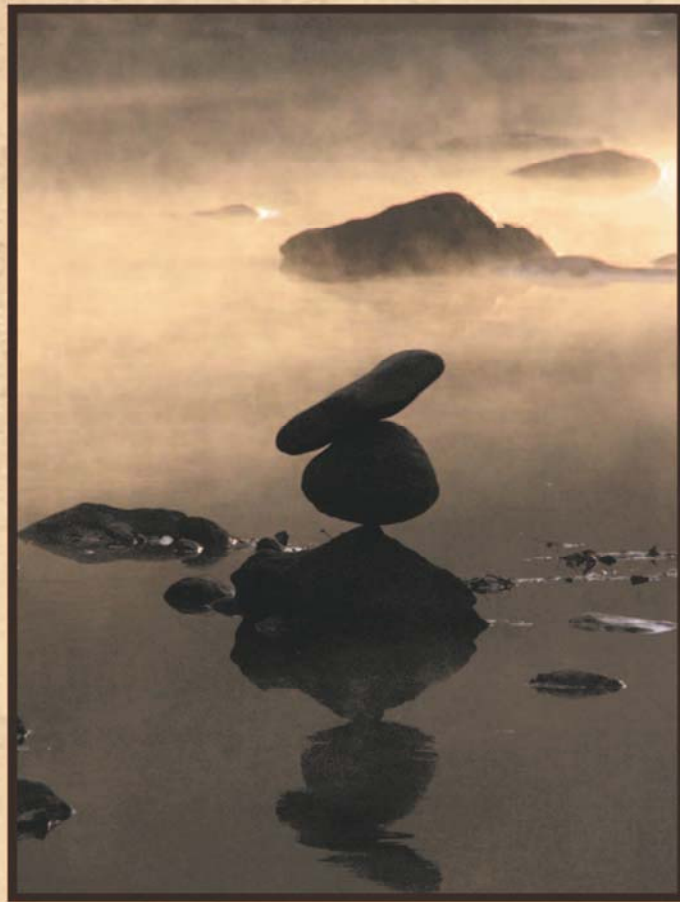


# PRESENCE-BASED LEADERSHIP

COMPLEXITY PRACTICES FOR CLARITY,  
RESILIENCE, AND RESULTS THAT MATTER



## DOUG SILSBEE

FOREWORD BY KEVIN CASHMAN

## Advance Praise for *Presence-Based Leadership*

*Presence-Based Leadership* is a gift. Silsbee transparently shares his thinking, experience, and self. This wonderful volume actively cultivates the experience of presence in the reader. And, Silsbee articulates a strong case for presence as the core practice of consciousness in a world of polarity and complexity. We are fortunate to have this gift: listen as this book speaks!

—Robert C. Pianta; PhD, Dean, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia

For leaders in an age of overwhelming complexity, Silsbee offers deceptively simple guidance: a profound focus on the present. “Embodying what matters” gives leaders a dispassionate and actionable foundational understanding. This core insight, and thought-provoking practices throughout, is having a profound impact on how I show up as a leader and as a human being.

—Michael J. Anderson; Global Managing Partner; Leadership Advisory Business, Spencer Stuart

An expansive book for anyone in a leadership role, and for leadership development professionals. Silsbee integrates systems theory, neuroscience, somatics, mindfulness, complexity and leadership. His synthesis is accessible, yet challenges readers’ ways of thinking, being and acting. This is a wise, insightful and intensely practical foundation for leading in ever-increasing levels of complexity.

—Bill Pullen; MCC, Co-Program Director, Leadership Coaching Program, Institute for Transformational Leadership, Georgetown University

The final book in Silsbee's must-read trilogy on leadership and coaching is the most important of all. In a crucial moment in history, Silsbee's book provides an exquisite guide for making meaning out of new patterns, "loosening the grip of outmoded habits" and leading at our best. This leadership model is brilliant!

—Pamela McLean; PhD, CEO, Hudson Institute of Coaching

The surge in healthcare complexity defies solutions. Yet in *Presence-Based Leadership*, Silsbee offers radical new perspectives and a pathway towards the answers we seek. Those answers are within us, emanating from our presence, our awareness, and the possibilities waiting to be realized through ourselves and those we lead.

