What's Worth Working For?

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Leadership for Quality Conference

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What's Worth Working For?

Leadership for Better Quality Human Services

Quality is first
a matter of leadership

After
20
years

Version 1
1987

We are at a point of divergence. The policy environment that contains our work is shifting in ways that will degrade our capacity to continually learn how to better support people & families unless we create a positive, effective response.

The foundation for this response will be laid by those who are clear about what they came to make happen in this world. This clarity emerges when we answer Neruda's question: We can discover the answer when we listen deeply to our inner responses to the gifts of those we support.
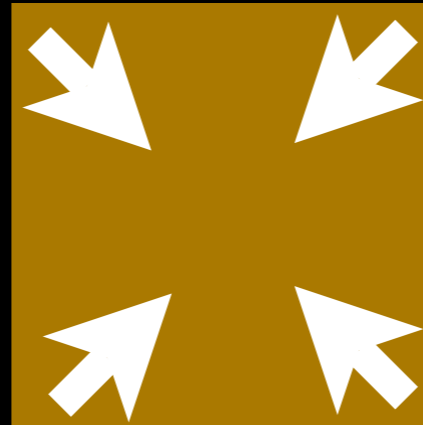
Whom can I ask what I came to make happen in this world?
—Pablo Neruda

Services have life-defining power when people count on them for survival

Some organizations act closed & direct attention internally, as though quality is simply a matter of following proper procedures within existing buildings and boundaries

where

how understood by others/self

what activities

with whom

It is more fruitful, though less certain, to see the discovery of quality as open ended & requiring engagement outside the buildings & boundaries of our organizations. The stance is one of taking responsibility for ignorance of what will become possible if we find deeper collaborations.
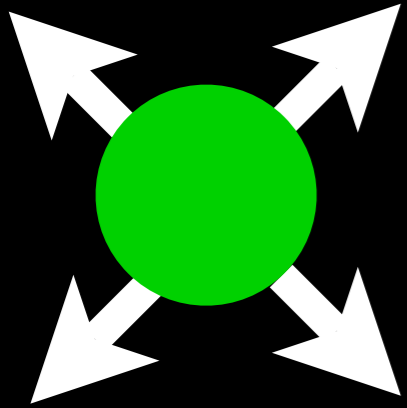
where

how understood by others/self
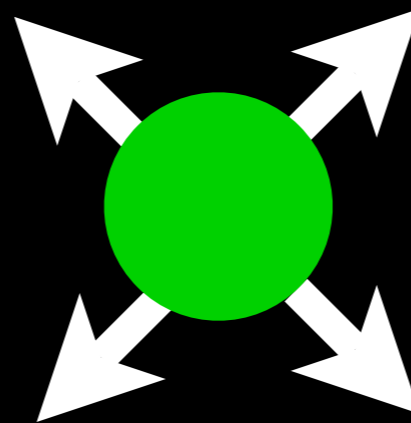
what activities

with whom

How can we use our resources to assist the people who rely on us to lead better lives?

better lives

?

de-stabilizing

What 'better lives' means remains open ended. New possibilities and new demands arise. To deal with them responsibly, we have to hold on to the question mark. This makes a commitment to better lives disruptive of our ways of organizing.
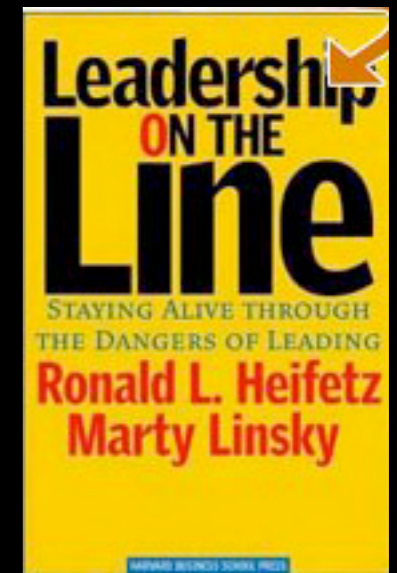
Leadership means mobilizing people's resources to make progress on hard problems

