OVERVIEW PATTERNS

1. All Concerns Addressed
2. Appreciative Thinking
3. Appropriate Innovation
4. Big Empathy
5. Capacitance
6. Caring into Quality
7. Checks on Extreme Inequality
8. Citizen/Stakeholder Balance
9. Civil Rights
10. Commons
11. Communal Intelligence
12. Competent Popular Oversight of Governance
13. Constraints on Concentrated Power
14. Context Awareness
15. Critical Thinking
16. Crowdsourcing
17. Deep Time Stewardship
18. Deliberation
19. Distributed Intelligence
20. Diversity
21. E Pluribus Unum
22. Enough Time
23. Expertise on Tap (Not on Top)
24. Exuberance
25. Feeling Heard
26. Full Cost Accounting
27. Full Spectrum Information
28. Generating Shared Orientation
29. Generative Interactions
30. Grounding in Fundamental Needs
31. Healthy Polarity Dynamics
32. Integrity and Authenticity
33. Iteration
34. Life-Enhancing Enoughness
35. Metabolize Polarization
36. Microcosms
37. Multi-Modal Intelligence
38. Multi-Modal Power
39. Multiple Perspective View
40. Nature First
41. Nurturing Social Capital
42. Partnership Culture
43. Possibility Thinking
44. Power of Listening
45. Powerful Questions
46. Privacy Guarantees
47. Proposals Emergent
48. Prudent Use of Power Over
49. Quality of Life Indicators
50. Restorative Justice
51. Restraint Liberty
52. Rich Feedback Dynamics
53. Safety First, Then Challenge
54. Self-Organizaton
55. Sortition
56. Spaces for Dialogue and Collaboration
57. Story Sharing
58. Subsidiarity
59. Synergy Between
   Part and Whole
60. Systems Thinking
61. Transpartisan Inquiry
62. Universal Intelligence
63. Universal Participation
64. Using Diversity and
   Disturbance Creatively
65. Visionary Attractors
66. Well-Utilized Life Energy
67. Wholesome Life Learning
68. Whole System in the Conversation
69. Wise Use of Uncertainty
70. Working Through Feelings
Objections and disagreements usually arise from failure to take into account someone’s needs, values, interests, or sense of “what’s needed here”. So translate their objections into “concerns” to bypass their adversarial energy. That helps all parties collaboratively address concerns so everyone feels heard and satisfied, generating wiser solutions and more buy-in.

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To appreciate is to understand, value, and increase in value. Appreciation can by itself enliven and empower whatever is appreciated. So practice thinking in appreciative terms and help discern, delve into and develop the wisdom-generating resource-value of people, situations, and the life and living systems in and all around us.

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The unchecked acceleration of human creativity invites folly. Something is “appropriate” when it fits. To be more a blessing than a curse, our creativity needs to fit within natural constraints and the wisdom embodied in the patterns of wise democracy. So create benign but effective ways to wisely oversee our powerful collective creativity.

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Normal empathy is sometimes critiqued as undermining rationality and being narrowly focused on visible suffering and those we know. Big empathy addresses suffering both directly and through systemic causes, using reason and perspective. So support people to see, feel, and care about suffering normally hidden by distance, time, otherness, and systemic complexity.

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Capacitance

We need the ability to tolerate disturbance and abide in an unsettled state. Complexity, uncertainty, mystery, paradox, conflict, crisis and diversity can all generate such unsettledness—yet all can also bring wisdom because they open us to fuller reality. So learn to co-exist comfortably or at least patiently with them so they can give their gifts in due time.

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Checks on Extreme Inequality

Human complexity and differences make absolute equality meaningless. But extreme inequality of wealth, social power, and status concentrate social power and reduce social capital, degrading creative energies and interactions needed for generating wisdom. So nurture basic equity as both a resource for and a feature of a society that works for all.

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Caring into Quality

Wisdom involves taking care. So recognize, value and nurture art, skill, authenticity and mindful attention in all engagement with life, with each other, and in everything we create. Be rightfully proud when the beauty and functionality of quality co-creations enhance the quality of life for all, now and into the future.

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Citizen/Stakeholder Balance

Citizen involvement in public forums clarifies community values and everyday experience and provides democratic legitimacy. Stakeholder engagement offers whole-system insight and helps resolve issue conflicts. So hold both kinds of forums and, where possible, include citizens in stakeholder forums and stakeholders as “expert witnesses” in citizen forums.

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Civil Rights

Oppression silences diversity and undermines collective intelligence. Protecting individual and group freedom and participation within the larger project of generating long-term collective quality of life is essential. So ensure that civil rights—even beyond being legally binding—are passionately held as vital to our identity as democratic societies and citizens.

