

Interdependence in the Face of Cultural Imperatives: Summary

1. Understanding Interdependence

- Distinguishing between dependence as a part of life, and relinquishing self-responsibility.
- Distinguishing between independence as the human capacity for free choice of action, and the choice to act without consideration of others' needs.
- Understanding interdependence as the nature of life, both in the natural world and for human beings
- Choosing to embrace conscious practices of interdependence as a path for personal, interpersonal, and social transformation.

2. Transcending Self-Sufficiency

- Recognizing dependence as a part of life and self-sufficiency as a cultural imperative
- Facing fears of dependence with a willingness to transform the impulse to self-sufficiency
- Recognizing that asking for support provides an opportunity for others to contribute

3. Valuing Ourselves

- Mattering to ourselves sufficiently to hold our needs with care and attend to meeting them
- Trusting that we matter beyond ourselves, whether or not we receive confirmation of that mattering
- Trusting that our needs matter sufficiently to ask for support and to open to receiving (support, love, etc.)
- Risking our significance, trusting that our actions are meaningful and acting on our intentions to contribute

- Valuing what we have to offer sufficiently to act on our care for others, whether or not they are able to ask for support (while not supporting others as a substitute for their own self-responsibility).

4. Everyone Matters

- Hold needs together with others whether or not we can find a solution that works for everyone
- Distinguishing between self-care and "selfishness"
- Distinguishing between holding everyone's needs with care and "altruism" or "selflessness"
- Holding everyone's needs with care even when we don't fully trust that our needs are held with care

5. Power-Sharing and Inclusive Decision Making

- Power and interdependence: Spectrum of whose needs are held in making choices and mobilizing resources.
- Inclusive decision making: Willingness to hold both parties needs even if the other party only holds their own or only holds ours.
- Making, keeping, and changing agreements with care
- Connecting across power differences

Interdependence: Transcending Self-Sufficiency

1. Understanding Independence, Dependence, and Interdependence

For each of the following questions, you can journal, draw images, empathize with yourself, or use any other method to become conscious of what arises inside you.

- a. What thoughts, images, or reactions do you have to the word independence? What does it mean to you?
- b. What needs are served for you when you experience independence? What needs are not served?
- c. What thoughts, images, or reactions do you have to the word dependence? What does it mean to you?
- d. What needs are served for you when you experience dependence? What needs are not served?
- e. What thoughts, images, or reactions do you have to the word interdependence? What does it mean to you?
- f. What needs are served for you when you experience interdependence? What needs are not served?

2. Experiences of Dependence

- a. Have you had experiences in your life when being dependent on others has been painful or challenging for you? Name one experience.
- b. If so, what was challenging about the experience? What needs were not met for you?

- c. What feelings and needs arise in you *now* as you reflect on that period of your life? Please take a few minutes to make full inner connection with your experience.

3. Identifying Challenges Connected to Asking for Support

- a. What are areas of challenge in your life that you are not asking for support with? Choose one to focus on.

- b. What gets in your way of asking for the support you would need with this area of challenge? Identify the thoughts or inner messages that stop you from reaching out.

- c. What are the needs underlying these messages? Take a moment to connect fully with each need you encounter. How do these messages relate to the experiences you explored in section 2 of this journal?

- d. What needs could be met by asking for the support you need? What needs would not be met?

- e. What needs might be met for the people you ask to support you? What needs might not be met?

4. Present Experience

- a. How are you feeling now and what needs are alive in you after doing this journal?

- b. What insights do you have about your relationship with dependence and self-sufficiency?

- c. Do you have any requests of yourself in this moment?

Interdependence: Willingness to Be Moved

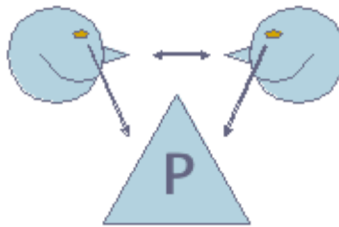
1. Think of a conflict you are part of, or a decision that needs to be made that involves another person. Choose a person that you struggle to hear open heartedly or that you struggle to collaborate with.
2. Sum up for yourself in one line what this person may be asking you to hear or do.
3. Take a moment to connect with your own needs that arise in relation to this person to support you in opening your heart.
4. What are some of the needs this person may have? Reflect on these needs. Whenever you find yourself retreating from openness to this person, remind yourself that you are simply connecting with the person's needs, not agreeing to anything this person does, says, or asks of you.
5. If you notice continuing challenge in opening your heart, consider: what needs might be met for you in opening your heart? Focus on yourself, not on any benefit or contribution to the other person. Take time to connect with these needs and notice any feelings that arise. Then ask yourself: am I *willing* to open my heart to this person? If not, what needs are in the way? As you connect with *these* needs, consider which needs you want to attend to at this time: those that may be met by opening your heart, or those that lead you to the choice to keep your heart closed.
6. If you do choose to open your heart to this person's needs, what changes in you? Take time to connect with your emotional state at this time, and with any shifts in the way you perceive or think about the person and/or the situation.
7. What might change in your response to this person in real life?
8. Notice your feelings and needs in this moment. Did this process attend to any needs for you? Any insights that arise?