This understanding sees leadership as an activity that anyone can contribute

Definitions must be negotiated

Responses must be invented

People feel pressure to avoid

Thanks, Ron Heifetz
See *Leadership on the Line* for an up-to-date version of this idea

Three leadership activities

Finding direction by discovering vision

Identifying distinctive contribution by clarifying purpose

Guiding daily work by agreeing on accomplishments

Finding direction by discovering vision

The context we choose for seeking vision makes all the difference. Are we trying to visualize a service that will give people what they need or -far more interesting & difficult to achieve-- a community in which it is more possible for people to work for better lives by filling a variety of valued social roles?
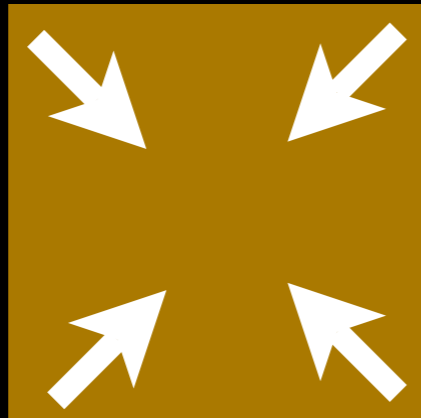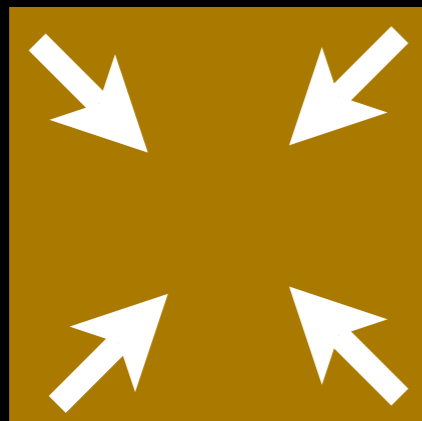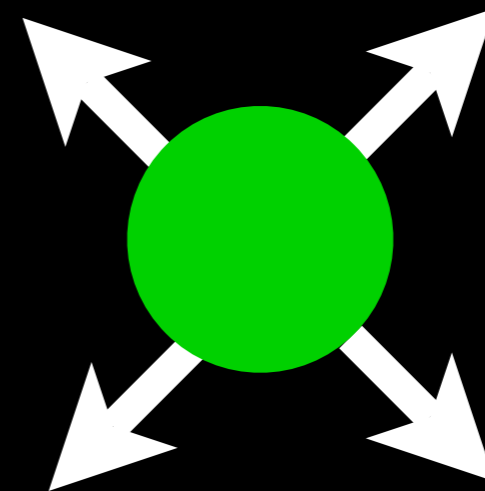
Meet all needs within buildings & boundaries
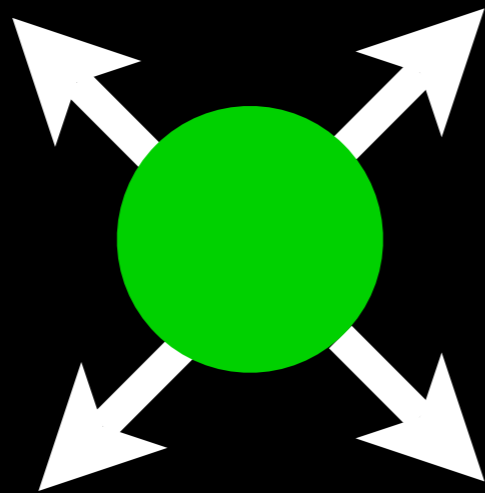
Challenge of building inclusive community

