

# SPIRAL DYNAMICS®

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## Applying the Model

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### PART 1: THE MODEL

#### INTRODUCTION:

*"Spiral Dynamics presents a new framework for understanding the dynamic forces at work in human affairs – business, personal lives, education, and even geopolitics.*

*"It is not another hard-edged and simplistic 'types of people' model nor a soft 'everybody's beautiful' egalitarian approach. . . . (it is) a very specific Tool Kit for managing the deepest differences in people (based upon) core intelligences (which) exist like STRANGE ATTRACTORS below our values, beliefs, and ethical structures. By applying the right tools at this base level, rather than to surface symptoms, any bright, curious human being can, quite simply, change the world." ~ Ronnie Lessen in SPIRAL DYNAMICS (1995)*



So what is Spiral Dynamics and why study it?

In a nutshell, Spiral Dynamics is a model about human thinking and development – it says that human intelligence is evolving and developing within the context of the world in which we live. Further, that this development is the key to how we perceive and interact with the world – we see the world as we are, not as it is.

Spiral Dynamics as we are approaching it, offers three key areas of value:

1. a categorization system that identifies “levels of human existence” or thinking,

- which can be applied to an individual, a community, or all of humanity;
- 2. a change model that provides insight into how change operates, how we tend to respond to it, and how we can consciously alter that response to allow rapid, easy change;
- 3. out of the first two areas comes a system of communication which can lead to significant reductions in misunderstanding, conflict, and inertia in an organization,
  - Using the model in your organization leads to clear communication that honors everyone *where they are*.

Spiral Dynamics provides a model for recognizing and honoring the differences in people, and for moving forward as an organization with greater internal cooperation. Please know that we cannot cover all the aspects of Spiral Dynamics in this introductory piece. There is more to come, and you are free to explore the model on your own.

## SPIRAL DYNAMICS – MEME's & vMEME's:

A MEME is a unit of cultural information, such as a cultural practice or idea, that is transmitted verbally or by repeated action from one mind to another (Dictionary.com). Examples of MEME's include commercial ideas like Coke, or iPod, political practices like voting and ideas like democracy. There are thousands and thousands of MEME's.

A vMEME is the underlying thinking systems, value systems, worldviews, coping systems, etc., which support MEME's. You might say that vMEME's are the "scaffolding" upon which MEME's, or mental constructs, are built. vMeme's are referred to as "Levels of Existence" and represented by color levels in the Spiral Dynamics model.

The vMEME's identified in Spiral Dynamics are based on research by Clare Graves, who developed the model (although the name Spiral Dynamics came about after Graves' death). Graves, a colleague of Abraham Maslow, identified eight levels of human thinking that had emerged thus far in human evolution. He divided them into two tiers, and he predicted that more levels of existence, or vMEME's, would emerge over time as we continue to evolve. Each level represents a different worldview, or capacity for complexity than the previous one, and each level contains more potential than all previous levels combined.

There are a few things to know before we explore the model.