—Sheldon Stadnyk; MD, Physician Executive, Leadership Development,  
Former Chief Medical Officer, Banner Health

All of us in leadership encounter dilemmas that stymie our best efforts. Sometimes, we are able to pause and recognize that we are in a different game than we thought. Doug's third book offers experiences and powerful reflections about the personal and organizational transformations that can follow from these crucial moments.

—Bill Torbert; PhD, Emeritus Professor of Leadership, Boston College,  
and author of 12 books

This book springs forth with the practical wisdom of a masterful leadership coach as we explore how to transform our relationship with the complex challenges we face. Here is practical guidance for harnessing the power of attention and presence to become a resilient catalyst for positive change. Be present with this work. Embody it, and watch your leadership evolve.

—Ginny Whitelaw; President, Institute for Zen Leadership, author of *The Zen Leader*

No leadership class nor treatise on the secrets of successful CEOs can teach you how to embrace the complexity, uncertainty, and shifting ground beneath your feet. Doug brilliantly and courageously reveals precisely where to find the clarity and resilience to access your skills and knowledge in those critical moments most vital to your success. This is radical new work at a crucial juncture in history.

—Marcia Reynolds; PhD, Former President, Global ICF,  
and Author of *Outsmart Your Brain*

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## Nine Panes for Leadership

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*Our theory determines what we can observe.*

– Albert Einstein

*The map is not the territory.*

– Alfred Korzybski

**B**RINGING AWARENESS AND PRESENCE TO THE META-COMPETENCIES OF SENSING, Being, and Acting, and recognizing the inherent limitations of your Bell Jar, will begin to reveal a vaster range of possibilities than you ever knew was possible. Within this expanded range will inevitably lie many choices for how to engage in new and creative ways with your Complexity Challenges.

In this chapter, you will add one more key set of distinctions to our overall framework. As a leader, you influence the systems around us. However, you are often blind to the multiple nested levels of system that are present in every situation, influencing you even as you myopically focus on the limited data that your Bell Jar allows you to see.

As a leader, you must not only engage with the **Context** system in which you lead. You must also acknowledge and negotiate with the automatic and incessant drives of your own **Identity** system within that Context. And, you must learn to direct awareness into the ceaseless dynamism of your **Soma**

(body) system as it self-organizes to respond to the world and perpetuate your Identity.

Whoa! Three different systems, all part of this Complexity. What's a leader to do? Right now, this may seem esoteric, but like Rachel—and like me, when Walker and I were creating Bend of Ivy Lodge—it's a safe bet that you are at this very moment missing significant data on less-obvious levels of system that could radically inform the way you lead.

This will prove both pragmatic and relevant. Hang in there.

## CONTEXT, IDENTITY AND SOMA

Let's look more closely at the distinctions of Context, Identity, and Soma, which have been mentioned many times, beginning with the introduction, but have not been foregrounded until now. The differentiation of these three levels of system will play an important part in our meaning-making in Complexity.

### Nested Systems

If we look around, we can easily find countless examples of *nested systems* of things.<sup>20</sup> For starters, think of the classic hierarchical structure of an organization. Or the design of governance in a representative democracy.

Now, switch your imagination to the physical. Imagine one of the marvelous sets of Russian *matryoshka* dolls. A tiny doll at the center is contained within a larger one, which is in turn contained within a still larger one. At home, I have a gorgeous set of ten nested dolls, and they are made with up to seventy.

Now, imagine the following nested system. Subatomic particles combine to form atoms. Atoms bond to form molecules. Get enough of the right molecules together and arrange them properly, and you get a human cell. *Include* other cells and *transcend* the single cell, and you get a heart, a neuron, a bone. Include and transcend again, and you have a living, breathing human. Put a group of humans around a table, and you have a team (or a family). Put teams together and you have an organization. Keep going, and you get to industries, cultures, nation-states, a species, a planet. (Sounds simple on paper, but it took the creative forces of the universe some 13.8 billion years to discover how to do this!)

