



Actions to Meet Challenges to Sustaining our Lives on Earth: Workshop 7

Building Capacities for Inner Resilience in the Face of Challenges
December 11, 2024

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Introduction to the Sustainable & Resilient Resources Roundtable, to the Workshop Series and to Today's Topic: David Berry, SRRR Founder and Director



David welcomed participants to the 7th workshop in the series *Actions to Meet Challenges to Sustaining our Lives on Earth*. He explained that the first six workshops had an undertone of urgency and concern that human activities were not in harmony with the natural world of which we are an integral part.

David shared the history of SRRR, which began as a federal advisory committee and transitioned into a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit before many of the committees were eliminated several years ago. During the COVID pandemic, the group

began to conduct online meetings.

This workshop is the seventh and final short online workshop in this SRRR series. The first six sessions were on the following topics:

1. **A Planetary Overview**
2. **Energy: Constraints & Consequences**
3. **A week after COP 28: What Happened & What's Next**
4. **Water: Challenges & Strategies for Mitigation & Resilience**
5. **Agriculture & Food Systems: Mitigation & Resilience to Breakdowns**
6. **Contending with Cascading Catastrophes: Pathways & Solutions**

Proceedings from these workshops are available at <https://sustainableroundtable.org/proceedings>

Information shared in this series, the daily flow of current events, and our own direct experiences all make clear the increasing challenges faced by humanity, and the stresses they are creating for the economy, our society, and for life on Earth. Some of the presentations and discussions in the previous sessions were stark unvarnished confrontations of these challenges and some participants reported feeling pessimistic or depressed about the view of the future. The SWRR steering committee decided to focus the final workshop, *Building Capacities for Inner Resilience in the Face of Challenges* to support participants in sustaining their effectiveness and cooperation as they engage with the difficulties to mitigate or at least minimize the painful impacts of these challenges on people and all life on Earth.

David introduced the theme of inner resilience by leading an exercise inviting recognition of and reverence for the nested support systems enabling and animating our existence. He invited participants to notice the pressure of their feet on the floor and of their weight on the chair beneath them. That pressure is a direct sensory experience of the support and grounding we receive each moment from the Earth, whose elements form our body via the food we eat, water we utilize, and air we breathe. We rarely allow ourselves to be aware that we are made of the planet through the nutriments it gives us.

Without food, people perish in about a month, and without water we fail in about a week. Without breathing air, our lives end in a few minutes; yet it is rare for us to

even vaguely appreciate the presence of the air we breathe. Our bodies are wet, contain flows, and are constantly changing; but we are not conscious of where it comes from as we drink water or blink to lubricate our eyes. We are entirely interdependent on and yet mainly oblivious of these supportive conditions from the world that gives us life.

There are two support systems even more central to our existence: We are not walking around **on** this planet – we are at the top of the rock layer and at the bottom of the gas layer we call air or atmosphere. The four largest planets in our solar system are made entirely of gas. We live embedded inside our planet where the two layers meet. Standard air pressure at sea level is 14.7 pounds/ square inch, or almost 1 kilogram/ square centimeter. David asked participants to lightly press on their cheekbones with two fingertips, each with the weight of about two pounds of butter. That much pressure is constantly pressing on our bodies and holding us together. We are like a baby swaddled tightly in a blanket of air. If we stepped outside the planet into zero pressure for even an instant we would not suffocate, we would explode.

The most fundamental of the support systems we depend on gets almost no attention except through metaphors and parables. The background radiation of the Big Bang is neither far away nor long ago. Many forms of radiation are present with us here and now and animating all matter and all life. It is not felt by our senses, but pointed to by scientists, spiritual leaders, and philosophers who use different names for aspects of it: background radiation, unified field, God, Atman, Divine Field, Spirit. That profound level of reality, even when pointed to by metaphor, can be helpful to maintain inner resilience. It directs awareness to a context greater than the difficulties we encounter moment to moment. We can experience a strengthening and the ability to adapt if we let our awareness include the big picture, always present in the here and now. The planet does not need us to be grateful, but it enables us to feel connected to these ever-present, strong, and supportive conditions with a depth and significance far beyond our worries in daily life. We have the resources available to enhance our own resilience.

