

Polarity Practitioners

And

Volume Two: Chapter 39

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*Making a Difference
by Leveraging
Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma
Volume Two: Applications*

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Themes Found in And: Volume Two

Volume Two is more of a resource book than a linear narrative; every chapter can be referenced by theme. The authors have identified up to three themes their chapters most directly address. One way you may find this book useful is to identify the theme(s) of greatest interest to you and focus on the chapters that include them.

Theme	Chapter
• Consulting & Leadership	1, 2, 4-23, 25, 26, 28, 33-42
• IT & Tech	6, 18, 22
• Healthcare	19-24, 32
• Learning & Education	2, 9-12, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41
• Social & Cultural	1-5, 26-29, 31, 35-39, 42
• Faith & Spiritual	3, 11, 28, 29
• Democracy & Politics	1, 4, 5, 25, 30, 31
• Methodology & Model	3, 6-10, 12-14, 17, 20-24, 26, 27, 29-42

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Introduction to *And*: Volume Two and Authors

Barry Johnson

And: Volume One is a foundational book for understanding what polarities are and how they work. Polarities are interdependent pairs that need each other to be successful over time. Because they are interdependent, we connect the two poles of a polarity with the word “*And*.”

One central polarity from Volume One is Claiming Power *And* Sharing Power. Volume One and Volume Two can be seen in the context of this polarity. Volume One is an example of me claiming power while Volume Two is about sharing power. In Volume One, I am talking; in Volume Two, I am joining you in listening.

About the Authors

When it came to inviting people to contribute to *And*: Volume Two – Applications, I chose those who have graduated from our two-year Polarity Mastery Program at Polarity Partnerships. They are all well-grounded in Polarity Thinking™ and represent a variety of disciplines and life experiences. They were invited to write a chapter and to invite other practitioners to co-author their chapter if they desired. I am grateful for their response and for the richness they have created.

Section One: Polarity Thinking Supports Radical Possibilities for Equity

This opening section directly addresses the polarity Dominant Culture *And* Marginalized Cultures by listening to polarity practitioners who are members of one or more marginalized groups. They are providing us with perspectives from the marginalized about how a polarity lens can be useful in addressing marginalization. This section provides a context for looking back at Volume One and looking forward to the rest of Volume Two.

Section Two: Expanded Applications of Polarity Thinking

The rest of the book provides a wide range of perspectives and experiences from an extended group of caring and creative people. Each has made a solid connection between their passion and Polarity Thinking. It is a feast of thought and experience.

I think I speak for all of the co-authors of *And*: Volume Two in hoping that you find this book useful in your own efforts to make a difference.

Enjoy, Barry

Find bio and contact info for all lead authors for each chapter at
www.polaritypartnerships.com/certified-polarity-practitioners

Shifting from Drama to Empowerment: Using The Empowerment Dynamic and Polarity Thinking™ to Engage Key Stakeholders*

Cliff Kayser, MSHR, MSOD, PCC
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Ann V. Deaton, PhD, PCC, CTPC

Here be dragons

This chapter is for current-day cartographers who guide leaders, teams, and organizational systems through fearful territories using Polarity Maps® and the Polarity Approach for Continuity and Transformation (PACT™).²¹⁶ Our expedition begins with two methodologies for navigating fear-based territories: the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT) – disempowerment through “drama” story dynamics – and The Empowerment Dynamic* (TED*) – enabling shifts from drama to empowerment.²¹⁷

Three key reference points guide the integration of our DDT/TED* and PACT. The first two provide orientation for DDT/TED* shifts on Polarity Maps. The final reference point explores how the PACT process accelerates shifts from disempowering drama (DDT) to sustained empowerment (TED*) for the broad range of fear conditions key stakeholders encounter. We trust you will find the integration of these powerful approaches to be a valuable legend as you map out journeys with key stakeholders.