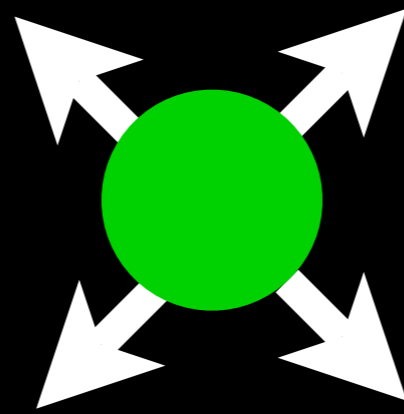# Vision energizes by creating tension with current reality

Meet all needs

Much in our history & the hopes/fears of some we serve pulls us this way

Build inclusive community

A vision of growing inclusiveness draws us toward greater collaboration & creativity
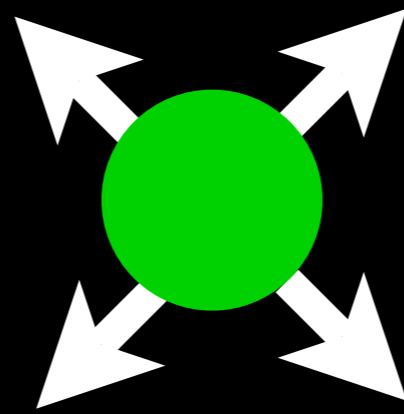
Vision must be chosen

Vision is discovered by
careful, respectful listening & thoughtful reflection on people's considered answers:
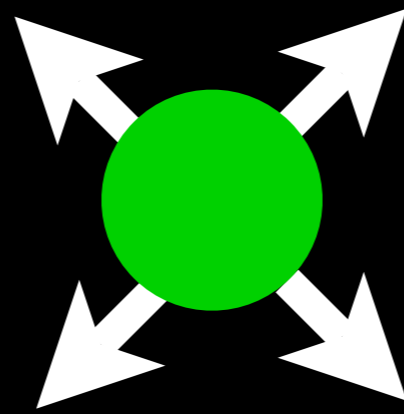
What kind of a community must we create to support our search for better lives?

and critical study of other's experiences & thoughts

What distinctive contribution can services make to building the kind of community that will support our search for better lives?

What legitimate promises can we make?

Assist people, along with family & friends, to discover & move toward a desirable personal future as part of ordinary community life

Offer needed help in ways that support & strengthen community competence

Offer needed help in ways that protect & promote valued experiences
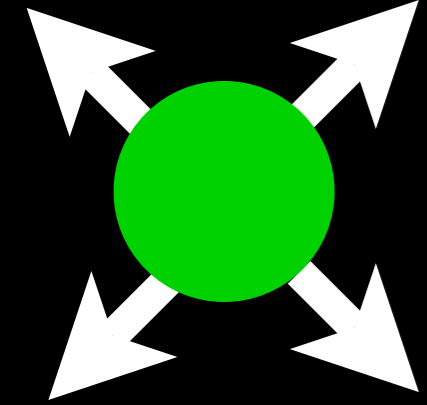
Commitment to purpose generates learning

