> *"We may not all agree about the concept of the Self; in fact, it would probably be a terrible thing if we did. However, we do believe that we can work towards a working language and a functional model to look at our Use of Self. "*

Doing Good By Knowing Who You Are

The Instrumental Self as an Agent of Change

By Charles N. Seashore, Mary Nash Shawver, Greg Thompson and Marty Mattare

THE MOST IMMEDIATE Use of Self for you is to decide whether to continue reading this article now that you have started out with us on a topic about which we feel passionate. The simplest way we know to talk about Use of Self is to link the concepts of *self-awareness, perceptions, choices* and *actions* as the fundamental building blocks of our capacities to be effective agents of change, hopefully to make a better world and to develop our own potential for doing so to the fullest in the process.

Are you still with us? Are you *aware of what you are thinking and feeling?* Are you *perceiving* the world around you? Do you think of and have access to a variety of *choices* that might allow you to move into action intentionally, deliberately and consciously? We hope that you will choose to continue reading what we have to say. It just might help you change the rest of your life – even a little bit – for the better!! However, we think you should *NOT* consider continuing to read this *IF* you agree with more than 6 of the following 8 points:

- You think that Jung is a four letter word!
- The thought of the unconscious makes you throw up
- You can't stand looking at yourself in the mirror
- The idea of being choiceful is limited to the politically correct aspects of life.
- The main thing your are interested in changing is the Other Person

- You believe you already understand how others perceive you
- You are not comfortable being a co-author of this article as the meaning you give to what you read is more significant than what we have to say.
- You believe that Use of Self can make you blind!!!

Please consider continuing *IF* you agree with 3 or more of the following 5 points:

- You want to spend time at the intersection of your own growth and your effectiveness as a change agent
- You are intrigued with what lies within your Shadow side and your Mushroom Cellar

CONFERENCE CONNECTION

Charles Seashore, Mary Nash Shawver, Greg Thompson and Marty Mattare are presenters at the 2004 OD Network Annual Conference in San Juan at the following session:

407W **Exploring and Engaging the Self: Interactive Models and Methods**
Wed., Oct. 6, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm

- You believe that you are as sensitive an Instrument as the Hubble on a very good day.
- You honestly believe it is wise to look at the *prison guard or interrogator within yourself* before trying to hunt down those at work in Iraqi prisons or other similar settings in the world *out there* – IF you believe there is an *out there*!
- Self-Efficacy, Agency, Support Systems, Individuation and Self-Differentiation, Unconscious, The Self, Ego, Awareness, and Robotic Behavior appeal to you at this moment more than A) going to the movies, B) sex, C) sleep or D) all of the above.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

Margaret Mead has said, "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

For some of us, Mead's words evoke the passion, the urge and the belief that, by paying close attention to what is going on inside us and clearly perceiving the limitless world beyond our Self, we can substantially increase our own capacity to contribute to the common good while engaging in the process of individuation and self-differentiation – the unfolding of our unique Selves over the course of our lifetime.