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Communal Intelligence

Intelligence is both information and its use in learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and action—all of which can be shared. The high democratic purpose of journalism—both citizen-based and professional—should be supporting wise collective intelligence. So help the whole community engage in big-picture explorations of the realities and possibilities of life.

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Commons

The commons includes anything which supports quality of life and is available to all. Nature is the most obvious example—especially air and water (land, animals and plants having become owned) but cultural commons like languages, institutions, procedures, arts, expectations, and history are potent common ground. So understand, value, support, reclaim, and learn from the commons.

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Competent Popular Oversight of Governance

Any governance activity that does not consist of the people themselves needs to be transparent to them so it can be overseen by them. So enable citizens to oversee their government with collective competence, intelligence and wisdom rather than collective stupidity, ignorance, factionalism and mob rule.

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**Constraints on Concentrated Power**

Concentrated power—while necessary for certain functions—tends to corrupt and ossify, undermining collective wisdom. So counter those tendencies with transparency, openness to critique, and constitutional answerability to—those whom concentrated power affects. Limit its scope and term and balance it with other power centers.

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**Context Awareness**

Contexts shape what happens. The same actions in different contexts create different outcomes and have different meanings. Environments, mindsets, values, expectations, situational dynamics, power relations, systemic forces, needs, culture... all these matter. So pay attention to context in whatever is explored, whatever is set up and whatever is done.


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**Critical Thinking**

Every failure or distortion of intelligence is rich with potential lessons. False information and logic, fragmented intelligence, manipulated emotions all generate failures or distortions of intelligence. So use critical thinking to understand and correct such failures and distortions while balancing it with appreciative and possibility thinking to generate wisdom.

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**Crowdsourcing**

Within any given problem or possibility there are many points of information, innovation, influence, and resources. So address the whole by inviting all these sources to come forth with their own contributions to the enterprise, unconstrained by official roles and assumptions and then weave them into greater wisdom and effectiveness.

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Wise people and societies do not trade long-term benefits for immediate gratification nor the lessons of the past for the impulses of today. We are all part of an immensely ancient and still unfolding learning adventure, alive in this moment. So help all people and groups play their evolutionary roles consciously and responsibly for future generations and the Earth.

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**Deliberation**

Wisdom explores, discerns, weighs, creates and envisions; it avoids jumping to conclusions and getting trapped by assumptions. Anything which helps us raise and care-fully consider a healthy range of factors, perspectives and options before and as we act qualifies as deliberation. So utilize and institutionalize diverse forms of such potent consideration.

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**Distributed Intelligence**

Many diverse individuals and groups have intelligence to apply to shared situations. So minimize alienation, domination and conformity while encouraging and creatively engaging many diverse voices and players. Enable them to call forth, organize and tap their vast collective intelligence and parallel processing capacity for better solutions.

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**Diversity**

Diversity provides a wide range of resources for big-picture insight, whole-system implementation, and general resilience. Cognitive diversity is especially important for collective wisdom. So consciously include relevant diversity in all forums and then welcome emergent differences, seeking to use them all creatively.

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E Pluribus Unum

That's Latin for “Out of many, one.” Properly respected, engaged, and interacting, the diverse many together are a resource for deeper, broader, wiser insight and action. So nurture “we the people” consciousness and agency rooted in diversity and learning, not conformity and authority.

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Enough Time

Life can be too fast and crowded for wholesome insights and changes to develop, or for sensible preparation and follow-up. So provide enough reasonably paced time for study, leisure, listening, reflection, nonlinear emergence, and exercising multiple intelligences—in personal life, in group process, and throughout a wisdom-generating culture.

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Expertise on Tap (Not on Top)

To the extent expert knowledge is diverse, accessible, unpretentious and well-contextualized, it can help generate democratic wisdom by clarifying situational dynamics and the likely outcomes of various options. So use expert knowledge to help people apply their own expertise about their values and everyday experience to make wise decisions, individually and collectively.

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Exuberance

Individual wisdom is closely associated with rationality, compassion, and broad awareness. These are also fundamental to collective wisdom. But quality of life is central to the goal of wise democracy, and life energy and creativity are central to its achievement. So initiate, join, appreciate and support vibrant expressions of aliveness.

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Feeling Heard

Feeling unheard, people withdraw or attack, making real communication and collaboration hard. Feeling fully heard relaxes people and opens them to hearing and working with others. This happens in relationships, groups and whole societies. So help people feel really heard by using active listening and reflection. Be curious. Ask: “Am I getting it?”