As one of the Founding Mothers of the United States of America said:

The greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our disposition and not upon our circumstances. – Martha Washington (wife of George)



Enhancing Resilience and Outcomes Through Mindfulness: Paul Massera,
California Dept. of Water Resources



Paul Massera has been with DWR since 1994 and is currently Strategic Planning Manager in the Division of Planning in the California Department of Water Resources. He has enjoyed his many experiences including statewide integrated water planning (California Water Plan); statewide storage and conjunctive use assessments (CALFED Bay-Delta Program); Kern Water Bank (State Water Project Planning); wetland water operations and habitat restoration (Suisun Marsh Program); dam safety (Division of Safety of Dams); Executive Policy Advisor; Statewide Flood

Management Program; and other opportunities throughout DWR. His passion is collaboratively balancing and sustaining environmental, economic, and societal priorities, and in increasing water resource resilience for generations to come. Besides his work on water resources, Paul is the developer and leader of a Mindfulness training program in DWR which has been so successful that it is now going state-wide in government agencies.



Mindfulness

- Deep, non-judgmental awareness of ourselves and others within each present moment.
- Kinship founded on shared characteristics unique to humans, such as kindness, mercy, and sympathy.
- More equitable, informed, and effective choices in our personal and professional lives.

Paul, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to provide the group with an introduction to the 9-hour course on Mindfulness that he and others have been offering. He began with a 2-minute meditation exercise to help attendees focus and calm their minds for optimum efficiency and effectiveness.

Mindfulness Strategies for Personal Growth

Paul discussed the concept of mindfulness and its benefits in a work context. He emphasized the importance of living in the present moment, rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. He also highlighted the potential for personal resilience and effectiveness in daily activities through mindfulness practice. Paul introduced five practical mindfulness strategies:

- meditation,
- objective observer,
- ego awareness,
- shared humanity, and
- the choice construct.

Mindfulness Clarifies Life's Purpose

Enhancing **Outcomes** from fulfilling our **outer life purpose.**

Interact with and create "form" within our physical universe in ways that are outside of ourselves.

Enhancing **Resilience** from fulfilling our **inner life purpose.**

Awaken from our outer purpose to live in the present moment and to nurture our spirit and that of others.

He also mentioned the concept of a 'wisdom circle' for productive and respectful interactions. The presentation is intended to inspire a shared journey towards mindfulness and personal growth.

Meditation for Emotional Awareness and Stress



Return to the Present

Meditation
Body scan
Observe surroundings
Silence
Mindful tasting
Acceptance
One task at a time
Breathing

Paul introduced the concept of meditation as a simple, secular, and scientifically validated exercise for the brain. He explained the three steps of meditation: sitting with a straight back and closed eyes, focusing on the feeling of the breath coming in and going out, and noticing when the mind wanders and starting again. Paul advised daily meditation for 5 to 10 minutes. He also introduced a pre-meditation self-check activity to help participants become more aware of their emotions and sensations.

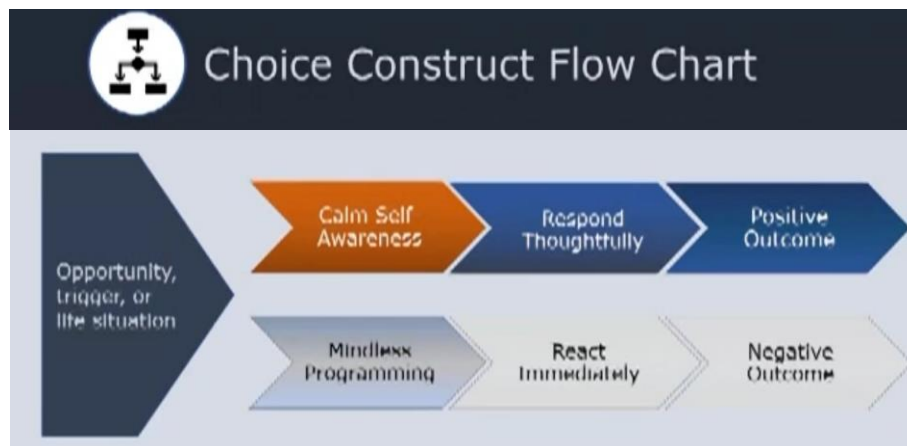
After a guided meditation, participants were asked to reevaluate their emotions and sensations. Two participants noted that becoming more aware of their emotions and sensations didn't make them feel worse, but rather more aware of their stress levels.