We may not all agree about the concept of the Self; in fact, it would probably be a terrible thing if we did. However, we do believe that we can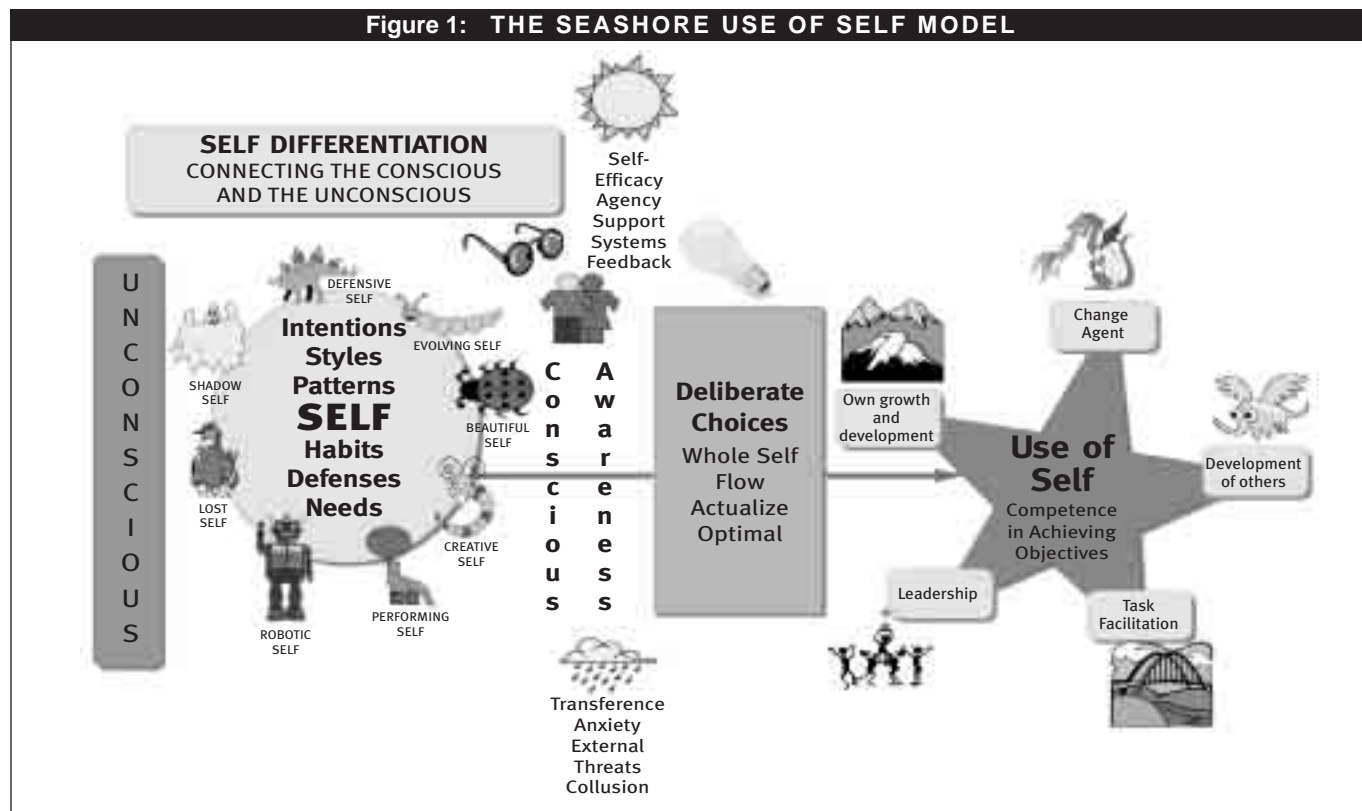 work towards a working language and a functional model to look at our Use of Self. Such a model can serve as an umbrella that allows us to incorporate interesting propositions from a wide variety of outstanding authors in the field of human behavior, change agentry and humanistic psychology. Greek Gods fit nicely under the umbrella along with Toni Morrison, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Virginia Satir, Ben Franklin and Gandhi. For that matter, there is no reason to not include any person, including yourself, from joining the ranks of those who want to link concepts and theory to improve the human condition. One of the choices you have is to consider yourself as a scholar-practitioner helping to build a workable model of Use of Self as an instrument of change.

Use of Self is a link between our personal potential and the world of change. We are proposing a model here which gathers together key factors which we know to be important in maintaining and increasing our capacities as change agents. We hope that you will find it helpful as a framework you can adapt and further develop to articulate your own ideas for developing our competencies as we do our work.

One function of a model is to help us define our key concept – Use of Self. To avoid feeling stupid if someone asks what we are talking about, you may find that the following elements can be strung together to form some kind of a working definition:

- Our model illustrates that the *Use of Self* is putting into action our best intentions to move towards some desired new state of affairs.
- It is what we *do* with our *perceptions* to make an impact in the world around us.

Figure 1: THE SEASHORE USE OF SELF MODEL

SELF DIFFERENTIATION
CONNECTING THE CONSCIOUS
AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Self-Efficacy
Agency
Support
Systems
Feedback

UNCONSCIOUS

DEFENSIVE SELF
SHADOW SELF
EVOLVING SELF
Intentions
Styles
Patterns
SELF
Habits
Defenses
Needs
BEAUTIFUL SELF
LOST SELF
CREATIVE SELF
ROBOTIC SELF
PERFORMING SELF

Conscious
Awareness

Transference
Anxiety
External
Threats
Collusion

Deliberate
Choices
Whole Self
Flow
Actualize
Optimal

Own growth and development

Change Agent

Use of Self
Competence in Achieving Objectives

Development of others

Leadership

Task Facilitation

- It includes *intentional conscious* actions taken with the hope of bringing about change.
- It involves a Self consisting of aspects that are out of our awareness as well as in our awareness.
- It includes a capacity for reflection, feedback and deep intrigue with what happens when we try to influence problems, people or situations.
- It reflects a profound appreciation for the unpredictability of the consequences of our behavior, balanced by the perspective that we can be powerful and effective agents of change.
- It implies an understanding that our Self is capable of serving as a finely tuned measuring instrument of what is going on outside of the Self by paying attention to our feelings, sensations and minute responses at the physiological, psychological and spiritual levels of awareness.
- The model portrays that the Self may be a beautifully constructed illusion that is helpful to be connected to the larger world of which we are a part.

AUTHORS

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- The Self can be seen as a container for the unconscious to emerge into consciousnesses.
- And, the model advocates that there are many roles in which we can serve as agents of change including taking leadership, providing facilitation, coaching others and being an advocate for a new state of affairs.