From Conflict ...



... to Dilemma



Making, Keeping, and Changing Agreements with Care: Reference

Draft February 2009 · Inbal Kashtan and Miki Kashtan --

KEYS:

- a. Making agreements with care: We see this as the capacity to make a clear choice when we make an agreement, with ourselves or another person, whether this agreement is one we really WANT to enter into based on connection with the needs we're hoping to meet. If self-connection is a challenge, a strategy we would use to work on this is to practice saying to people who ask for an agreement with you something like this: "I would like to consider whether or not agreeing to this will work for me, and I will get back to you by _____ with a response." It's not the words, it's the intention to make space for full reflection instead of habitually saying yes or habitually saying no; cultivating the awareness to agree because it will meet your needs, and not out of fear of consequences or a desire to please. Alternately, you could practice in the moment reflecting on what needs would lead you to saying yes, what needs to saying no, and given this, considering whether to say yes or no. A key question for some of us may be whether we are able to "hear" our inner misgivings clearly enough, or whether we override them in some way when we say "yes" (or "no").
- b. Keeping agreements with care: We see this as the capacity to evaluate whether staying with an agreement we made is still meeting our needs other than harmony and peace, and being able to recognize that an agreement is not meeting our needs any longer.
- c. Changing agreements with care: We see this as the capacity to renegotiate with the other party a new strategy that would address both our needs. This is the trickiest aspect of reliability and interconnectedness. Sometimes, when people discover the freedom possible with NVC, they express that freedom by prioritizing their own needs to the exclusion of consideration of the other party's needs (thus not meeting their own needs for consideration of others and interdependence). This can be expressed by changing or breaking agreements without consideration of the other party's needs that may have been met in the existing agreement, and thus without looking together with the other party for strategies to meet both parties' needs. This is where dialogue skills are particularly essential, so that we can communicate to the other party that our needs are no longer met, while at the same time conveying the commitment and care for the other party's needs. Conveying our care to the other party goes beyond just expressing it, and includes, ultimately, the willingness to stay open to the possibility of shifting our own strategy of changing the agreement. In reality, we may not be able to include the other party to this degree. In that case, we can show up authentically and honestly to grieve our crisis of imagination or resources.

Interdependence: Making, Keeping, and Changing Agreements with Care

Note: Refer to the handout in the reference section before answering the following questions.

Consider for yourself which of the three areas (making, keeping, or changing) is one that you most want to grow in. You are welcome to explore all three areas. In all three, the questions below are about the present, but you are welcome to explore agreements you have made, kept, or broken in the past, whether or not you did it with care.

1. With regards to making agreements with care: choose an agreement that you have not yet made and are considering making.
 - a. What needs are leading you to want to make the agreement?

 - b. What needs may not be met with making that agreement?

 - c. What would it look like to make that agreement with care?

 - d. What dialogues would you want to have to explore whether making that agreement would meet needs for you and the other person, and what other strategies may meet those same needs?

2. With regards to keeping agreements with care: choose an agreement that you have kept for a while.
 - a. What needs are met with keeping the agreement (especially needs other than harmony and ease)?

 - b. What needs are not met?

- c. In moments when your needs are not met with keeping the agreement, are you connected with the needs that led you to take on the agreement?
 - d. Overall, does keeping this agreement meet your needs?
3. With regards to changing agreements with care: choose an agreement that you are considering changing.
- a. What needs are no longer met?
 - b. What needs are still met?
 - c. How open is your heart to holding the other person's needs?
 - d. As you imagine entering into a dialogue with the other person, check with yourself: have you already made a decision to change or break the agreement, or would you be entering the dialogue fully open to the dialogue and the strategies that might emerge from connection?
4. If you want to take this further, you can write out a mock dialogue as you imagine it might take place with the other person, exploring at each juncture in the dialogue your own authentic responses and openness to yourself and to the other person's needs.