Mindfulness, Leadership, and Shared Humanity

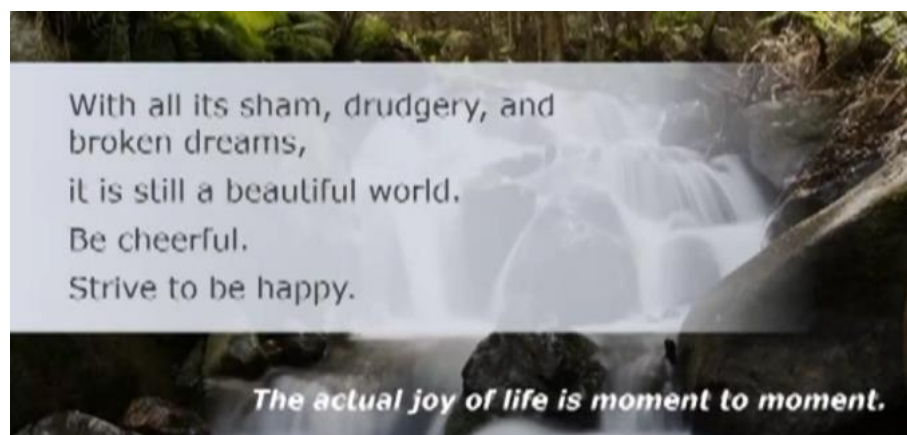
Paul discussed several strategies for mindfulness and creating a positive work culture. He emphasized being present in the moment rather than ruminating on the past or future. Listening without being attached to one's own viewpoint enhances active listening skills. Ego awareness and humility are important for effective leadership and fostering an inclusive environment. Paul highlighted the concept of "shared humanity" which can help overcome divisiveness and bring people together. He also introduced the "choice construct" - the idea that the quality of our choices affects the outcomes in our lives.

Mindful Work Culture

- Leverage and multiply talent.
- Unleash Initiative.
- Experience mutual support and encouragement.
- Foster, inspire, and enable growth.



Paul concluded with the final stanza of the poem Desiderata by Max Ehrmann (1927), which he said maps closely with the core concepts of mindfulness.



David thanked Paul for his presentation and said that throughout, Paul transmitted a sense of calmness, humility and generosity in his motivation to contribute. Clearly, he practices what he presented.

*Building Capacities for
Inner Resilience in the Face of Challenges*

I-We-It: Inward Journey for Outward Change

I-We-It: Inward Journey for Outward Change: Sandy Wiggins, Consilience



Sandy Wiggins is a national leader for equitable economies, environmental sustainability and the transformation of finance. After walking out of his life as a corporate executive, he served as Chair of US Green Building Council, was founding Chair of Green Business Certification Institute, and Chair of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (now Common Future). He also served as Sr. Advisor to RSF Social Finance, creating the Local Economy

Foundation Circle and their Conscious Finance initiative. Sandy now works with individuals and organizations around the world to support healing, the evolution of consciousness, and the exploration of new possibilities for the human family and life on Earth. He currently leads Capital Institute's "Inner Work for a Regenerative Economy" program. He is also a certified breathwork practitioner and meditation teacher.

Resilience...

Resilient people are able to...

- ...keep going in the face of adversity.
- ...grow through their experience.
- ...maintain psychological well-being.
- ...alter priorities in order to solve problems.

...is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands.

Inner Resilience and Systems Change

After inviting participants to stand, move their bodies and forcefully exhale three deep breaths, Sandy discussed the importance of inner resilience and mindset change as the key to driving large-scale change. He explained that he was going to present intertwined frameworks addressing change in complex systems.

Sandy shared the renowned work of Donella (Dana) Meadows on places to intervene in a system. Dana said the most effective place to intervene in a system is the mindset or paradigm out of which the goals, rules, feedback, and structure arise.

Places to Intervene in a System

Donella Meadows

9. Numbers (subsidies, taxes, standards).
8. Material stocks and flows.
7. Regulating negative feedback loops.
6. Driving positive feedback loops.
5. Information flows.
4. The rules of the system (incentives, punishment, constraints).
3. The power of self-organization.
2. The goals of the system.
1. The mindset or paradigm out of which the goals, rules, feedback structure arise.

Sandy shared experiences from his time as Chair of the US Green Building Council and other change-making initiatives, highlighting the role of networks and shared vision in creating change. He saw people who entered the field seeking market share opportunities but they would engage, learn, start to change and discover a sense of connection and shared humanity. They began to see that what they did in their day to day lives was connected to the challenges that we face, and they would develop a new sense of purpose.

