Transforming Organizational Suffering through GRACE

Thesis

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With gratitude to my teachers, mentors, and exemplars,

who have indefatigably pointed out the way:

His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, Lama Shenpen Drolma,

Roshi Joan Halifax, Roshi Bernie Glassman (whom I never met

in this life), Lama Choyang (Allison Rader),

Pamela Weiss, and Sarita Chawla.

May all beings benefit.

Sarwa mangalam!

Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful,
aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress,
and despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful,
separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful.
In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress:
the craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion and
delight, relishing now here and now there — i.e., craving for sensual pleasure,
craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress:
the remainderless fading and cessation, renunciation, relinquishment,
release, and letting go of that very craving.

And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to
the cessation of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path —
right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood,
right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Shakyamuni Buddha

Abstract

When people have the wherewithal to live, work, respond appropriately, and continually learn inside dynamic, complex systems, they are better able to meet obstacles creatively, and therefore thrive and grow despite challenging circumstances. Studies (Moss, 2021) show that organizational challenges can result in myriad forms of suffering in the workplace: empathic distress, angst, outrage, moral injury, anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, resignation, hopelessness, burnout, and much more. A program structured on Roshi Joan Halifax's GRACE model and employing integral coaching strategies was designed to empower a group of structural engineers to resource themselves and grow resilience and compassion as they encounter structural, organizational, interpersonal, and ethical issues in the course of their daily work lives. At the program's completion, the ten participants variously reported: a newfound appreciation for and commitment to mindfulness meditation; an understanding of the importance of attentional awareness (and the costs of its absence); a recognition of how their internal narratives limit what they perceive as being possible; the importance of cultivating meaningful work relationships (versus the merely transactional) through deep presence and listening; and having gained new tools and skills for alleviating stress. This paper concludes that workplace suffering can be transformed into continual learning, personal growth, and opportunities for greater connection with others when coaches or coach-chaplains effectively impart the concepts and give their coaching clients the means to instantiate the skills implicit in the GRACE model.

Keywords: workplace suffering, workplace stress, burnout, workplace resilience, compassion at work, mindfulness, GRACE model

The Truth of (Organizational) Suffering

In the context of this paper, a discussion of organizational or workplace suffering and the ways one might seek to transform it necessitates first defining what we mean by "suffering." Indeed, no discussion of Buddhism can begin without starting with the first noble truth: life, as we live it, is full of *dukkha,* the Sanskrit/Pali word for which "suffering" is shorthand. Some translators point to the origin of "dukkha" in this context as the opposite of *sukha,* which connotes happiness, ease, or comfort. Deriving from the ancient Aryans, nomadic people reliant on the wheel, sukha and dukkha indicate having a good or bad axle, and therefore a smooth or bumpy ride (Dalai Lama et al., 2016). This distinction is important, as "suffering," which we often relate to traumatic experiences or physical pain, can sound extreme in some organizational contexts. So perhaps more relevant and recognizable when we consider workplace suffering is the deeper meaning of dukkha: Buddhist teachers (Chodron et al., 2017) variously explain dukkha as comprising such mental/emotional states as sorrow, sadness, grief, dissatisfaction, unsatisfactory circumstances, existential angst, and attachment to preconceived notions of how things are meant to be. Others include impermanence (or the impact of change), inadequacy, imperfection, and discontent in their discussion of dukkha (Dhiman & Kriger, 2018).

Prevalence and Manifestations of Corporate Suffering

Hundreds of millions of people globally spend most of their waking lives at the organizations for which they work; in the United States alone, organizations of different sizes employ an estimated 100 million full-time workers (Gallup, 2017). In that suffering is implicit and prevalent in all of life, as Shakyamuni Buddha instructs us, it is safe to say that all workers encounter organizational, interpersonal, and ethical issues that result in some form of dukkha.

The prevalence of corporate suffering has been well documented: A study of more than 3,000 adults found that workplace stress is only second to financial worries for 60% of American employees (APA, 2015). Researchers have been working to understand the connection between work stress and cardiovascular and other diseases; at the very least, multiples studies have shown that work stress leads to a host of unhealthful behaviors (overwork, sedentariness, poor diet choices, alcohol and substance abuse, to mention only a few) that then lead to chronic disease or the exacerbation of existing conditions. A 2015 Stanford University meta-analysis of 228 workplace stress studies estimated that work stressors may be linked to 120,000 deaths and $190 billion in healthcare costs in the United States alone (Goh et al., 2015). A Swedish study of nearly 157,000 people found that incidence rates of myocardial infarction were higher on Monday mornings and lowest on Saturdays and during periods of vacation, correlating the psychosocial stressors of the workplace with poorer health outcomes (Wallert et al., 2017).

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), among other institutions, have recognized the urgency of promoting mental health in the workplace in recognition of the deleterious impacts that workplace stress, depression, and anxiety on population and economic health. In a brief on mental health in the workplace, the WHO (Burton, 2010) acknowledged that difficult work environments can result in mental and physical health problems, and that depression and anxiety—affecting nearly 615 million worldwide—have significant negative impacts on worker productivity, costing up to US$1 trillion globally. Moreover, WHO (2019) has recently included, in the International Classification of Diseases, workplace burnout as an occupational phenomenon requiring mental and physical health interventions.

Peering into the state of the American workplace (Gallup, 2017), we find a sobering state of unhappiness: more than half of all employees are disengaged, actively looking for new jobs or at least keeping an eye out for new opportunities; 16% are actively disengaged, resulting in behaviors that have negative impacts on their office cultures, co-workers, productivity, and work product; and 53% report that they would welcome a different role, affording them better work-life balance and well being. Further, of 7,500 workers surveyed by Gallup, 44% report feeling burned out sometimes; 23% report feeling burned out most of the time or always, with 23% more likely to visit the emergency room (ER) and 63% more likely to take sick leave (Weigert & Agrawal, 2018).

To make matters much worse, the last 19 months of the COVID-19 pandemic (as of this writing) have served only to amplify and deepen these sufferings, adding economic and job uncertainties, grief, sickness, interpersonal frictions, political division, and profound uncertainties atop already existing work sufferings. A 2020 survey of 1,500 people from 46 countries found an overwhelming decline in mental health, a diminished capacity to attend to basic needs, and an increase in depression, loneliness, and feelings of isolation, all as a result of the global lockdown (Moss et al., 2021). Findings include: 85% felt that their general well-being declined, while 89% observed a decline in their workplace well-being. Of the majority reporting a decline in their general well-being, 50% offered that their mental health significantly deteriorated, manifesting in increased stress and general anxiety, COVID-19-specific anxiety, and increased burnout. Of those who reported a decline in workplace well-being, 56% reported increased job demands, including loss of work-life separation, unmanageable and increased workloads, increased hours, being in constant survival mode, feeling burned out, and lack of staff

support. Moreover, participants in the study scored very high on exhaustion and cynicism, the latter reflecting a marked decrease in their trust in the world and their government's ability to ensure their health and safety, as well as an amplification of injustices they perceive in their workplaces.