uncertain technology — how to assist

enduring prejudice — how to support resistance

rigid funding — how to create flexibility

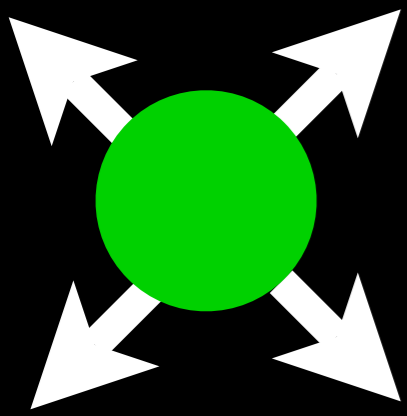Guide decision making at every level by a deepening understanding of accomplishments
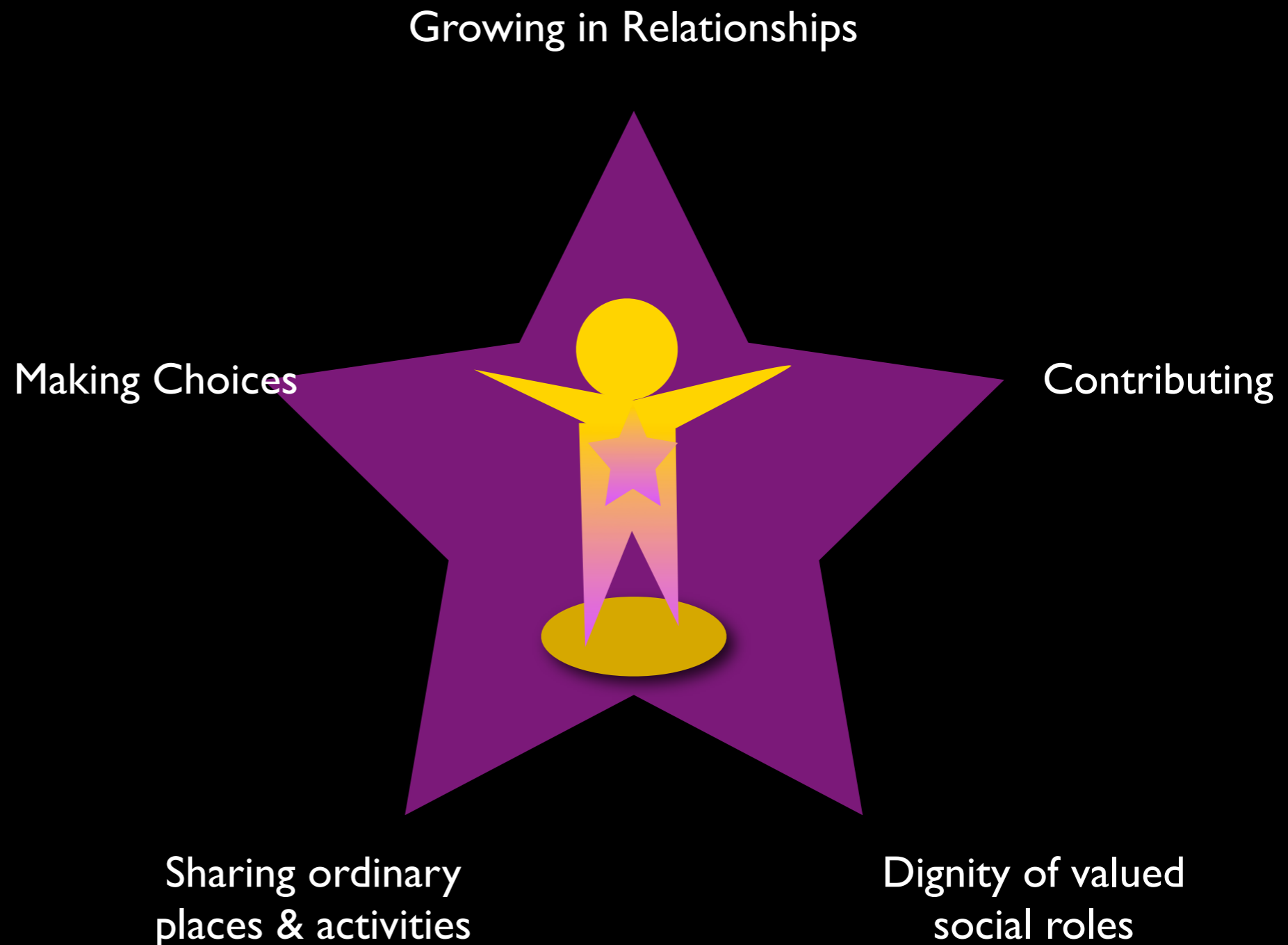
Valued Experiences

Accomplishments

Legitimate Promises

These five dimensions of human experience have 3 characteristics that make them useful in thinking about the difference that services can make:

• They matter regardless of disability

• They are at particular risk for people with disabilities because impairment increases the chances that people will be cast into devalued social roles, isolated, segregated, controlled, & deprived of opportunities to develop & contribute their gifts.