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Full Cost Accounting

Most economic, technological, and political decisions routinely ignore major negative impacts. They often “externalize” social and environmental costs on disadvantaged people, taxpayers, ecosystems and future generations. So when determining policy, developing technology or establishing prices, take due account of downsides as well as upsides, both proven and potential.

Related: 4 Big Empathy, 7 Checks on Extreme Inequality, 10 Commons, 17 Deep Time Stewardship, 27 Full Spectrum Information, 34 Life-Enhancing Enoughness, 40 Nature First

Full Spectrum Information

Beyond minimizing bias and suppression, wisdom demands consideration of all major perspectives as well as significant views from the edges. Work to base all efforts on as full a range of information and ways of knowing as possible, thereby increasing the likelihood of taking into account what needs to be taken into account.

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Generating Shared Orientation

People create wise common ground together by developing shared visions, ideals, purposes, understandings and cultures through social interactions or consensus or supermajoritarian decisions. So avoid the stagnation and folly of superficial agreement and conformity by practicing active co-sensing: moving forward, co-evolving, and adapting together.

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Generative Interactions

The most important interactions in a wise democracy—especially conversations—are those that generate more wholesome understanding, relationship, and/or possibility. So engage diverse people and perspectives in high quality social interactions—like DNA strands recombining in sexual reproduction—to produce novel outcomes that serve the well-being of everyone involved.

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Grounding in Fundamental Needs

Positions and demands impede consensus, whereas addressing deep needs makes true consensus possible. Deep needs are universal and can be satisfied in many ways, opening up possibilities. So help people clarify and meet the deep needs of all parties and to understand the addictive, shallow nature of pseudo-satisfiers and their manipulative power.

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Healthy Polarity Dynamics

Polarities are interdependent realities, not always opposites and not problems to solve. So seek healthy manifestations of—and coexistence, synergy, dynamic balance, and evolutionary vitality between—polarities like divergence/convergence, self/other, individual/collective, material/spiritual, subjective/objective, immediate/long-term, gravity/levity, depths/surfaces, safety/challenge, equality/freedom, etc.

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Integrity and Authenticity

Deception generates collective ignorance and folly. So it is important to represent ourselves and our views, feelings, intentions, and knowledge as truthfully as we can in life-serving ways. This helps everyone understand what is needed, real and available as they seek to generate broad benefits in changing conditions.

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Wisdom is not a one-time thing. It is intelligent learning stretched over the long haul and applied mindfully. Situations change, calling for course corrections—or an unexpected level of complexity appears, revealing new paths and challenges. So use periodic, iterative processes whose outcomes give birth to—and feed into—new inquiries, insights, possibilities and activities.

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Polarization is a compelling illusion. There are never just two sides unless people’s consciousness and choice are being manipulated. So show polarized people thinking and working together. Or instead of polarized people, choose people at random and reveal how unique and complex their thinking becomes, once informed into the big picture.

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It can be hard to create wisdom-generating conversations in large groups. So use smaller groups of diverse people—like a cross-section of the community or a full spectrum of stakeholders—to enable powerful shared learning and interactions that generate collective wisdom. Engage broader publics in and around that process and wisdom.

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Multi-Modal Intelligence

Reason offers only one mode of learning, understanding, and meeting challenges. Greater intelligence arises to the extent we integrate other modes including (but not limited to) intuition, imagination, emotion, stories, aesthetics, movement, spatial sensing, habit, and the intelligences of nature and of transcendence. So engage them all to enhance individual and collective well-being.

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Multiple Perspective View

Every conflict or issue has at least two self-legitimizing sides—and usually more. Their stories contain energies and information vital to a healthy shared future. So compassionately hear—and make visible in a compelling manner—the spectrum of perspectives, both to evoke empathy and to help everyone see what needs to be taken into account for truly wise solutions.

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Multi-Modal Power

Power is the capacity to do, to create effects.
- Power-over is power to control.
- Power-with is generated by collaboration.
- Power-from-within is spirit, character, discipline, focus.
- Power-from-among arises from collective interaction.
- Power-through is wise use of resources. They are all powerful, so empower and synergize them all.

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Nature First

Humans arose from eons of evolution and are inescapably intertwined with nature. Nature is our most important teacher, test, and nurturer. Ignoring our interdependence with natural systems—and with human nature—is folly. So tailor all actions and civilization to the demands, dynamics, limits, lessons and blessings of nature.

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Nurturing Social Capital

Divisiveness and alienation undermine wisdom-generating capacity. Social capital is the resource of human connection. Bonding capital exists within a group and bridging capital exists between groups. So nurture and invest social capital to generate not only more social capital but greater abundance and well-being generally.