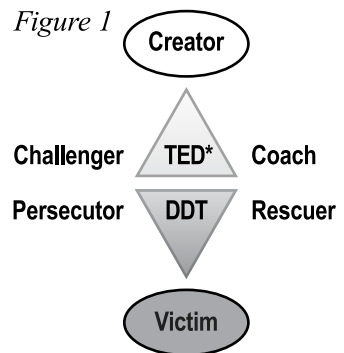
Overview of Drama and Empowerment Methodologies (Figure 1)

Our natural default (preferred pole) as humans is to protect ourselves against threat so we are problem focused. In the Dreaded Drama Triangle that results from this focus, we tend to relate in predictable roles – Victims, Persecutors, and Rescuers (Figure 1, lower triangle).

DDT: Victim, Persecutor, Rescuer (Or-thinking)

Victim: “Poor Me”

- Feels powerless, oppressed, helpless, hopeless, and ashamed.
- Looks for a Rescuer to alleviate their negative feelings.



²¹⁶ Johnson, Barry. *And: Making a Difference by Leveraging Polarity, Paradox or Dilemma. Volume One – Foundations*. HRD Press, 2020; *Polarity Management*. HRD Press, 1992.

²¹⁷ Emerald, D. *The Power of TED* (The Empowerment Dynamic)*. Polaris Publishing, 2006, 2016.

Rescuer: “I’ll Help You”

- Feels best when needed and fears not being needed.
- Rescues on own terms and keeps the Victim dependent.

Persecutor: “It’s All Your Fault”

- Mobilized by anger and/or instilling fear – blaming, criticizing, oppressing Victim(s).
- Fears and defends against becoming a Victim.

TED*: Creator, Challenger, Coach (*And*-thinking)

The Empowerment Dynamic (TED*) offers the antidote to drama, shifting from a problem focus to a focus on our vision, or desired outcome. When we focus on what we want rather than what we fear, there is a related shift in the roles we play (*Figure 1*, upper triangle):

From Victim To Creator: with passionate intention, Creators focus on propelling the person, team, or system previously identifying as Victim(s) to take steps as Creator(s). Empowered Creators own their ability to choose responses to life circumstances.

From Persecutor To Challenger: is focused on learning and growth, holding Creator(s) accountable while encouraging learning, action, and next steps. A Challenger intentionally builds others up, instead of putting them down using criticism, blame, or control. They challenge by encouraging others to stretch, believing in their potential, inviting them to step into growth opportunities. Challengers evoke and provoke learning as an accountability partner.

From Rescuer To Coach: uses compassion and questions to help Creator(s) develop a vision and action plan. Rather than doing for the other and taking on responsibility for “rescuing” other(s), Coaches provide safety through a witnessing presence and encouraging support partner.

Reference Points One and Two

The first reference point orients the shifts from DDT to TED*, illustrating two shifts from downside limitations (-Fears) to upside benefits (+Values). One is from the Persecutor limitations (-B) to Challenger benefits (+A). The second is the limitations of Rescuer (-D) to the benefits of Coach (+C). *Figure 2* provides the Polarity Map for Challenge *And* Support from which we can consider these Leveraging possibilities – Action Steps and Early Warning Signs – in our shift toward TED*.