You can easily see that, in this nested system, every level has an influence on the levels above and below it. Cells exist in dynamic interaction with the organs of which they are a part; each level influences the other. Leaders influence, and are influenced by, the



Context in which they lead. Component parts on any level exist not only in relationship with other parts on that level, but also in relation to the levels above (in which they are included) and in relation to the levels below (of which they are comprised).<sup>21</sup>

It is important to recognize that *the present-moment reality of any Complexity situation in fact exists on multiple, simultaneous levels of a nested system.* The interactions and interdependencies between levels are an inherent part of the complexity of the overall system. As leaders, recognizing and leveraging these interactions has a profound impact on our understanding of how the whole system actually works, and therefore on our capacity to produce results that we care about.

*Emergent phenomena on any level of a nested system are determined by interactions and dynamics in the levels of system below it.* What happens in a human system (Context) is produced by interactions between the people that make up that system. And, how each individual (Identity) acts is determined by complex and invisible interdependencies within his or her psychobiology (Soma).

Following this logic, we arrive at a radical new realization. Understanding the functioning and causalities of any complex human system requires a new and non-negotiable awareness. To begin to understand a system, we must include, in our Sensing and perceptions, the conditioned driving forces embodied deeply and invisibly in the Somas of the individuals that make up that system.

Yet, most of us cannot see or access the information and perspectives inherent in the scales of system either bigger or smaller than we are trained to observe. Mostly, we have been rewarded for paying attention to the external Context that immediately impacts us. Other levels of system that absolutely shape our reality remain invisible, obscured by our myopic attention to the Context immediately outside and surrounding us.

This is another Bell Jar. We are blind to the multiple levels of system, which, in their dynamic interdependence, produce everything around us. Recognizing and lifting this blindness will be crucial to our Sensing of Complexity.

A new set of distinctions is emerging here. Let's make the levels of this nested system explicit and describe them so that we can get better at recognizing the complexity of the dynamic and adaptive multilevel system of which we are a part. Thus, we will access a deeper understanding of the system that will, in turn, inform how we create conditions for what matters.

## Context

The system occurring around us is our human *Context*. This can include many levels of scale, but whatever naturally comes to mind for you is probably the right starting point for your Complexity Challenge. Some readers are leaders

in a team, others in a university, marriage, family, nonprofit, company or community. Context, for our purposes, is the level of human system within which you consider yourself a leader.

Context, of course, also could include the larger ecosystem and economies in which you play a part. It could include the health of the planet, and the macro systems that we read about in the news but that we imagine have impacts elsewhere but not on us. Of course, we are directly or indirectly affected by all of it, and presence relentlessly deepens our connection to these larger views.

As we examine what is really important to us, it is important to consider the biggest possible view that we can choose to organize around. That said, on a daily basis, we focus most often on the level of Context that is the human system in which we consider ourselves a leader, and that's mostly what we will address here.

Our Context is the most obvious level of system to see. It is the level to which we've been most trained to pay attention, and it is what we naturally organize around and attempt to act upon as leaders. However, it is only one level; we ignore others at our peril.

## Identity

As unique individuals, we function as an *Identity* system. Our Identity is our individual personality, our sense of our self in the world as an entity with particular characteristics that are uniquely ours: strengths, ambitions, skills, awareness, choice and free will.

As with Rachel, and with me at Bend of Ivy, it is a human tendency to make meaning of our Context in ways that are Identity-driven. We seek to protect and affirm our sense of who we are in the world. We are, each one of us, a *self-system* that is in the business of self-organizing to perpetuate itself and to maintain the illusion of a secure stasis.

Our Identity system is also a component of various super-systems (our teams, organizations, communities, nation-states, etc.). These super-systems include other humans, each of whom is protecting and affirming their own sense of who they are in the world. Our identities are strongly affected by these larger super-systems; we might feel enlivened or threatened. Either way, we can sometimes react in ways that aren't helpful. And, the ways in which we respond in turn affect that super-system.

## Soma

Similarly, each of us is comprised of sub-systems (our nervous system, muscles, bones, endocrine system, heart, etc.). These have been conditioned

by our life experiences as a psychobiology that provides both the physical basis for life and the biological substrate of personality. Our *Soma*<sup>22</sup> refers to this set of psychobiological structures, as well as the conditioned functioning through which these structures preserve our Identity and produce our subjective experience.

Our internal *somatic* sub-systems collaborate rather elegantly to keep the physical body functioning, as well as maintain the psychobiology that underpins and encodes our sense of who we are. They are strongly affected by what our Identity is experiencing (particularly when it is threatened!). They are trained to act consistently and automatically to defend and perpetuate the Identity system that we imagine ourselves to be.