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Possibility Thinking

We are co-creators of all that is happening and will happen and life is filled with potential. So take responsibility in each new situation by thinking “What is possible now?” Embrace undesirable possibilities but focus on positive developments that are possible now that things have become arrayed as they are at this moment.

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Partnership Culture

The search for long-term broad benefit requires the shared openness and energy of all participants. Competition is part of it but cooperation and mutual aid are the dominant themes. So realize the power of conscious collegiality. Nurture awareness that treats everyone, everything, and every situation as a potential partner.

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Power of Listening

The power of speaking is seriously undermined if no one is listening. Speakers need listeners in order for their perspectives to contribute to collective intelligence, and real listening is become rare. So promote active listening to open up hearts and minds and to evoke the wisdom of all. And listen into silence, your center, nature, group energy, and other sources of valuable insight.

Powerful Questions

Finding answers is important, but truly powerful questions open our attention and conversation into breakthrough insights and possibilities, evoking powerful life energy. So create powerful questions people can live into in ways that generate change with or without being answered, or that yield answers over and over, like a fruit tree.

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Privacy Guarantees

While openness is a hallmark of a wise democracy, such a democracy requires that people feel both safe to develop and express their uniqueness and also able enough to defend themselves from oppressive power. So seek to appropriately guarantee privacy while also helping people feel safe enough to be open.

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Proposals Emergent

Proposals usually promote arrival at particular outcomes. This often prematurely narrows attention into pro/con responses and amendments. So, when possible, start with the situation, issue, or inquiry and treat proposals as data about possibilities en route to greater understanding—until a proposal finally triggers a group ah-ha!

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Prudent Use of Power-Over

Often we seek to control what we cannot engage collaboratively. While sometimes necessary, domination often demands extra energy, evokes resistance and/or causes harm. So use power-over minimally and mindfully for broad benefit and, wherever possible, with consent. Profoundly respect the life energy and needs of those whose lives are being managed.

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Quality of Life Indicators

For communities and societies to generate long-term broad benefits, they need some overall feedback to track how they are doing over time. So promote the design, compilation and tracking—by experts, officials and the public—of statistics that measure factors that contribute to or indicate the quality of their lives.

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Restrained Liberty

The flourishing of life—passionate, free, self-organized expression and relationship—is both the point of and a source of wisdom. But trying to maximize our autonomous freedom can undermine healthy aliveness. So seek to optimize liberty in whole communities and systems within life-serving constraints ordained by reality, character and society.

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Restorative Justice

The purpose of wise justice is to maintain and restore wholeness and balance in relationships and community. Punishment, and even rehabilitation, do not achieve this. So promote true healing of both crimes and systemic social injustice with honest communication among victims, offenders, and communities as well as any needed amends and cultural and systemic changes.

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Rich Feedback Dynamics

Wisdom usually entails avoiding extremes by using balancing (“negative”) feedback grounded in observation, relationships, and systems. When abundance or transformation is needed, encourage magnifying (“positive”) feedback. So consciously apply and design feedback dynamics into activities and systems so that nature and reality don’t have to supply them at our expense.

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Safety First, Then Challenge

Most people don’t step far out of their comfort zone, even though change and challenge demand that they not back off or close down. So help people feel safe in ways that enable them to truly and effectively engage with the challenges they face. Then present them with challenges that help them grow and serve quality of life for all.


Sortition

Random selection by lot replaces human agency with chance (the modern view) or supernatural agency (the view of Italian city-states and ancient Athens). It can help democracy be just, clean, and efficient. So use it mindfully to thwart corruption, to produce legitimate deliberative cross-sections of a population, and to fairly distribute social goods or burdens.

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Self-Organization

Democracy and self-organization enhance each other. Self-organization thrives on localness, collaboration, healthy feedback dynamics, and intrinsic motivation. So, when addressing complex situations, minimize friction and expense by providing conditions whereby those involved can and do address it sensibly themselves within the constraints of the common good.

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Spaces for Dialogue and Collaboration

Wise democracy involves people working together—talking, creating, learning, deciding, taking action… This requires space—physical space and spaces, online spaces, psychological space, space in people’s schedules, and cultural space that honors and makes room for such interactions. So ensure such space is available in each situation and in the general culture.

Related: 6 Caring into Quality, 7 Checks on Extreme Inequality, 10 Commons, 20 Diversity, 29 Generative Interactions, 42 Partnership Culture, 46 Privacy Guarantees
**Story-weaving**

Story-weaving is a primary mode of sense-making and sense-sharing. Sharing personal and group stories promotes empathy, social capital, awareness, and collective intelligence. So encourage people to share stories about their experiences and longings. It will engage them and promote individual and collective shifts, discoveries and collaborations.

