

Chapter 3

Inner Work and Self-care

> - *The journey of trusting ourselves is very much **connected** with **trusting others**... there's very little that can happen that is generative in **social life without trust**... When there's trust, there's a gesture of **openness and expansiveness.** Where there's lack of trust, there's a gesture of closed-ness and fear and contraction.*

- Sue Davidoff

reflecting on inner work and trust, for Synergos' project, Inner work for social change.



> - ***Real fearlessness** is the product of tenderness. It comes from letting the world tickle your heart, your raw and **beautiful heart**. You are willing to open up, without **resistance or shyness**, and **face the world**. You are willing to share your heart with others.*

- Shambhala

The Sacred Path of the Warrior (Chapter 3: The genuine heart of sadness)

INTRODUCTION why attend to our inner world

How do we prepare ourselves to collaborate for the hard work of influencing systems change? We know that social and organizational change work can be challenging and sometimes exhausting. How do we refuel ourselves or replenish our reserves when they are depleted? How do we channel the transformative energy of our many emotions (joy, love, frustration, anger, rage, hurt, fear…) that may support or prevent our ability to connect with ourselves, each other, and our collective purpose? And, how may we cultivate synergy between us and heal rifts within ourselves, our organizations or networks when they occur?

Bridging leadership, with its focus on relationships and connection, offers a heart-centered approach for this journey. It is an invitation to begin from a place of deep human connection and move with others toward a common purpose. At the heart of Bridging Leadership is the cultivation of trust. Without trust (in ourselves and others), collaboration remains task-based and superficial, and will likely not sustain, especially in our current polarized and turbulent times. When we build trust, we allow our true authentic selves to be seen. This may make us vulnerable and therefore, requires courage. But if we stay the course, we will be able to lead from a place of deep authenticity within, overcoming the fears and obstacles that may come in our way.

From those who have traveled this path we learn **that nourishing our inner worlds is an important ingredient for working from our core purpose and building trust** to effectively bridge divides. It helps us to be more open to uncertainty and different ways of knowing, to be curious, to ask questions, and to listen deeply to different perspectives, rather than imposing familiar solutions. It gives us the courage to look at ourselves, including our imperfections and failures. Greater self-awareness and openness to others helps us acknowledge and face our fears or whatever may be blocking us.



"We all have an inner world that needs to be nourished, so we can make the outer world a better place"
(from Synergos' Inner work for social change project)

We can nourish our inner world through 'inner work'. But what do we mean by inner work? By 'inner' we mean the domain of emotion, cognition, consciousness and culture on which we draw, to engage with the world through interactions, relationships, collaboration. Our inner world includes our mindsets, worldviews, paradigms, values,

identity, religious or spiritual sensibilities, existential inquiries, biases, and even imagination. Our inner condition plays a critical role in how we engage with the world around us. **Inner work then, may encompass a range of conscious practices that connect us to our core essence, to our motivation, to each other, to our world, and importantly, to our deepest purpose for our work and our life in this world.** These practices help anchor us in our core being and values, and they ground us, helping us to be resilient in the face of challenges or destabilizing forces. Working on ourselves gives us the courage to look within and face what may be blocking us from achieving our full potential. We may cultivate inner work practices on our own, with friends, or with colleagues in our organizations or wider networks, in homes, offices, meeting rooms, community centres, spiritual centres, or in nature.

Many inner work practices explicitly focus on self-care -- paying attention to and nourishing our physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. This may include getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, engaging in physical activity or stress-reducing activities, and making space in our lives for what brings joy and fulfillment. Self-care is particularly important for us as Bridging Leaders to avoid stress and burnout, maintain our ability to function effectively, build nourishing relationships, and enjoy a balanced, fulfilling life, both personally and professionally. Chronic stress has wide-reaching consequences for our health and engagement in the world. It can weaken our immune system, impair our cognitive function, cause mood swings, irritability, decreased emotional regulation, anxiety and depression, and affect our memory and decision making. Self-care can help manage stress effectively and help us understand and face our strengths and weaknesses, develop greater resilience, and communicate more effectively.

