

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

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# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

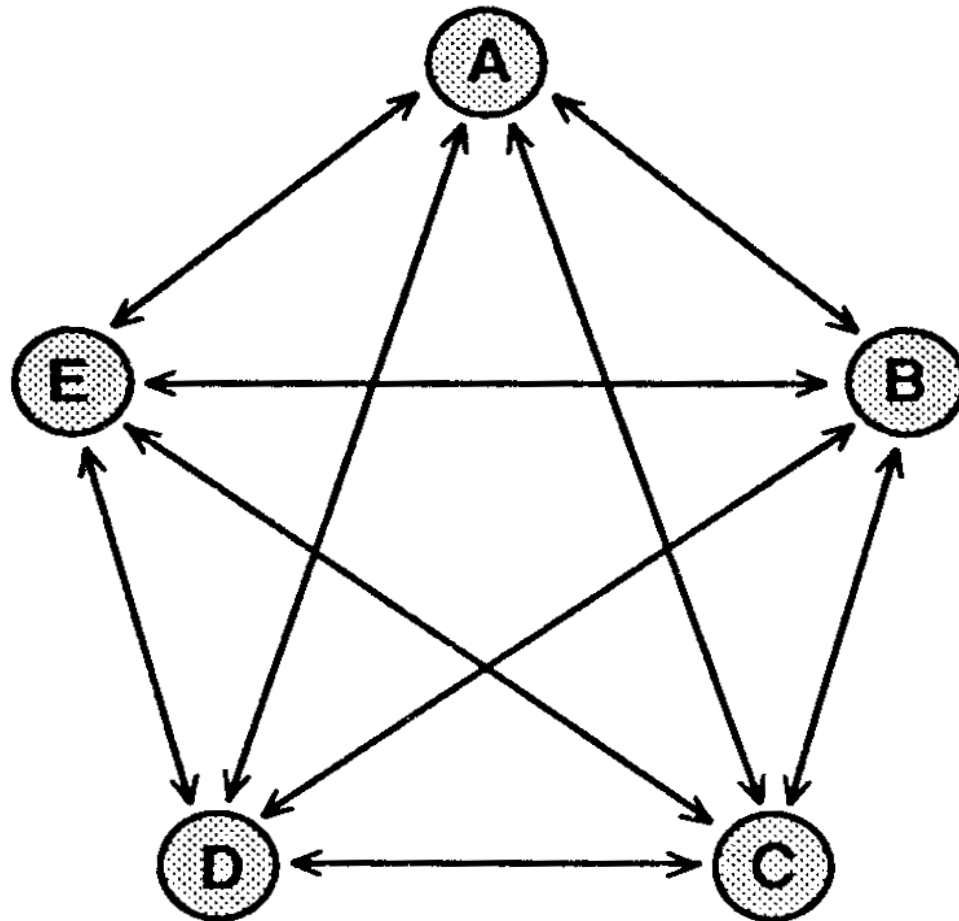
## **SYSTEM THINKING**

- Things only function as they do because of the presence of one another
- Nothing is influenced in one direction
- Each part contributes to what is happening

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## SYSTEM THINKING

- Change in one part produces change in other parts
- There is mutual maintenance of behavior
- The interactions between different people affect the whole
- Relationships are not merely interesting—that's all there is



**Systemic Causation**

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

**Who** You Are Matters More  
Than What You **Do**

*Leadership is the Art of  
Hiding Your Panic*

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It's Not About You



It's all about You!

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Traits of Anxious People

### Emotional Patterns

1. Feelings of dread & hopelessness
2. Fear of differences.
3. Panic: Fight/Fight/Freeze
4. A need to “fix” the problem.



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## Traits of Anxious People

### Cognitive Function

1. Inability to concentrate.
2. Inability to think of anything else.
3. Distortion in receiving information.
4. Over simplification of issues.
5. Denial of reality.