The Causes of (Organizational) Suffering

Buddhist teachings hold that our own heartminds generate much of the dukkha we experience through our clinging (*tanha*) and aversion to phenomena that we encounter. The Dhammapada sutra, an anthology of verses said to have been uttered by Shakyamuni Buddha, opens thus (Thanissaro, 1997):

> Phenomena are preceded by the heart
> ruled by the heart
> made of the heart
>
> If you speak or act
> with a corrupted heart,
> then suffering follows you —
> as the wheel of the cart
> the track of the ox
> that pulls it.

Simply put, while there are myriad phenomena outside of our control (natural disasters, political upheavals, the onset of disease, financial insecurity, loss of loved ones, and aging, to name but several) that undoubtedly cause a range of hardships, it is largely how we make meaning of and react to these occurrences—themselves the very texture of impermanence, or

aniccā—that determine the degree of suffering that we ultimately experience. In the Sutthana sutra, the Buddha speaks of two darts: the first is the painful feeling brought on by phenomena; the second is the mental pain brought on by our resentment and resistance to the first (Thanissaro, 1997).

From a neurobiological standpoint, how we are hardwired for survival (through the action and interaction of neurochemicals in our nervous systems) is at odds with some incontrovertible truths, the recognition of which allows us to attain peace and a measure of happiness. Our three main survival strategies are (1) establishing our boundaries as separate and distinct beings; (2) maintaining internal and external states of stability and equilibrium; and (3) maintaining a state of vigilance to capitalize on opportunities and ward off threats. Ironically, it is these second-dart strategies that cause a great deal of our suffering and are in direct opposition to (1) the truth of dependent co-arising; (2) the truth of constant change; and (3) the truth that much of what we desire is unattainable and much of what we resist is unstoppable (Hanson & Mendius, 2009).

Causes and Conditions of Dukkha in Organizationss

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, "Stress and anxiety often come from too much expectation and too much ambition. Then when we don't fulfill that expectation or achieve that ambition, we experience frustration. Right from the beginning, it is a self-centered attitude…. Often we are not being realistic about our own ability or about objective reality." This perfectly, elegantly encapsulates the nature of dukkha for most workers in today's organizations. Moreover, our modern Western culture emphasizes the primacy of the independent individual over the interdependent collective, leaving most workers with the misapprehension that it has to be up to

only them to manage situations and circumstances over which they truthfully have very little control (Dalai Lama et al., 2016).

The Role of Individual and Organizational Levels of Consciousness

Given the role of the second dart in human suffering, it is useful to examine the mindscapes and mindsets of both individual workers and the companies for which they toil to understand the dynamics and causes of dukkha in 21st century organizations. One might view this dynamic as a matter of individual and corporate egos meshing or clashing in the process of getting work done. Following is a brief description of the plateaus of adult mental complexity (as it has evolved from the work of a number of thinkers such as Jean Gebser, Jane Loevinger, Susanne Cooke-Greuter, William Torbert, Robert Kegan, and Lisa Lahey), and of organizational consciousness from the point of view of Integral Theory[1].

From the perspective of adult ego development, our educational pedagogies fail to equip us with the capacity to navigate a world rife with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguousness (Kegan, 1993; Berger, 2012). At its essence, how our minds perceive subject and object—i.e., what we are able to *look at* (objective observation) and what we are able to *look through* (subjective lens)—determines what we are capable of bringing to our experience and, in turn, the actions we then take. We can apprehend and make generative meaning of circumstances of great complexity when we are able to look *at* what previously we were only able to look *through;* for example, very young children can look only through their own subjective lens of the world, while a self-aware adult can distinguish between what they observe, how they feel about

[1]Integral theory, as described by the contemporary American philosopher Ken Wilber, is a philosophical map that brings together more than 100 ancient and contemporary theories in philosophy, psychology, contemplative traditions, and sociology. Rather than attempting to describe "the one correct view," Integral theory attempts to describe a framework for understanding and valuing the perspective of each theory and philosophical tradition and understanding how they relate to one another (Duffy, 2020)

what they observe, and the conclusions drawn from such observation and feeling.

This view of adult ego development (Kegan, 1994; Berger, 2012) theorizes three plateaus of mental complexity (earlier levels of development pertain to child and adolescent development): The first is the *socialized mind* (most adults), which is shaped by and largely holds to the values and expectations of the external world (family, community, political and/or religious affiliation, work environment, and so forth); authority is experienced as external, found in rules and regulations set forth by others. The second is the *self-authoring mind* (some adults), which has the capacity to distinguish and choose between one's own opinions and beliefs and those of others, often using the latter to buttress the former. Authority is experienced as internal, based on self-authored values and rules. The third is the *self-transforming mind* (very few adults), which has the capacity to regard its own as well as others' opinions and beliefs on the same plane without prejudice, and draw conclusions from an objective weighing and testing thereof. The self-transforming mind allows others' opinions and beliefs to continuously transform its own, and so allows the process of continued growth and development to take place. Authority is fluid, not fixed, and always relies on the full context and participatory constellation of the moment. These plateaus of adult ego development determine how an individual interprets, and reacts or responds to the circumstances—adverse or positive—they meet. In the face of adversity, those of socialized mind, for example, may perceive themselves as victims without agency and look to others to extricate them from their dilemma. Someone of self-transforming mind may instead meet the same circumstance with the question, "What might best serve everyone in this situation? What am I learning about myself in my reaction to this problem?"

Organizational consciousness, on the other hand, pertains to the collective mindset and world view that governs and structures the day-to-day workings of a company, determining the nature of policies, processes, expectations, and rewards under which its members labor. According to Integral Theory, one might conceive of the level of consciousness of a given organization based on where power and decision-making reside and how employees are viewed by their supervisors. Integral Theory uses colors to distinguish levels of consciousness; each is characterized by a dominant quality and metaphorical narrative. *Impulsive-Red* organizations (metaphorized by a wolf pack), exemplified by the Mafia or by street gangs, are characterized by impulsiveness, reactivity, and short-term focus. Power typically resides with a sole leader who rules by whim, according to which employees serve and are rewarded. *Conformist-Amber* organizations, exemplified by the Catholic Church or a McDonald's franchise, are characterized by highly formalized roles within a pyramidical hierarchy. Its members are fungible and expendable; governance is top-down, command-and-control, and the army is its guiding metaphor. *Achievement-Orange* organizations, which tend to speak of themselves as machines, are meritocracies exemplified by most multinational corporations and Silicon Valley, where innovation is the key driver for competition and growth. Governance is still pyramidical and command-and-control; however, greater freedom can be found in how employees go about producing their deliverables. *Pluralistic-Green* organizations, while governed in a pyramidical hierarchy, bring a greater focus on the collective good and cultivate a culture that empowers individuals. These tend to be values-driven companies whose metaphor is the family and where leaders see themselves as stewards for all stakeholders. Companies like Ben and Jerry's or even Greyston Bakery fall under this category. Lastly, in *Evolutionary-Teal* organizations, hierarchy is

replaced by the self-organization and self-management reflected in living systems—there are neither bosses nor middle managers. In fact these organizations are recognized by employer and employee alike as complex, adaptive, living systems that require their own constant nimble shifting, growth, and development. Several companies have been identified emerging teal organizations, such as Buurtzog, a healthcare nonprofit in the Netherlands with 7,000 employees, and Patagonia (2,300 employees) and SoundsTrue (100 employees) in the United States (Laloux, 2014).