Everyone's inner work and self-care practices may look different. For some it involves spending time in nature, hiking, gardening, exercising, doing yoga or practicing martial arts. For others, it may include artistic endeavors like making music, singing, dancing, making something beautiful. These practices may be done in silence or loudly – they may have a spiritual dimension to them. Whatever form they take, the intent is for people to ground themselves in purpose (individual and shared) and grow a culture and way of being that aligns with the core values they hold dear. Beyond cultivating these kinds of practices, enabling a culture of wellbeing may call for specific structures to be put in place to encourage us to pay attention to inner work and to support self-care. As individuals, we can create our own structures in our routines, for example, creating a quiet space to begin our days in silence, or carving out time in the day for music or for a walk in the park, or scheduling regular time to connect meaningfully with dear friends. In spaces of collaboration, we can create structures like establishing specific behavioral norms (for example against bullying behaviors), facilitating collective commitment to core principles, or enacting policies that promote wellbeing and care, such as encouraging adequate breaks and time-off from work or creating spaces for reflection.

Thoughtful facilitation of spaces for collective action can play an important part in creating a culture that supports inner work and wellbeing and nurtures purposeful collaboration. Chapter 4 in this resource pack focuses on the specific nature of facilitation that can create and hold safe space for people to come together with courage, to build trust, and journey toward collaboration, bringing their best and most effective selves to the work of leading change. This kind of facilitation is most effectively done by people who have done their own inner work, and can therefore allow themselves to be vulnerable, authentic, compassionate, and thus, trustworthy to those participating in the spaces they hold.

In the case of the ICBC project, Synergos along with the **Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation** helped ECCD leaders experiment with a range of inner work and self-care practices, linking their personal fulfillment and wellbeing to their agreed purpose and commitment to the care, development and protection of young children across Bangladesh.

Experimentation with inner work and self-care practices in the ICBC project's Leadership for Collaboration workshops was an attempt to draw people's attention to their inner worlds and core purpose, and to explore how this linked to their shared purpose. In this chapter we share some tools and practices to turn the lens inward that colleagues embarking on the collaborative journey toward integrated ECCD services found useful.

> ***"There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in"***
>
> ***- Leonard Cohen***



USEFUL
TOOLS AND PRACTICES

Synergos collaborated with the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation to introduce participants of the ICBC project's Leadership for Collaboration workshops to some inner work and self-care practices. These practices were embedded in the workshops, and are compiled here to make them available to users of this resource pack. They may be used by individuals or groups during workshops, regular meetings, or in quiet time alone. These resources are presented in three groups: Reflecting and cultivating awareness, Embracing wellbeing, and Building connection.

Reflecting and cultivating awareness and purpose

If we wish to lead authentically from within to build connection and influence change, we need to cultivate a strong awareness of ourselves, our purpose and the system around us. This requires the capability and courage to look at ourselves with all our flaws and be open to change, often going beyond what feels comfortable. Building a practice for reflection helps us pause and become more self-aware and attentive to our core purpose. It helps channel our own energy and emotions and embrace the world around us with greater empathy and openness from a place of self-knowing and purpose. We present here a few practices compiled for use in the ICBC project.