In this model, the Use of Self is a link between our personal potential and the world of change. It starts with our understanding of who we are, our conscious perception of our Self, commonly called the ego, and the unconscious or out of awareness part of our Self that is always along for the ride and on many occasions is actually the driver. This understanding of Self is then linked with our perceptions of what is needed in the world around us and our choice of a strategy and a role in which to use our energy to create change. Our focus here is on the potential for changing one's own world – the world as we perceive it – and to act on it and leave our mark and legacy for others to appreciate.

As we use our Self to create change in the world around us, we may also be intentionally and unintentionally changing ourselves. We refer to that process as self-differentiation or individuation, to use the language of Jung, when the change in the core Self occurs in some fundamental or substantial way. This self-differentiation is the result of the integration of conscious aspects of Self with unconscious aspects which come into awareness. It is generally thought to be a "letting go" of some introjected elements from the past and the integration of one's own unique set of qualities and characteristics. The Self includes elements such as our needs, intentions, styles, patterns, habits and defenses.

Use of Self consists of intentional, conscious and deliberate choices which result in actions/behaviors taken to bring about change where:

- We use our *sensations and perceptions* of Self and situations.
- Our behavior can be based on *illusions as well as "realities."*
- Both our *conscious and unconscious parts of Self* are active and influential.
- *Feedback* from Self and others is *constantly modifying our behavior.*
- The *results* of our actions may be *unpredictable as well as anticipated.*
- Our *perception of the impact* of what we do *may or may not be in agreement* with the perceptions of others who are aware of the situation in which change is occurring.
- We *may or may not have clearly defined roles and positions* in a relationship, group or organization.
- We can develop and draw on support systems to maintain and dramatically increase our effectiveness.
- We can avoid collusive relationships, especially with those in authority, and help a group to break up dysfunctional collusions which have evolved over time.

Our competence and effectiveness are functions of many elements, including our self-efficacy, agency, skills and use of support systems to optimize those two factors *(see Table 1)*. Self-efficacy as used here refers to our belief in our capacity to successfully achieve desired ends. Agency refers to our ability and capacity to act as our own agents in carrying out and implementing our courses of actions. Agency and self-efficacy both draw heavily on the work of Albert Bandura.

Two critical process skills that promote the effective Use of Self are reframing and giving/receiving feedback (Seashore, Seashore, & Weinberg, 2001). These are core skills that are used in combination with both relational and technical competencies. Reframing is critical in the management of change as it allows for new perspectives and ways of organizing information and perceptions, while feedback skills are critical for the continual re-direction of efforts based on a constantly changing environment of people, process and situations.

Support systems as defined by Seashore are a pool of resources (individuals, groups, organizations) that an individual can draw on selectively, to help one be at their best in moving in directions of their choice and to grow stronger in the process. Support systems can be used to provide ego support, understand "realities" of situations, identify expert resources, manage stress and maintain self-efficacy and agency. They are also critical in assisting an individual to deal with issues of transference, high anxiety and the presence of external threats, to name but a few of the debilitating forces present for an active change agent, leader, facilitator or educator involved in the development of other people or organizations. These are but four of the common roles in which Use of Self has significant influence.

THE MODEL AND OD PRACTICE

Among the many competencies required of OD practitioners (in 2004 the OD Network lists 141, and the OD Institute defines 139), the Use of Self as an instrument is considered by many to be at the core (Cheung-Judge, 2001; Curran, Seashore & Welp, 1995; Hanson, 2000; McCormick & White, 2000). Cheung-Judge (2002) asserted that owning and constantly developing our instrumentality is key. Self-knowledge and technical expertise should be ongoing developmental exercises that constantly shape us, while we interact with others.

Hanson (2000) focused on definitions of Self and related concepts, such as self-esteem, ideal Self, self-actualization, self-awareness, and self-acceptance. He emphasized the significance of one's actions being consistent with values, of being proactive versus reactive, displaying moral courage, and being a model of leadership. Hanson encouraged engaging in consulting with a clear self-concept, an understanding of why we do the things we do and do not do, and an appreciation of the values that guide our behavior.

McCormick and White (2000) presented five methods for using one's Self as an instrument for organizational diagnosis: emotional reactions, initial perceptions, understanding bias, postponing judgment, and images and fantasies. They described the importance of Self as instrument in triangulation of data, and emphasized the necessity for awareness of one's biases.

Seashore's model provides a synthesized and cohesive model that draws on the above areas as well as many other practitioners and theorists over multiple years' worth of literature, research, and application. There are several implications of the Seashore Use of Self Model for those engaged in the practice of OD. Some of the more important issues are identified below.