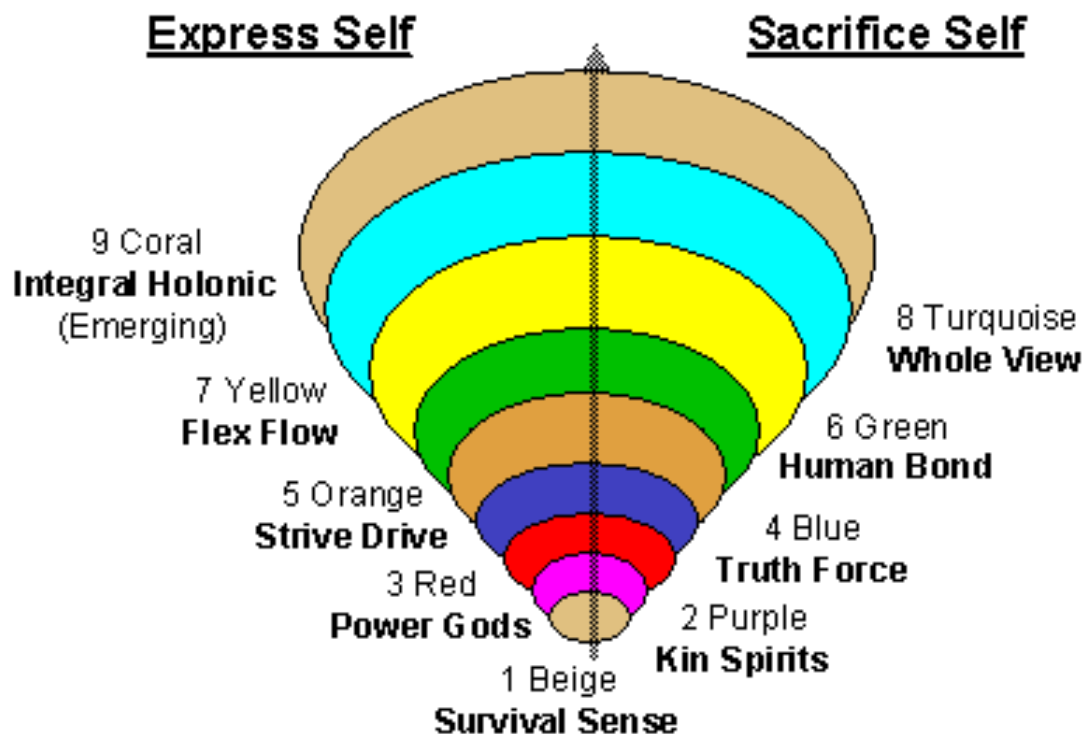
- First, the levels are not discreet, that is, you exist in ALL of them all of the time. However, you have a "center of gravity" that would include one or more levels that are close together. That "center of gravity" moves in a developmental fashion.
- Second, higher levels are not necessarily *better* than lower levels – you simply are capable of greater complexity and the various traits and values associated with that level. There are times when someone operating at one of the "lower" levels will be

much more effective at handling certain life conditions than someone at a more complex level. Clare Graves was very clear that “Everyone has a right to exist where they are,” and that no organization should try to change the levels of anyone (see the 12 Gravesian Principles, Appendix A).

- Third, the vMEME’s alternate between individualistic and communal energies – they are alternately “I” consciousness and “we” consciousness.
- Fourth, within each vMEME, one can be either “Open,” “Arrested,” or “Closed,” that is, one is on a continuum between being open to other ideas or ways of being or closed to them. This is a critical factor in how you deal with others in terms of tolerance and acceptance.

The colors used in the model are not really meaningful in themselves. They were assigned by scientists and do not have much, if any, symbolic value. There is some logic to how they are assigned, but do not read too much into the colors themselves.

Let’s take a look at the Spiral Dynamics vMEME’s and what they represent.



This illustration shows the model looking straight on. The “warmer” colors on the left represent the individualistic vMEME’s and they alternate with the “cooler” colors on the right side, which represent the communal vMEME’s. The model is developmental, that is you must go through each level, in order, not skipping any. So you go from Beige to Purple, to Red, etc., centered in one or more vMEME’s at any given time. Each Level is Existence is briefly explained below.

## vMEME LEVELS – FIRST TIER:

The first six levels are “subsistence levels” marked by “first-tier thinking.”

**BEIGE: ARCHAIC-INSTINCTUAL.** Individualistic – Survivalist Value System. The level of basic survival; food, water, warmth, sex, and safety have priority; uses habits and instincts just to survive; forms into survival bands to perpetuate life. No real self-awareness; unable to function in modern society.

**EMERGED:** Ancient humans.

**WHERE SEEN:** First human societies, newborn infants, senile elderly, and shell shock. 0.1 percent of adult population, 0 percent power.

**PURPLE: MAGICAL-ANIMISTIC.** Communal – Tribal Value System. Thinking is animistic; magical spirits, good and bad, swarm the earth, leaving blessings, curses, and spells that determine events; forms into ethnic tribes. The spirits exist in ancestors and bond the tribe; kinship and lineage establish political links, sounds “holistic” but is actually atomistic: “there is a name for each bend in the river but no name for the river.” Strong attachment to ritual is a vestige of this vMEME.