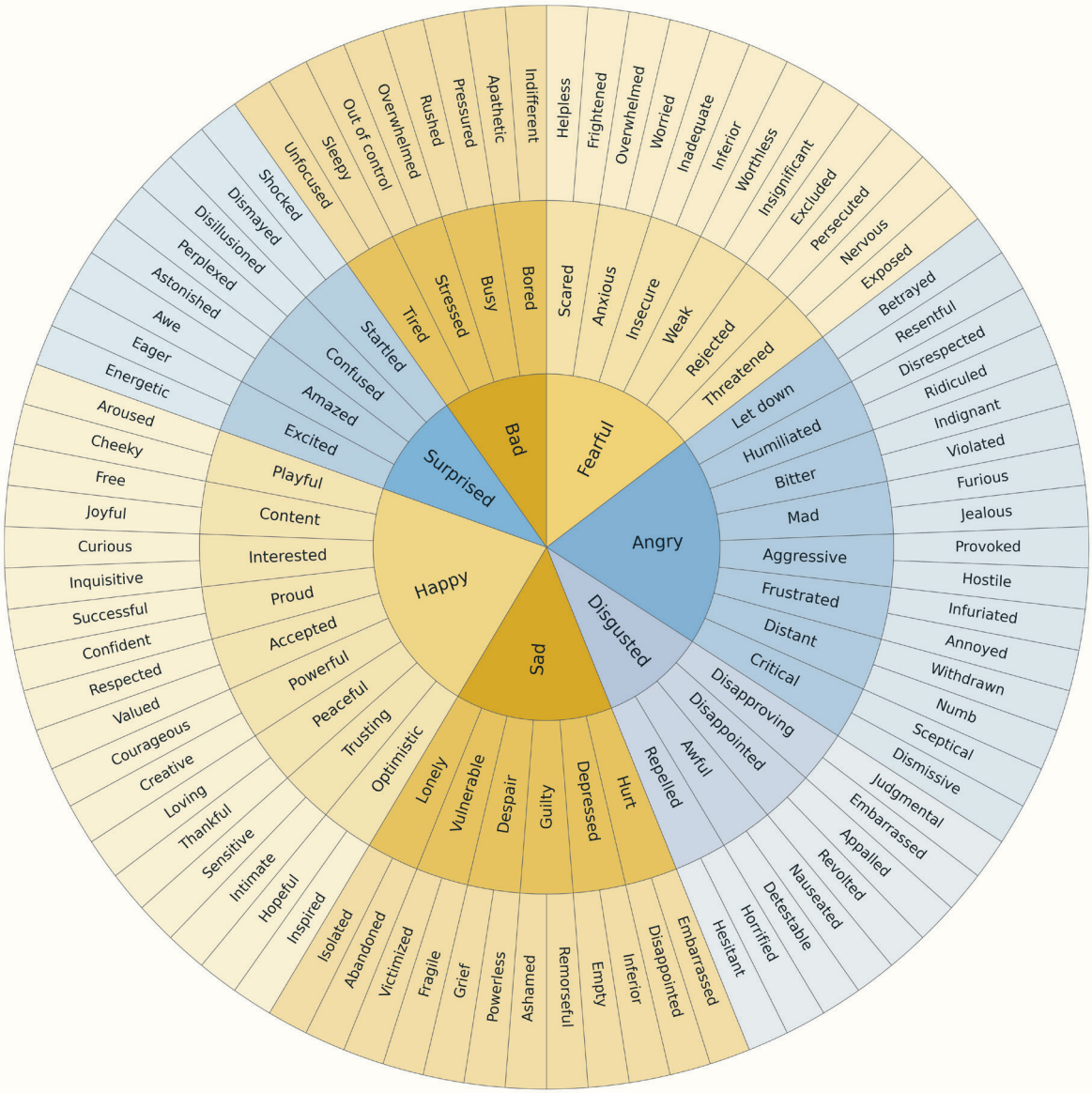
Mindfulness practices (individual or collective) are used to practice paying attention to the present moment without judgement. This can help us develop self-awareness and acceptance, allowing us to make more conscious choices about how to respond to change, stress, conflict or perspectives that are different to our own. They are also known to help reduce anxiety and stress, and enhance our focus and concentration. Slowing down together can help us be more open to systemic thinking, cultivating trust, and harnessing collective wisdom required for pursuits such as collaborating across ministries, departments, and levels for the provision of integrated early childhood care, development and protection services. Mindfulness practices are thus useful in helping us understand and navigate our ecosystems without judgement.

Mindfulness practices are wide ranging and may include:

- Sitting meditation, which often focuses on the breath, observing any thoughts or feelings without judgement, drawing attention back to our breath if it wanders.
- Mindful walking, paying attention to the sensations of our feet on the ground, to sounds, smells, sights around us, drawing our awareness to the present moment.
- Body scans, that draw our attention to our body, noticing sensations, tightness, pain.
- Gratitude practices, that invite reflection on things for which we are grateful.

Many people are turning to cultivating mindfulness as a way to ease stress, connect to their inner selves, and restore connection to each other or to the natural world.The slide deck included in this resource pack contains a small set of Mindfulness practice cards created by The Idea Space to help get started. These practices may be used on your own, with friends, or as part of meetings or workshops.

Drawing awareness to our emotions is a powerful way to practice looking within. Many of us are unaccustomed to noticing or talking about how we feel and our emotions can be hard to express. The wheel of feelings presented here can help us better understand and express our emotions without judgement. For example, rather than just noting that I am feeling angry, I may think more clearly about where this is coming from – is it from a feeling of being let down, or humiliated, or frustrated? This clarity can then help us understand more clearly our inner condition.



Taking a long-time perspective can enhance our ability to connect to personal purpose. Our life and work often keeps us busily tied down to short-term tasks, expectations, deadlines, and our immediate siloed teams. Staying in this space most of our time can inhibit us from following our most cherished dreams. Taking a step back to consider longer periods of time or even the totality of our lives helps us think about the legacy we want to leave behind as individuals or groups and what kind of ancestor/s we want to be. The recent push back and revolution from young people in Bangladesh, Nepal and several other countries reminds us that we need to think and plan and feel beyond our generation alone. The work of the ICBC project offers a powerful intergenerational vision of change for children and the future of Bangladesh. How does this connect to our own core purpose?

