions, and thus being weighed down by them....
3. As you take the second step up the stairs, let yourself similarly step away from RELATIONSHIPS....
4. As you take the next step, step away from EMOTIONAL REACTIONS...
5. And as you step up again, step away from IDEAS about how things are or should be, and from EVALUATIONS...
6. Stepping up again, step away from awareness of your PHYSICAL BODY...
7. Continue up the stairs, step by step, letting yourself have the sense of becoming increasingly free of any other concerns or “SUBTLEBODIES” that you normally carry around with you, whether or not you seem to be aware of them as they fall away behind ... (longer pause...)
8. And as you continue up the stairs, without being concerned with what you might find here, let yourself move up into what we will call the ZONE OF PROBABILITIES...
9. Continue on through this zone and up into the ZONE OF CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES...

10. And still further upwards, to the ZONE OF CREATIVE EMERGENCE...
 11. And still further upwards as the tope of the stairs dissolves into the SOURCE
...remains there for a while, until ready to continue...(much longer pause...)
 12. Now as we begin again, let most of your awareness remain here in what we may call the ZONE OF SOURCE, while simultaneously allowing a smaller part of your awareness to look back down the stairs – or even slide down the center of the stairs on a slippery pole such as firemen use to save time. Once at the bottom, remember what it is that you chose as THE TARGET before beginning the exercise and climbing up the stairs.
 13. Let any ideas or concerns you previously had about the target remain at the bottom of the stairs...and as you zip back to the ZONE OF SOURCE again, bring only an awareness of the topic or nature of the target, nothing more.
 14. Now return from the ZONE OF SOURCE into the ZONE OF CREATIVE EMERGENCE...Pause here, taking several moments to let yourself become aware of the essence of the target being created or manifested anew...Quietly and very gently, let yourself be aware of whatever presents itself as this happens, regardless of what it is.
 15. Now descend a bit further, into the ZONE OF POSSIBILITIES, letting your awareness of the process of emergence take different forms that reflect that reflect the target's various possibilities for the future. Let yourself intuitively see the main possibilities in ways that you can understand and remember later.
 16. Descend still further, into the ZONE OF PROBABILITIES, while continuing to watch the process of emergence and differentiation. You may begin now to see different intensities, colors, or some other attributes to indicate how strong, vital, or probable each possibility is compared to others.
- (NOTE: As an optional “aside” exercise, you may wish to let your awareness move horizontally, away from the stairway, following one or more possibility, seeing how its probability changes though time as various events and human intentions change their influence on it).
17. When you have achieved a sense of what is here to see in the ZONE OF PROBABILITIES, continue back down the stairs, step by step, taking on all of the “subtle bodies” of functions and concerns that you earlier left behind, bringing back down with you a memory of what you experienced in the zones at the top of the stairs....
 18. Nearing the steps at the bottom once again, take the step that leads back into the PHYSICAL BODY and notice how it feels...Does being back in it again feel any different from before?

(NOTE: Depending on your purpose for using this exercise, an appropriate option at this point is to also suggest “feeling the ‘flow’ from the zone of source, through the zone of

creative emergence, etc. into the physical body;” and to do this in the remaining steps of the method as well: i.e., to “let this flow permeate your system of ideas, ideals, and evaluations” in Step 19, etc.)

19. Take another step down, stepping back into EVALUATION and awareness of your IDEAS concerning how things are or should be...Are any of your ideas, especially your ideas about the target now different?
20. Take another step down, now into EMOTIONAL REACTIONS and feelings...How do you now feel about what you’ve seen and experienced? How do you now feel about the target?
21. Stepping down again, back into RELATIONSHIPS...Ask yourself if there are any important changes in your awareness here that you wish to note?
22. And down again, back into POSSESSIONS at the bottom of the stairs... Do you notice any interesting changes in your perception at this level, especially those having to do with the target?
23. Finally, while standing at the bottom of the stairs as you did before taking the first step up, allow yourself to feel again the heaviness of all that we metaphorically called “bodies” – the cargo you let go of item by item before seeing what was at the top of the stairs and then taking them on again...
24. You may also wish to itemize and reflect on what your explorations concerning the target revealed from this new perspective, and what it means to you now that you are back at the bottom. Do this now, before these impressions vanish as do night dreams when you awaken in the morning...
25. And when you are ready, take several deep breaths, letting yourself remain relaxed and revitalized; then open your eyes, ready to do whatever you choose to do next.

(Note: it is strongly recommended that several moments be taken to write down your impressions. Otherwise, as cautioned in Step 24, they may quickly disappear).

A USER’S GUIDE TO CREATIVE USE OF THE FOUR METHODS.

As noted in the introduction, the methods described herein are particularly useful for three broad classes of applications:

1. The overcoming of internal blockages or resistance that prevents the occurrence of insight in either creative problem solving or in psychotherapy. Although not previously mentioned, the methods can be used for this by any one particular member of the problem solving team or by all simultaneously.
2. The tapping of deep values and senses of vision among organizational leaders, and the translation of these into a formal mission statement in strategic planning and

management. Because vision precedes creation, this type of application can precede that mentioned in No. 1.