• They are ideals, both in the sense of their desirability & in in the sense that they are issues humans never get finished with.

Growing in Relationships

Making Choices

Contributing

Sharing ordinary places & activities

Dignity of valued social roles

Each valued experience indicates an accomplishment that can be created when service work is structured so that people can attend carefully & creatively to it.

Community Participation

Supporting Contribution

Community Presence

Encouraging Valued Social Roles

Promoting Autonomy

After
 20
years

People with disabilities have opened

many new possibilities

Differences have grown

Own lives **v** segregated & controlled

Mobilized family & allies **v** isolated & defeated

High expectations **v** any place

At home at low capped cost **v** 24/7 service with
$ growth factors

Personalized supports **v** congregation

Our autonomy is at risk

For much of our history since the 60's, DD services have been administered as a distinct service, often led by people with a particular commitment to the work, & much more politically influential than its size would suggest because of strong & well organized advocacy.

Long Term Care

DDS
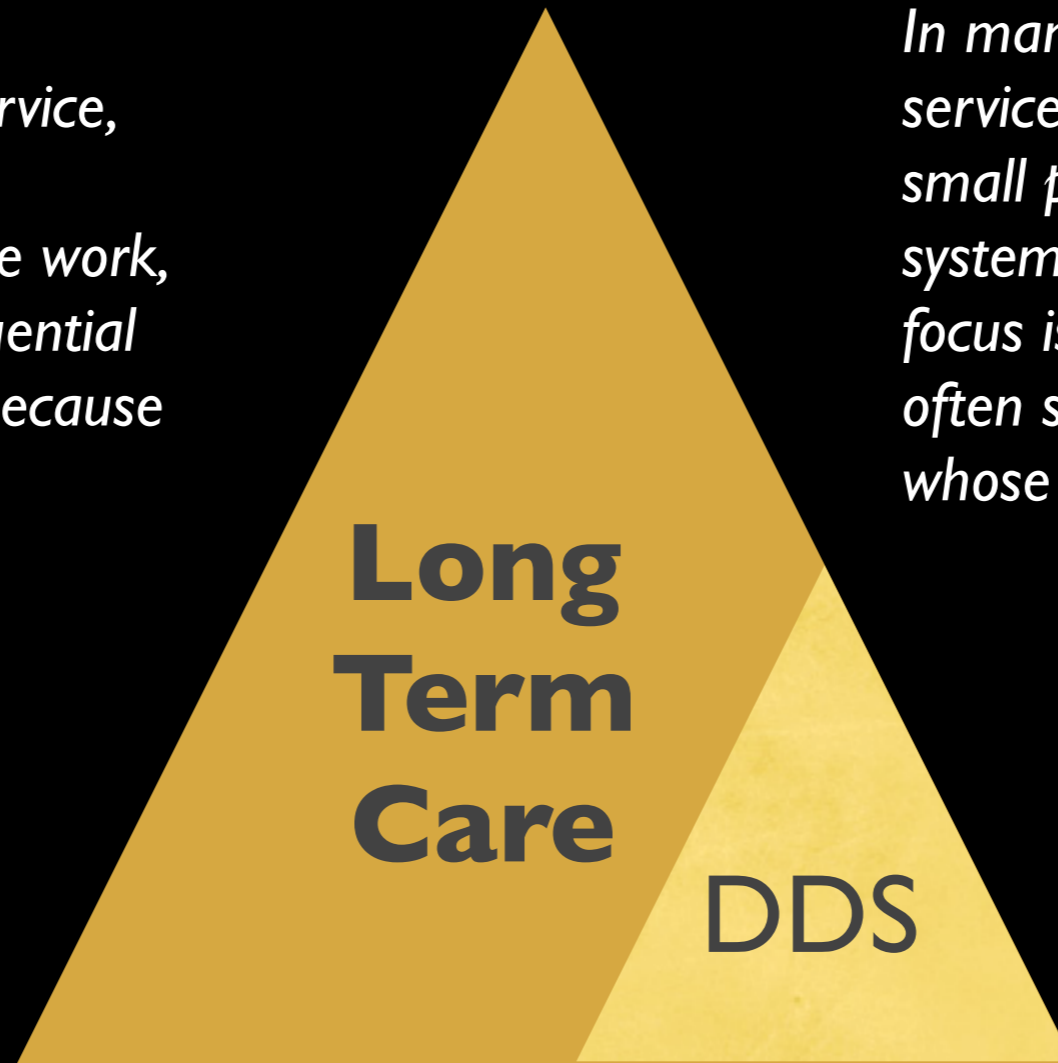
In many places, this is changing. DD services are being administered as a small part of a long term care system whose largest population of focus is elders. In this context, DD is often seen as a special interest whose costs must be tamed.