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## Traits of Anxious People

### Physical Symptoms

1. Agitation.
2. Sleeplessness.
3. Increase of blood pressure.
4. An urge to go fast.
5. General uptightness.

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## Traits of Anxious People



### Relational Stress

1. Blaming, critical anger.
2. Scapegoating.
3. Distancing, cutoff.
4. Forming alliances.
5. Appeasement.

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## Some Anxious People?

Edvard Munch  
Woody Allen  
Homer Simpson  
George W. Bush  
?



# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Traits of Non-Anxious Persons

### Emotional Patterns

1. Feeling wary but hopeful.
2. Appreciating differences.
3. Notices panic urge; works to calm self & others.
4. Stays with the pain of not knowing, not fixing.
5. Endures pain, ones own and that of others.

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## Traits of Non-Anxious Persons

### Cognitive Function

1. Stays focused, on task & “in the room”.
2. Takes “time out” from issues.
3. Checks out perceptions & understandings.
4. Values own thinking.
5. Accepts the messiness of issues.

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## Traits of Non-Anxious Persons

### Physical Symptoms

1. Works on breathing slowly.
2. Gets physical exercise to reduce stress.
3. Takes the time needed, goes slow, is leary of any “quick-fix.”
4. Stays loose.
5. Has a life outside the system.

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## Traits of Non-Anxious Persons Relational Stress

1. Seeks the fear beneath anger.
2. Guards against attributing motives or criticizing.
3. Stays connected.
4. Watches for triangles.
5. Assumes good intent.
6. Takes stands as necessary.

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Some Non-Anxious People

Barack Obama  
General Eisenhower  
Oprah Winfrey  
Atticus Finch  
?





# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## The Emotional Field

Balance of Self &  
Togetherness Forces

\*Cf. Gravity, Magnetism.

\*Known by its effects:

\*To thwart of forces that induce imbalance.

\*Whitehead: Relationships > Substance.



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## The Emotional Field

### Balance of Self & Togetherness Forces

- \*Newton's Law of Inertia.

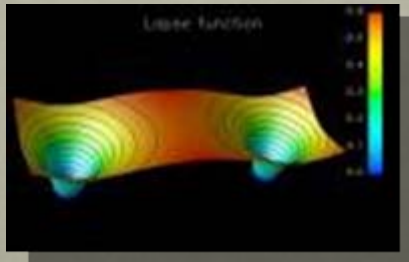
- \**"The more things change, the more they stay the same."*

- \*Preservation of form provides meaning & coherence to life.

- \*Systems per se resist change.