*Somatic literacy* is the essential capacity to be present with our own intimate internal dynamism as we respond to and generate our worlds. It is the essential entry point to Sensing, moment by moment, how our somatic sub-systems interact to express thoughts, emotions, sensations, urges, internal states, and ultimately actions.

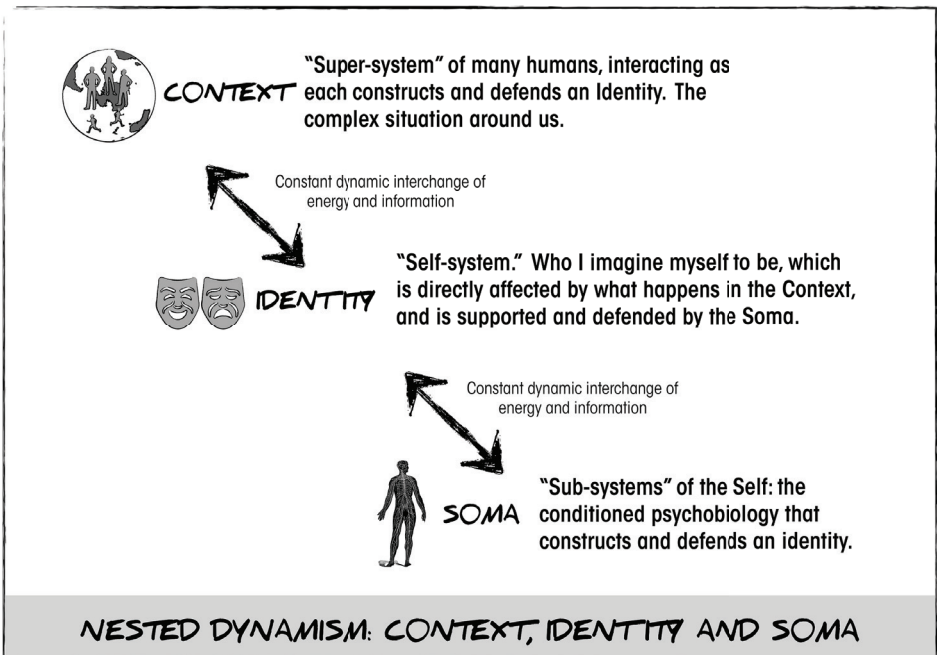


Figure 4.1

Because all thought or behavior arises from conditions in the Soma, information from our Soma system reveals previously invisible but mission-critical influences in the overall multilevel system in which we hope to lead.

### **Nested Systems as a Lens on Complexity**

What is enabled by seeing this multilevel nested system as a lens upon our Complexity situations?

Each of these levels of system—Context, Identity, and Soma—is an integral and critical component of the overall situation in which we intend to lead. The conditions and tendencies of each level have profound influences on the others, as well as on the whole. Yet, some of those effects are simply invisible to us. Because these dynamics are not obvious and take energy and attention to recognize, we miss crucial pieces of information about how the whole system in which we are leading is functioning. This information could profoundly influence our choices.

Let's look at what happened with Rachel with these three levels of structure as a lens. With the stepping stones of our new distinctions, hindsight reveals intricate dynamics of Context, Identity, and Soma. All were present during Rachel's brief honeymoon, the dawning realization that the ship was still sinking, and the turnaround process.

For Rachel, the growing awareness of how her Identity was entangled with the Context, along with how her Soma automatically acted to protect and defend her Identity, became instrumental in the turnaround. These enabled fresh approaches for Rachel to both observe and intervene in the Context itself.