Another area of self-reflection is drawing attention to how we show up in the world, or in the systems we seek to change. How do we cultivate an authentic presence in collaborating with others, deeply aware and engaged with ourselves and others in our environment with a profound acceptance of our true imperfect selves and an openness to vulnerability, connection and trust. Different people cultivate this kind of presence in different ways. For some, it is through mindfulness practice, for others, it may be through a few moments of breathing exercises to clear their mind and focus on the task at hand. Some may step into nature and spend a few moments deeply observing the details of a tree, and others may take a walk to be in tune with their body, feelings, thoughts. The best way to cultivate authentic presence is to notice the quality of your presence in different circumstances and with different kinds of preparation, and take note and learn from your experience.

Practice: *Find a quiet space in which you can be comfortable to look within. Reflect on a time when you were collaborating with others on something that felt important to you and in which you were fully engaged with your whole self. Try to picture yourself there… Where were you? Why were you there? Who else was there? What was the scene around you? Now focus on that scene in your mind… don't rush. Describe to yourself how you were engaging with those around you and with your environment. Try to describe it – your posture, how you were listening, the quality of your attention, your inner voice, your breathing, what was going through your mind, what you felt…. Give yourself the luxury of time to immerse yourself in that experience. What contributed to your experience of being authentically present?*

Breathe in deeply, inhaling the energy and spirit that you carry from that experience. When you are ready, try to make some notes to yourself of how you may continue to cultivate that kind of presence. Be gentle with yourself and with others as you carry this intention forward to your next engagement. We cannot be fully and authentically present all the time, but we can reflect and learn from our experience.

Guided journaling is a useful way to practice self-reflection, allowing your writing to guide you. Three principles are important in guided journaling for reflection: 1) Not thinking too much before writing. Just start writing and see what emerges; 2) Respecting privacy, which means that if you are facilitating a guided journaling session, you do not force people to share their journaling notes in public. If it suits the context, you may invite those who would like to share, to do so; 3) After a journaling practice, it may be helpful to create an opportunity to reflect with others, however, this should always be voluntary . Guided journaling usually includes a set of prompts or questions to which those journaling may respond. This can be anything that invites reflection. In the box here we include a few ideas for prompts.

[1]These principles are drawn from the Presencing Institute's Toolkit (Tool: Guided Journaling)

Practice: *This is a guided journaling practice. Find a quiet space in which you can be comfortable. Bring along something to write on (paper is better than a phone) and a timer. When you feel comfortable and at ease, set a timer for about 5 minutes. Pick one of the prompts below. Read it slowly, and immediately start writing, whatever comes through you to your pen and onto the paper or your phone. There is no need to think about what to write… first write and see what emerges. Let your hand guide you. When you are done or time is up, put your paper or phone down. Pause, breathe and read what you wrote.*

Energy: *What over the past few days has energized you? What drained your energy? What seem to be your most vital sources of energy?*

Growth: *What is one mistake you made recently? What did you learn from it?*

Growth: *Think of a time when you felt closed to something new? What was driving this?*

Self: *Over the past few days, what new aspects of yourself have you noticed? What new questions and themes are interesting you now?*

Self: *Watch yourself from above, as if from a drone or helicopter. What are you doing? What are you trying to do at this stage of your personal or professional life?*

Legacy*: If you can, transport yourself to the last moments of your life, look back at the whole of your life. What are you hoping to see in this moment? What do you want to be remembered for? What advice would you like to give your current self to make this a reality?*

As we become more accustomed to self-reflection, we may be brave enough to reflect on our leadership behaviors in contexts in which we hope to be Bridging Leaders. We may reflect on behaviors and actions of which we are most proud, and importantly, those that we are not so happy about, or that we are reluctant to revisit. In reflecting on our behaviors, it is worth remembering that we all have good days when we may be at our best, and some days when it is harder to live up to our own expectations. Rather than thinking about good or bad behaviors, it may be easier and more compassionate to think about our leadership behaviors when we are at our best and those when we are not doing so well, seeing the space between them as a continuum. We can then try to put in place the support we need to move closer to our fullest potential in more situations and on most days.

