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Encouraging Self-Discovery and Empowerment



Bringing Creative Change into Our Relationships by Charlyne Gelt, Ph.D.

“The bat hanging upside down laughs at the topsy-turvy world.”
— Japanese Proverb



Sometimes, especially in the media, it appears as if the world is teeming with crisis and “bad news” — economic woes, wars, homelessness, family dysfunctions, addiction, abuse, anxiety and angst. Bad news may help sell newspapers, but it doesn’t lift the spirits or help find solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems, whether global or personal.



Unique, interesting, alternatives can shift bad news into good news! What's blocking us from creating that change? Usually it's fear of change itself. In any arena of life, change is uncomfortable. Creating change, means we leave behind those who remain hooked in destructive patterns, are invested in personal gain, thus resistant to moving forward. Change may elicit fear or anxiety that pushes us into lethargy. It takes courage to release the choke-hold of templates that keep us anchored to the known, even when it is detrimental to the soul. Creative solutions to problems challenge us to move past the duality of either-or thinking. It calls for “outside the box” thinking, and that’s not easy either!

Sometimes, adjustments to the human condition develop out of desperation, in a "bottom up, community and they happen all over the world! In spite of all the negativity in the news, people are finding creative and sustainable solutions to tough problems. Together, we can solve both emotional and environmental issues. All spiritual traditions, in fact, view a crisis as an opportunity for growth, new awareness, and change. Just learning about some of them can be inspiring and can give us hope. Here is a sample!

Helping to Create Change

David Byrne, an artist and musician, realized that our current focus on bad news isn't helping anything. So, he took action: He founded a "good news" website called *Reasons to be Cheerful*, which looks at the positive and helpful things that are going on in the world around us. **"People are solving problems and it's making a difference!"** (<https://reasonstobecheerful.world>). Many of these things are smart, proven, replicable solutions to the world's most pressing problems . . . It's important to ask ourselves how we can be part of this change. Nothing changes when you're numb." A similar project is a website called *positivetv.tv*, which reports on what's breaking through rather than what's breaking down. "Create a positive world," is what's written at the top of their website.

Architecture of Change

One of the most creative "good news" solutions to the worldwide problem of pollution comes from the world of architecture. Architects are creating buildings that incorporate trees and plants in their design. These *Vertical Forest* skyscrapers literally suck the pollution from the air. The Chinese city of Liuzhou, Guangxi Province, has masterminded an entire "Forest City," scheduled for completion in 2020, which is made up of tree-covered houses, hospitals, schools and office blocks over a sprawling 15-million-square-foot site (<https://youtu.be/gqmj9vAw4ao>). According to architect Stefano Boeri, "In addition to sucking carbon out of the air directly, these forest buildings also reduce noise pollution, cooling costs, and energy expenditure for their residents. The beauty and comfort they offer will also entice residents who value being close to nature to live in high-rises in walkable cities rather than destroying more wilderness by living in wasteful suburban houses and commuting to work in a car, and parking the car in parking lots that take up more land.

Boeri adds, "Studies have shown that being around greenery actually helps people live *longer, healthier lives*, not only by shielding them from pollution and encouraging them to take walks, but also just by reducing their stress . . . And if buildings with plants growing on them are seen as beautiful, comfortable, desirable, and contemporary, they will inspire architects, voters, urban planners, and residents to compete to find better ways to green their buildings." Boeri's firm has already unveiled plans for new Vertical Forest buildings in European cities including Treviso in Italy, Lausanne in Switzerland, and Utrecht in the Netherlands.

Change, whether it's on a global, community, or relationship level, is possible and doable. We don't have to be "stuck" with pollution or stuck in a dysfunctional marriage (in other words, stuck *inside* the box). The challenge is to think "outside the box" and realize that whenever we do, *good news* may be the result.

Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again" — Joseph Campbell

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