#### ***Rachel recognizes the interdependencies of Context, Identity and Soma***

Initially, when Rachel stepped into the CEO slot after the resignation of her predecessor, the entire organization breathed a sigh of relief. The Board as well as other leaders were appreciative and encouraging. To a person, they told her that her kind and caring manner would be important for restoring trust and getting the company back on its feet. *We can see, with the benefit of hindsight, that there was a lot of energy in the **Context** that supported Rachel's emphasis on culture and people. This, of course, resonated with Rachel's **Identity**-based tendency to rely on well-practiced strengths. Rachel's **Soma** responded with excitement, energy, and a sense of optimism, all of which reinforced her meaning-making that she could make the difference.*

After several months, it became increasingly apparent that the company wasn't out of the woods. Staff appreciated more flex hours and Friday afternoon social events. But another major customer went to the competition, and the quarterly

financials were terrible. Staff felt that they were entitled to some good treatment, but many started asking what Rachel intended to do to turn the ship around. The fun atmosphere began to seem forced and artificial, and people became stressed and impatient. *Plenty of evidence in the **Context** indicated all was not well. Rachel's **Identity** and confidence were being challenged. She recognized trouble and was beginning to doubt if she really had the guts, vision and skills to turn things around. Equipped with new **Somatic** distinctions, she recognized a continual sense of weight on her shoulders, persistent anxiety, knotted shoulders and an instant urgency to put positive spin on bad news. All this contributed to the atmosphere of anxiety she was trying to change.*

Rachel reached out for help, engaging a coach who could also work with the entire leadership team. Intensive work for her, and off-site work for the team, led to a multipronged collaborative effort on rebuilding trust, building shared accountability around performance, and going after some of the customers that had been lost over the past couple of years. *Rachel saw her developmental edge. Her go-to behaviors were both useful and incomplete. She saw that her **Identity** needed to include driving rigor and accountability, while transcending her natural focus on care-taking. She built the skill of paying attention to her inner **Somatic** experience. Rachel learned to spot, in the moment, her internal urges to duck difficult conversations about performance in the guise of "trust-building." In-the-moment awareness enabled Rachel to intervene in her own automaticity and to bring forward new actions. Rachel's broader range of leadership behaviors inspired and energized others in her **Context**, engaging staff in new collaborative processes that produced shared ownership.*

As I hope that you are beginning to see, excluding any of the three levels from awareness means we miss crucial information about the operation of the whole system in which our Identity and our Soma play vital parts.

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#### Experiment 4.1: **The Nested Levels of System and Your Challenge**

This is an initial opportunity to name and acknowledge the three nested levels of system that are most certainly present in your Complexity Challenge.

Context and your Complexity Challenge

- What is the scale of Context most apparent to you in this situation?
- Who are the primary stakeholders who strongly influence the dynamics?

- Who are the less visible, or even invisible, stakeholders who influence the long-term outcomes?

Identity and your Complexity Challenge

- What is at stake for you personally in this situation?
- Who would you be if this challenge is resolved successfully?
- What would you tell yourself *about yourself* if you were not successful?

Soma and your Complexity Challenge

- As you answered the previous questions about Identity, what did you sense in your body?
- What do you sense in your body right now?
- What do you sense in your body most frequently as you engage with this challenge?

## INTRODUCING THE NINE PANES

Realizing the fluidity of the territory of Complexity, and also cultivating the stability of stepping stones for a pathway through it, is our premise.

In Chapter 3, we introduced into our Presence-Based Leadership model *three meta-competencies*: Sensing, Being, and Acting. By attending to these through *presence*, we cultivate present-moment realization of these three core human processes, making visible what is normally invisible. These three meta-competencies influence each other in ways both profound and subtle.

Now in Chapter 4, we have introduced into our model *three levels of a nested system*: *Context, Identity, and Soma*. Each represents a different level of scale. Context is the scale of the situation. Identity is the scale of our personality, the sense of self in that Context. Soma is the scale of the embodied habits and psychobiology that holds our Identity in place. Taken together, these three dynamic and interdependent levels of scale represent a more complete understanding of reality than if any were excluded through our own blindness.

Each level of scale contains information and dynamics upon which our three meta-competencies can operate. Each is fodder for *realization*. Yet, the myopia of our Bell Jars and our single-minded dedication to Identity preservation keep us blind to much of what would otherwise be readily available for us.

How, then, might we remove our blindness?