**EMERGED:** Earliest tribes 50,000 years ago.

**WHERE SEEN:** Belief in voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, ancient grudges, good luck charms, family rituals, magical ethnic beliefs and superstitions; strong in Third-World settings, gangs, athletic teams and corporate “tribes;” those holding ritual as very important. 10 percent of the population, 1 percent of the power.

**RED: POWER GODS.** Individualistic – Warrior Value System. First emergence of the self distinct from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric, heroic; mythic spirits, dragons, beasts, and powerful people; feudal lords protect underlings in exchange for obedience and labor; the basis of feudal empires – power and glory. The world is a jungle full of threats and predators; conquers, outfoxes, and dominates; enjoys self to the fullest without regret or remorse. Higher level of this vMEME is very persuasive and manipulative through threat or use of force.

**EMERGED:** 15,000 years ago.

**WHERE SEEN:** The “terrible twos,” rebellious youth, frontier mentalities, feudal kingdoms, epic heroes, James Bond villains, “Bill the Butcher” in “Gangs of New York,” soldiers of fortune, wild rock stars, Attila the Hun, Lord of the Flies. 20 percent of the population, 5 percent of the power.

**BLUE: CONFORMIST RULE.** Communal – Traditional Value System. Life has meaning, direction and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful Other or Order. This righteous Order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of “right” and “wrong.” Violating the code or rules has severe, perhaps everlasting repercussions. Following the code yields rewards for the faithful; rigid social hierarchies; paternalistic; one right way and only one right way to think about everything; law and order; impulsivity controlled through guilt; concrete-literal and fundamentalist belief; obedience to the rule of Order.

**EMERGED:** 4000 years ago (Moses consciousness)

**WHERE SEEN:** Puritan America, Confucianist China, Dickensian England, Singapore discipline, codes of chivalry and honor, charitable good deeds, Islamic fundamentalism, Boys and Girl Scouts, FBI, old IBM, “Moral Majority,” patriotism (and all “isms”), the Amish. 40 percent of the population, 30 percent of the power.

**ORANGE: SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT.** Individualistic – Modern Value System.

At this wave, the self “escapes” from the “herd mentality” of Blue, and seeks truth and meaning in individualistic terms – experimental, objective, mechanistic, operational – “scientific” in the typical sense. The world is a rational and well-oiled machine with natural laws that can be learned, mastered and manipulated **for one’s own purposes**. Highly achievement-oriented, especially toward materialistic gains; the laws of science rule politics, the economy, and human events. The world is a chessboard on which games are played and winners gain preeminence and perks over losers. Marketplace alliances; manipulate earth’s resources for one’s strategic gains. This vMEME dominates the modern western corporate world.

**EMERGED:** 350 years ago – The Enlightenment

**WHERE SEEN:** The Enlightenment, Ayn Rand’s Atlas Shrugged, Wall Street, The Riviera, emerging middle classes around the world, cosmetics industry, trophy hunting, colonialism, the Cold War, fashion industry, materialism, liberal self-interest. 30 percent of the population, 50 percent of the power.

**GREEN: THE SENSITIVE SELF.** Communal – Post-Modern Value System.

Communitarian, human bonding, ecological sensitivity, networking. The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness; feelings and caring supersede cold rationality; cherishing of the earth, Gaia, life. Against hierarchy; establishes lateral bonding and linking. Green is judgmental about “judgmentalism.” Emphasis on dialogue, relationships; reaches decisions through reconciliation and consensus (downside: interminable “processing” and incapacity to reach decisions); refresh spirituality, bring harmony, and enrich human potential. Strongly egalitarian, anti-hierarchy, pluralistic values, social construction of reality, diversity, multiculturalism, relativistic value systems. Subjective, nonlinear thinking; shows a greater degree of affective warmth, sensitivity, and caring, for earth and all its inhabitants.

**EMERGED:** 1960’s – 50 years ago.

**WHERE SEEN:** Deep ecology, postmodernism, Netherlands idealism, Rogerian counseling, Canadian health care, humanistic psychology, liberation theology, Greenpeace, animal rights, ecofeminism, post-colonialism, politically correct, diversity movements, human rights issues, ecopsychology. 10 percent of the population, 15 percent of the power.