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## The Emotional Field

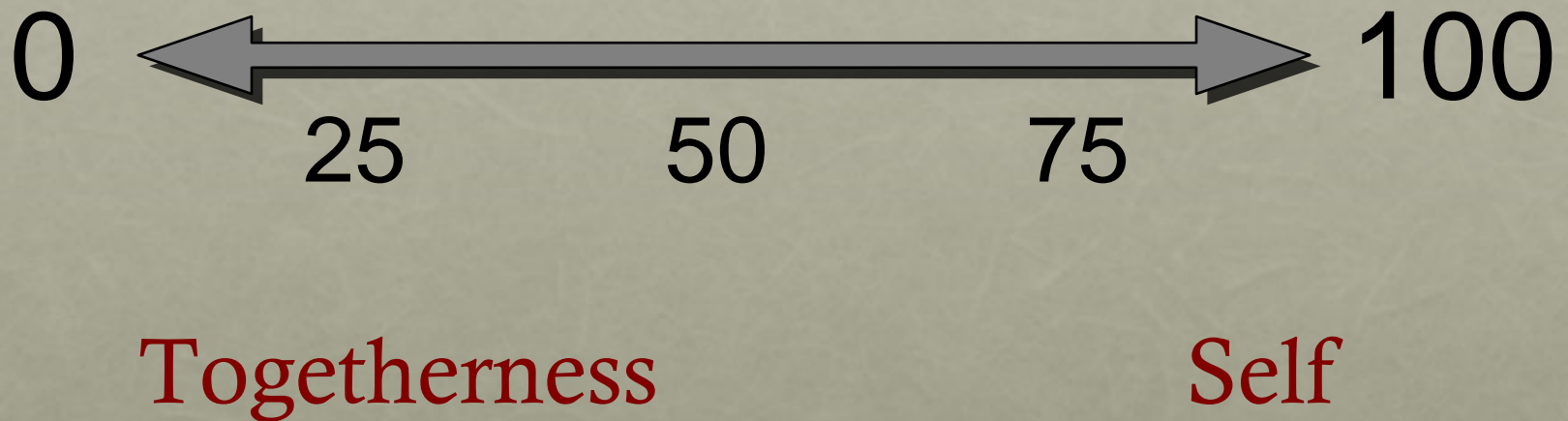


## Relational Conflict

- \*Always about disturbance in the Field.
- \*Perceived threat to the group Togetherness.
- \*Leadership  $\approx$  Intentionally inducing Change.
- \*Leadership  $\approx$  Creating Conflict.

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## The Scale of Differentiation



# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## The Scale of Differentiation



**Togetherness Force ~**  
makes relationships,  
procreation possible.

**Self Force ~**  
makes individuality,  
novelty possible.

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Me & We

We want it  
both ways!

Lifelong balancing act!



# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Anxiety

*Life is an anxiety-disorder!*

Anxiety cannot be eliminated.  
It can be modulated.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Anxiety

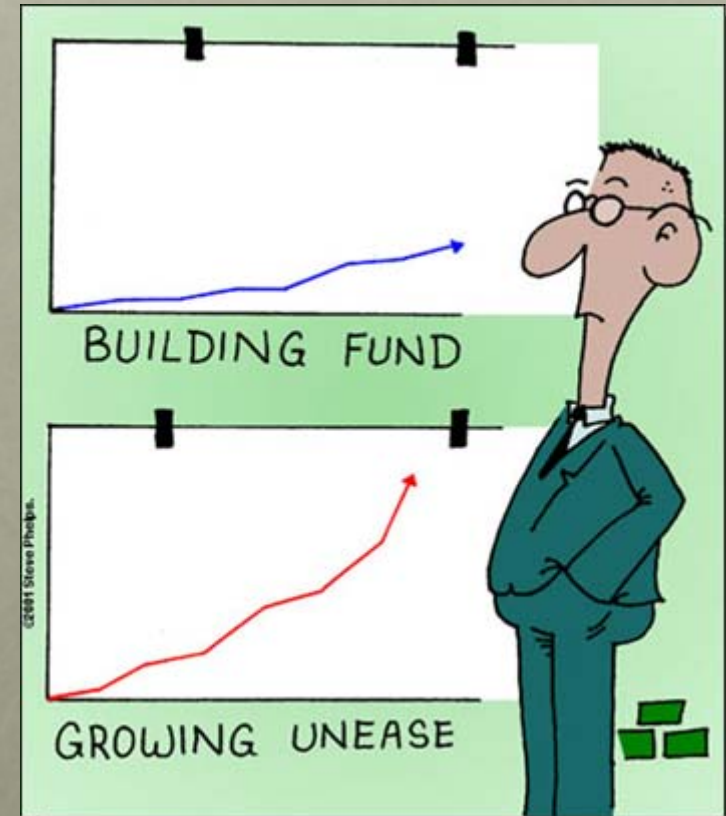
Maturation into adulthood = never  
ending effort to grow up!

Anxiety modulation = increasing  
intentionality to determine your own  
course in life.

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## Anxiety Spikes

1. Changes in congregational system.
2. Trauma to any members.
3. Leadership transitions.
4. Adoption of new goals or restructuring.
5. Staff changes.
6. Building construction.
7. Values & norms.



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## Relational Conflict Healthy/Non-Anxious Leadership

1. Aware anxiety always present.
2. Never takes reactivity personally.
3. Mindful that relationships are reciprocal.
4. Calm leaders calm systems.
5. Anxious leaders jazz up systems.

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## Relational Conflict Healthy/Non-Anxious Leadership

1. Knows that self-management is essential to serving others.
2. Knows that any change here leads to change there.
3. Remains patient, focused on the long haul, not the short term.

