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### *Enspirited Leadership*

While I was starting to work in this intersection of Art of Hosting and FutureCenters in 2010, I met many Japanese — perhaps especially young people — who were asking: *“How do I discover what I’m supposed to do with my life? Where do I find my gifts? What is mine to lead? And once I start to see the beginning of an answer to that question, how the hell do I find my way forward?”*

I started introducing my framework for Enspirited Leadership as one way of entering those questions. It has been a foundation of my work in Japan now for many years, and my own understanding and ideas continue to evolve, especially through a series of workshops I started doing in 2016 in Kyoto, my home town in Japan. One of the participants at a recent workshop there nailed it by saying, “For me, this begins with an appreciation of our greater selves as enspirited beings who reach out to each other and begin to discover possibilities outside our imagination. We begin to trust emergence.”

Turning back to the beginning of all this, back in 2001, I had been sitting with a group of people in their 20s and 30s at Castle Borl in Slovenia. Most were from Europe or Africa. They were grappling with big questions about their lives. They wanted to know how they could help the world and how they could live lives that had heart and

meaning. I listened as they spoke with each other about their values and beliefs and the dreams that were growing inside of them.

From 2001-2003, I witnessed and supported a number of these younger leaders from different parts of the world as they found the confidence, clarity and courage to take their next steps. I listened and talked with them, trying to understand how they were living their lives and the challenges they faced. Their experience and questions seemed both similar to and different from how I remembered feeling when I was 25 years old and starting my first nonprofit corporation — but something different was present as well. This caught my attention; I wanted to understand this more.

While I was working with these vibrant leaders, I was also finishing my doctoral work at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). I changed my dissertation to focus on exploring whether or not there was a largely invisible movement for change being started by these leaders. I came to understand that the social movements I'd grown up with and actively engaged in during the sixties and seventies were ideological, strategic and tactical<sup>14</sup> As I listened to these young leaders' stories, I understood that the model of change and the leadership they were offering was enspirited, appreciative and emergent. This became the framework of my dissertation and my eventual book, *Enspirited Leadership*.

Fast forward from my dissertation research and writing, which culminated in 2003, to the Japan Art of Hosting workshop in May, 2010. We started talking about “participatory leadership.” While some people got a sense of the idea, it was a bit of a stretch for others to figure out what this really was. I began to share the basic ideas of *Enspirited Leadership* with them. The young people, especially, felt a strong resonance — it helped them make sense of their lives, giving them a way of recognizing what they already know and are already doing. It also gave them some clues about how to step forward in the work that is theirs to do.

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14 For a full explanation of this way of describing these movements, see *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* in the bibliography.

## Practices for Enspirited Leadership

These six practices are the foundation of Enspirited Leadership

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Many of us want to be in service in these tumultuous times. It is easy for any of us to get overwhelmed. There is so much to do. Which opportunity or challenge do we respond to? I think part of the key is that we do not choose. We are chosen. You must **let your calling find you**. Calling doesn't always have to be big – and there doesn't need to be just one. When we stay open and listen with our whole being, we can hear the whisper of calling. It has to find us. Of course, we have to show up and be present – the other practices here help – but we are not in charge of how or when we are called. When you hear calling, follow it. Start now.

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To let our calling find us, we must **stop and be still** – a big challenge for most of us. For some it is meditation. For others, it is hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. Some find this space in a long, hot bath. The nature of the practice itself doesn't matter as much as the act of stopping. The act of stilling. It was after the disasters, when I was completely overwhelmed, that this practice help me find my way forward. My climb to the top of the Fushimi Inari mountain shrine, which I mention in Chapter 2, was the first time in my life I completely gave myself over to prayer and meditation, and since then it has become an integral part of my life.

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Especially when we are working from calling, we must continue to **stay connected** with a close circle of people who accompany us on our journey. In Japan's collective culture, this is the easy part. People understand that they need each other, that they are stronger together. This isn't as true in other parts of the world where people often want to go off on their own and “prove themselves.” We do our work, the work of our lives, best when we stay connected to others, sharing our stories and questions. We can cheer each other on when we feel confused and we can help each other not get lost in our egos. We are stronger, brighter, and better together.

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When we do this work of calling — or any work of innovation for that matter, essential learning is available every step of the way. We're often in too much of a hurry to gather that learning. What's needed is to **chew your experience**. Stop, look back at what's been happening. Chew it. Savor the different flavors — the sweetness and the bitterness. Take in all the aromas. Mash it with your teeth and see what's essential. It is so easy to get busy and then busier still. But our minds and hearts can only take so much in before we have to stop and take stock — and chew.



**CHEW YOUR  
EXPERIENCE**

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When we are creating innovations, we often don't understand what's really going on. That's when it is time to reach out and **bring in more difference**. It is essential. Interacting with people whose experience and perspectives are different from ours helps us see more of an invisible whole. Holding the tension of differences usually allows something else to emerge. From the very beginning when I introduced this idea in Japan, people would tell me how tricky this was — how they wanted to be with like-minded people because it was just more comfortable. But as we talked, they also easily saw that they needed the questions, perspective and experience of people who saw things differently.



**BRING IN MORE  
DIFFERENCE**

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Finally, we must **embrace ambiguity and uncertainty**. I have spent most of my life thinking that I needed certainty. But I have discovered we need to stay with "what is," rather than insisting on some sort of false clarity. Studies in neurosciences these days tell us that the brain craves certainty. In our world these days we see countless examples of how people are willing to follow someone who says, "Trust me, I know what to do." But what's important is to stay with the ambiguity rather than jump to a dangerous "clarity." Our world invites us to act with our questions, to stay wide open as we work to create new lives and new communities. It is often not comfortable but it is necessary.



**EMBRACE AMBIGUITY  
AND UNCERTAINTY**

Years after I started introducing *Enspirited Leadership* in Japan, I was hosting a retreat for people who were volunteering their time in the disaster area. One young man, who had graduated from college the previous year, spoke of his entry into the village where he was now living. With all of his earnestness, he would go to people in the village and say “I am Tetsu, and I’m here to help.” They would offer him a big smile and welcome him and say “Please find what is yours to do.” It drove Tetsu crazy. In school for 16 years and being told what to do every day and now “Please find what is yours to do?” Slowly he was able to quiet himself. He started asking questions rather than just saying he was there to help. He started connecting with others and he began to find a way forward. He was practicing *Enspirited Leadership*.

Whenever I start to feel a bit lost, I come back to these six practices — they help me remember how I need to be. At the same time, it’s important to note that these practices are not meant to be an answer. They are an invitation to each of us to remember who we are, what we are doing and why. This is where we find the clarity and courage to take the next step. I’ve often explained this framework to groups and then invited them into a conversational exploration of the points as a way to become get clear about what comes next in their lives.

From the time I started my work in 2010, people in Japan have frequently commented on the rich atmosphere present in our various workshops. Using both my own presence and the social technologies of *Art of Hosting* and *FutureSessions*, I always invite people to remember what’s important to them, connect them with each other, bring in silence and finally reflect on what we’ve been doing and learning. It opens the next steps of our leadership.

Practicing *Enspirited leadership* requires conversation. It thrives in community. It is not something we can do alone. We need each other. As people in Japan started to explore *enspirited leadership*, they started to stand up for what they really cared about. But they knew they couldn’t stand alone. These six practices flourish in the BA we create with *FutureSessions* and *Art of Hosting*. The last three in particular require a gracious space in which we greet each other with respect, curiosity and generosity.