## SUMMARY OF FIRST-TIER vMEME’s:

A common factor in all first-tier vMEME’s is fear, which shows up in the belief, “If everyone else does not think or see things the way I (we) do, we are all doomed.” A great deal of energy is spent resenting and being in conflict with those centered at different vMEME’s. Orange thinks Blue is stuffy and out of it and thinks Green is a bunch of weirdoes. Green thinks that Orange is greedy and that Blue is stifling growth. Blue thinks that Red

threatens stability, that Orange is unethical and ignoring authority, and that Green is soft and mushy. Get the idea? People at First-Tier vMEME's rarely know how to define Yellow or Turquoise (Second Tier) at all.

With the completion of the green vMEME, human consciousness is poised for a quantum jump into "second-tier thinking." Clare Graves referred to this as a "momentous leap," where "a chasm of unbelievable depth of meaning is crossed." In essence, with second-tier consciousness, one can think both vertically and horizontally . . . one can, for the first time, vividly grasp the entire spectrum of interior development, and thus see that each level, each wave is crucially important for the health of the overall spiral.

As Ken Wilber words it, each level is "transcend and include," each level is a fundamental ingredient of all subsequent levels, and thus each is cherished and embraced. Second-tier awareness thinks in terms of the overall spiral of existence, and not merely in the terms of any one level. Second-tier is also characterized by a shift in the ego characteristics of the individual. The reason that the transition from Green to Yellow is described as a momentous leap is that it encompasses a huge shift from a fear-based ego to a love-based ego – that is, one's center of gravity moves into a true sense of self-empowerment from which one operates.

## **vMEME LEVELS – SECOND TIER:**

**YELLOW: INTEGRATIVE.** Individualistic – Integral Value System. Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies (holarchies), systems, and forms; flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority. Differences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows. Egalitarianism is complemented with natural degrees of excellence where appropriate. Knowledge and competency should supersede rank, power, status, or group. The prevailing world order is the result of the existence of different levels of reality (MEME's) and the inevitable patterns of movement up and down the dynamic spiral. Good governance facilitates the emergences of entities through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy).

**EMERGED:** 1970's – 40 years ago.

**TURQUOISE: HOLISTIC.** Communal – Mystical Value System. Universal holistic system, holons/waves of integrative energies; unites feeling with knowledge; multiple levels interwoven into one conscious system. Universal order, but in a living conscious fashion, not based on external rules (Blue) or group bonds (Green). A "grand unification" is possible, in theory and in actuality. Sometimes involves the emergence of a new spirituality as a meshwork of all existence. Turquoise thinking uses the entire spiral; sees multiple levels of interaction; detects harmonies, the mystical forces, and the pervasive flow-states that permeate any organization.

**EMERGED:** 1990's – 20 years ago.

**CORAL:** Emerging now – no research as of yet. Individualistic.

**Second-tier thinking:** 1 percent of the population, 5 percent of the power.

*“The reason that Graves called second tier a “momentous leap” is that unlike all first-tier waves (which imagine their values are the only correct values), second tier has an understanding of the crucial if relative importance of all previous values—including red, blue, orange, and green. Orange thinks green is mindless; green despises orange; blue thinks both of them are going to burn in hell forever. Yellow, on the other hand, finds all of them necessary and acceptable, as long as none of them gets the upper hand and starts repressing the others. This, needless to say, would have a profound influence on any (organization) operating from yellow or second tier values.” ~ Ken Wilber*

## **WORKING WITH THE vMEME LEVELS:**

When you understand the vMEME’s and their characteristics, AND you realize that most of us are a blend of two or more vMEME’s or are in the process of transitioning from one to the next, you develop a greater awareness of why others are seeing things differently than you are. Remember that a color category level is not a label for a person; it is simply a way of describing the stage of development that the person’s thinking is at now.