The level of a company's organizational consciousness will attract and retain employees with comparable mind; therefore Impulsive-Red and Conformist-Amber organizations may draw people of socialized mind (and perhaps in even earlier developmental stages). While Achievement-Orange organizations may comprise employees of socialized to self-transforming mind, those who succeed best and are elevated tend to be of self-authoring mind. And workers of self-authoring but inclining toward self-transforming minds are found in Pluralistic-Green and Evolutionary-Teal companies. And these combinations of and interactions between individual and corporate mind give rise to the nature of and response to dukkha within these organizations.

Data Points Illuminating Organizational Dukkha

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an in-depth analysis of the structural, systemic, interpersonal, and personal causes of workplace suffering, what follows are a number of data lenses through which those causes and conditions might be understood.

According to WHO (2010), many risk factors with negative impacts on mental and physical health manifest in workplaces globally. These may arise as a result of organizational and managerial structure, governance, hierarchy, and policy; company culture (the ways in which

things are done); the capacities and competencies of workers relative to the kind of work employees are tasked with executing; and the support made available to employees to ensure their ability to deliver their work product. Examples of such risks are: inadequate health and safety policies; poor communication and management practices; limited participation in decision making or low control over one's area of work; low levels of support for employees; inflexible and long working hours; and unclear expectations or organizational objectives. Furthermore, workers may experience various degrees of bullying, mobbing, and harassment, which increase states of stress, depression, and anxiety and adversely impact their general health.

The 2015 Stanford University meta-analysis previously cited found that the top ten work stressors are: lack of health insurance; shift work; long hours; job insecurity; work-family conflicts; low job control; high job demands; low social support; and organizational injustice. Researchers found that highly demanding jobs and unjust organizational practices raised the likelihood of physician-diagnosed illnesses by 35% and 50% respectively, while long work hours increased mortality by 20%. Workers who experience high work-family conflicts were 90% more likely to self-report poor physical health. One of the researchers compared mortality from work stressors to that from heart disease and accidents, the fourth and fifth largest causes of death in the United States.

A study on the corporate sustainability measures of private-sector companies in Spain (Gismera et al., 2019) found that employee well-being was largely left out of the calculus when organizations strategized to meet the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by world leaders in 2015 (to be fulfilled by 2030). While the human resource directors interviewed acknowledged that suffering is part and parcel of the employee experience, they stated that

workers mostly suffer in silence. They also admitted that, were they in their professional capacity to address the suffering, they feared that new problems would arise for them: attempting to do so would illuminate the problem, which in turn would expose the injustices that caused them. One infers that these directors weren't prepared for whatever consequences might ensue. Further, they cited their own lack of management tools, skills, and expertise to appropriately intervene to alleviate suffering on case-by-case basis. The difficult conclusion was that while the human resources (HR) professionals participating in the study understood that addressing employee suffering was in their purview, they did not have the resources to effectively respond. This surfaces a huge gap in the discipline of HR, one that has significant downstream impacts on the profitability and sustainable thriving of organizations owing to employee attrition.

Indeed, in the wake of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are witnessing a degree of worker resignations heretofore unseen, now termed "The Great Resignation"—2019 set a record as 42.1 million Americans quit a job; in August 2021 alone, more than 4.2 million resigned. As of this writing, resignations levels are at 10% to 15% higher than they were in 2019. While it's true that the pandemic triggered household moves across the country (20% more homes sold in November 2020 than in November 2019), exhaustion, burnout, and a preference not to return to the office have been cited as the major reasons for these resignations (Ducharme, 2021; Anderson et al., 2021).

Addressing the crisis of burnout experienced by 21st century American workers, Gallup (2018) identified five main factors: unfair treatment at work; unmanageable workloads; lack of role clarity; lack of communication and support from their manager; and unreasonable time pressures.

Finally, as many white-collar companies shifted to mostly work-from-home scenarios owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, four main organizational failures were identified that exacerbated worker stress, depression, and anxiety (Moss, 2021): (1) Workloads were not adjusted to take into consideration the new challenges employees faced in working from home. (2) C-suite executives[2] and their managers did not foresee the need to give workers greater flexibility and control over their work schedules to accommodate new difficulties such as caring for children whose schools or daycares closed. (3) The deleterious effects on employees' physical and mental states from increased screen and meeting time were unmitigated. (4) Managers largely did not possess the tools to recognize and address the extent of their workers' sufferings.

In summary, although we might parse, sift through, interconnect, and rank all the myriad manifestations and causes of dukkha in organizations, in all of it one recognizes how employer and employee alike strive with every ounce of effort for what may bring happiness and satisfaction, and to push away and escape from what may cause unhappiness. Everyone tries to manage and control phenomena of all kinds that are beyond the reach of our power. We all seek to make the impermanent permanent. We see ourselves are distinct and separate, with distinct and separate solutions for our own personal survival and thriving. As human beings, we all are caught navigating through the buffeting waves of the eight worldly concerns: pleasure and pain, praise and blame, fame and obscurity, gain and loss (Chödrön, 2016). And as we go about our everyday business in this way, we simply create even more suffering.

[2]Referring to the executive leaders of a company; typical positions include the chief executive officer (CEO), chief operations office (COO), chief financial officer (CFO), chief technology officer (CTO), and so forth.

Visions of Corporate Suffering Transformed

In the third noble truth (*nirodha*), the Buddha reveals that there is a way to uproot dukkha's ultimate cause, which is our habit of clinging—to those things we think will make us happy, and fundamentally to our notion of the separate self that we are continuously compelled to reify and please: "And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading and cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, and letting go of that very craving."[3]

What does the transformation of suffering look like in the context of organizations? This is the challenge that thinkers, academics, practitioners of organizational design, and some business leaders have taken up in the last few decades. Thus we have seen proffered quite a number of paradigms that, were we to adopt and apply to our ways of doing business, promise a future where employer and employee sustainably and interdependently succeed and thrive into the future. These jettison the patriarchal command-and-control, top-down, employee-as-fungible constructs that date back to the industrial revolution, instead painting visions of flattened structures, liberal governance and policies, greater collaboration, and more democratic decision-making processes (reflecting Pluralistic-Green to Evolutionary-Teal models).

There are visions of leader-as-servant and leader-as-steward (Greenleaf, 1977; Block, 2013); "conscious" leadership (Dethmer & Chapman, 2015); learning organizations that foster the growth and thriving of all parts of the organizational ecosystem (Senge, 1990); values-focused, highly inclusive cultures that center and care for *all* stakeholders (Kegan and Lahey, 2016; Sisodia, 2007; Sisodia & Gelb, 2021; Chapman & Sisodia, 2015); and holacracies

[3] *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion* (SN 56.11), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html

and other agile organizational models based on the decentralization and self-organization of living systems (Wheatley, 2006; Robertson, 2015; Laloux, 2014), to name just several. There are even those who radically advocate elevating love, caring, and compassion in the workplace as a key component in sustaining innovation, collaboration, service quality, talent attraction, and employee retention (Worline & Dutton, 2017). The annual Wisdom 2.0 conference that has taken place in the San Francisco Bay Area since 2010, lately drawing thousands of attendees interested in bringing mindfulness, groundedness, and well-being to their work (while remaining connected through technology), as well as the emergence of the Search Inside Yourself Institute[4], are emblematic of this paradigm shift as espoused by many of Silicon Valley's (and beyond) technology organizations.

