

PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 7 conditions for sustainable personal, organizational, professional and spiritual development with Psychophonetics¹

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Human development is unstoppable. Since we first stood up on our two feet and freed our hands for expression, relationship and work – we have never stopped changing and developing. The history of our civilization is a record of constant change. Like it or not – change and development is as natural to our species as breathing, eating, thinking, walking and talking. We live in a time when the pace of outer change is much faster than the pace of inner change, which means constant crisis. The dynamics of change will not slow down. In order to survive and to stay true to our essential humanity – we have to continuously change and transform.

There could be very different motivations for change but only change that is guided by that which is essentially human in our being can be beneficial and sustainable. We know a lot and talk a lot about environmental, economic and physical sustainability. In this article I wish to speak about 'People's sustainability' and of 'sustainable personal development'.

While the drive for change seems to be built into our constitution, the direction, nature and sustainability of the personal change have to be created consciously. If you want to grow a tree – you have to know the nature of the tree, of the soil, the environment, and the required conditions for the growth of that particular tree. So is the case with a growing child: you have to work with the child's innate nature as it is at the present while, at the same time, holding a vision of its future development. That is also the case with a growing adult as the basis for the development of relationship, family, community, organization, nation and international relationship.

A deep insight into the underlying nature of growing human beings is required for sustainable personal and professional development. Such insight is at the origin of the '*7 Conditions for Spiritual Development*' articulated by Rudolf Steiner³ early last century⁴. It was given sustainable spiritual development at the start of the 20th century, but it was hardly put to practical use. He did not make them up himself. It is his early attempt of making public ancient initiation knowledge for the training of the leadership of humanity, which until then was the privileged of the select few. These principles are now available for everyone.

No tree is just growing up. A healthy tree is grows up and down: for every new branch visible in the sunlight – there grows a new root under the ground invisibly. That is sustainable. So it is with people's development: conditions apply. The following is a list of the Seven Fundamental conditions for sustainable personal and spiritual development. They were first published in one of Steiner's earliest books on personal development⁵. They were made into a practical path of sustainable personal and professional development by the curriculum of the

¹ A modality of personal and professional development and therapy based on Rudolf Steiner's Psychosophy.

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³ Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) an Austrian philosopher, scientist, educator and psychologist, founder of Anthroposophy and of Psychosophy.

⁴ Rudolf Steiner (1904) 'Knowledge of the Higher Worlds' chapter 5: 'The Conditions for Spiritual Development'.

⁵ Rudolf Steiner (1904) 'Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its attainment' chapter 5.

Foundation Year of Psychophonetics⁶ (Mentoring for Sustainable Personal Development) since its beginning in 1991 in Australia. We have to train people in personal sustainability before we can train them to become mentors, coaches, counselors, consultants and therapists for others. The following is a short description of the 7 conditions for personal and spiritual development:

1) Commitment to take personal responsibility for one's own Well Being on the basis of your own intuition – on the physical, environmental, mental, emotional and spiritual levels

2) Commitment to cultivate of Empathy methodically – an on-going commitment to upgrade one's practical ability to listening, observing and perceiving others' experience and meaning from their own point of view.

3) Commitment to conscious Self-management – regarding one's inner life as if it was real - Developing practical skills for self awareness, perspective regarding one's own emotions, desires, motivations, reactions, projections. Taking responsibility and care for one's own human reality.

4) Commitment to cultivate tolerance and respect for differing realities - Commitment to the on-going cultivation of acknowledgement and respect for the truth of others on the basic of respecting one's own truth, identity and boundaries.

5) Commitment to making conscious decision and to Act on these decisions – the commitment to conscious decision making that expresses one's higher nature, and to the cultivation of the will to act on these decisions. Identifying and overcoming hindrances for action constructively.

6) Commitment to the conscious cultivation of Gratitude – the conscious cultivation of gratitude and appreciation as soul nurturing.