This kind of reflection could be done alone, or in a workshop setting with a group of colleagues aspiring to demonstrate Bridging Leadership behaviors. One way to do it is to pick a theme around which you may like to reflect on leadership behaviors. For example, a team may want to reflect on behaviors related to communicating with others. We can invite the group to describe behaviors they have observed (their own or that of others) on people's best and worst days. This gives us the extremes of a continuum and prepares the ground for reflection. The group can then go through a process of personal reflection or journaling to reflect on their own behaviors at each end of the continuum… "On my best days, I…." and "On my worst days, I… They may think about specific examples for themselves of when they were closer to their best, and the conditions that supported them. Similarly, they can think about specific examples of their behaviors on some of their worst days and the conditions that held or pushed them there. Rather than reporting on their specific behaviors, participants may be invited to share some of the conditions

(within themselves or in their environment) that supported or hindered their desired leadership behaviors.

The pictures below are from preparation undertaken for the district level workshops in the ICBC project. In preparation for the workshop three areas had been identified by participants coming to the workshop as being challenging: Communicating with others, Being a team player, and Being a good supervisor. This kind of reflection helps us understand that our behavior is not inherently good or bad. We all sometimes do well and sometimes not so well. If we pay attention to the conditions and environments that support us or prevent us from being our best, we can support each other in cultivating good leadership behaviors.

Reflecting on my behavior in sharing information and communicating with others

On my worst days

- I withhold information from relevant stakeholders in the wider ecosystem
- I do not engage when someone is trying to share relevant information with me
- I interrupt people before they have finished speaking
- I ignore or belittle other opinions
- I keep checking my phone or looking away while someone is speaking
- I indirectly express negative feelings through sarcasm or subtle criticism, seeding doubt
- I make assumptions about people's motivations or feelings without clarifying
- I communicate vaguely or in broad generalizations, without specific examples or data
- I share sensitive information without safeguards
- I forward information without relevant context

On my best days

- I proactively share information with key stakeholders
- I help others find effective ways to share information
- I make sure my information is from a good source before sharing it
- I listen actively and with empathy, clarifying what is not clear
- I express my opinions in respectful ways, even when I disagree
- I adjust my communication style to suit the audience
- I offer positive feedback and am open to receiving it

Reflecting on my behavior as a team player

On my worst days

- I highlight faults in others
- I talk about my team mates behind their backs (gossip)
- I try to show that I am better/ cleverer/ more competent than others in my team
- I do not trust my team mates
- I avoid conflict and disengage. It is not my problem
- I am not curious about my team mates' opinions and perspectives
- I resist feedback
- I do not take initiative to pursue team goals/ plans
- I do not help resolve team challenges, unless it directly involves my own work
- I do not meet my commitments

On my best days

- I am fully present and attentive and listen well to my team mates
- I acknowledge and appreciate the talents and contributions of all team members
- I proactively share information and ideas
- I interact in ways that help build a safe and enabling environment for everyone in the team
- I give constructive and appreciative feedback to improve our work
- When a team mate is having difficulties in the team, I try to support them
- I try to understand team challenges or conflicts and contribute to resolving them
- I take responsibility for team goals and represent the work of our team to others
- I am accountable to the team and meet deadlines and deliver on responsibilities

Reflecting on my behavior as a supervisor or while interacting with those who have less power

On my worst days

- I remind people of my power in the hierarchy, my access to resources, and my ability to use my power in ways that affect them
- I judge and evaluate those with less power and give critical feedback, even when not asked
- I talk more and do not invite the opinions of those with less power
- I do not give people time when they want to speak with me
- I expect everyone to pay special attention to my needs and demands without considering theirs
- I demand accountability from them, but am not accountable to them
- I do not care about their story or journey
- I manipulate the use of resources for my own interest

On my best days

- I try to create opportunities to build our collective power
- I am aware of my power and privilege and design interactions to allow all voices to be heard
- I try to highlight the value of each person's role, no matter where they sit in the hierarchy
- I try to listen more than I speak
- I highlight the contributions of all, especially those with less power in the hierarchy
- I express interest in what they have to say, being curious, asking questions
- I try to be sensitive to cultural differences in different contexts and sectors
- I try to honor everyone's knowledge – I do not know best

Embracing wellbeing

Self-care makes us better leaders. It refers to the deliberate and intentional actions and behaviors we engage in to promote and maintain our physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. It involves taking care of oneself in a holistic manner, such as getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, engaging in physical activity, engaging in stress-reducing activities, and prioritizing actions that bring us joy and fulfillment. Self-care is particularly important for us to be good Bridging Leaders because it helps us avoid burnout and maintain our ability to function effectively in our personal and professional lives. When we neglect our physical, emotional, and mental needs, we are more likely to experience stress, fatigue, and other negative consequences that affect our ability to work or build the relationships that may help us achieve our purpose. By taking the time to care for ourselves, we are better equipped to manage stress, stay focused, and maintain a positive outlook, allowing us to live a more balanced and fulfilling life.