"I believe that by changing ourselves we change the world. It is a path of a two-way movement, a going deep into the self and an expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society. And yet, I am confused as to how to accomplish this." - Gloria Anzaldua

When Sandy was active with The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies — (Balle; now Common Future), he encountered the work of Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze on Cultivating Emergence. He said "Emergence" is the way that evolution works. They used the framework "name, connect, nourish, and illuminate" for cultivating a collective vision and promoting systems change.

"The world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what's possible."
- Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze

The first step is to **name** what we see is happening. Then we work to **connect** it to other nodes to build a network. Next we **nourish** the network and the people in it with whatever they need. And finally to **illuminate** what is happening – tell the story. This is a way we can participate in evolution and have an influence on the direction it goes.

Sandy told the participants that most of his work is with the **connect** and **nourish** parts of the framework. He said that most people focus on the existing system or

some aspect of it that they want to change, or the new system they want to create. These are represented by the “It” in this diagram:

I → We → It

The “We” is the collective – that includes the shared vision – but how do we get to that “We?” Sandy says it comes from each of us beginning with the one person. He said we need to focus on all three, the **It** the **We** and the **I**.

He gave us a quote from Gandhi

“If you want to change the world, start with yourself.” - Mohandas Gandhi

Guided Meditation and Inner Resilience

To illustrate what he meant by working on the “We” and the “I” Sandy led a guided meditation, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings through the exchange of atoms and breath. He encouraged participants to contemplate the breath and its role in the dance of exchange with the world around them.

-Participant Responses

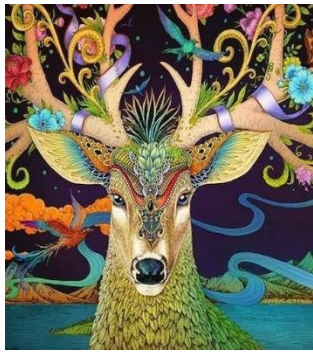
Abdul Khan expressed his profound connection to the meditation.

Sandra Faber, Founder, Earth Futures Institute, UC Santa Cruz, said she would like to follow up as the cosmologist in the group. She observed that one of the great gifts, from the point of view of being a cosmologist, is to feel a connection with the universe. She would like to enlarge the concepts, by calling attention to the interesting fact that atoms in our bodies aside from hydrogen and helium, were synthesized in the centers of stars, and so every one of us is stardust. All the nitrogen, oxygen, and the heavier stuff that makes us tick was made in stars.

David Berry noted that what Sandy shared is that each one of us is part of roughly a million different supernova explosions across the galaxy, over billions of years. And yet somehow, chance has brought all those atoms together from hundreds and thousands of light year distances to create, first of all planet Earth, and then us.

And so each of us on the Earth are children of the universe. We are created by it, and we're part of a great cosmic process which Sandy has found, because of its grandeur and sheer incomprehensibility, to be extraordinarily comforting.

Sandy Wiggins: Thank you so much, Sandy, and I'm right there with you. Beautiful!



Inner Resilience

The Power of Calling

Inner Resilience: The Power of Calling: Sharon Franquemont, Intuition Works



Sharon is a coach, consultant, teacher, and writer in the intuition field. She led nature & intuition retreats at [Charlson Meadows](https://cmeadows.org/), (https://cmeadows.org/), a Minnesota non-profit, for 20 years, worked with the University of Minnesota's [Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing](#) on Ways of Knowing conferences for healthcare professionals, and developed retreats for the [Shumei International Institute](#), a Japanese organization devoted to nature, art, and world citizenship. Her works include *You Already Know What to Do* (Putnam/Penguin), an audio program *Intuition: Your Electric Self* (Sounds True), and articles for *Creative Nursing*. She explores inner knowing and collaborative intuition in cultural, scientific, mystical, artistic, and other disciplines. She is the visionary co-founder of the annual volunteer [Prayer Vigil for the Earth](#) held on the National Mall for 20 years. The event supported environmental and spiritual awareness and had meetings in the White House, Pentagon, and Congress.

Resilience, Mindfulness, and Inner Purpose:

Sharon shared her own background in intuition and of her 45 years helping people get to the center of themselves and learn another way of knowing. Then she read a beautiful poem by Rumi

The clear bead in the center changes everything.

There are no edges to my loving.