These organizational constructs centering the human being in how we do work and acknowledging our undeniable interconnectedness with one another are supported by sustainable and sustainable-and-just economic theories that emerged in the later half of the 20th century on the heels of the environmental movement. Some call for nothing short of a revolution in our global capitalist mindset and posit viable systems that aim for the flourishing of everyone, including saving the Earth itself from climate change (Benyus, 1998; Hawken et al., 1999; Eisler, 2007; Brown, 2009). New paradigms and models for doing business have emerged, such as *conscious capitalism,* in which all stakeholders—from vendors, customers, owners, employees, and the environment—are prioritized; *doughnut economics,* in which social justice goals are linked to economic growth; and *regenerative capitalism,* which adopts the rules of living systems

[4]The Search Inside Yourself Institute, which originated at Google, combines neuroscience, attention-training, and emotional intelligence in a leadership-development program.

and uses the principles of biomimicry and holism to create sustainable economic systems (Hoffman, 2018).

Foundational to the shifts in thinking, being, and doing reflected in the foregoing were breakthroughs in philosophy, psychology, and psychiatry that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, exemplified in the work of the modern European phenomenological philosophers Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty; theologian Martin Buber; psychiatrist Viktor Frankl; psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich; and psychologists William James, Carl Jung, Fritz Perls, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers. The movement of humanistic psychology, attributed primarily to Maslow (Moss, 2015), emerged and evolved from this flow of thinkers, its central question being "What does it mean to be *fully* human?" Humanistic psychology rejected psychological reductionism and the mechanistic views of behaviorism and traditional psychoanalysis, looking instead to the immediacy of human experience, as well as the roles of intentionality, narrative, self-concept, spiritual experience, archetypes, and behaviors to inform a holistic view of what constitutes a human being. Maslow, in his quest to understand how it is that some push themselves to the highest limits of human potential (self-actualization), went on to found the transpersonal psychology movement (Moss, 2015).

The practice and profession of coaching arose in the early 1970s in the intersection of humanistic, social, and industrial psychology, organizational and leadership development, and business and management consulting. Since the mid-1980s, coaching has come to comprise multiple developmental theories and pedagogies, drawing from the disciplines of philosophy (Eastern and Western), psychology, neuroscience, and (often) spirituality. What unites them is the

goal of empowering the individual, whether employer or employee, in determining their own growth, development, direction, and future, a decidedly dramatic departure from the paternalistic view that ruled for the previous decades. Of particular salience in the context of this paper is the goal of Integral Coaching®[5], which is to facilitate the unfoldment and deepen the capacity of an individual so that they might meet every circumstance—no matter the dukkha inherent in it—generatively, that is to say, with an impetus toward learning and transformation.

It is evident that numerous paradigms and frameworks have emerged over the last century that seek to alleviate untold sufferings conditioned by the view of the human being as merely an engine of production, of organizations as mechanistic means of churning out profit, and of the world as merely a trove of resources awaiting exploitation in the creation of commodity. But how do we get there?

A Path to Transform Organizational Suffering

Having revealed to his followers the first three noble truths, in the fourth, Shakyamuni Buddha described the path leading to awakening, or liberation from dukkha. Known as the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya atthangika magga*), these practices, or disciplines, comprise training the mind, living ethically, and cultivating wisdom; i.e., wise (or right) view, wise intention, wise speech, wise action, wise livelihood, wise effort, wise attention, and wise awareness. These practices are at the very heart of the Buddha's teachings (Bodhi, 1994).

While this path is clearly laid out, and though there are innumerable teachers and teachings illustrating the various ways one might adhere to these disciplines, even committed Buddhists of every major and minor lineage experience the tensions inherent in such striving

[5]"Integral" refers to wholeness, completeness, and inclusiveness. Integral Coaching® is an ongoing evolving methodology that includes everything about a human being—leaving nothing out—and was originally founded on the frameworks and developmental practices of Integral Theory.

against the background exigencies and emotional textures of daily life. In my experience living with sangha at a Buddhist retreat center, this is no mean task, as it requires constant vigilance, self-inquiry, and radical honesty. (And in the context of a spiritual community, it's not difficult for even the sincerest practitioner to fall into spiritual bypassing to avoid the pain implicit in authentic self-investigation.) How much more challenging would it be for non-Buddhists and Buddhists alike in a conventional corporate or organizational setting to hew to such discipline? Are there ways of framing what constitutes the path to alleviate suffering so that anyone, irrespective of tradition, might benefit, learn, and grow from their every experience, no matter how difficult or distressing?

Background and Purpose of the Current Study

For more than thirty years, I've continuously borne witness as an employee to the truth of organizational dukkha—whether in small companies of 8 to 40 people, in a couple of large corporations employing thousands of workers, or even in the resident population of the aforementioned spiritual community. It has been the wish to transform this suffering for self and other that I sought training to become a leadership coach, and then later to engage in Upaya Institute's chaplaincy program.

In the last several years serving as internal coach at a small engineering firm, I'd repeatedly observed how giving people the means to increase their capacity to live, work, respond appropriately, and to continually learn inside dynamic, complex, and often difficult systems has been extremely beneficial. These coaching engagements have facilitated not only the acquisition of new, practical tools and skills for navigating choppy organizational waters, but

also the uncovering of innate resources to overcome obstacles, thrive, and grow despite challenging circumstances.

Ultimately, the goal of Integral Coaching® is the deepening of a client's capacity for self-awareness through self-reflection and self-observation, as well as for long-term self-generation, which is the ability to continuously renew oneself by drawing on internal and external resources. In doing this work, I've used several fairly powerful frameworks to help guide the process: a "four human domains" model that helps people integrate the major dimensions of their lives (individual experience and consciousness; body and behaviors; culture and relationships; and the environment in which they locate); a "six streams of competence" model[6] that helps to pinpoint where a person's developmental edge may be and what work may be needed to facilitate integration; and a "ten ways" developmental model that assesses what is currently of greatest importance to a client, therefore dictating how they respond to life and where I as a coach need to meet them (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2013). I also sometimes rely on an integrated, developmental approach to the Enneagram, an archetypal framework of nine interconnected personality types. All of these models, taken together, help me consider the wholeness of the human being that is my client and guide my understanding of how I must walk with them in exploring what may be their next implied step, personally and professionally. These

[6]*Cognitive:* the ability to make observations in a particular field and then synthesize the observations into coherent understanding; *emotional:* the ability to discern our own emotional states in the moment, our mood, and our emotional responses to particular events, as well as the ability to discern those of others; *somatic:* the ability to observe what is happening in our bodies and to tap into this somatic wisdom in responding to the present moment; *relational:* the ability to initiate and sustain mutually satisfying relationships; *spiritual:* the realization of interconnectedness and creating a life dedicated to the benefit of everyone; *integrating:* the ability to decompartmentalize so that our commitments and values show up in all of our words, actions, and relationships (Flaherty & Handelsman, 2013).

individual coaching engagements typically take place over six to eight, sometimes continuing into twelve or eighteen, months.

