

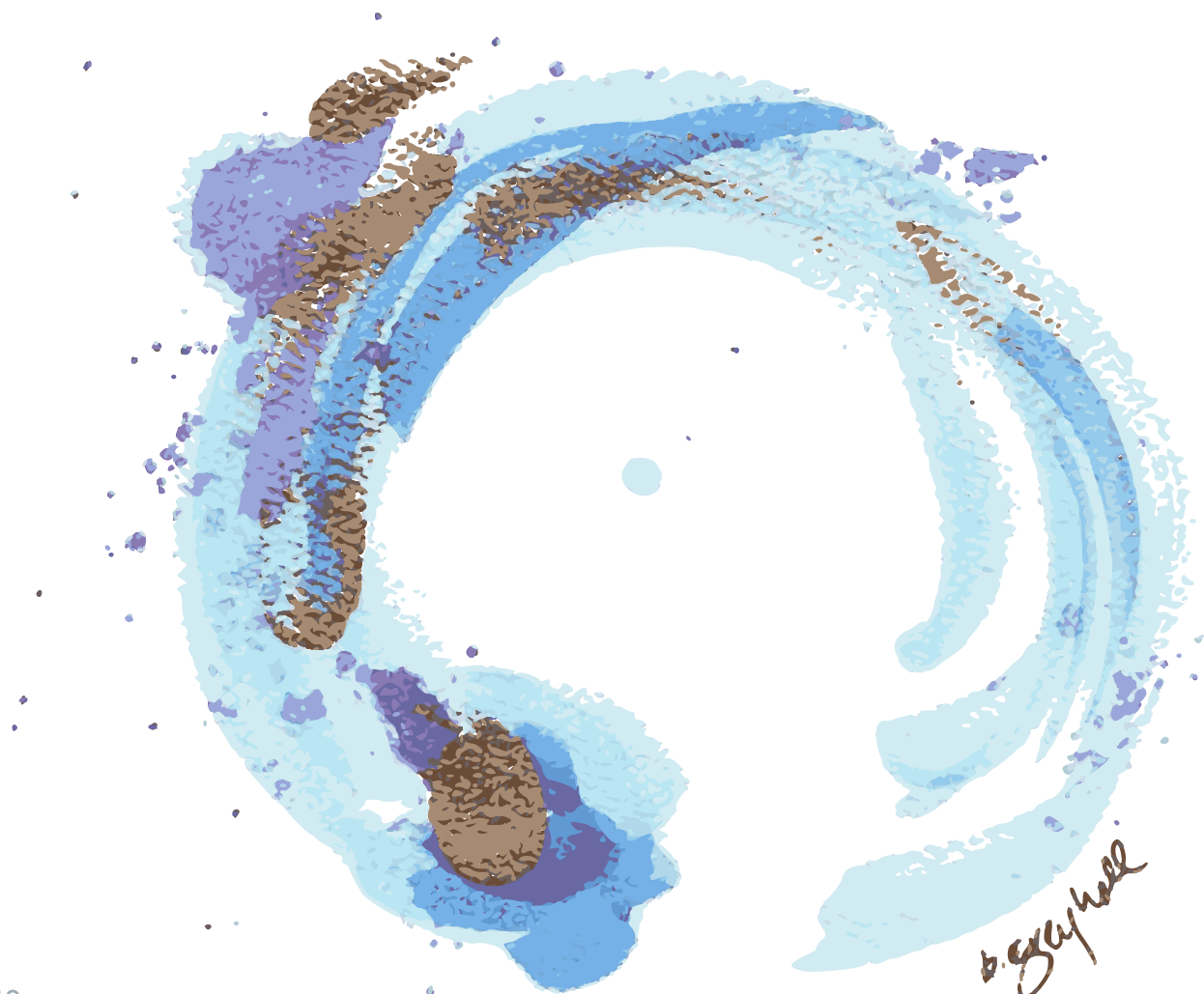


COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE

PIP COBURN

Foundational Ideas Series

THE HOUSEFLY FORMULA



AUGUST, 2019

cvcommunityforchange.org

Artist: Grey Hall Borneman

The Housefly Formula



Community for Change: Foundational Ideas Series

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In May of 2016, I was talking with Amanda Posa, our Coburn Ventures Community For Change Fellow. Amanda is studying Sustainability at the University of Florida. I was on the elliptical machine at the Breakwater Inn (which has been my local “gym” for the past 12-13 years since we bought a second residence in Goose Rocks Beach, Maine). I think Amanda may have been calling from one of the beaches around New York City, although she might get a little defensive if I suggested such – I don’t think she has fully unpacked her own “guilt” of working from a beach. Thankfully I have had no problem with that! :)

So...

I asked her, “What is your working definition of ‘Sustainability?’”