For the ICBC project Leadership for Collaboration workshops the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation introduced activities to help participants embrace wellbeing and self-care. We describe these activities below, and Annex 6 in this resource pack includes a short note about cultivating wellbeing, prepared by the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation for the ICBC project, "Wellbeing Inspires Welldoing."

Affirmations refer to positive statements or phrases that are used to encourage, support, and reinforce someone's beliefs, attitudes, and

behaviors. These statements are typically repeated frequently, often with the intent of creating a positive mindset, improving self-confidence, reducing anxiety or stress, and promoting personal growth or change. The effectiveness of affirmations is based on the idea that the thoughts and beliefs we hold about ourselves and the world around us can shape our emotions, behaviors, and experiences. Affirmations work by intentionally replacing negative or self-defeating thoughts with positive, affirming ones. By repeating positive statements about ourselves, we can reprogram our subconscious mind to adopt more empowering beliefs and attitudes. Annex 6 of this resource pack offers some guidance on how to create effective affirmations for mindfulness, including some visualization exercises to incorporate affirmations into daily life, along with some examples.

Examples of Positive Affirmations for Mindfulness Practice

"I am present in the moment and open to all experiences." Use this affirmation to remind yourself to focus your attention on the present moment, rather than getting caught up in thoughts about the past or future. The benefits of being present include reduced stress, increased focus, and a greater sense of peace and calm.

"I accept myself and my emotions without judgment." This affirmation encourages you to cultivate a non-judgmental awareness of your thoughts. Rather than getting caught up in negative self-talk or criticism, you can observe your thoughts with curiosity and compassion. This can lead to greater self-awareness, reduced anxiety, and improved mental well-being.

"I am mindful of my thoughts, feelings, and sensations without getting caught up in them." This affirmation encourages you to cultivate a sense of compassion and kindness towards yourself and others. By cultivating these qualities, you can reduce stress, improve relationships, and increase your overall well-being.

[Excerpted from resource prepared by the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation, Bangladesh]

Grounding techniques are used to shift attention from unsettling thoughts to the here and now. These exercises provide quick relief from worries and anxiety and contribute to our overall mental wellbeing. They help counter our fight or flight response, and bring our nervous system to a more balanced and present state. The 5-4-3-2-1 technique and Breathing exercise for stress relief presented in Annex 6 include detailed instructions for these exercises.



Somatics represent a field of movement studies and body work that focuses attention on internal physical sensations, perceptions and experiences of the body. Somatic exercises enhance our mind-body connection, helping to release physical tension or heal stored stress or emotions to improve our mental and physical health.

The mindful body scan art therapy exercise helps us become more aware of our bodies and our emotions in a non-judgmental way. It is helpful in noticing and reducing stress and releasing pain or tension in our body. Beginning with mindful breathing the exercise then progresses to a body scan to get in touch with our physical self, from our feet up to the crown of our heads. Through a series of prompts the facilitator encourages participants to make art, while continuing to be mindful of their body and breathing. After the exercise is complete, participants are encouraged to reflect on their artwork, describing the physical sensations they have drawn and reflecting on the parts of their bodies where they feel particular emotions. They reflect on what they learned from their drawing. Annex 6 of this resource pack includes detailed instructions for the exercise.



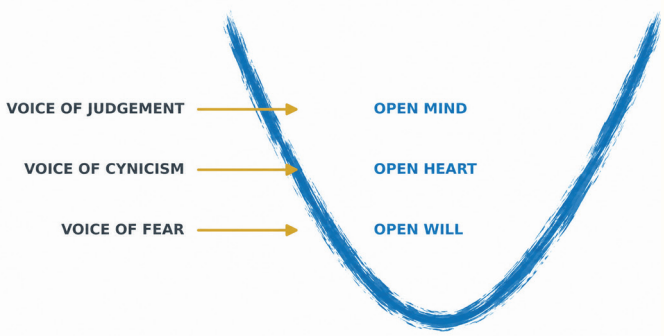
Building connection

Some of the most transformative changes in the world have come about through communities of passionate, purpose-driven people carving a path forward. These communities of changemakers are not necessarily formal project teams in organizational hierarchies (although well-functioning project teams can be very valuable). Those that navigate change around complex problems are often not just connected by organizational structures, project work plans and agendas. They are often made of diverse people who connect around a purpose larger than themselves or their formal roles, creating opportunity for transformation. They hold a sense of belonging to something bigger, connecting to their personal and collective purpose, intelligence and wisdom. The essential work of connecting in this way begins within, with an openness and sensitivity to each other.