Sensing that there may be other ways in which I might serve my co-workers' personal development, even those who may not be interested in plunging into the deep work that an Integral Coaching® engagement entails, I had been attempting to design a group coaching program (or programs), considering different lenses and points of entry. Some of these, like leadership development through the lenses of the six paramitas and the five wisdoms, and bodhisattva leadership through the lens of the sixteen precepts, were firmly rooted in my perspective as a dharma practitioner, with the intention to use these frameworks without necessarily couching them in the Buddhadharma. I had also considered (and led workshops on) secular awareness-based models like Conscious Leadership (Dethmer and Chapman, 2015), and mastering meaningful and difficult conversations using different approaches (Flores, 2013; Flaherty, 2011; Rosenberg, 2015; Schein & Schein, 2013). However, none of these in the end addressed holistically what I wanted to accomplish with the groups I'd imagined—delivering a program that would build participants' capacity to meet whatever challenge came their way, irrespective of context and content.

It wasn't until I was introduced to the GRACE model that I encountered a pedagogical framework that is at once elegant and complete, as well as solidly founded in neuroscience, social psychology, ethics, and contemplative perspectives. I decided to undertake a mixed-methods approach in gauging the effectiveness of merging GRACE with Integral Coaching® strategies to build and instantiate the competencies GRACE comprises.

GRACE Background and Description

Joan Halifax, Ph.D., founding abbot of Upaya Zen Center, developed GRACE as a process for transforming the suffering of nurses and other frontline healthcare workers, who as an occupational hazard experience many occasions for moral distress and injury, burnout, and disconnection from their original intention to serve their patients with compassion. Halifax based GRACE on the principles of the ABIDE model of compassion, which she developed in her work as Kluge Distinguished Scholar at the Library of Congress. ABIDE is a heuristic model that views compassion as emerging from interacting, noncompassion elements: attention and prosocial affect, ethical intention and insight, and embodiment and engagement (Halifax, 2013).

GRACE is a self-interventional process that, with practice, can be quickly resourced and applied when one is in the midst of a difficult, challenging situation. The mnemonic for GRACE (Halifax, 2013) is: **G**athering attention (focusing, grounding, and balancing oneself); **R**ecalling intention (reconnecting to values, purpose, and altruistic motivation); **A**ttuning first to self, and then to the other (tuning in cognitively, somatically, and affectively to decrease perceptual, affective, and cognitive biases); **C**onsidering what will serve (bringing insight and discernment for the most appropriate response or action from a systems viewpoint); and **E**ngaging and ending (enacting a principled, ethical, and compassionate response, and concluding explicitly and deliberately).

Method

Participants

Ten participants (three women and seven men) joined the pilot program in response to an email invitation I had sent to the entire staff of my company, as well as to the president of

another structural engineering firm that my company has partnered with over the years. The invitation described "a six-session program designed to build emotional agility, resilience, and the capacity for generative action based on what is known as the GRACE model...founded in neuroscience, social psychology, ethics, systems thinking, and contemplative practices [and developed] to address the problem of burnout among clinicians...allowing them to down-regulate from sympathetic nervous system (SNS) overload caused by meeting one crisis after another; reconnect with and ground themselves in their original purpose; and reengage appropriately and act generatively."

Ethnically, five participants were White, three Asian American, and two Hispanic. Although they weren't asked to self-report age, participants ranged from 27 to roughly 48 years of age. All had completed undergraduate studies, eight held master's degrees, and one had completed a doctoral degree; nine are structural engineers, and one serves as an accounting manager. Employees from my company could use their professional development and employee development time to participate in the training; a nominal fee was charged to those from the other firm to compensate my company for my time. The invitation soliciting participants underscored the importance of emotional resilience in facing the challenges inherent in an industry already rife with uncertainty, as well as the burnout, anxiety, and grief arising from navigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants joined the program for several different reasons: five cited a lack or loss of the ability to bring focus to their work, with one person stating their inability to stop ruminating; four said they were experiencing burnout, emotional drain, and stress; five desired the skills to build and maintain better personal connections with their work colleagues, and to

develop better listening and interpersonal skills. Other reasons given were the desire for: greater emotional agility and resilience; the ability to transform challenges into learning; greater capacity for processing interactions in the moment; learning to respond generatively to difficult situations; release from perfectionism; and ways to contribute positively to healthy teams, as well as to organizational culture and flourishing.

Program Structure, Content, and Materials

Before the program began, participants were asked to take the online Emotional Styles Questionnaire (ESQ) developed by Healthy Minds Innovations, a nonprofit started by Dr. Richard J. Davidson in 2014 and affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The 24-item questionnaire is a validated, psychometrically reliable measure of healthy emotionality; it specifies six dimensions of emotional life, each of vital importance to an individual's psychological well-being and hence predictive of how one might respond to one's circumstances. The six dimensions measured by the ESQ are: *resilience,* or the speed with which one recovers from adversity; *outlook,* the capacity to sustain positive emotions over time; *social intuition,* or how attuned one is to nonverbal social cues; *self-awareness,* the ability to perceive one's own bodily signals; *sensitivity to context,* the degree with which one's emotional and behavioral responses take into account one's social context; and *attention,* the ability to screen out distractions and stay focused (Kesebir et al., 2019).

The virtually held program was designed in six sessions, each scheduled for 1.5 hours starting at 5:00 pm (at the end of the work day so as not to interfere with the engineers' billable work time), the sessions spaced two weeks apart. The first included an overview and acknowledgment of organizational dukkha in its various manifestations, with participants sharing

their own experiences of difficulties and dissatisfactions; an introduction to the components and sequence of GRACE; and an inventory of the capacities individuals ideally might build to expand their ability to learn, grow, and thrive no matter what they faced. The remaining sessions sequentially addressed each step in the GRACE model. Each of these comprised lecture (including neurobiological correlates of the capacities GRACE builds), in-class practices in breakout dyads or triads, and opportunities to share their challenges as well as experiences of these practices, either in small groups or in the large.

Every session ended with homework assignments consisting of cognitive exercises like real-time periodic self-observations (e.g., Five times a day, pause and ask: "What is my mind doing right now?") or self-reflective journaling (e.g., "When today was I able to drop my agenda and listen with presence to someone else? What were the circumstances? Who was present? What happened? What was the result? What did I learn from this? What do I intend for tomorrow?"); body practices to hone somatic intelligence (e.g., daily corpse pose to experience awake, alert nondoing; body scans to sense into where a particular emotion is registering); and relational practices in which participants were invited to bring newly learned skills into their daily work or personal life interactions. In addition, participants were given a daily sitting practice, with the choice to engage in either focused attention (*shamatha*) or open-awareness (*vipassana*) meditation. The two-week period between sessions was designed to give them ample opportunity to engage in their daily practices and exercises to give them the chance to start to embody new competencies. (All together, the practices and exercises were designed to take up no more than 15 minutes of each participant's day.) Lastly, each session included a

reading/resource list that participants could refer to in the event they wished for further self-study.