7) Commitment to Consistency – the on-going commitment to the consistency of living and acting on the basis of all the above standards

Before speaking in more details about each of the 7 conditions I need to mention the method of making them practicable. As ideas and ideals they don't go very far. Only when trying to change habitual established life patterns – the typical difficulties become conscious. Habits have not been created consciously and to change them requires perspective on oneself, which is not possible with intellectual effort alone. A special effort and practical process is required. As described in the February edition of Vitalita⁷ the possibility exists to observe objectively one's own experiences, emotions and behavioral patterns. Psychophonetics is one practical way of doing it. What enables Psychophonetics to create 'self-perspective' is its engagement of 'Deep Intelligence' tools of non-verbal communication: Body Awareness, Gesture and Movement, Visualizations and Sounds. Together they enable perspective between one's awareness and one's experience which enables deep change.

The Seven Conditions were given, potentially to everyone, as preparation for sustainable spiritual development. A whole range of contemplations and meditations follows that preparation, aiming at the conscious cultivation of higher faculties of perception, of transformation and of initiation. But even taken individually, any practical attempt to upgrade one's ordinary life in the direction of the 7 conditions will result in significant changes on all levels.

Take for example the first condition: **Commitment to take personal responsibility for one's own well being on the basis of your own intuition.** This is not just about being healthy, although that is a major motivation for making that commitment. In order to fulfill this commitment the following is required:

⁶ Certificate in Mentoring for Personal Sustainability - Facilitation qualification for Stress Management, Self-Care, Resilience, Methodical Empathy for management & Human Services personnel with Psychophonetics. It is the Foundation Year for the Advanced Diploma in Psychophonetics – Consultancy for Sustainable Personal Development and for a Fellowship Diploma in Anthroposophical Psychotherapy. www.pace.sk <> www.psychophonetics.com

⁷ Yehuda Tagar, Vitalita, February 2014 "Evolution of Consciousness".

- 1) Stop and acknowledge how you are;
- 2) Remember what it feels like to be really healthy;
- 3) Confront the compromises and distortions and blocks that exist in you limiting your wellbeing, strength, energy, joy;
- 4) Acknowledge and face everything that you are habitually doing which damages and compromises your health, and take responsibility for it;
- 5) Learn to listen to your own body, emotions, heart, energy, needs, pains on all levels – with interest, empathy, acceptance, patience and care;
- 6) Listen to your own intuition which will tell you exactly what is going on in you and what you need to change;
- 7) Take a position of leadership in your own life and act towards changing habits and aspects of life style that are destructive to your wellbeing, in light of your own intuition;
- 8) Face the struggle to change habits, monitor changes, listen to deep responses, review your direction of care, learn from experience and keep changing.

Taking the First Condition for personal and spiritual development seriously and practically results immediately in practical steps of developing: courage to face yourself; honesty with yourself about yourself; empathy to your own being (which is the only real foundation for empathy with others); taking responsibility, authenticity, autonomy; listening to your own intuition; inner leadership (which is the only basis for any true leadership) clarity of observation, and strengthening of the will. And this is just the first condition.

Each one of the 7 conditions effects all the other six and one's whole being. It makes an integral whole. Each step in the development of the seven conditions, even if coming 'only' from the simple intention to function better in one's own personal and professional life - will become a spiritual exercise for the following reason: every conscious, honest and free initiative to take a step in one's personal development - is in fact a spiritual activity, because the one that is doing it is a conscious spirit – one's own 'I', a personal spirit in action.

In the depth of the soul of each one of us there lies dormant the potential for higher development⁸. Activating consciously the next step in our personal development is what makes us fully human. Everyone can be a complete human being in the middle of any outer circumstances, however hard and challenging. But no one can claim to express one's full humanity without striving to fulfill one's own higher potential through the opportunity of one's life as it is. The striving to grow as a human being is essential to *being* a complete human being.

For desired changes in our outer lives – we are dependent on outer circumstances: work, money, partners, families, colleagues, houses, locations, education. But for inner development no other changes are necessary. What is necessary is the commitment for conscious upgrading of the basic conditions necessary for real and sustainable personal development. It requires practical changes in the habits which unconsciously control the way we interact with our life, inwardly and outwardly. Such a commitment forms the transition from living one's life as a purpose in itself into living it as an opportunity for personal development. The seven conditions offer a complete course of life-training of personal, spiritual, social and professional development.

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⁸ That is the solemn promise made by Rudolf Steiner at the opening sentence of his historic book mentioned above.