

# Sustainability Starts When You Throw Away the Instruction Manual. Introducing Syntony

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*The following is a guest post by our friends at Saybrook University's [Organizational Systems Program](#) (a 3p sponsor) – designed for students who want to understand the nature of organizations, collaborative practices, and transformative change.*

**By Alexander and Kathia Laszlo**

If there were an easy manual for sustainability, we'd follow it: western culture loves three easy steps, quick decisions, and technical fixes. Such a manual is great, for the right problem when we're dealing with technical problems for which there are known solutions. But life isn't a problem to be solved, and neither are people or nature, [or sustainability](#) ... though we often treat them as if they were.

Many well intentioned "sustainability solutions" respond to economic, social and environmental problems from a short term and [reductionistic perspective](#). But there are [some individuals](#) who are starting to connect the dots and are ready to put their energy into designing healthy, regenerative and abundant systems based on [a different view of the world](#). The world view involved asks that we create an ecology of new ways of working, learning and living that [embody social and environmental integrity](#), and this involves cultivating practices that reconnect. Specifically, ones that reconnect us with ourselves, with each other, with the more-than-human world that surrounds us, and with those who have come before us and will come after.

In essence, becoming sustainable is a more like learning how to love than it is following an instruction manual.

**How good are we at that?**

For most of us, getting on the path of sustainability is about finding a new way of approaching the problem, but that doesn't get to the essence of what it means to *be sustainable*. Striving to embody and enact sustainability involves putting the "how to" manual aside, abandoning the quick fix, and designing a whole new system for life. As

the evolutionary philosopher Erich Jantsch admonished, we must learn to design systems of *syntony*.

Syntony means resonance, to tune in or harmonize with each other, our surroundings, and the way in which we flow with them. It is a powerful concept to expand our understanding of sustainability. Rather than thinking about a desirable state in which we balance supply and demand of resources, sustainability from a syntony perspective becomes an ongoing process of learning and exploration to adapt with our ever changing environment. We never get to sustainability, but we make progress in re-creating our relationships to ourselves, to each other, to other species, and to future generations.

Like all forms of truly creative processes, this can only be done in relationship – with oneself, others, nature, and the potential inherent in the bridge we represent between what has been and what is yet to be.

### **How do we do this?**

At the first level – syntony with oneself; personal or internal syntony – the practices involve centering, quieting the monkey-mind, listening beyond words. These practices cultivate intuition, compassion, insight that matches oversight, and a willingness to explore and follow our deepest calling.

### **Some questions to engage in personal syntony:**

- What do I care deeply about? How do I live my values? What is my learning path?

At the second level – syntony with others; community or interpersonal syntony – the practice involves deep dialogue and collaboration. Coming together to learn with and from each other and to engage in collective action with empathy, considerateness, openness, and joy.

### **Some questions to engage in interpersonal syntony:**

- Who are my collaborators? What is our common purpose? What are the different talents that we bring to our relationship?

At the third level – syntony with nature; ecosystemic or transpecies syntony – the practices involve communing with and listening to nature; and acknowledging our interdependence and ultimate unity.

### **Some questions to engage in transpecies syntony:**

- What can I learn from nature? How do my daily choices respect and honor the rights of other species? In what ways can I experience my interconnection with natural systems?

At the fourth level – syntony over time; evolutionary or transgenerational syntony – the practices involve learning how to read the patterns of change of which we are a part; learning to think long term and to honor our past as we create our future; assuming responsibility for the part we play in creating new realities.

**Some questions to engage in transgenerational syntony:**

- Do my decisions acknowledge my history? What would my grand and great-grandchildren think of my choices? What is my legacy?

Sustainability starts with a personal commitment to learn, to expand perspectives, to change behaviors, to transform ourselves and our world. Our past has prepared us for this moment in history in which we can consciously decide our future. We have the cognitive and emotional capacity to embark on this quest for syntony. Denial and business as usual will only bring us more of the same. The crisis at the Gulf of Mexico is an alarm we cannot ignore. The question is whether or not we have the will, the vision, and the conviction to evolve consciously.

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Read more: [http://www.triplepundit.com/2010/07/sustainability-syntony/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+TriplePundit+%28Triple+Pundit%29#ixzz0tU4iRVqG](http://www.triplepundit.com/2010/07/sustainability-syntony/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TriplePundit+%28Triple+Pundit%29#ixzz0tU4iRVqG)