Throughout these sessions, participants were introduced to supportive frameworks, tools, and concepts—along with their implications—such as edge states (Halifax, 2018); the importance of compassion in the workplace and the requirements of compassionate leadership (Worlines and Dutton, 2017); the Above and Below the Line tool for shifting out of the drama triangle[7] into a more creative way of being (Dethmer and Chapman, 2015); the ladder of inference, or how we form and sustain our mental models (Argyris, 1982); the left- and right-column exercise to surface unspoken thoughts and feelings (Senge, 1990); systems thinking, or learning to see the whole system in considering what will serve (Senge, 1990; Scharmer, 2018; Meadows, 2008); principles of nonviolent communication (Rosenberg, 2015); and the three kinds of conversation important to gain competence in—conversations for relationship, for possibility, and for action (Flores, 2013). Mid-program, participants were asked to take the Barrett Values Center's Personal Values Assessment (PVA) to help make explicit what they hold dear and what deeply motivates them, as well as the VIA Character Strengths Survey (CSS), to surface the inherent qualities and gifts they have to offer (both are online assessments; resulting data was not collected for this study). Lastly, each participant was offered the opportunity during the training for a half-hour, one-on-one coaching conversation with me to facilitate their learning and practice.

At the conclusion of the program, participants were asked to complete a course-evaluation survey to ascertain which aspects of the training/coaching they had

[7]The Karpman drama triangle describes the dysfunctional archetypal roles (victim, villain, or hero) that people unconsciously take on or project onto each other in the face of difficult situations, where power, accountability, and responsibility dynamics become distorted.

experienced as effective or ineffective; what improvements they thought could be made for more successful integration of their learnings; what the biggest impacts of GRACE training were for them; what they intended to take forward into their lives as a result of the training; and into which components of GRACE and the subtopics covered they might wish for a deeper dive in the future. Participants were also asked to retake the Healthy Minds ESQ two to four weeks after the program's end, to measure the relative effectiveness of the program.

Results

As early as the third session of GRACE training, participants expressed self-discoveries that had previously been occluded from their view. During a sharing session about what they'd been learning about themselves, one said, "I was appalled to realize how I much I've [been living in] the 'victim narrative,'" and "I didn't realize how transactional my conversations with co-workers have been…. I've made the commitment to being friendlier, to invest in relationships," and "I've now gotten into the habit of checking in with my intention whenever I'm about to move onto the next thing." Another confessed, "I never realized just how much I don't listen!" Yet another expressed surprise at the degree of mind wandering they engage in, and how they habitually have distanced themselves from painful experiences. Still another expressed surprise at recognizing how much they feel that "everything is always up to me."

Healthy Minds Emotional Styles Questionnaire, Pre- and Post-Test

The results of a paired-samples t-test revealed that, overall, participants scored significantly higher on the Healthy Minds ESQ post-test ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.39$) relative to the pre-test ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.71$), $t(9) = -2.68$, $p = 0.025$ (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). The greatest increases were found in the mean scores for resilience (19.6%), attention (16.4%), and sensitivity

to context (14.8%), followed by outlook (12.2%), self-awareness (6.9%) and social intuition (2.5%). Examining individual scores, one finds the highest increases in attention (P8[8], 175%), outlook (P8, 110%), and resilience (P8, 109.1%), followed by sensitivity to context (P3, 84.6%), self-awareness (P7, 62.5%), and social intuition (P3, 37.5%). One participant volunteered that a perceived degradation of their scores for resilience and outlook (see Table 1, P10) was owing to their ability to provide more honest answers the second time as a result of their having explored a lot of the questions more deeply over the 12 weeks of GRACE training.

Course Evaluation Survey

Nine out of ten participants completed the course evaluation survey at the program's end. To gain an understanding of the benefits accrued to them from having engaged in GRACE training, they were asked (1) which aspects of the training they found most useful, (2) what positive impacts the training may have had on them, and (3) what they intended to take forward into their lives from the training.

The aspects of the training participants found most useful were (44.4%) the in-class practices, exercises, and homework designed to cultivate gathering attention (e.g., focused attention, open awareness meditation, and mindful breathing; self-reflective daily journaling to deconstruct reactive moments of the day, imagine what alternative actions or behaviors had been possible, and forming the intention to take a different tact on the next similar occasion; and the scheduled self-observation practice of asking, "What is my mind doing right now?") The exercises to cultivate recalling intention (22.2%) were also cited as most useful (e.g., the practice of asking, "What do I intend right now?" before engaging in their next activity or task; surfacing

[8]To protect the participants' anonymity, I have referred to them as P1, P2, and so forth, as well as used third person plural pronouns to indicate them.

what is most important to them through the Barrett PVA and discerning how they might bring their espoused values to their personal and professional lives (22.2%); and contemplating their inherent gifts as revealed through the VIA CSS and how they might offer these in service to their colleagues, clients, families, or community (22.2%). One participant cited taking the Healthy Minds ESQ as useful and eye-opening; another found the Above and Below the Line tool (for first self-attuning, and then shifting out of the drama triangle to a more generative mindspace) extremely useful.

The responses regarding the positive impacts of GRACE training show that 44.4% of participants gained competence in the relational field—having more tools and skills to engage with others more openly and generatively; 44.4% experienced a greater degree of self-awareness relative to their own and others' emotional states, as well as greater ability to self-correct (down-regulate) in the midst of strong emotions; 44.4% gained new ways of seeing and interpreting their experiences, and thus the ability to respond more appropriately to challenging situations; and 33.3% attested to either a recommitment to or a newfound appreciation for meditation and bringing mindfulness to bear into all their experiences. "I feel more reflective in my day-to-day life, and have observed myself trying to cultivate more meaningful relationships with colleagues," wrote one participant. Another said, "This class has really brought me back to focusing on exercising my ability to be mindful; prior to this, that had fallen by the wayside. Also, I always previously associated mindfulness with my personal life, and this class has made me realize it is for my professional life as well. It taught me a lot of great tools in mindfulness that I continue to try to implement, and a vocabulary for [making sense of] a lot of mental challenges that I encounter." Yet another offered, "GRACE training has encouraged me to

respond differently to challenging/difficult situations and to gain more strength and confidence in the way I communicate and engage with others. Specifically, the time spent attuning to self and others once a difficult situation arises has helped me to make decisions that have more generative outcomes."

As to the question of what participants intended to take forward into their lives from GRACE training, 55.6% stated their commitment to cultivating and maintaining more meaningful relationships, especially with their co-workers; 55.6% said they intended to meditate regularly and continue to grow their attentional competence; 55.6% expressed their commitment to continual learning by engaging in the practices and exercises they were given during the course; and 33.3% said they would focus on building their self-awareness and ability to attune to self and other. "I plan on focusing more of my life on developing my ability to be present and mindful. I'm hoping to spend more time with the material, as well as the suggested readings, but also returning my attention to other ways that I can increase my mental presence," stated one of the participants. Another wrote, "It is a muscle that I have to practice, but I'm hoping to be able to access this training during not just difficult situations at work but also just in general—the concept of conversations for relationship, possibility, and action is an interesting framework, and I want to practice conversations for possibility in general, but then focusing on why and how I can bring conversations for relationship at work more and then conversations for action outside of work." A third reflected, "I think applying GRACE methodologies (and sharing/advocating for others to consider the methodologies in their daily practices) would help me and others to work together more harmoniously *and* effectively and all our efforts to have more meaning/purpose."