I propose that we do so systematically through the lens of the Nine-Paned Leadership Model. This model takes our three meta-competencies, on the one

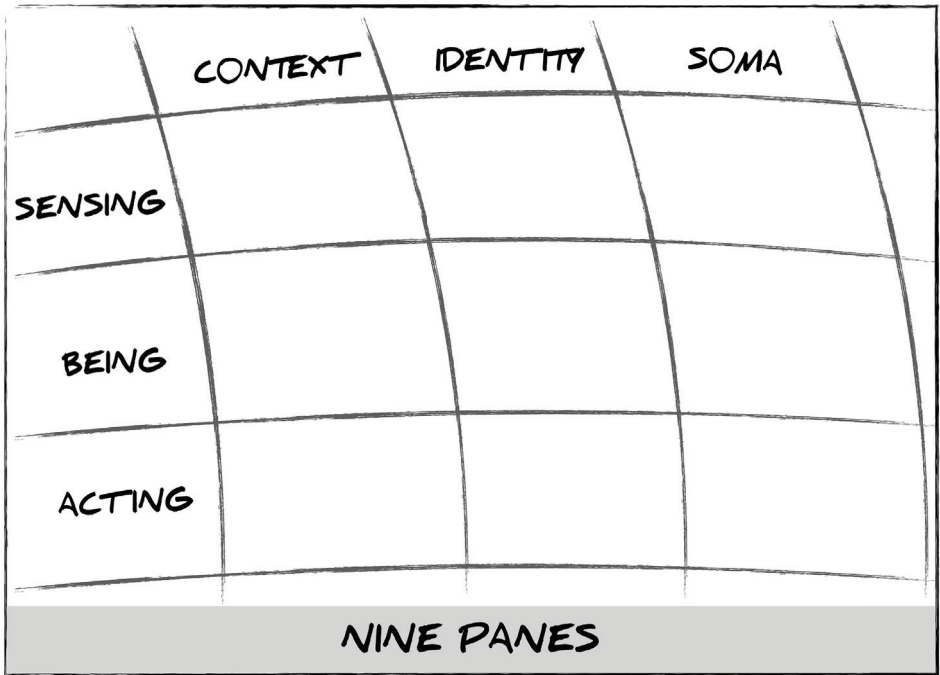


Figure 4.2

hand, and the three nested systems, on the other, and combines them. Three times three equals nine. The result: nine different Panes, or “windows,” or perspectives, into any given situation.

By viewing reality through each of these differentiated Nine Panes, we can fluidly shift our perspectives, access previously unavailable information and practices, and realize more of how reality is truly operating. We become present to what is and more able to lead with clarity and resilience towards results that matter.

### Three Meta-Competencies at Three Levels of Scale

Overlaying *Sensing, Being, and Acting* onto *Context, Identity, and Soma* provides a new meaning-making framework. Each Pane is a unique perspective that integrates an omnipresent meta-competency with an omnipresent level of scale.

This grid is three by three. These are the Nine Panes. We could name other meta-competencies, as well as both bigger and smaller layers of the nested

system. The grid, theoretically, could be four by four, or eleven by six. It could include anything else we decide to throw into the kitchen sink.

In my experience, however, these three simple meta-competencies and three levels of scale are a gold mine. I am not claiming that this model is either complete or rigorously scientific. My chief concern is pragmatism. The Nine Panes are always “on,” always available. As such, the nine views are accessible and useful. They are places to look, providing unconventional and high-leverage ways of working with difficult situations.

Here’s a promise. In the swirl of your Complexity Challenge, each of these Nine Panes offers you:

- A unique *perspective* on some of the critical vectors that influence your immediate situation and that are likely invisible to most people without these distinctions
- A set of *distinctions* that allow you to observe yourself and/or the situation in more inclusive and precise ways, making visible what has previously been invisible to you. These realizations will increase your clarity and understanding of what is true in the moment. They enable new *meaning-making*.
- A set of *practices* that can dramatically increase your present-moment awareness of the choices that are available to you as a leader. These practices will, with some consistency and dedication, produce real and pragmatic embodied capacities for awareness, your way of being, and the actions that are available to you.
- *Core realizations* that are rather universal, and provide a powerful source of clarity and stability for any situation that you may find yourself in

The Nine Panes are particularly powerful when leading in conditions that feel elusive and “stretchy” and new, requiring adaptive learning and development. When the leadership cookbook inevitably fails us, here are nine places to look for new, present-moment understanding.

