

Resilience is topical in economic, business, environmental, community and individual arenas. In our “dash for cash” we have borrowed deeply from the future and our grandchildren. The party has been great. We know that we are pushing bankruptcy. Nature provides ample reminders.

This is not a comfortable topic. Resilience calls us to confront it with clarity, courage and skill. *Storms of my Grandchildren* by James Hansen (2009) is required reading on this subject.

### Entering a scary time

Scientists, environmentalists, health experts and economists are wrestling with pessimism. Sustainability is not easy. The blunt truth – often denied – is that we are afraid and doubt our resources to act. Here are the lead issues:

1. Our planet is death spiralling with accelerating CO2 & temperature rise, ocean acidity, species extinction, insane resource extraction, and toxic pollution. There are too many of us.
2. Western governments are so indebted we doubt their ability recover, let alone deal with more frequent natural disasters.
3. Our monstrous “health & welfare systems” inflate a disease economy that is destroying our resilience and biological vitality.
4. We live in a gadget-infested merry-go-round of distraction, indulgence and delusion. Physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual life contracts to ever decreasing units of time – often in front of a screen!

The history books of 2100 will have a lot to say about how our generation dealt with these challenges. Resilience underpins sustainability. Resilient beings and systems thrive in adversity and predict individual, community and economic viability. Resilience is the input and goal.

Sustainability does not capture depth well, therefore Resilience must take a position on how

to act with wisdom and skill. Humans discount the future; enjoying the present and hoping that things will work out down the line. Not smart.

### More resources than ever

Thousands of groups are forming to restore and rebuild Resilience in human and natural systems. Millions have become stewards of the planet. We are well informed and have infinite opportunity to tip towards Resilience.

Clearly we cannot wait for governments and corporations with short horizons. You and I must lead – in thought, in word and in daily action. The resources to assist are abundant. The challenge is to nurture your own resilience so that it is radiant to the world around you. To make a difference and improve the futures of your children and all sentient beings, your resilience is key. AND we must tackle the big issues. We have the data and the tools.

### Start with your body

Those of us on this journey have usually started with the body. We know that we look, feel and perform better when in good shape. We must extend this to family, business and community initiatives to protect and nurture sustainable wellbeing. Healthcare is failing. While we are living longer in general, the incidence of disease (morbidity) is increasing. Healthcare funding is in crisis. While the fortunate few are flourishing, the bulk of humanity falls prey to a toxic lifestyle and environment. Obesity is only the tip of the iceberg.

To walk the talk with skill, each one of us must demonstrate **explicit respect and compassion** for the physical vitality of those close to us. Show your commitment to exercise, sleep and nutrition. Never miss a chance to nudge others to better choices. Parents, teachers, managers and community leaders must confront those they profess to care for. We must be honest and clear

in crafting cultures of wellbeing and vitality. A informative book on this topic is *Nudge* (2009) written by Thaler & Sunstein.

### Nurture your new economy

One of the coolest books to read on this topic is *Plenitude* by Juliet Schor, (2010). A Boston economist, Schor captures the insanity of our growth obsessed economy and provides a wonderfully practical framework and inspiring examples of how each one of us can begin to shift to a *Plenitude Economy*. In a nutshell she demonstrates how to shift to more local, healthy, time-rich, and socially rich ways of living. Those doing it are measurably happier. It is logical and rewarding.

### Be a source of radiant light

If body is the base, emotion is the fuel for movement – positive or negative. Low self-awareness and reactive emotion is the single biggest risk to the future of humanity and the planet. Let us remember that unconscious reactions are exquisitely designed for survival in nature. But we now live in a very different time.

For example, sugar craving helped us tolerate bee stings to take a handful of honey home. Today it drives a fast food economy spewing out cheap jobs, environmental damage, obesity, diabetes and impulsivity. Anger helped us protect our family but today can provoke wanton violence and incurs an enormous personal health cost.

For those with a passion for neurobiology, read Antonio Damasio's *Self Comes to Mind* (2010) to explore this.

The mystics are right. We must activate gentleness, tolerance, contentment and compassion. For what it is worth, I have introduced emotional combat to my

integral daily practice. While optimally part of daily meditation, this can be done in many ways. The discipline is to bring awareness to the reactive emotion and then actively build its positive antidote.