3. General exploration of the future, but with emphasis on freedom from biases associated with “hidden loyalties to the past.”

The four methods can be used independently, but for better results may be used sequentially, or even recursively, as follows:

1. Regardless of your reasons for using the “deep intuition” methods described above, it is helpful to begin with Method 1 to sharpen your sense of purpose. Here the technique of Focusing is used for what we called Need Finding. It may also reveal concerns (sometimes called “unfinished business”) that need to be addressed before attending the purpose that you initially intended to consider.
2. Method 1 produces a “felt shift” about the “target” of your concern. Depending on your purpose, it is useful to pause at this point and reflect on your intentions concerning the target: What might you choose to do about it should Method 1 be the only intuitive exercise you plan to use. Jot down these potential “action items” to refer to (e.g., in Step 6 below).
3. Using Method 2, let the “higher knowledge processes,” usually hidden reserves in your self-system, transform the target you identified in Step 1 from a problem into an opportunity – or whatever it becomes.
4. Now that you have a newly transformed vision of the target, do any new strategies come to mind that might be more appropriate “action items,” or ways to realize the opportunities that you now perceive? Jot these down as well for later use.
5. At this point, either choose a strategy based on what you are now aware of, or continue using depth intuition methods for more “intelligence.” Should you want to continue, use either Method 3 to assess the relative worth of the different “action items” or strategies you now have in mind, or Method 4 to get a more deeply rooted intuitive grasp of the situation.
6. (a) If you choose Method 3, the impact assessment method, review the details of both the “basic” and the “advanced” versions of the method, estimating how much time you may want to spend on this exercise, how many “levels” you may want to explore, and which alternate strategies (or more immediate “action items”) you plan to mentally simulate in the mind-trip(s) it involves. Then, adapt the general method to your current needs. (Note that one of these options can be a “non-strategy,” i.e., a strategy involving non-action. This option not infrequently appears to be the wisest course of action when plausible impacts occurring at each successive level in the advance version are explored and compared.)

(b) Using the parameters you have decided upon, implement Method 3 making a careful record of the impressions of each successive “scan” before they are forgotten. Afterwards, compare the impacts of each strategy across all levels, while remaining open to other possibilities of pattern recognition. Often, in this

final step, the most profound payoffs often occur; so allow enough “space and time” for it to be productive. Continue as well, to record your reflections as you proceed, or soon thereafter. (NOTE: Although carried out under conditions of relaxation, these exercises often leave the participant feeling the need for a snack to maintain energy and alertness during the reflection and recording period. Usually the urge is for “junk food,” but a more nutritious snack will sustain the high energy level needed by these methods for a longer period.)

7. Should you choose to use Method 4 next, follow the same suggestions in regard to recording your reflections and maintaining your energy level as in Step 6 above. Method 4 may precede or follow Method 3; or, as with any of these methods, may be used independently of the others.
8. Review the results, and decide if you wish to use any of the methods again, using your newly obtained results as modified “target.”

A CAVEAT AND SUGGESTION

Most people undertake to do exercises such as the four described in this article in order to get what they want. Although a topic that goes beyond the scope of this article to discuss fully, it is important to note that attachment to specific outcomes you may think you want can be a most detrimental obstacle to using these methods successfully.

According to an ancient teaching, “When seeking with attachment, you may get what you ask for, but it will rarely be what you want.” *Releasing* (Carrington, 1984), is a book which not only discusses this phenomenon, but also describes experiential methods not unlike those covered here for handling it. The methods it describes may therefore be considered a direct extension of those described here.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As with all methods of inquiry, these techniques work best when adapted to the motivational set and contextual setting of the user. Although relatively easy for an experienced guide to do, it is difficult for a beginner to know what may be changed without loss and what is essential. If in doubt, therefore, the specific instructions of each should be implemented as they are, for each is carefully constructed, with its own integrity.

Also, as with any imaginative type of thinking, one may expect to see/feel different things when a procedure is repeated. Similarly, if a project team or other type of group undertakes these exercises together, each person will usually have unique experiences. Underlying patterns across observers and their observations are usually apparent, however, which lends credibility to the intuitive validity of methods. As with other impressionistic approaches, such as attitude scaling or the Delphi Survey often used in futures research, it is these central tendencies or common patterns that one wishes to discern. And, as is generally true in alternative futures research (field of inquiry for which these four exercises were initially adapted by the author), the question of

predictive validity is appropriately left unevaluated. Plausibility, utility, and cost are the preferred criteria for comparing these methods of inquiry with others.

In sum, the above techniques are useful in a wide variety of situations involving decision-making in the face of uncertainty and risk. Indeed, they are now proving more useful to executives, managers, and psychotherapists than to the systems analysts and futures researchers for who they were initially adapted and set forth (Markley, 1983).

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