The way I figured, if she is going to perhaps spend her life “doing” “sustainability” she might be all the more powerful and effective in that pursuit if she decided what SHE MEANT with that word. I wasn’t looking for her to mimic someone else’s working definition but, rather, I wanted her to craft her very, very own. She spent the rest of the summer developing her sustainability working definition such that it became her own.

I knew in that one conversation that she was going to be an incredible Fellow due to this simple question about her working definition of “sustainability” triggered deep engagement, lead to a 50-minute conversation and a great workout for me and likely a modest sunburn for Amanda. She relentlessly continued digging for weeks and weeks on the assignment.

Her other major summer 2016 assignment was to develop thinking on “*8 critical elements in making lasting change*”. She generated a stellar set of thoughts on “Making Lasting Change” (*attached*) that we have been routinely using in fire-starting many of our brainstorm sessions at Coburn Ventures as well as in the Community For Change. (We don’t really believe in “making lasting change” or “making change last” because the word “*last*” might be at odds with our observation of *impermanence* but in a relative sense, there is a difference in the failed New Year’s resolution to “eat healthy” that “lasts” only until January 24th versus a change that lasts through one’s lifetime.)



Here is why I thought to give Amanda these assignments: *I think there is real problem in our world.*

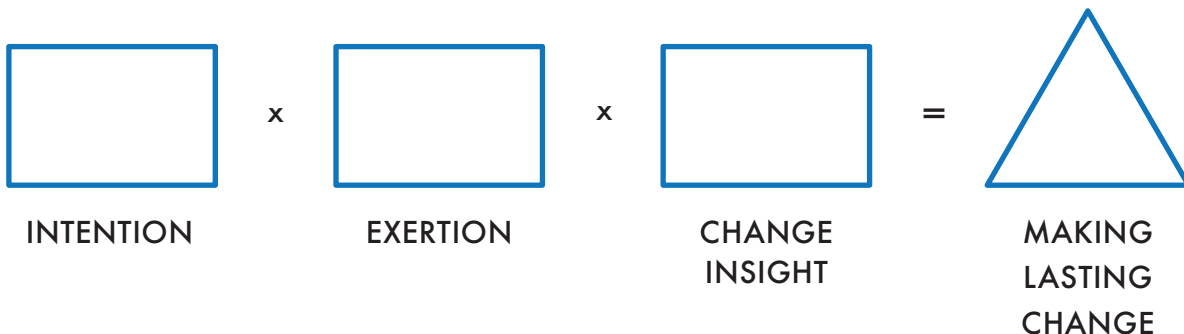
While we all seem to want an improved world with lasting positive change, we don't know how to do it!

Aside: For now, in this unforgettable moment of 2017, I want to set aside the idea that many, many people have many, many different world views which lead to, at times, very different opinions on what an improved world looks like and how to get there.

For today...

From my lens as an enthusiastic student of monumental change for over twenty years now, my observation is that there is ten lifetimes more for me to learn about change than I have so far taken in... and that being a student of change is asking for a life of questions, moreso than answers, which appeals to very few.

My experience is that society at large is lacking knowledge about change itself. So, I created a simple little formula. After speaking with Amanda Posa, I thought she had boatloads of intention and exertion but hadn't yet started any study of "change" and its patterns. The Fellowship is our aim at making a difference to the next generation of difference makers.



Generically I consider that there are THREE COMPONENTS in someone's or some organization's ability to CREATE lasting CHANGE:

- 1. Intention
- 2. Exertion
- 3. Insight about Making Change

...being a student of change is asking for a life of questions, moreso than answers, which appeals to very few.

We are societally blessed with change makers!



...And of those change makers, the world also has many many who are more than willing to exert their energy to create change, such as Amanda Posa.

But not too many people have been studying change. It isn't taught in grade school or college. Societally we put phrases on t-shirts that say things like, "change is the only constant," but we still deeply suffer in resisting "impermanence". We put "be the change you want to see in the world — Gandhi," but we usually look outward and blame when struggles arise.

Societally, we don't have nearly enough comprehension of how to make lasting change and implicitly we behave as if intention and exertion are enough... I don't think they are at all.

Deep knowledge and insight into making change last seems to be THE missing ingredient. And it is complex!

People like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. didn't stand out because of greater exertion or intention to create change more than others, so much as they possessed far greater wisdom about how to affect that change and it worked. They were successful!

For me I suspect I will continue my own study until the day I pass.

For today, we thought we would offer some sampling of Coburn Ventures work to the wider Community For Change. Specifically, we are including below a note highlighting FIVE of the change frameworks we have routinely come to deploy across years as one set of building blocks. We consider that all of them translate well into change in a broad set of conditions and these tools are just the tip of the iceberg.

— PIP