### **Co-Arising: Distinct and Interdependent**

It’s tempting to see these as nine distinct areas of focus. After all, they are always present, always in operation, always accessible just for the looking.



|   | <b>CONTEXT</b><br>Super-System<br>around the Self   | <b>IDENTITY</b><br>Self-System  | <b>SOMA</b><br>Sub-Systems<br>of the Self:<br>Our Psychobiology  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>SENSING</b><br>RECEIVING<br>Energy<br>and<br>Information | <b>Observe<br/>the system</b><br>Complexity is<br>normal and<br>interesting.<br>Accepting and<br>observing it<br>produces clarity.        | <b>Recognize<br/>Identity<br/>at stake</b><br>Complexity<br>challenges us; it<br>is natural to<br>respond with<br>habits primarily<br>designed to<br>defend Identity. | <b>Attend to<br/>experience</b><br>Recognizing and<br>staying present with<br>internal experience<br>increases<br>information<br>and choice. |
| <b>BEING</b><br>PROCESSING<br>Energy<br>and<br>Information  | <b>Decouple<br/>state from<br/>Context</b><br>Liberating inner<br>state from<br>outer conditions<br>provides<br>resilience and<br>choice. | <b>Embody<br/>what<br/>matters</b><br>Building internal<br>congruence with a<br>future that matters<br>provides an<br>organizing<br>principle for<br>leadership.      | <b>Regulate<br/>inner state</b><br>Directed and<br>focused attention<br>regulates,<br>stabilizes, and<br>shifts inner state.                 |
| <b>ACTING</b><br>EXPRESSING<br>Energy<br>and<br>Information | <b>Scale<br/>awareness</b><br>Complexity-<br>adapted<br>capacities are<br>cultivated through<br>shared<br>experimentation.                | <b>Extend<br/>leadership<br/>presence</b><br>Internal<br>congruence,<br>expressed<br>externally, invites<br>resonance and<br>collaboration<br>with others.            | <b>Tune the<br/>instrument</b><br>Sustained<br>development<br>results from the<br>practice and<br>embodiment of<br>new capacities.           |
| <b>NINE PANES OF PRESENCE-BASED LEADERSHIP</b>              |   |   |  |

Figure 4.3

Each would seem neat, complete, and straightforward, and we might think we can master each and employ them appropriately. And, to some extent, we will explore them as distinct areas of inquiry.

While this isn't wrong, it is a limited view. It is a Bell Jar that could support the reassuring belief that working through the Nine Panes, step by step, would result in a reliable road map that tells us how to use each perspective in the right amount and in the correct order to produce certain results. Sorry, reality doesn't work like this.

Rather, these nine areas of attention *co-arise*. What happens in any Pane affects each of the others. The Nine Panes are dynamic, interdependent, co-arising phenomena.

The bad news about this is that we can't take one Pane and work with and fix it in isolation, as we might replace a broken pane of a window.

The good news is that because of this interconnectedness, action or change in any Pane will necessarily affect others. This interdependence is actually intrinsic to Complexity, and so the dynamism of the model appropriately reflects the dynamism of the interdependent systems we are seeking to engage.

It can be astonishing how a nudge in one place begins to influence others, often in completely unpredictable ways. A major takeaway for leading in Complexity is that we get to experiment and see what happens!

## **An Integrative and Creative View of Leadership**

The subsequent chapters will offer enough to understand what each of the Panes might open for you. I invite you to see the Nine Panes as a *set of lenses through which to engage your own Complexity situation with fluidity, inventiveness, and creativity*.

They are neither a methodology nor a nice, neat process to smooth the ever-shifting emergent process of leading. Rather, the Panes are partial and pragmatic lenses on reality. They are available descriptions that can help us identify areas for attention in navigating this territory.

Taken separately, they offer new distinctions, perspectives and practices. Or, taken together, they are a radically new view of leadership in Complexity. Ultimately, I invite you to embody an artistic, spacious and integrated view of the Nine Panes as a whole. I invite you to practice integrating the parts in new and innovative ways that create the conditions for what you care about to emerge.

For now, with the benefit of new distinctions and equipped with 20/20 hindsight, we can use Rachel's new responses to complex challenges to glimpse some of the leverage points and possibilities that had always been available to her but were previously invisible without these distinctions.