Growing waiting lists

Rising costs of existing services

Demographic shifts

Because it sees uncontrollably growing demand, the long term care system tends to act from fear of scarcity

The long term care system acts as if growing demand is manageable without a major shift in social priorities. Like the storybook King Canute, it imagines that the wave can be controlled like a machine, by putting proper controls & incentives in place. This puts our efforts to create good lives in a new environment: **COGWORLD**

The architects of **COGWORLD** *believe that any goal can be achieved if the machine is properly designed & efficiently managed.*

COGWORLD Promises

Health & safety

Control - "self-determination" - individual budgets

Equity

Quality Outcomes

Person-centered work

Natural supports

The problem is not in the promises but in the contradiction between the ends the system wants to serve & the ways of organizing & managing that go with a mechanistic mindset.
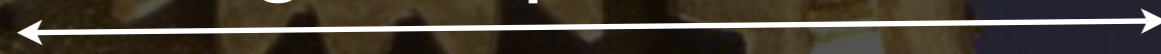
COGWORLD

Command & control

Standardize

Analyze – optimize single process –remove redundancy

Enforce compliance

Work ←——— gets separated from ———→ Meaning

which leads workers to

Disconnection

Counter-control

COGWORLD

tries to enforce conformity by invoking fear. As if life will grow better for people with disabilities if everyone serving them were scared all the time.

How can we make sure that this person follows health & safety regulations and does not expose us to legal liability or the disapproval of inspectors or payers?

How do workers show up in the person's life in **COGWORLD**?

As interchangeable hands to do prescribed "cares"

As channelers of standards & contracts

As supervisors of "activities"

As good company

Workers can still feel good about the people they support, but it is very hard for that care to flow into the creative action that builds inclusive community. It turns inward & makes maginalization bearable -often even pleasant.

Lifeworld grows

Experience shows that real life – with its uncertainty, fallibility, messiness & creativity– is the only reliable source of better lives.
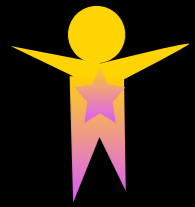
Shared vision

Explicit agreement based on clear purpose

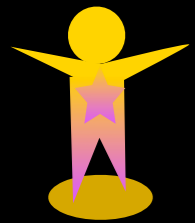Generate variety through co-production

Build resiliency through learning

Culture commitment

How do workers show up in lifeworld?

As good companions on life's journey

As co-creators of possibilities for engagement & contribution

How can we act for life in **COGWORLD**?