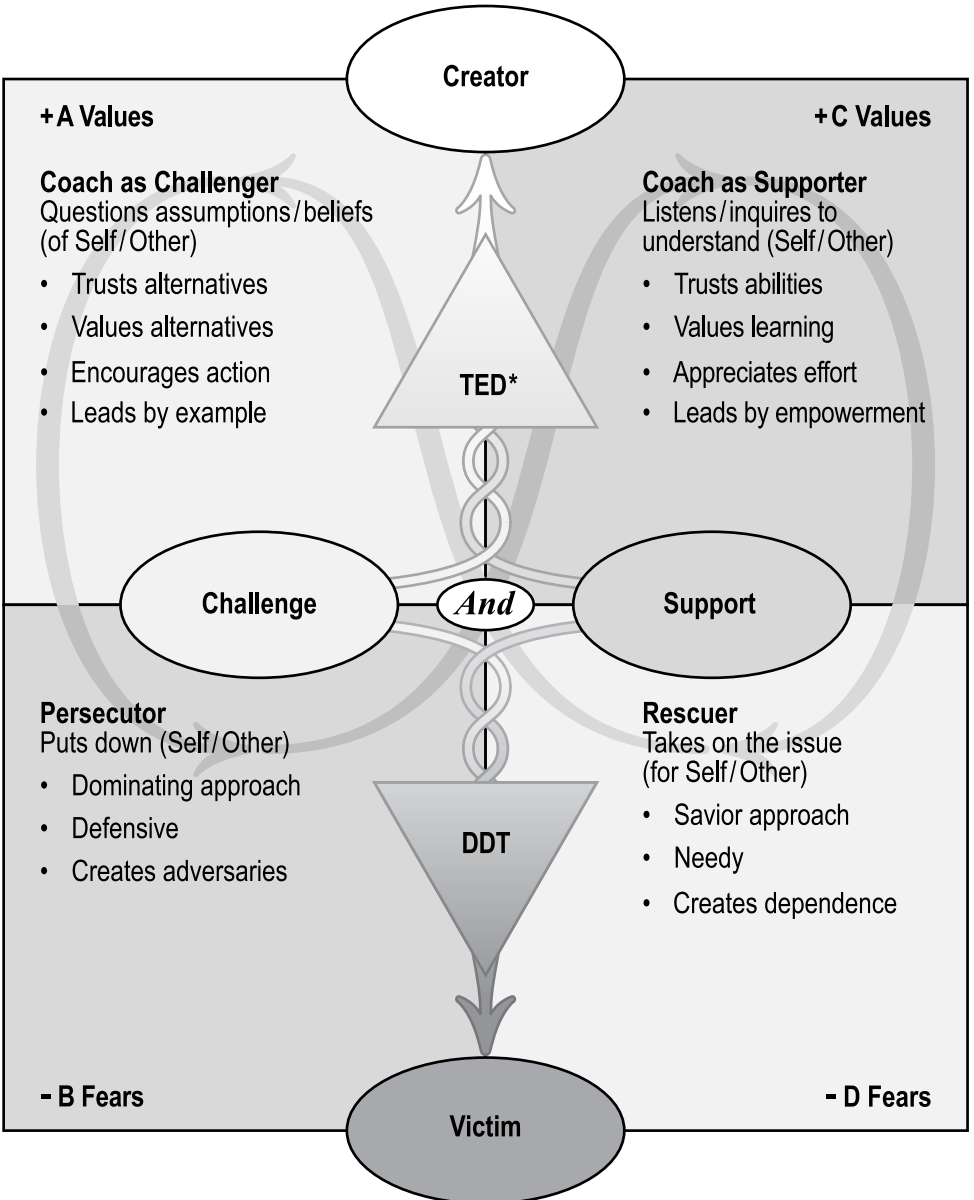
Action Steps and Early Warning Signs

Early warnings or signs that inform us that we have slipped from Challenger (+A) to Persecutor (-B) include sarcasm, blame, judgment, and loneliness. These warnings are often the manifestation of having a Dominating approach, being Defensive, and can Create adversaries. Early signs that we’ve moved from Coach (+C) to Rescuer (-D) are others’ responsibilities ending up on our own “to do” lists, and when we find ourselves delighting in opportunities to swoop in and save the day; corollary actions to Creating dependence, being Needy, and a Savior approach.

When experiencing these warnings, we can take Action Steps to minimize the downsides and again gain the benefits of Challenger (+A) and Coach (+C). We do so by acknowledging mistakes as an opportunity to learn and grow rather than cause for judgment or rescue. Action steps also include asking curious questions that provoke learning and enable the other to solve their own challenges, and then celebrating their success. These signs and actions all support focusing on what we want, not what we fear.