### ***Rachel's leadership is clarified by the Nine Panes***

*With coaching support, Rachel began to see that turning around the company was not simply a matter of building a compassionate culture, nor even figuring out the "right" places to intervene in the system. Rather, it required a creative process for developing herself as a more aware leader, embodying and committed both to compassion and to performance. Rachel's Identity was as much of a change project as the organization itself!*

*Through working with the Nine Panes across the meta-competencies and levels of scale, Rachel became more able to observe and describe the intricacies of the dynamics within her organization, as well as how she was blinded by her own Identity needs.*

*Rachel practiced staying present with herself. She began to recognize the internal sensations of avoidance when a strong move was needed. She learned to settle herself to be both direct and compassionate. Working with her inner state to build resilience became both enjoyable and powerful as she expanded her leadership presence to include a broader range of leadership moves that supported both performance and compassion. She no longer saw these two qualities as being in conflict, and she believed, in fact, that she could be the embodiment of both. She expressed this consistently in her conversations and relationships with others.*

*Small experiments across the organization engaged many people. Paying attention to positive results began to build trust and confidence in Rachel and her people. She saw that through new practices, her own leadership style and the range of moves enabled by awareness were changing in ways that surprised even her. Her confidence and assurance grew in parallel with the organization's success in collectively creating a culture that embraced both compassion and accountability.*

*Rachel's development as a leader was both intricate and exquisite. Her own change process had not been a separate undertaking from the company's change process. And she was both happy and relieved at the growing realization that leadership didn't all rest on her shoulders, but was rather a wholehearted and human participation in a complex and emergent process. Rachel marveled at how much had changed in six months!*

Consider, for a moment, what opened for Rachel through this process. And consider what possibilities might be waiting, not yet visible, for the light of day in your own Complexity Challenge.

 PRESENCE PAUSE 

In subsequent chapters of this book, we will explore the Nine Panes in detail. For now, I invite you to take a first look at your own situation through these panes.

Think of this experiment as an entry point. I encourage you not to expect solutions or answers; your understandable desire for certainty is actually *anti-helpful* in Complexity—worse than only neutrally unhelpful, it is actively counterproductive.

Rather, I want you simply to practice being curious. Please assume, for now, that the Nine Panes might later reveal currently dormant, invisible opportunities. For new realizations to emerge, simply being curious is the best starting point. So, fill in what you can. And, really, don't worry if nothing comes up for now.

#### Experiment 4.2:

### An Initial Nine Panes Perspective on Your Complexity Challenge

Divide a large sheet of paper, in landscape orientation, into a three-by-three grid. If you have a large piece of paper (flip chart or poster board) use that. Label the rows and columns per Figure 4.3 (on page 77). Then, fill in what you can for each Pane.

This is not a test; you are just getting started. Still, it's helpful to build connections between your developing understanding and your real-life Complexity Challenge. Don't worry about completeness or "getting it right." This is really about jump-starting your curiosity rather than finding clear answers. In each pane, write down some brief high-level bullet points for each question. You might refer to Figure 4.3 (on page 77) for a reminder of what each Pane reveals:

- What is the relevance of this Pane to your situation?
- What do you suspect you already know about this Pane?
- What do you suspect you might not yet know?

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, you looked within your situation to recognize three nested levels of system. You live and lead as an Identity, within a Context that you seek to influence, and as a Soma (a set of psychobiological sub-systems) acting in concert to construct and perpetuate that Identity. These three nested systems (Context, Identity and Soma) comprise the most accessible and relevant levels of the whole of the situation you are facing.

As you map these three nested levels of system against the three meta-competencies of Sensing, Being, and Acting, you get nine combinations. Like a nine-paned window, each of these Panes looks out on the same landscape. Yet, each offers a unique perspective on the system and its functioning.

The core realization? You have available a fluid and accessible set of perspectives on the overall reality of your Complexity Challenge. These complementary views can be taken one at a time, or taken together, to make a whole range of phenomena explicit and actionable.

Being present to all nine of these perspectives is stretchy and liberating. With presence, you can easily and fluidly shift between them, accessing what is most relevant and pragmatic at any given moment. Each offers a different way of making meaning. Each offers intervention points and opportunities for a different kind of engagement with Complexity. Each provides a stepping stone for realization and clarity.

And, paradoxically, they are also an integrated whole. They co-arise, and a change in any affects all. Collectively, these Nine Panes comprise a radical new view of Complexity and of the leadership opportunities Complexity offers.

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