Promises we **can't** make

Health & safety without resilience

Happiness without engagement

Control without collaborative work

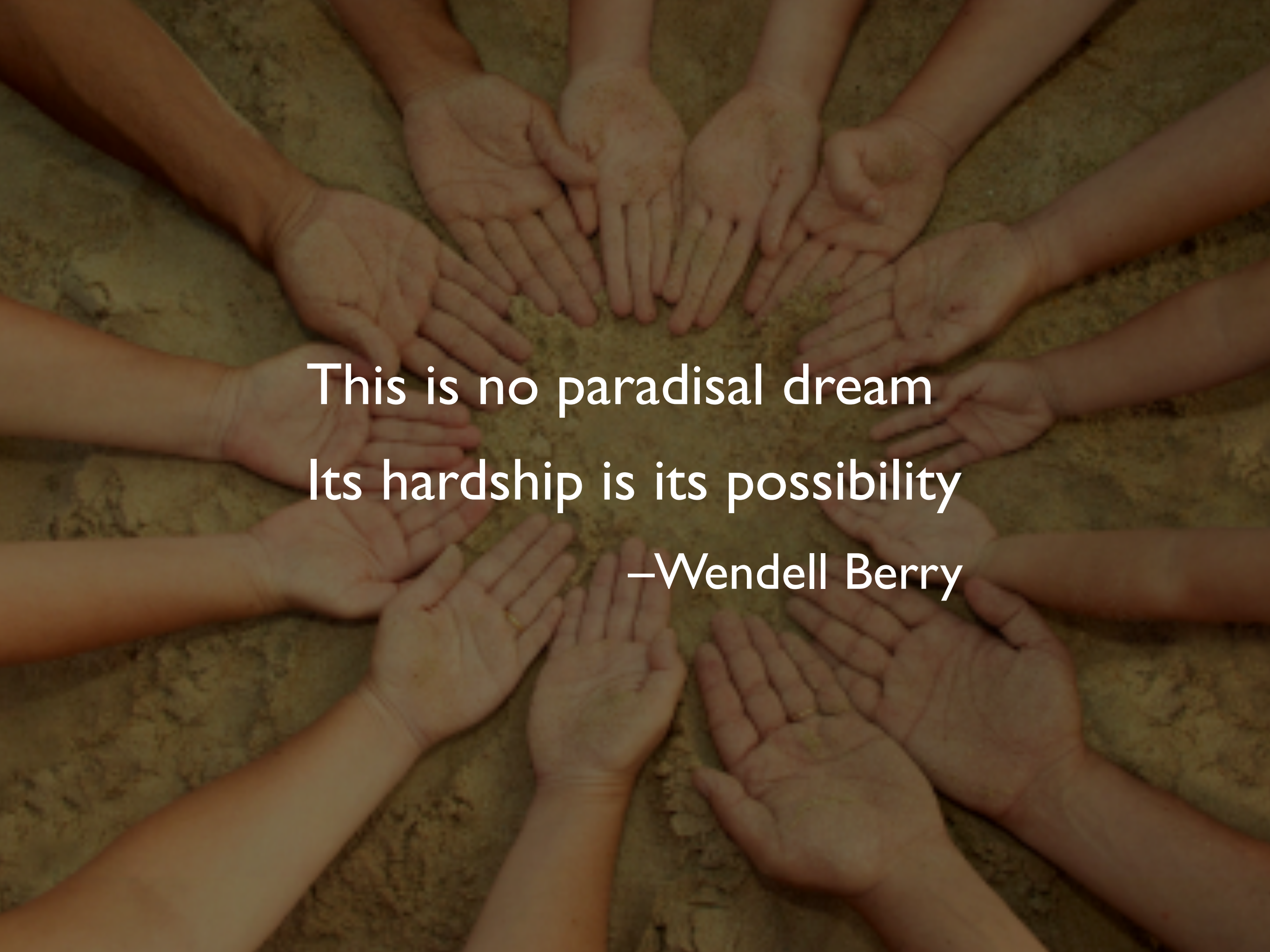Meaning without struggling to make & protect space for relationship despite cogland

Person-centered work without resilience, engagement, & collaboration

Three leadership questions

What kind of a community must we create to support our search for better lives?

What legitimate promises can we make?

What contribution can we make to valued human experiences?

This is no paradisal dream

Its hardship is its possibility

—Wendell Berry