Using the vMEME model, you can gain a greater understanding of how and why people take different positions and design your communications to take this into account. This is true both in terms of how and what you communicate and how decisions are reached. The vMEME model also gives insight into the levels of development that you may not have reached – in other words, it gives a model toward which to design your own personal and organizational growth.

## **THE CHANGE MODEL:**

Change is inherent in all organizations. The rate of change is accelerating. Learning to manage change is essential for growth (or even for stability) in the modern organization. When organizations consisting of people at different vMEME levels move into change, or exist within constant change, the process is usually uneven at best, and filled with roadblocks, obstacles, and failure at worst.

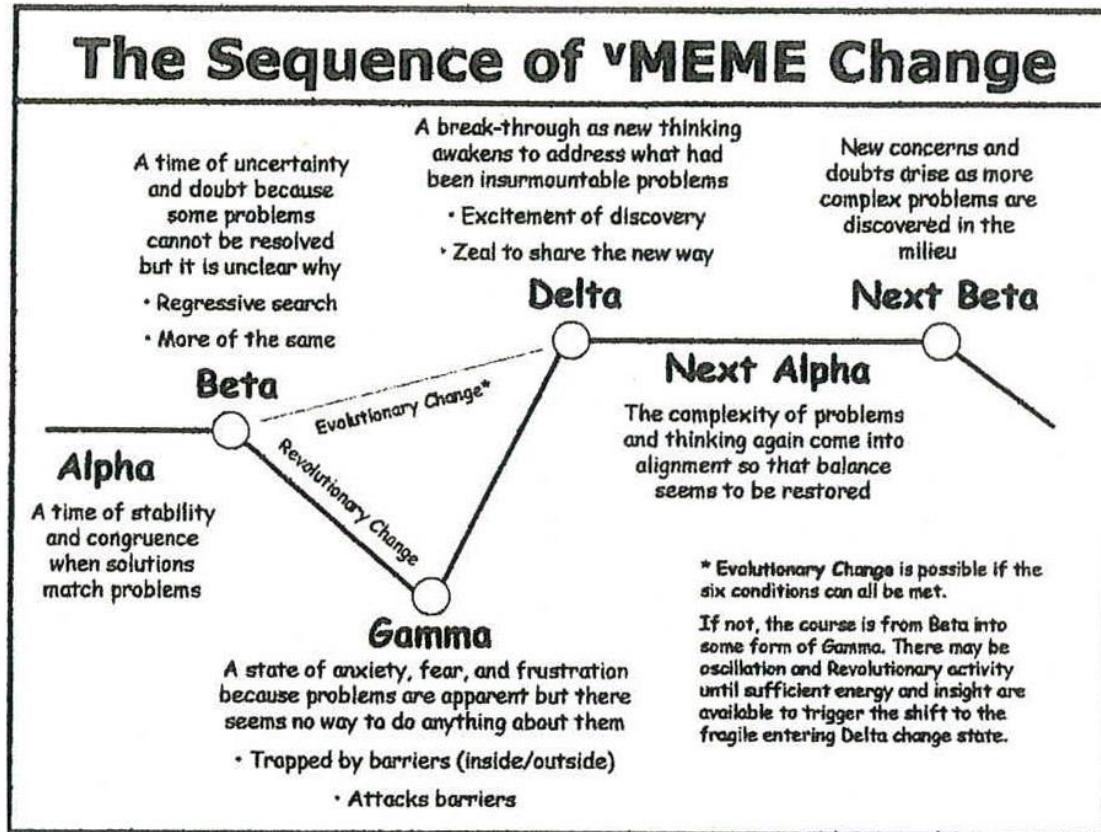
Some questions:

- Is your organization changing and evolving continually due to an internal commitment to grow?
- Or is it similar in feel and in operation to two, five or even ten years ago?
- Do you find the prospect of change positive, even exhilarating?
- Or do you internally resist change and all the attendant chaos that it seems to bring? Would you like this to be different?
- How would you answer these questions for leadership and other key elements of your organization?

The Spiral Dynamics model includes a model for change that is both illuminating and a map to creating natural, easy, positive change at both the personal and organizational levels. Called the Sequence of vMEME Change, it illustrates the steps in moving from one

level of existence, or vMEME, to another. It also provides six conditions for organizational change that must be met for change to be a smooth and volitional process.