Figure 2: Leverage Challenge And Support for DDT/TED*

Polarity Map®

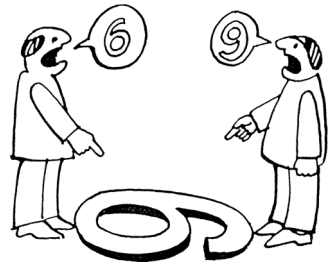


The second reference point orients the shift from DDT to TED* using the polarity Focus on Current Reality *And* Focus on Desired Outcome (*Figure 4*, pp. 302 -303). It is important to recognize DDT's could result from getting “hooked” by over-focusing on one point of view to the neglect of the other. Drama results when, let’s say, an over-focus on Current Reality has kept stakeholders from focusing on Desired Outcome (-B), so there is a charge to shift focus to Desired Outcome (+C). But the passionate charge toward and over-emphasis on Desired Outcome inevitably leads to being out of touch with the Current Reality (-D). This is one DDT triangle. Then it happens again, but in the opposite direction. The fear of being “out of touch” (-D) yields another passionate charge toward Current Reality (+A), fatefully leading to unaddressed Desired Outcome (back to -B). This triangle of movement, “solving a problem” by focusing on *either* the Current Reality *Or* the Desired Outcome, will almost always bring the stakeholders into the Dreaded Drama Triangle. The Empowerment Dynamic* is designed to navigate effectively between the Current Reality *And* Desired Outcome, acknowledging the importance of *both*, and leveraging the tension generated by the gap between what is and what could be. To dispel the DDT, what is needed is the power of *And*-thinking.

Perception vs. Thinking Competency

Researchers from the U.S. Army used mathematical models to demonstrate how *Or*-thinking to the neglect of *And*-thinking leads to the inevitability of another world war.²¹⁸ Similarly, misapplying *Or*-thinking to *Figure 3* could invite a “war” of sorts – in the form of a Victim/Persecutor. Misapplying *Or*-thinking results in each stakeholder seeing the other as the Persecutor who is wrong, stupid, evil (or all the above), and themselves as Victim. Add a Rescuer to the scene and you have a triangle, where the roles can begin to shift in a full-blown DDT. If retaliatory cycles become increasingly vicious, staggering levels of cruelty is justified by fear – or the reverse. And cruel outcomes are then defended with self-righteous indignation *Or*-thinking.

Fig 3: Differences in Perception



Reference Point Three – the PACT 5-Step SMALL Process™

Key stakeholder challenges and opportunities bring a broad range of fear conditions that require specialized focus to navigate. Complex situations require using both *Or*-thinking *And* *And*-thinking competencies. Engaging key stakeholders in this process helps ensure both thinking competencies are engaged for a range of fear conditions key stakeholders experience and navigate.

Seeing helps orient key stakeholders in the thinking competency required to address the Current Reality *And* Desired Outcomes with less fear/drama and more empowerment.

²¹⁸ West, B., Mahmoodi, K., and Grigolini, P. *Empirical Paradox, Complexity Thinking and Generating New Kinds of Knowledge*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

Following are five scenarios to help illustrate how the PACT™ process can accelerate shifts from DDT (*Or*-thinking), and sustain outcomes for TED* (*And*-thinking). DDT's *either/Or* false choice can create incredible drama for the stakeholder, as they feel forced to choose between them. With *both/And*, the stakeholder can *both* see *And* powerfully leverage both poles to gain and sustain their goals!

1. **Leader Career Decision:** A current job lacks in fulfillment of purpose, but pays well. An alternative job opportunity is in line with personal mission, but pays less. The impact of the decision has profound impact on key stakeholders.