Several of the frameworks and exercises presented in this resource pack hold an inner work dimension to build deeper and more meaningful connections, as described below:

A shift from doing to being: A powerful way to begin to build connection is to shift our awareness from "doing" to "being," allowing discomfort and uncertainty or awkward silences to exist, resisting the temptation to fill them with busy chatter. When we slow down, mindful of our presence and actively cultivate our curiosity and compassion for people, we open space to build meaningful connections. We can be more mindful of this as we plan meetings and workshops, creating space for connection and not trying to fill every minute with output focused busy activity.

Generative listening and your inner voice: In Chapter 1 we explored different levels of listening and learning to engage in deep dialogue from beyond our intellect, drawing on our emotions, experience, seeing things through the eyes of others, and sensing what possibilities are emerging between us. As we try to practice different kinds of listening, moving deeper from downloading and factual listening to empathic and generative listening, we can pay attention to barriers that may arise within us by listening to our inner voice. Theory U describes **three voices that may inhibit us from moving toward a higher possible but uncertain future – the voice of Judgement, the voice of Cynicism, and the voice of Fear.** Once we recognize that these inner voices are trying to protect us, we can try to gently counter them if they are not serving our purpose in the following ways:



By invoking curiosity and an open mind rather than judging (curiosity and judgement do not thrive together)

By opening our heart, staying engaged and present and trying to cultivate compassion toward others even if we do not agree - trying to see their perspective, rather than being cynical and checking out

By finding the courage to take a step forward with an open will, allowing ourselves to participate in future possibilities that are emerging (but not yet certain), pushing back our fear of the unknown.

Practicing being open to other perspectives: In Chapter 2 we explored the sensing tools, "Stepping into the shoes of another" and "the 6-9 game". These exercises remind us to consider possibilities from a perspective different to our own. You don't have to wait for a workshop to use them. As you engage with others (especially those with whom you may not agree), try to make some space to imagine yourself in their shoes and listen to the discussion through their ears. Then with an open heart, return to your inner voice.

Moving beyond binary (either/ or) thinking: We often have a tendency to see the world in simplistic, black-and-white categories. This may come from the nature of technical training many of us have received. But our contexts and many of the issues that arise as we try to influence change are complex. They often hold multiple realities and a lot of uncertainty. If we always try to reduce things to two certain sides – black or white, for us or against us, we risk dismissing useful information, deepening divides and differences, preventing innovation and blindly holding onto our prejudices by dividing people into rigid categories. This moves us away from our aspirations of being Bridging Leaders who nurture collaboration. Binary thinking makes life simpler. This is why people campaigning for elections often like to communicate in binaries – two opposing sides – theirs and the other. But as we know, this is not necessarily accurate. We all hold many truths within us. For example, we can be scientific and religious; We can care deeply about preventing drowning and also embrace the ICBC project framing of early childhood care, protection and development. One way to counter binary thinking is to embrace both/ and thinking, actively looking for ways to seek out and work with diverse perspectives, exploring how diverse possibilities that seem very different at first, may coexist or inform each other. When you find yourself trying to build an either/ or choice as you try to collaborate, consider if there is a grey area, a larger tent, a way to build synergy between what at first appear as competing ideas.

Building collective power through story: In Chapter 2, we explored the leadership art of public narrative, using the power of storytelling to motivate others. Public narrative offers a helpful way to craft our messages to mobilize the interest and support of others. It draws attention to the story of self (the experiences and information that call you to take leadership on an issue), the story of us (the values and experiences that resonate with our audience), and the story of now (why we should come together now with urgency). This frame can also be used for inner work, helping us reflect on why we are drawn to be a Bridging Leader around an issue; The values and experiences we hold dear and want to share; and The sense of urgency and action we feel. Articulating this for ourselves offers powerful motivation to build meaningful connections with others.

Practice:
Find a quiet space to be with yourself. Take a few moments to settle and feel at ease. Close your eyes if you wish, and take a few breaths. When you feel ready, pick a question from those listed below that you would like to spend some time with. Ask yourself the question and then be still and embrace what comes to you. Make a few notes to remember any insights to which you may want to return. When you are done, think about how you may apply your insights to your current life or work. It takes courage to look within… to be curious about yourself. And this courage helps us grow.