- **Choices.** The key to conscious, deliberate and intentional Use of the whole Self is to expand and develop the range of behavioral choices that are available to oneself for contributing towards the accomplishment of goals, particularly in increasingly stressful situations. This capacity to have a range of choices significantly reduces the negative effect of defensiveness or automatic "robotic" habitual behaviors that may or may not be appropriate in any given situation.
- **Unconscious and out of awareness factors.** The complexities of working with the unconscious or out of awareness parts of the Self are often bothersome and in fact are intolerable for those who prefer to stick to more rational models of human behavior. The mere acknowledgement of unconscious forces can be an important first step in enlarging possibilities of understanding another person's behavior, gathering and considering feedback on one's own behavior and making more realistic

Table 1: SYNTHESIS OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF INTENTIONAL USE OF SELF: THE SEASHORE MODEL

Agency	Ability and capacity to act as one's own agent in carrying out and implementing courses of action
Giving & Receiving Feedback	Continual re-direction of efforts based on a constantly changing environment of people, process and situations
Reframing	Allows for new perspectives and ways of organizing information and perceptions; cultural competency
Self-efficacy	Belief in one's capacity to successfully achieve desired ends
Skills	Communication, listening, goal-setting, conflict management, team building, building and maintaining effective relationships, stress management
Support Systems	Pool of resources (individuals, groups, organizations), which an individual can draw on selectively, to help one be at their best in moving in directions of their choice and to grow stronger in the process

assumptions about the level of awareness individuals and groups have of what they are doing, why they are doing it and strategies for bringing some of these factors into awareness through coaching, feedback and group consultation.

■ **Systems thinking and the issue of undesirable outcomes.** The inclusion of many concepts and steps in the model is a reminder that we are dealing with systems that require the ability to juggle, predict and project the effect of interdependent and interacting forces. "Good" intentions or "doing good" requires allowance for the emergence of undesired outcomes. Learning to become aware of early signs of the impact of "shadow" forces is a critical part of the process, including making allowance for the possibility that we may actually be unconsciously sabotaging the very outcomes we consciously seek.

■ **Working with colleagues.** Partnering with colleagues through co-facilitation, co-training or team-based practice and intervention becomes both more important and potentially a more complex proposition with significant implications for increased effectiveness. The potential for capitalizing on diverse strengths and competencies is very important as well as building in the possibilities for ongoing self-development and avoidance of operating out of one's weakness or shadow sides.

■ **Long term Self development.** Deepening one's appreciation for the complexities of one's own Self and the conditions necessary for effective Use of Self can be a very humbling experience as we become aware of some of the skill areas which may not be immediately accessible or for that matter not likely to develop without significant and intensive Self work such as therapy, coaching and an inquiring and persistent drive for greater Self understanding. Patience and persistence are very, very important.

■ **Support systems.** It is important for practitioners to develop their own support system outside of the people in the client system if one is to be able to manage conflict, challenge and resistance. Relying on the client for emotional support or meaningful feedback is a very vulnerable position to be in as a consultant.

■ **Frameworks and theories.** Use of Self as an umbrella concept can be a very helpful framework in which to import and utilize the theories and concepts of theorists and other practitioners in the service of developing one's own working "theory" or conceptual model to guide one's practice.

■ **Projection and transference.** A useful principle for all practitioners to consider is to be able to perceive situations with the awareness that projection of oneself onto others is inevitable, potentially useful and can even be an accurate reflection of what is going on with others in the client system.

■ **Reflexive processing.** A principle coming out of the whole framework is that when one perceives something "outside of Self" it is helpful to do an internal check to see what is being stirred up "inside of oneself." When looking for or dealing with the "terrorists out there." check first to see if you can locate the "terrorist within." Then you will be clearer on what, if anything, to do.

■ **Appreciation of Diversity.** The deepening of one's awareness, widening of one's perceptions and expansion of one's choices are critical elements to increase our appreciation of the differences people bring to opportunities to work together for some larger purpose or vision. This is one avenue to reduction of oppression and building a world where we can thrive rather than just survive.

CONCLUSION

Use of Self is a concept that can draw on centuries of thought as well as recent theories and concepts in the fields of human and organization development. Developing a sophisticated and workable theory for how to use one's own talents and strengths and that takes into account the complexity of human behavior in groups and organizations can be a worthwhile, challenging and continuous lifetime learning process. Using one's Self in creative ways to optimize one's own growth can be coupled with effective Use of Self in helping individuals, groups and organizations move towards achieving their own potential. To the degree that OD includes valuing the development of the full potential of people inside the organization, a framework for understanding the effective Use of Self can be a powerful instrument for the managers and consultants to use in building strong, viable and sustainable organizations. It is not the simplest way to go about our business, but it may be one of the most intriguing, rewarding and powerful of the tools available to us. ■

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