

the alchemy of **CONTEXT**

NAVIGATING CHANGING CONDITIONS



1 THE POWER OF CONTEXT. Context provides the supporting matrix for all creation. A brilliant idea seeking expression in the wrong context produces disappointing results. And often our most challenging people problems are more easily addressed by creating a better context for relationship than by simply pressing for a change in behavior.

2 FRAME OF REFERENCE. Everything is interpreted within our personal frame of reference. From a large enough view, almost everything makes sense—there are very few surprises. From a highly constricted view, much of the world seems unfamiliar, and we are poor at anticipating what's most likely to occur. What seems random or bizarre often says more about us than the thing we are observing.

3 HE/SHE IS MY KRYPTONITE. Most of us have experienced a person who's our *kryptonite*—whenever they are in the room, we are off our game. This happens when a person is very different than we are, but *highly related*. Suddenly all of our edges are illuminated. Things from our history we thought we had released are right back in our face. And we feel sucked into a smaller version of ourselves we thought we had transcended. These individuals are actually some of our most important allies. They provide an opportunity for growth by immediately *shifting the mix*—driving us toward our brilliance in a new way.

4 THE CHAMELEON. How well your contribution translates across varying contexts depends on your ability to build an interface between worlds. If your brilliance is insensitive to your context, what is true one place may not be relevant or appropriate in another. The highest expression of authenticity is the ability to morph your interface so *who you are* is not held captive by *where you've been*. This means you may look very different in very different worlds.

5 SYNERGY, SERENDIPITY, SYNCHRONICITY. When a context is highly resonant with an intention, a lot happens in a short period—and with relatively little effort. This is because everything within the context is capable of connecting and combining with the nature of the intention—the system spontaneously organizes. Often our highest intentions don't manifest powerfully not because of merit or effort, but because we are attempting to express them within an ill-fitted context.

6 DISPLACEMENT. The contexts we are most familiar with provide an anchor for what we are best at—but radically alter everything in a context and some people lose much of their ability to deliver. It's important to not only foster the growth of an ability, but also our capacity to offer it in an increasingly larger frame of reference. This means continuously seeking unfamiliar environments—even ego-alien. Ultimately, how brilliant we are depends less and less on the limitations of our current context.

7 AGREEMENTS. An agreement you make with a person may be easy to keep in the current context, but exceptionally difficult if the context shifts. You may agree to watch my dog while I go into the store, but neither of us anticipated a car nearby catching fire and the immediate need because of the child inside! Because of this, we often feel betrayed by another person even though they acted with only the best intention. It's important to understand what a change in context means to someone else before our agreements with them get brittle.

8 RIGHT THING—WRONG CONTEXT. The right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing. Without a sensitivity to the current conditions, we may speak or act in a way that's created a positive effect in the past but creates a negative effect in the present. It's important that our urgency for resolution doesn't cause us to ignore context. Often a more supporting context presents if we are simply patient.

9 ASSUMPTION OF COMMON GROUND. It's easy to assume other people live in the same world we do—nothing could be further from the truth. Nobody lives in the same world you do, and some people live in worlds you can't even imagine. Because of this, it's easy to make the serial error of assuming what's obvious to us is obvious to others. This may lead to a surface consensus that falls apart once people understand what each other really means.

10 RAPID ACCLIMATION. A person's ability to thrive in a radically new context is often determined by how quickly they experience something powerful from their old world within the new world. So it's important to help them translate what they are most sure about in this new place where very little of it makes sense. It's also important to immediately help them contribute in some way. We feel most at home when we are able to make a difference. A path of service helps make the way from the old to the new. If we get too uncomfortable, we may withdraw and isolate ourselves in the *foreign land*.

11 MISALIGNED CONTEXT. The most brilliant person in a misaligned context will struggle greatly—and become increasingly disillusioned and disruptive. But even the most difficult and disruptive person may go through a rapid metamorphosis if we simply shift their immediate context. We may miss the greatest opportunities for growth if we mistake a person's current context for their nature.