Starting with fear (base of spine), one acknowledges uncertainty and proceeds to generate a feeling of calm or equanimity. Focus on being the strength and stability of rock – unmoved by storms. Then by noticing craving and greed, generate a respect for life force and give thanks (gratitude) for life energy.

Third, notice any lethargy or dullness and build passion (fire in belly – lumbar spine). Fourth, notice how passion can become too forceful or even angry and counter it with loving-kindness. Take time on this one to generate love for those close to you, those you influence and extend the kindness as far out as you can (heart area). Finally, notice any despondency and actively generate joy and exuberance. On inhalation draw these conscious positive emotions up the spine and on the exhale send them out to the world.

If that all seems a bit much, may I humbly suggest that as you move through your day silently say “peace, love and joy” to every person you can. Don't forget yourself.

This practice is devilishly difficult. It takes years of diligent practice to master. However, you will be surprised at how quickly you will start to experience the benefits.

We must move in this direction. If we continue to react with fear, craving, dullness, anger and sadness we will continue to wreck our planet and ourselves. With equanimity, gratitude, passion, kindness and joy we will be more resilient, radiate resilience to others and seek to stop the violent exploitation of life, nature and planetary resources. These are the emotions of positive, achievable change.

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## Relentless optimism

We know that pessimistic people are more accurate in their thinking. We recognise that rumination on the perils of modern life can leave us despondent and hopeless. So, it is no surprise that many advocates and experts for sustainable initiatives are wrestling with pessimism. Many others just jam their heads in the sand and hope for the best.

From the perspective of Resilience, human life is immeasurably richer today. We have safety, basic services, functional communities and a sense of self far beyond anything that has existed before. Provided one holds those positive emotions in mind, there is enormous scope for optimism.

For those of us who care, it is crucial that we manage our thinking and our words. I acknowledge fully that at times I feel overwhelmed by the stupidity and insanity of what we are doing to the planet and each other. My thoughts become dark – even angry – and my words become bitter and negative. This is not helpful.

In Resilience we must be vigilant with our thoughts and speech. Barack Obama's state of the nation speech is a good example. It has been a tumultuous two years for a leader with such great aspirations. Yet, once again he has fired up hope and optimism.

A simple suggestion that many find helpful is to agree in your family or organisation that "above the line" or "high road" comments are desirable. Further to that we give each other permission to challenge "below the line" or "low road" comments. The challenge is always followed by a respectful and compassionate opportunity to "reframe" and restate the comment more constructively. Once again this is no easy fix but each of us can start a small movement. Support from those around is surprisingly effective. From time to time we need to be tough with "miserable buggers".

## Spirit in Action

A perspective on the spirit question is to imagine: "my body is fit, energised and resilient, I radiate serenity, gratitude, love and joy, and I am mindful, optimistic and determined." Is your Spirit in action? I think so. This in a nutshell is what the Performance supply chain encourages. The body radiates presence, the emotions resonance and the mind clarity of meaning. Not a bad way to be.

But is it enough? How important is a healthy planet? Should we extract every last drop of resources as fast as we can? We are causing mass extinction. Do these species matter less than 7 billion humans? How do we value quality of life versus mass conspicuous consumption?

If we confront the reality of human induced climate change (I have just flown over the "biggest storm ever" in Queensland), we might consider how much Spirit is in our actions.

These are tough questions. From a Resilience perspective it is not OK to shove your head in the sand. Nor, in my opinion, is it appropriate to take the ascending path and hide in your cave or sanctuary. If we choose the path of Resilience, we must take action. We must act to build our own Resilience. We must respectfully help others to build Resilience. We must foster community resilience and we have to step up to the challenge of taking better care of our planet.

As we build Resilience, the impulse and resources to steward in a better future emerge naturally. If you champion sustainability, build Resilience. If you are building Resilience, become a sustainability champion. Live simply. Grow vegetables. Challenge those who wantonly waste and exploit. Lead a movement. Extend your Spirit to connect with all sentient beings and a radiant planet Earth.

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