The poles at play: Leader/Family, Money/Mission, Continuity/Transformation. The drama, DDT (*Or*-thinking), is in having to choose between these poles. The power, TED* (*And*-thinking), is when you know you can leverage these polarities toward a powerful career track and work-life balance, while still coming to closure by making a decision between the current job or the alternate job.

2. **Healthcare Leaders Reduction in Force:** Efficiently and effectively responding to the impact on key stakeholders.

The poles at play: Patients/Staff, Empathy/Performance, Margin/Mission, Continuity/Transformation. DDT (*Or*-thinking) can overwhelm when the belief is that there is a singular choice between these poles. TED* (*And*-thinking) lets you empower both to the benefit of the Healthcare company *And* employees, while still reducing the workforce.

3. **Key Stakeholder Performance Focus in an IT Start-up:** Customer support for the existing product helps the organization hit the numbers for the board, but siphons resources for innovation that's central to their brand.

The poles at play: Service on Current/Innovation on Current, Tactical/Strategic, Customer/Organization. DDT may have you feeling caught between these poles while TED* leverages the polarities in support of satisfying both company *And* customer with current products *And* innovation.

4. **National Leadership of COVID-19 Pandemic Response:** Decisions that support efficient and effective responses for protecting lives and economic well-being of key stakeholders in the nation.

The poles at play: Human Health/Economic Health, Short-term/Long-term, Anticipate/Respond, Deliberate/Emergent, Individual Rights/Communal Obligations, State Responsibility/Federal Responsibility, National Needs/Global Needs. Choose between these and your nation can quickly descend into chaos, while actively leveraging each pair will create a healthy and well-run nation.

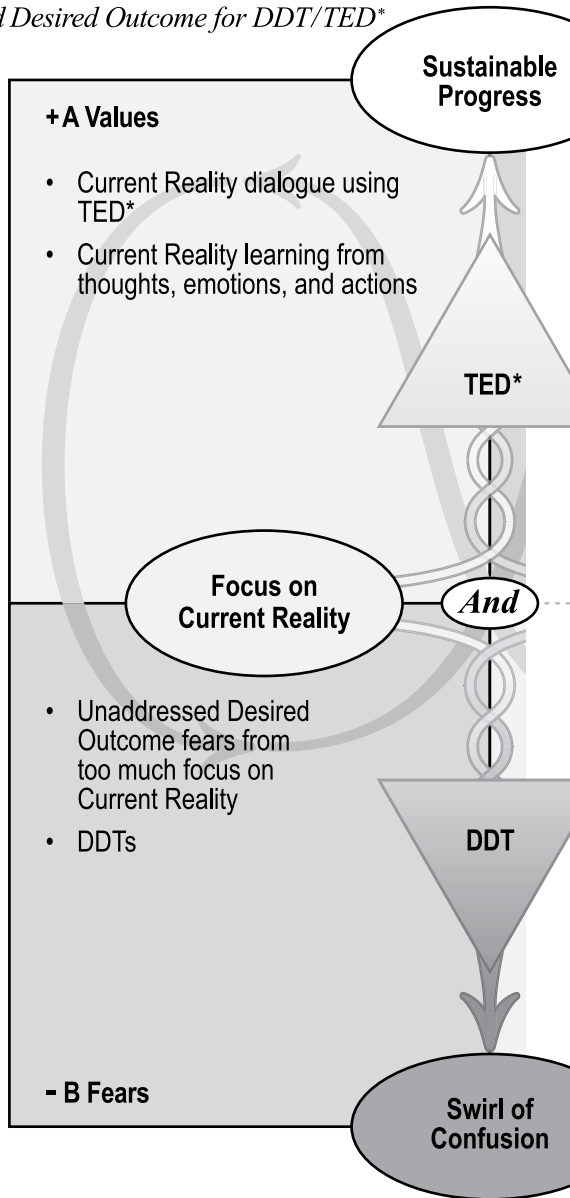
Figure 4: Leverage Current Reality and Desired Outcome for DDT/TED*