Now you've heard it said

That there is a window

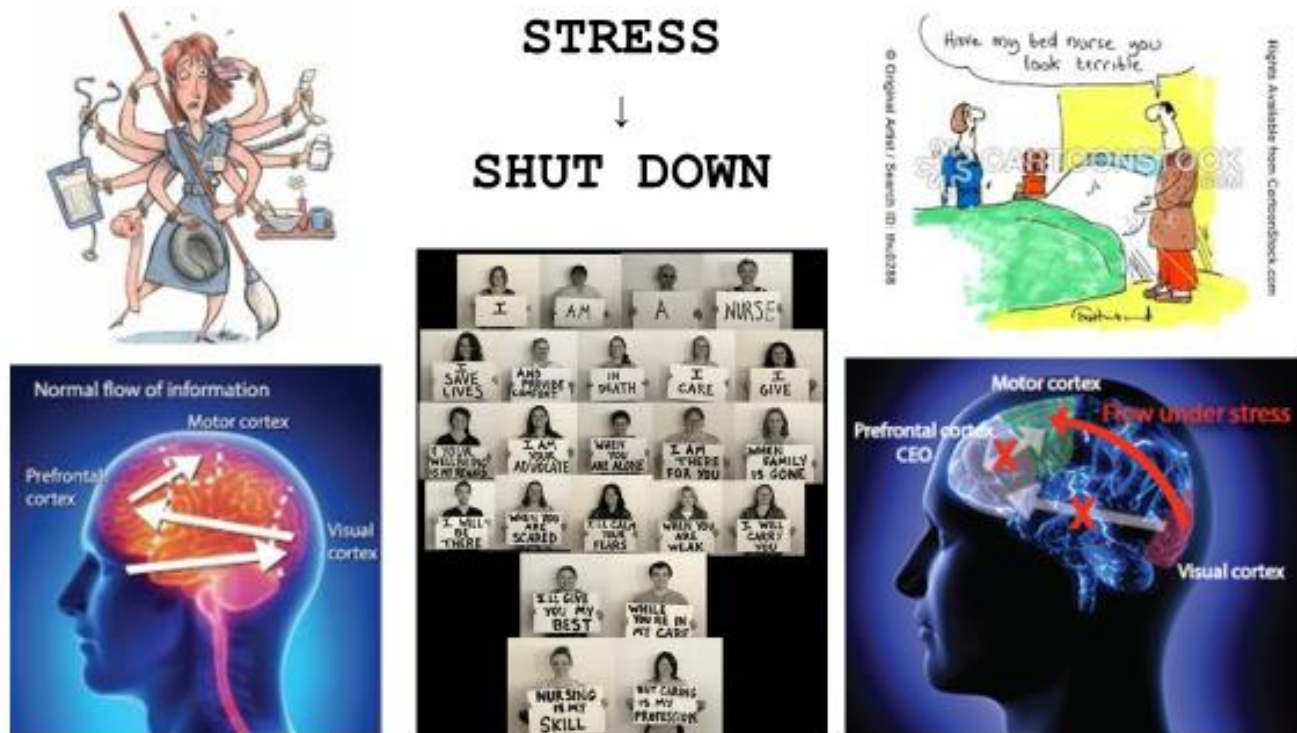
That opens from one mind to another.

But if there is no wall,

There is no need for fitting the window or the latch.



She discussed the importance of resilience and the ability to recover from difficulties. She emphasized the need for mindfulness, rest, and silence to restore one's spirit and foster a sense of purpose. She also highlighted the significance of nature in nourishing the spirit and the importance of observing life with a clear mind.



Sharon explained that inner resilience is a real bodily sense and enhanced by the connections of neuropeptides within us like an Internet of the body. That capacity is part of our essence,

She shared her experiences working with nurses, who often felt overwhelmed and disconnected from their purpose. She encouraged them to reconnect with their inner selves and find meaning in their work. She also discussed the concept of "seeing into being" and the importance of clear communication in partnerships and communities.