Lastly, participants were asked to consider what improvements could be made to enhance the effectiveness of GRACE training. More than half (55.6%) suggested that the training would benefit from a greater time allotment: either longer sessions, starting earlier in the day (for better engagement), and/or extending the duration from six to eight or ten sessions to accommodate more in-class practices (22.2%), discussion (22.2%), and deeper dives into the material (11.1%).

Discussion

Everything is waiting for you

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice. You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,

and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the
conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

David Whyte

The underlying theory of this paper is that, like most of life's challenges, much of the external causes of workplace suffering lie outside of our control; and as the Buddha taught, the way out of suffering lies in how we meet and respond to our experiences. The purpose of the current study was to determine the effectiveness of teaching and coaching professionals in a group setting to rely on the GRACE model to transform stress, anxiety, burnout, and other forms of workplace suffering into continual learning, personal growth, and opportunities for greater connection with others. The premise is that equipping individuals with new ways of seeing and interpreting, helping to uncover what lurks in their blind spot, and giving them the means to shift out of self-limiting narratives and expectations allows them to meet all their life experiences in

increasingly creative ways, to recognize opportunities for learning in every situation they encounter, and to discern new possibilities that heretofore had been veiled and unrecognizable.

The promise of GRACE training was for participants to begin to cultivate and grow (1) attentional and affective balance, thus enabling access to their executive functions in the face of active stressors; (2) the ability to ground themselves in purpose and intention, shifting attention away from the distraction and churn of the drama triangle; (3) the capacity for including and holding complex truths and the lived experiences of self and other in apprehending the totality of a given situation, leading to greater empathy, understanding, and trust; (4) the ability to recognize multiple possibilities in addressing challenges and discern the appropriate response or action from a systems point of view; and (5) the ability to generatively engage or take meaningful action from a compassionate stance.

The approach of Integral Coaching® contributes a pedagogy of adult development and learning that posits the importance of including and balancing all streams of competence—cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual, and integrative—in any move toward change. A corollary principle in this method is the idea that we are the sum of our practices, and that any desired change can be authentically, sustainably instantiated only by engaging repeatedly in specific practices that result in our gradually embodying the desired state. As somatic experts and coaches remind us, we are embodied beings; therefore, change cannot take place by (cognitive) will alone—we must include our bodies in creating any change we seek (Palmer, 2008; Strozzi-Heckler, 2014).

The results of this 12-week study indicate that imparting the GRACE model in an Integral Coaching® environment holds a lot of promise. In a limited span of time, a third of the

participants not only gained an appreciation for the importance of meditation in gathering attention, but also committed to a daily sitting practice and regularly pausing to observe what their minds are doing. Almost half attested to gaining greater relational awareness and skills, and committed to cultivating more meaningful engagements with their colleagues. Almost half spoke of gains in attuning to self and other, becoming more aware of their own emotional and somatic states and what those imply about what may or may not be possible in the moment; moreover, they reported new skills in down-regulating from difficult or intense emotions, allowing greater objectivity in considering what might serve and in relating to those they may not agree with. More than half of the participants voiced the recognition of truths previously concealed in their blind spots: how much they don't listen; how compelled they are to interpret phenomena as problems to be solved; how often they perceive themselves as victims or as standalone heroes; how transactional their conversations are; and how fear-based they've realized their decisions and actions have been.

Furthermore, the results of comparing the pre- and post-program ESQ scores are a validation of the effectiveness of the program's approach. The fact that, overall, the needle moved in a significant, positive direction with regard to participants' healthy emotionality over a period of only 12 or 14 weeks indicates that greater progress is possible with more intention and sustained practice.

This is good, exciting news. As organizational-culture guru Ed Schein (2010) has witnessed in his work with numerous companies over many decades, meaningful cultural shifts take place and are indeed speeded up as individual behaviors change. He noted that when a Scottish hospital started training their receptionists to interact with patients more skillfully and

empathetically, overall patient mood shifted, positively affecting doctor-patient interactions, as well as downstream treatment outcomes through better patient compliance. As it happens, I have borne witness to the same phenomenon: when a smattering of individuals at my company started to courageously bring a number of challenging issues to the fore (something unimaginable just five years earlier owing to culturally determined relational habits in the building industry), having difficult conversations and respectfully naming uncomfortable truths became normalized over time and gradually became possible in everyday meetings. And so, as more employees become better resourced, empowered, and empathetic in the face of challenges by applying self-interventions like GRACE, it is reasonable to predict a similar gradual shift in overall organizational behavior, and therefore a gradual decrease in the prevalence of workplace dukkha. Indeed, most executive coaches understand the powerful positive cultural impacts of coaching emotional intelligence and resilience skills in organizational leaders: As leaders learn to listen deeply, to have the conversations that need to be had when they need to be had, to cultivate inclusivity and let go of the myth that all solutions must come from them, their teams begin to emulate these much healthier behaviors, and meaningful cultural change gradually occurs.

Several years ago I had a chance Thanksgiving encounter with Buddhist teacher, author, and Integral Coach® Pamela Weiss. She had been on the faculty of the coaching school I'd just graduated from, although our time there hadn't overlapped. We both had spent a good number of years living and practicing at a dharma center; we had both enrolled in coach training sometime after having returned to conventional life; and we were both squarely planted, for the time being, in some aspect of corporate life—she as an executive coach serving large Silicon Valley firms, I as a full-time employee. We compared what we regarded as our vocation: to alleviate suffering,

bringing the principles of the dharma into our work with individuals and organizations, and in fact imparting the truths of dharma under a stealthy, secular guise. In her memoir (2020), Weiss writes, "For me, coaching is bodhisattva work. It was a way that I could use what I learned in the monastery [Tassajara] to help alleviate suffering." Similarly, bringing GRACE to the corporate setting is bodhisattva work. It is underpinned by the three tenets[9] of not knowing, bearing witness, and moving to compassionate action primed by not knowing and bearing witness; through instilling the GRACE model in everyday work lives, one can operationalize training the mind, working from the basis of ethics, and cultivating wisdom.

Limitations of the Current Study and Future Considerations

Although it seems clear that the current study resulted in positive, heartening gains, it is important to acknowledge two limiting factors, the small sample size and the relatively short time period in which the study took place. Especially with respect to the ESQ paired-samples t-test, it would be instructive to include a larger number of participants in ascertaining the effectiveness of the GRACE intervention. A larger sample would also yield more useful and pertinent qualitative information as to which aspects of the training are more or less effective. Time constraints limited a number of components of the training: preparation for each session, in-class practices, the sharing of reflections and experiences, opportunities to unpack homework exercises and challenges, and one-on-one coaching conversations to surface obstacles and to tailor somatic and other practices for each participant.

[9]The Three Tenets of the Zen Peacemakers Order were first developed and articulated by Roshi Bernie Glassman in 1994. They are: Not Knowing (letting go of fixed ideas about yourself, others, and the universe); Bearing Witness (to the joy and suffering of the world); and Taking Action (that arises from Not Knowing and Bearing Witness).