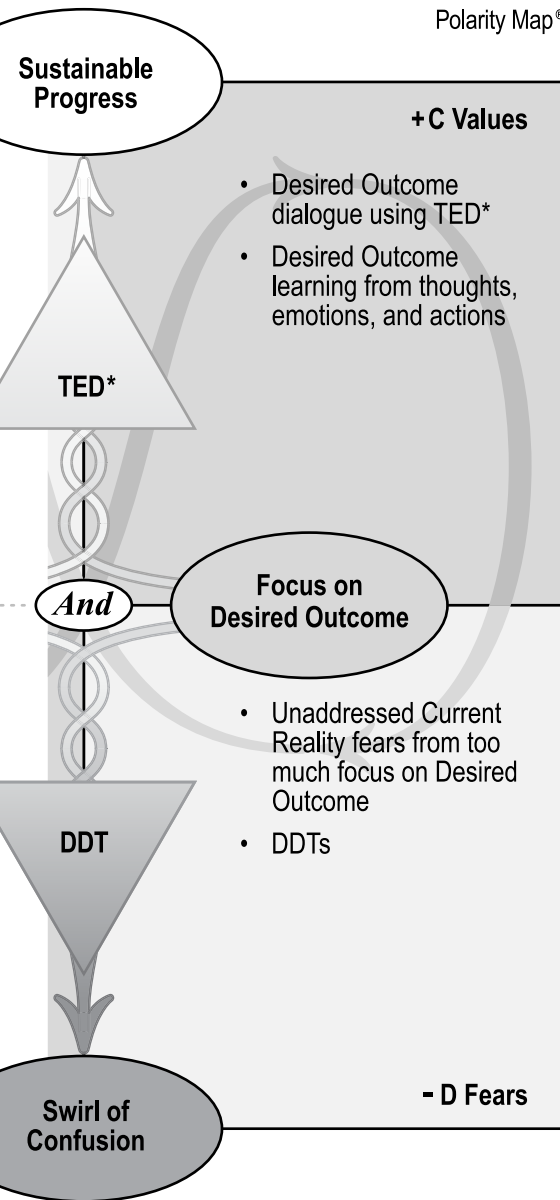
Action Steps

- Commit to the power of **TED*** (Emerald, 2016) to address the Current Reality
- Practice 3VQ for the Current Reality (Emerald, 2016)
- Practice Conversational Intelligence™ (Glasser, 2014) for the Current Reality
- Practice Appreciative Inquiry (Mohr and Watkins, 2002) for the Current Reality
- Practice the Stockdale Paradox (Collins, 2001) in the Current Reality (confront the brutal facts)

Early Warnings

- Complaints about neglecting attention for Desired Outcome
- Increased pattern of Desired Outcome dialogue neglected
- Increasing difficulty avoiding DDTs related to the neglect of Desired Outcome dialogue





Action Steps

- Commit to the power of **TED*** (Emerald, 2016) to address the Desired Outcome
- Practice 3VQ for the Desired Outcome (Emerald, 2016)
- Practice Conversational Intelligence™ (Glasser, 2014) for the Desired Outcome
- Practice Appreciative Inquiry (Mohr and Watkins, 2002) for the Desired Outcome
- Practice the Stockdale Paradox (Collins, 2001) for the Desired Outcome (unwavering faith for prevailing)

Early Warnings

- Complaints about neglecting attention to Current Reality
- Increased pattern of Current Reality dialogue neglected
- Increasing difficulty avoiding DDTs related to neglect of Current Reality dialogue

- 5. Global Leadership Climate Crisis Response:** Decisions that support efficient and effective responses for protecting lives and the economic well-being of key stakeholders on the planet.