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**Subsidiarity**

Governance functions are best performed by those closest to the realm being managed, with due consideration for the scope of that realm. So promote subsidiarity such that each governance function occurs at the smallest scale where it can work well. That’s usually the personal or local level, but it can be higher—even global, if necessary.

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**Synergy Between Part and Whole**

We are both whole and part of greater wholes. Caring for any whole or part of a whole involves caring for both. So, rather than caring for the individual OR their community or environment, nurture the capacity of whole communities and environments to enhance the lives within them AND nurture the capacity of individuals to enhance their communities and environments.

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**Systems Thinking**

Reality is systemic, complex and deeply interconnected. Systems are dense webs of relationship. Addressing any situation wisely requires understanding and tapping relevant participants and connections. Systems thinking can be cybernetic, ecological, social, physical, shamanic, cultural and more. So use it to help people take into account relevant fields of relationship.

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Transpartisan Inquiry

Partisans are parts of the political puzzle, offering partial insights and solutions. The parts are valuable but must interact creatively to address and benefit the whole. So help partisans become transpartisans, maintaining their ideological center of gravity while engaging in civil, productive interactions with the Other for personal and social well-being.

Related: 25 Feeling Heard, 28 Generating Shared Orientation, 29 Generative Interactions, 31 Healthy Polarity Dynamics, 32 Integrity and Authenticity, 35 Metabolize Polarization, 57 Story Sharing

Universal Participation

Everyone and everything participates in co-creating whatever happens, knowingly or not, willingly or not. Guilt, blame, and single linear causation tend to be problematic illusions arising from limited awareness. So expand awareness of multiple causes and field effects. Promote conscious Full Spectrum participation in all wisdom-generating designs and activities.

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Universal Intelligence

Wisdom usually involves intelligence beyond the merely personal. Nature and evolution have much to teach us, as do broadly shared spiritual, philosophical, and ethical understandings. So practice moving beyond isolated awareness, deepening into our common humanity and the rest of nature, and witnessing how our personal consciousness links to the universal.

Related: 4 Big Empathy, 17 Deep Time Stewardship, 19 Distributed Intelligence, 37 Multi-Modal Intelligence, 40 Nature First, 44 Power of Listening, 54 Self-Organization

Using Diversity and Disturbance Creatively

Sameness makes everything seem dependable and secure. In contrast, diversity and disturbance introduce unpredictability and discomfort. So, to enrich life and better navigate complexity and change, welcome and engage diversity and disturbance as signals, stimulants, and resources for deeper insight into what’s developing beneath the surface and what’s needed to address it.

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**Visionary Attractors**

Compelling, grounded narratives and examples energize action. The most potent intensify and guide longing in that exciting space of possibility between what is and what could be. So make healthy role models, powerful conversations, inspiring initiatives and innovations broadly visible and engaging to help people live into them in their own lives and take them to scale in the real world.

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**Well-Utilized Life Energy**

People’s passion and caring - purposes, visions, values, needs, interests, concerns, compassion —and the energetic patterns of all Life—are resources for self-organized effectiveness. But these things can also generate dissonance. So seek to nurture, call forth, liberate, and support intrinsic life energy in ways that help realize broad long-term benefits.

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**Wholesome Life Learning**

Individual and collective explorations, learning and teaching can serve wholeness—whole people, whole communities, healthy ecosystems and wholesome futures. And deep, nuanced understandings enrich quality of life. So participate eagerly together in the vibrant realization of enlightening, effective knowledge that is both multi-dimensional and evolving.

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**Whole System in the Conversation**

Conditions—both desirable and undesirable—are co-created by all the players involved, directly and contextually. To the extent these diverse people, interests and perspectives are brought into creative interaction, wise outcomes can be co-created. So think seriously about who or what else should be part of any given conversation.

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Wise Use of Uncertainty

In any complex situation—i.e., in most situations—uncertainty is a given and certainty is a danger. Probabilities and surprises rule and possibilities and learning can flourish. So hold plans lightly, engage actively, value diversity, pay attention as things unfold, and nurture resilience and delight in the doorways opened by the unexpected.

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Working Through Feelings

Denying or shutting down feelings—emotions, pains, etc.—usually blocks people’s energy or blinds them to important warnings. “Working through feelings” has two seemingly opposite meanings: continuing despite feelings and addressing feelings directly and productively. So promote conscious use of both approaches, as needed, to support people’s clear energy and attention.

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