The Sequence of vMEME Change is illustrated below (thanks to NIV Consulting, Inc.):



To describe the model, the **Alpha Stage** to the left represents a stable or static situation. **Beta** represents the time when it becomes clear that change is needed. **Gamma** represents the reaction to the change process, the deeper that **Gamma** goes, the more fear, anxiety, and frustration exist – so the ideal would be to have a minimal **Gamma** response. **Delta** is the breakthrough period, when the change process is nearing completion and the excitement of the new way takes hold. **Next Alpha** is the new level of existence, the new stable or static state, which is preparing you for the **Next Beta**, which is surely on your agenda.

The more you resist change, the more time you spend in **Gamma** energy, which is not pleasant – this is the place of struggle and stress. Through activities such as strategic planning and visioning, you can actually go into **Gamma** intentionally, with a clear concept of the **Next Alpha** level in your mind, and goal setting and visioning to carry you through a **shallow Gamma** experience. People who have learned to master the process of change are doing just that, although they may not be familiar with this model.

In other words, if your current **Alpha** is Orange, your **Next Alpha** will be Green. You will exist in Orange for a time, and then reach a **Beta** stage, where you will begin to feel that

your current vMEME is no longer working (you are now ORANGE-Green). This is a critical point, because what you do next will determine the quality of your experience as well as your level of existence. If you resist the **Beta** stage feelings – try to stay in Orange, in other words, you will either go into a deep **Gamma** stage as if you are being forced into the change; or you will remain in a **Beta-Gamma** state without developing into Green, but remaining unhappy with Orange.

Those who actively resist change and stay at one level are rarely happy or fulfilled at that level, the best that can be said is that they are coping and resisting the deep inner urge to develop more of their potential. Actually, you are not AT a level when this occurs, you are at a transitory stage BETWEEN levels, so in this example you are ORANGE-Green or GREEN-Orange, the two transitory states between Orange and Green.

Likewise, your team or organization may be stuck at a certain vMEME or between two vMEME's. Since the inner urge to grow and express more of yourself is a universal reality, it is painful to stay in place (and is actually regressing – you can't stay in place in a changing world without regressing). The answer to the internal resistance may be a deeper understanding of the Spiral Dynamics model –

- Are you stuck with a bunch of obstinate people, or are there vMEME differences in how things are viewed?
- Is it your desire to change everyone else to your point of view before things can move forward?
- Have you spoken to the other vMEME's represented in your organization and tried to understand their point of view?
- Is your communication style based upon an understanding AND an acceptance of these differences and are leaders being responsible for communicating to everyone?

### SIX CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE:

The Six Conditions for changing to more complex thinking (the next vMEME) are:

1. **POTENTIAL in the brain or brain syndicate** – there has to be a physical/emotional capability for growth.
2. **SOLUTIONS of problems at present level** – people have to see the possibility of solutions emerging.
3. **DISSONANCE about conditions and future** – that Beta Stage must exist; dissatisfaction and frustration is building; what used to work no longer works.
4. **INSIGHT into alternative forms and means** – there must be some openness to possibilities beyond what is known.
5. **BARRIERS to change identified and managed** – using the vMEME model and the Change Model.
6. **CONSOLIDATION & SUPPORT in transition** – there must be a way to get through the change process and stay together in a healthy way.

In planning change or in coming to terms with change that is not planned, leadership should review the six conditions to see if they are in place. If one or more are not, the change will be difficult at best. When you understand these conditions and are constantly checking to monitor how they are in your organization, you will have a good grasp on how ready you are for change. Visionary leaders are constantly working to create an environment that ensures that change is a natural part of the culture.