The Clear Road at the Center Changes Everything

Real Sense: Sensory Aliveness

BE HERE NOW... PRESENCE

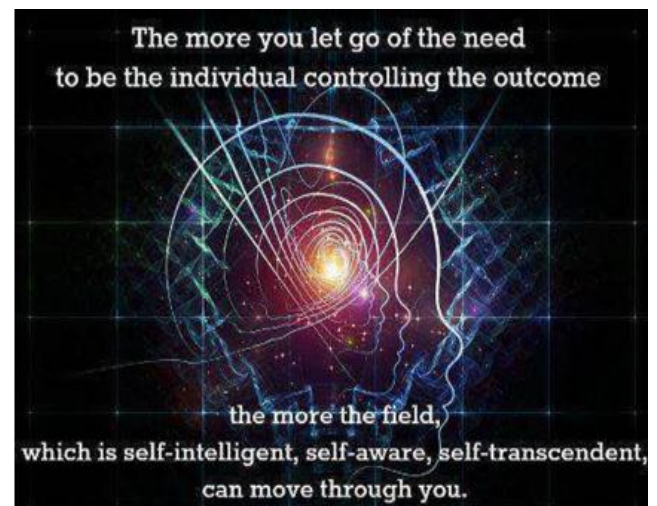
WHY HERE? CALLING/PURPOSE

WHAT HELPS? MINDFULNESS

WHAT NOURISHES? NATURE

WHAT RESTORES?
REST/SILENCE

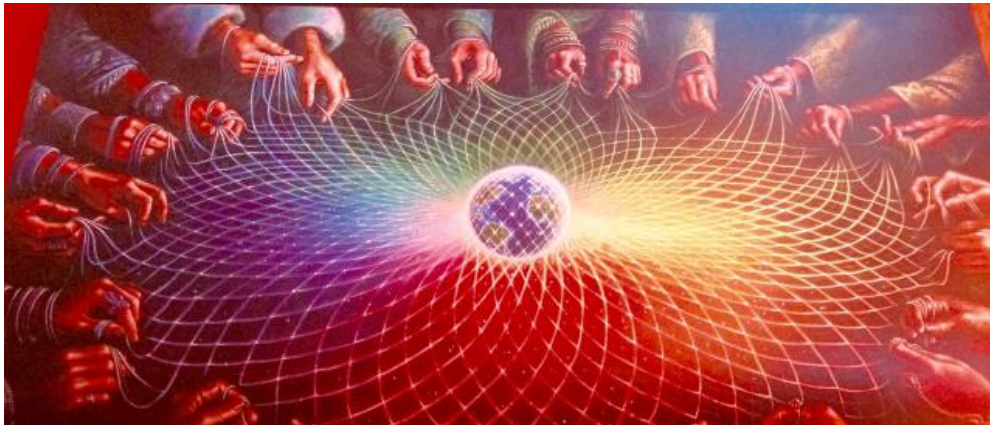
WHAT HAPPENS? ACTION



Embracing the Universe and Interconnectedness:

Sharon discussed the importance of embracing the vastness of the universe and the interconnectedness of all things. She shared a personal experience of feeling insignificant when gazing at the stars, but emphasized the comfort and resilience that can be gained from recognizing our place in the larger cosmic field. She also touched on the role of nature in healing and the concept of the field as a self-intelligent, self-aware, and self-transcendent force.

Sharon encouraged the group to cultivate a field identity and to trust in the larger forces at work in the universe.



This last slide is an image of the sacred net. In this net, at every juncture, every little place is part of the whole. It's like a fractal, joyful interconnection. Addressing our doubt or inexperience with this vastness, Rumi, the poet we began with states it this way:

**This we have now is not imagination
is not a grief or a joy, not a judging state
or an elation or sadness.
Those come and go.
This is the presence that doesn't.**

- Participant response

Abdul Khan: Sharon, I want to express my appreciation. This was a really beautiful presentation. What I realize in that there were three difference presentations, and yet at the same time very connected. There is the inner being, the outer being, and there is a purpose for everything we do. The three presenters used different language to deliver their message which came from a similar paradigm. It was beautiful to witness,

Closing Reflections

David Berry thanked the presenters and all who participated in the workshop.

Recall the experiences you had as you looked at the images, as you heard the sounds of the voices of the presenters. as you heard a question and the response. You generated the experiences that you had. What was happening here in the last two and a

half hours may have been familiar to you or it may have been new territory, new examples or new affirmations, because the presenters went broad and they went deep. Whatever experiences you had, were generated by you. The capacity to observe phenomena and the capacity to build resilience, is inherent in each being.

Seeking intelligent and compassionate ways to respond to complex challenges has been inherent in the 22 years of these workshops. Whether we were talking about biodiversity “out there”. or water resources “out there”, or climate change phenomena “out there” we were working to find approaches, answers, things to try, collaborations to build both “out there” and “in here”.

We cannot fully meet our current, or really any circumstances without bringing to it our own fullness - if we want to truly learn, if we want to act effectively.

We accomplished something today in making explicit what's always been implicit in the conversation. My experience is that this group of people already accepts responsibility for the dilemmas that we have collectively created, and that accepting responsibility is one of the many steps to empowerment.

Thank you all for being here.