The poles at play: Economic Health/Climate Health, Study/Respond, Deliberate/ Act, Human Health/Economic Health, Individual Rights/Communal Obligations, National Needs/Global Needs. As with the others, to choose *either/Or* will, over time, lead to negative outcomes regardless of which pole is chosen. Choosing *both/And* will lead to powerful and world changing responses to this crisis.

Mapping key underlying polarities in the drama enhance the seeing. Mapping the polarity tensions identified by key stakeholders explores unique contexts of the challenge/opportunity territories. As key stakeholders improve their capability for mapping uncharted territories, their capacity for TED* improves in parallel.

Assessing how well upside benefits are being maximized and downside limitations are being minimized can take place through one or a combination of navigation tools: dialogue; manually assessing polarities; or using the online Polarity Assessment™. **Learning** supports key stakeholders making meaning of their challenges and opportunities based on the Assessing. **Leveraging** supports the developing Creator Action Step strategies and Early Warning Signs to avoid Victim.

Conclusion

Medieval cartographers often depicted unknown territory with “Here be dragons.” In this chapter, we explored the integration of powerful methodologies to help dispel or reduce fears when navigating in difficult or unknown territory. With the shift from focusing on the problem as a Victim, toward focusing on what we want as Creators, what formerly appeared as dragons may now be seen more clearly as often harmless souls, or even beings amenable to strategically creative solutions, having the transformative power to fundamentally change what appears to be their core nature. We first oriented DDT/TED* fear-to-empowerment shifts on two Polarity Maps: Support *And* Challenge; and Current Reality *And* Desired Outcome. We then explored how the PACT process supports navigating unique key stakeholder fear conditions to do as Wayne Dyer’s quote suggested, “Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change.”

The authors would like to say a special thanks to Donna Zajonc of The Power of TED* for her thoughts and insights to this chapter. www.powerofted.com

Find info for authors Cliff Kayser, Bert Parlee, and Ann V. Deaton at www.polaritypartnerships.com/certified-polarity-practitioners

Praise for And



“To be able to make a difference in the world has always mattered to me. This book has supported me to break out of the constrictions of *Or* and into my expanding world of *And* which holds more possibilities for me. In the space of more possibilities, I am more aware of my increased capacity to love and to be connected. I am no longer perplexed by the chronic conflict and polarization I see in organizations and in the world. I feel I can access the energy flow between two wants and hold the whole. That is how I make a difference in my circle of influence, and it is my hope that in some small way I make a difference in the world. I am confident that others will benefit as much as I have.”

~ *Shareefah Sabur, MA, MNO, CDP, GPCC, BCC*
Executive Director, Gestalt Institute of Cleveland



“*Both/And* thinking allows for the recognition that two seemingly contradictory things can both be true at the same time. Within equity, inclusion, and justice work, the *Both/And* lets us be honest about our privileges without descending into guilt or shame, recognize urgency while understanding that growth takes time, and focus on the concerns of marginalized communities while uplifting our shared humanity.”

~ *Shelly Tochluk*
Author, Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk About Race and How To Do It and Living in the Tension: The Quest for a Spiritualized Racial Justice



“Polarity Thinking is the most elegant approach to dealing with the critical issues that we wrestle with in institutions, organizations, and groups the world over. When we grasp the concepts and their application, we realize that we can truly make a difference in the world by seeing and making sense of both horns of knotty dilemmas. We can have our cake and eat it! Leaders at all levels too-readily see complex issues as problems to solve rather than polarities to leverage. Leaders thus make the issues more complex by invoking solutions that ‘solve’ only one pole of the issue. The shadow of these one-sided solutions eventually come to the foreground and thus cause downward spiraling and anguish for all involved. Barry’s vision has energized and innovated my own work. I’m happy to endorse Polarity Thinking because it has made such a difference in the work I do with leaders at all levels and the design of programs and interventions with those leaders and their organizations.”

~ *David Magellan Horth*
Director of Innovation Venturing and Partnerships / Senior Fellow,
Center for Creative Leadership

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