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## Relational Conflict Healthy/Non-Anxious Leadership

1. Remains goal focused so as not to yield to momentary pressure to return to status quo.
2. Exhibits a willingness to stay with member anxiety;
3. Is willing to not fix things.
4. Learns how to tolerate anxiety & uncertainty for creative good.
5. Accepts that change is noisy and messy.
6. Normalizes upset as “ok.”
7. Manages ones Self.

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## Change Resistance

*“Followers want comfort, stability, and solutions from their leaders, but that’s babysitting. Real leaders ask hard questions and knock people out of their comfort zones. Then they manage the resulting distress.”*

Ron Heifetz

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

Anxiety Management =  
Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety with Questions

- \*Why now?

- \*How does my family of origin leave me vulnerable?

- \*What values matter here?

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

Anxiety Management =  
Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety by taking stands

- \*What is our mission?
- \*Whom do we serve?
- \*What do our members value?
- \*What results do we want?
- \*What is our plan?

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

Anxiety Management =  
Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety by Honoring Resistance

- \* Not taking it personally.
- \* Not becoming oppositional.
- \* Tending to boundaries.
- \* Living right relations.
- \* Resist your own willfulness.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Anxiety Management = Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety by > Resiliency

- \*Expanding your own repertoire.
- \*Connecting with your family of origin:  
Knowing where you are reactive.
- \*Knowing where you have resources.
- \*Leaders maturity > followers.
- \*Anxiety flows down from the top.
- \*Get a coach.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

Anxiety Management =  
Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety Physically

- \*Count to 10; count again.

- \**“When in doubt, don’t just do something, stand there.”*

- \*Slow your breathing.

- \*Write it down before you speak.

- \*Don’t defend, explain, justify.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

Anxiety Management =  
Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

Lowering Anxiety with Imagination

- \*Go closer to those who make you anxious.
- \*Exaggerate the “what if...”
- \*Be playful.
- \*Live your dreams.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

### Signs of Being a Grown Up!

- \*Thinking before acting.
- \*Staying calm & poised.
- \*Staying present.
- \*Being an “I,” making I-statements.
- \*Being self-aware.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

## Becoming a Non-Anxious Presence

### Signs of Being a Grown Up Leader!

- \* Focus on Your Life's Larger Purposes.
- \* Serving the divine > winning battles.
- \* Being true, authentic > pleasing others.
- \* Staying the course.
- \* Ask good questions.
- \* Confront immaturity.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

- To become a well-differentiated, mature person, one has to think from an “I position” and focus on one’s own functioning while still staying connected to others. Self-differentiation is indeed good stewardship of the self.

# Growing Healthy Congregations: Responding to Anxiety and Change

- The differentiated, non-anxious leader works on SELF, one's own functioning. His or her influence does not rely on personality, gaining consensus, techniques or skills, piles of information, or expertise. The field's force is influenced by the leader's BEING (presence) and DOING (functioning).

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Leaders take responsibility for their own actions. They are not responsible for how others function.

The leader is the person who most influences an emotional field.

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*Leadership is the spiritual process of discerning what one believes (clarity), acting on that belief in the public arena (decisiveness), and standing behind that action (responsibility) despite the varied responses of people (courage).*

Rev. Frank Thomas

# MORE HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS AT GA

#2061 Growing Healthy Congregations: Non-Anxious  
Leadership and Healthy Relationships

Thursday 1:00 p.m. 200 CDE

#3022 Growing Healthy Congregations: Generosity and  
Spiritual Health

Friday 1:00 p.m. 200 CDE

Healthy Congregations Discussion Group

Saturday, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Hilton Marquette III

Healthy Congregations Discussion Group

Sunday, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Hilton Marquette II

# RESOURCES AND FURTHER LEARNING

- Call your District Executive for scheduling a Healthy Congregations workshop series.
- Recommended Book:

*Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times by Dr. Peter Steinke, \$18.00 in the UUA Bookstore*