I plan to hold GRACE training again in the spring of 2022, with the following alterations, based on feedback from the participants, as well as on my own observations: (1) scheduling the sessions an hour earlier, starting at 4:00 pm, so that participants aren't tapped out from a full work day; (2) moving most, if not all, of the supporting neuroscientific information to the introductory session, allowing more time in subsequent sessions for discussion; (3) while still holding sessions every two weeks, adding a 30-45 minute check-in period on the weeks the sessions aren't held, to field questions about homework practices and exercises; (4) creating a glossary of new terms to facilitate participants' understanding of heretofore unfamiliar material; and (5) actively scheduling two half-hour one-on-one coaching conversations with each participant as part of the program. In addition, as suggested in the course evaluation survey, I plan to launch a GRACE study group, meeting every six weeks, for the cohort that participated in the current study.

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once,
but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is
within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do
to help another soul, to assist some portion of
this poor suffering world, will help immensely.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes

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Tables

Table 1

Healthy Minds Emotional Styles Questionnaire Scores Before and After GRACE Training

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10		Mean
Resilience BG	4.25	3.50	3.50	4.25	3.50	4.25	5.50	2.75	3.00	5.00		3.9500
Resilience AG	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.50	4.75	5.25	6.00	5.75	3.25	3.75		4.7250
Difference	0.75	1.25	0.75	0.25	1.25	1.00	0.50	3.00	0.25	-1.25		
% Inc or dec	17.6	35.7	21.4	5.9	35.7	23.5	9.1	109.1	8.3	-25.0		
Outlook BG	4.50	3.50	3.25	5.00	5.25	5.25	6.50	2.50	3.75	5.50		4.5000
Outlook AG	5.25	4.75	4.50	4.75	5.00	5.75	6.50	5.25	4.25	4.50		5.0500
Difference	0.75	1.25	1.25	-0.25	-0.25	0.50	0.00	2.75	0.50	-1.00		
% Inc or dec	16.70	35.70	38.50	-5.00	-4.80	9.50	0.00	110.0	13.3	-18.2		
Soc Intuit BG	5.75	4.25	4.00	5.75	5.50	6.25	3.75	3.75	5.00	6.00		5.0000
Soc Intuit AG	4.50	4.00	5.50	5.00	6.25	5.75	4.75	3.50	5.25	6.75		5.1250
Difference	-1.25	-0.25	1.50	-0.75	0.75	-0.50	1.00	-0.25	0.25	0.75		
% Inc or dec	-21.7	-5.9	37.5	-13.0	13.6	-8.0	26.7	-6.7	5.0	12.5		
Self-Aware BG	4.75	3.75	4.25	5.25	5.75	5.75	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00		4.3500
Self-Aware AG	4.50	5.00	5.25	4.50	5.75	5.00	3.25	3.75	4.50	5.00		4.6500
Difference	-0.25	1.25	1.00	-0.75	0.00	-0.75	1.25	-0.25	0.50	1.00		
% Inc or dec	-5.3	33.3	23.5	-14.3	0.0	-13.0	62.5	-6.3	12.5	25.0		
Sensitivity to Context BG	4.50	4.75	3.25	6.75	5.25	3.75	6.25	2.75	5.75	2.50		4.5500
Sensitivity to Context AG	4.25	4.75	6.00	6.25	6.00	5.25	6.25	4.25	6.75	2.50		5.2250
Difference	-0.25	0.00	2.75	-0.50	0.75	1.50	0.00	1.50	1.00	0.00		
% Inc or dec	-5.6	0.0	84.6	-7.4	14.3	40.0	0.0	54.5	17.4	0.0		
Attention BG	2.50	2.50	4.75	5.25	5.00	4.00	3.50	2.00	5.25	3.25		3.8000
Attention AG	4.75	4.25	3.75	5.75	4.75	4.00	3.75	5.50	6.00	1.75		4.4250
Difference	2.25	1.75	-1.00	0.50	-0.25	0.00	0.25	3.50	0.75	-1.50		
% Inc or dec	90.0	70.0	-21.1	9.5	-5.0	0.0	7.1	175.0	14.3	-46.2		

Table 2

Healthy Minds Emotional Styles Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Resilience BG	10	2.75	2.75	5.50	3.95	.86442
Resilience AG	10	2.75	3.25	6.00	4.73	.84533
Outlook BG	10	4.00	2.50	6.50	4.50	1.22474
Outlook AG	10	2.25	4.25	6.50	5.05	.67495
Social Intuition BG	10	2.50	3.75	6.25	5.00	.97895
Social Intuition AG	10	3.25	3.50	6.75	5.13	.99478
Self-Awareness BG	10	3.75	2.00	5.75	4.35	1.11305
Self-Awareness AG	10	2.50	3.25	5.75	4.65	.72839
Sensitivity to Context BG	10	4.25	2.50	6.75	4.55	1.47102
Sensitivity to Context AG	10	4.25	2.50	6.75	5.23	1.29877
Attention BG	10	3.25	2.00	6.25	3.80	1.22927
Attention AG	10	4.25	1.75	6.00	4.43	1.24192
Valid N (listwise)	10					

Table 3

Healthy Minds Emotional Styles Questionnaire Results

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Emotional Dimensions, Before Scores, Average	4.3583	10	.70607	.22328
Emotional Dimensions, After Scores, Average	4.8667	10	.38730	.12247

Table 4

Course Evaluation Survey Ratings

Statement	Rating									Mean
The training was well organized and cohesive.	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4.5000
The in-class practices and exercises contributed to my understanding of the material being presented.	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.8750
The neurobiological correlates presented by the instructor contributed to my understanding of the material being presented.	3	4	5	4	2	4	4	3	5	3.8750
The homework practices and exercises contributed to my understanding and integration of the material presented.	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.7500
The homework practices and exercises were reasonable to accomplish in the two weeks between classes.	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	3	5	4.1250
The suggested resources (readings and videos) contributed to my understanding of the material presented.	3	2	5	5	3	4	4	4	3	3.7500
The instructor was well prepared for each class.	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.8750
The instructor used class time effectively.	4	5	5	3	4	5	4	3	4	4.1250
The instructor presented course material in a clear manner that facilitated understanding.	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4.5000
The instructor stimulated my interest in the subject matter.	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	4.7500
I would recommend this instructor to my colleagues.	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.8750
GRACE Training provided me with new resources to meet day-to-day challenges.	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4.6250
GRACE Training provided me with new tools to build resilience in the face of adversity.	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4.6250
As a result of the training, I feel I have what I need to practice gathering attention and being present.	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.7500
Because of the training, I am better able to clarify purpose and/or to imbue my activities with meaning.	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4.7500
I feel that I am better able to attune to my own direct experience and needs because of GRACE training.	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4.6250
I feel that I am better able to attune to others as a result of the training.	5	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	4.5000
Owing to the training, I gained new ways of seeing and thinking in trying to determine what might best serve a given situation.	4	5	5	4	4	3	5	5	5	4.5000
I gained a better understanding of how to effectively and appropriately engage with others, personally and professionally.	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.5000
I feel that, with practice, I would be able to rely on the GRACE framework and sequence in meeting my challenges.	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.7500
Overall, this training stimulated my interest in the subjects and topics covered.	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.6250
I would recommend GRACE Training to my colleagues.	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.0000

n=9