## CONCLUSION TO PART 1:

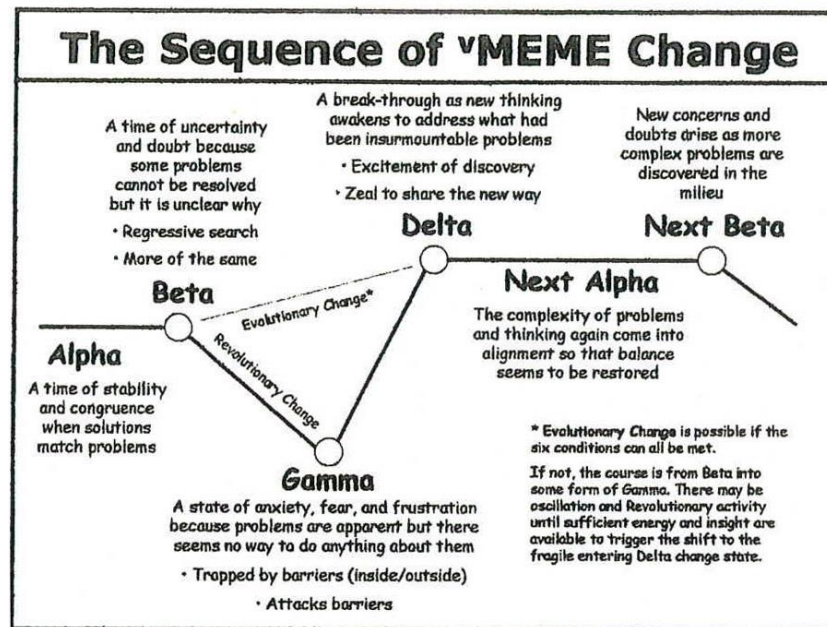
Graves' theory can be summarized in the following five key points (Caleb Rosado, Ph.D.):

1. Human nature is not static, nor is it finite. Human nature changes as the conditions of existence change, thus forging new systems. Yet, the older systems stay with us.
2. When a new system or level is activated, we change our psychology and rules for living to adapt to those new conditions.
3. We live in a potentially open system of values with an infinite number of modes of living available to us. There is no final state to which we must all aspire. (Here is where Graves differed with Maslow and most other psychologists. Maslow, before his death, told Graves that Graves was correct and he [Maslow] was wrong in thinking of human development as a closed state.)
4. An individual, a group, or an entire society can respond positively only to those managerial principles, motivational appeals, educational formulas, and legal or ethical codes that are appropriate to the current level of human existence.
5. A Spiral vortex best depicts this emergence of human systems as they evolve through levels of increasing complexity. Each upward turn of the spiral marks the awakening of a more elaborated version on top of what already exists. The human Spiral, then, consists of a coiled string of value systems, worldviews, and mindsets, each the product of its times and conditions. In other words, new times produce new minds.

*“That means that, even in an “integral society” (Yellow or higher), there will still be pockets or subcultures of individuals at Purple, Red, Blue, Orange, and Green. This is not only unavoidable; it is healthy, normal, desirable. What is not desirable, however, is that any of those waves dominate the governance system and therefore attempt to force their values on others—whether those are Red values, Blue values, or Green values. A Yellow society, in short, would have laws that basically stem from that second-tier level of consciousness. And the basic defining characteristic of Yellow is that it accepts all previous values without letting any of them repress or dominate others.” ~ Ken Wilber*

## PART 2: USING THE MODEL IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

## THE CHANGE MODEL



Moving from a static (Alpha) place through a dynamic change (Beta-Gamma-Delta) and into a new static (New Alpha) place is an ongoing natural process of any organization. Stagnation may occur when there is a resistance to change, often due to a very negative experience (deep Gamma) with change in the past. An organization that has been through such an experience as a difficult change of leadership, a scandal, or a significant financial setback, may develop a deep resistance to change. This resistance may remain over time, as older leaders and influencers continue to remember the difficult times, while newer ones begin to press for change.

Using the Sequence of vMEME Change Model, leadership can easily identify the issues and energies present and then address the need for change across the spectrum of value systems (vMEME's) present. Merely understanding the change process can lead to a breakthrough in consciousness and a greater willingness to move forward. ("No wonder we're struggling, we're in deep Gamma!")