How might I consciously bring my best self to the table today?

What are some ways that binary (either/ or thinking) has limited true reflection of my experience? How can I practice both/and thinking in my life and work today?

What is the advice that I give to others to heal them and help them be effective and thrive? How often do I follow this advice?

How might I express gratitude for the place I occupy in this ecosystem? In this world?

What are the parts of myself that I am hiding from others, or from myself? Why?

CULTIVATING INNER WORK PRACTICES IN THE ICBC PROJECT

The Tender Heart of the Warrior

In preparation for the ICBC project Leadership for Collaboration workshops, Synergos invited participants to share some of the challenges they were facing. Among the challenges that surfaced, fear was one – the fear to do something different, or to go against traditional norms of hierarchy… the fear to share what we truly feel, the fear to say "I don't know", the fear to fail at something, the fear to express an opinion different to someone who holds power, the fear to speak out when we observe something wrong,

In some of the workshops, we reflected on what it meant to cultivate courage. Drawing from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's writings in Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior, we noted that to overcome fear we had to allow ourselves to be tender, sad, and fully present. When we are fearful, we do not allow tenderness to enter into us. We put on a mask of aggressiveness and do not allow ourselves to feel restless, anxious, or excited. When we allow tenderness to touch our hearts, we can truly touch and feel reality – we are fully aware and fully present to connect and sense what is emerging. This is what cultivates fearlessness.

"Real fearlessness is the product of tenderness. It comes from letting the world (touch) your heart, your raw and beautiful heart. You are willing to open up, without resistance or shyness, and face the world. You are willing to share your heart with others."

The range of inner work practices presented in this Chapter may seem daunting, especially for busy people. It is not important that you try them all and it is not necessary that you organize a workshop to explore them. They are offered here as a resource for your journey going forward. The next time you plan a meeting, perhaps you will begin with a minute of mindfulness. Notice how it changes communication in your meeting. Notice your inner voice as you embark on this experiment. Being curious about ourselves and each other opens pathways to exploration and growth. We all have innate goodness and confidence within us. We can cultivate it by noticing its presence.

In preparing and facilitating the ICBC project Leadership for Collaboration workshops, the facilitation team tried several of the practices presented here at different points. There was no pressure for participants to engage. However, many found them deeply valuable.

> **"Listening attentively instead of always talking made me realize it is a practice I should maintain more often."**

> **"I felt I built an organic bond with my partner through sharing and listening. We feel we have developed a lasting friendship."**

Some simply appreciated the space to pause and pay attention to their inner world, to look within without the pressure to share it with others… to reflect on their purpose. Several of those who have participated have since embraced some of these practices in their life and work.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Reflections and stories from the Inner work for social change project hosted by the Fetzer Institute and Synergos https://www.innerworkforsocialchange.org/

You can read more about **inner work** in this paper, "Defining Inner Work for Social Change: A conceptual paper by Shirley Pendlebury" developed for the Inner work for social change project hosted by the Fetzer Institute and Synergos https://syngs.info/files/inner-work-for-social-change-defining.pdf

Videos

Channel 24 interview and discussion with Esha Husain, Peggy Dulany, and Camille Massey of Synergos reflecting on **Bridging Leadership, inclusive collaboration, inner work and serving with love** on the occasion of the Bridging Leadership initiative in Dhaka in February 2024 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQ3zRw4p-Mo

Listen to Abadallah Naeefy from Porticus Bangladesh at the wellbeing summit in Dhaka, 2024. He discusses **the importance of wellbeing,** starting from inner vulnerability and strength to ecological awareness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7lP4XIsrMg

Podcasts

In this Wellbeing Project podcast (Health and Hope in Bangladesh), Monira Rahman from the Innovation for Wellbeing Foundation, Bangladesh shares **insights from the wellbeing summit in Dhaka, 2024.** She discusses her work empowering changemakers and explores emerging paths to creating a movement for mental health and wellbeing https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZI_Xsr_Rgk

Poem, art or song

Relaxing music to rest your mind (used in the district level Leadership for Collaboration workshops): https://youtu.be/-to5Ez_ieZk?si=aTPuwBCIVgPFFlbe

We used this Sitar music in the National Leadership for Collaboration workshop as participants entered and left the room. It helped create an aura of hope, positivity and an invitation to look within: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5izQXuAGifI