A second-tier leader (see previous section), can empower people across the vMEME spectrum by communicating to each vMEME, addressing the key values. For example, when an organization is faced with long-term stagnation and a pressure for change into a new way of being,

- **Purple** will seek to have rituals, to honor what came before, to “celebrate” what is, and to seek guidance as to what to do. Any change will have to include a ritual ceremony or **Purple** may be unable to accept it;
- **Red** will look for ways that “face” is threatened and seek to protect its territory through acting-out or by force or threat of force (this will most likely be a regression from a higher stage triggered by fear).
- **Blue** will likely begin to value the stagnation as the natural way to avoid the past difficulties from occurring again – they will be very risk-averse, and seek to call upon written authority to determine what to do;
- **Orange** will likely be very frustrated that their individual needs are not met by the current situation and press for change and for the “old timers” to change or move on – if their frustration continues, **Orange** may leave;
- **Green** will likely see the need for greater connection and extensive process activities to allow everyone to express their feelings about the issues;
- **Yellow** will recognize the position of all of the other vMEME’s and develop excellent strategies to move forward, which may be perceived by Green as ignoring feelings.
- **Turquoise**, if present, will serve as a great comfort to Green and Blue, and be willing to nurture all of the vMEME’s toward greater openness.

Another situation is the more dynamic organization where change is part of the culture. In this case, the **Blue** present will tend to value ongoing change as the norm and look to leadership to be focused on and implementing change on a continual basis. In this case, change becomes the static (Alpha) value. Such an organization will tend to have a lot of **Orange** energy and will need something approaching second-tier leadership, which has a high degree of risk-acceptance.

Here, the issue may be one of taking on a big change or project that is beyond the comfort zone of most of the leaders/employees. Those uncomfortable with change as a norm will either change to a more open way of being, dig in their heels and become obstacles, or move on.

## COMMUNICATION USING THE MODEL – WIZARDS

A Spiral Wizard is a person thinking at a second-tier level that has mastered the model and is able to naturally and easily communicate across the vMEME spectrum. She is second-tier because only at that level of development is one able to be completely open to different values. Here are some of the communication issues and values in the Spiral Dynamics model:

- A basic question asked by a second-tier leader: “In what way does the person operate in respect to this issue?”
  - The leader must come to understand the basic values and worldview of everyone involved in the processing of the change.
  - Then, she must take that into account in planning, communicating and implementing anything new.

- The Spiral Wizard “recognizes the spiral,” that is, she operates from an understanding of the model.
  - The organization consists of people at each vMEME and between each pair of vMEME’s.
  - This includes leadership, employees, and customers.
  - Most people are a blend of vMEME’s.
  - Some are in “cool” stages & some are in “hot” stages.
  - Some are “Open”, some are “Arrested” and a few may be “Closed”
  - The goal is to get each vMEME to display itself,
  - And to get the vMEME’s in balance.
- She understands the vMEME’s present.
  - Be able to step outside of your own vMEME profile.
  - Identify the prevailing Life Conditions (what is happening).
  - Notice the difference between “what” is thought and “why” it is being thought.
  - Remember that vMEME’s ebb and flow as Life Conditions change.
- She applies the P – O – A Principle:
  - Politeness – Respect, courtesy, kindness & consideration
  - Openness – No secrets, being clear as to intentions and actions
  - Authority – Used when appropriate, clearly and firmly

Using this communication model, the leader can facilitate change and growth through an understanding and an honoring of the values present. No one should need to change their Level of Existence (vMEME), in order for the organization to thrive.

This type of conscious leadership brings complimentary positive qualities out of the people who are already present, and leads to the attraction and retention of new people with complimentary qualities.

## **A SECOND-TIER LEADERSHIP MODEL**

In **Spiral Dynamics**, Clare Graves, Christopher Cowan & Donald Beck present a number of characteristics of the **YELLOW vMEME**, which is the first level of second-tier thinking. This is where leadership should be aiming, if we truly want to foster the growth of the organization at a significant and sustainable level. At the **YELLOW** level, there is a greater degree of integration and holistic systemic approaches are the norm, plus a high tolerance of, and even an appreciation of, chaos. While this may be idealistic for some, it does provide a description of a leadership level to which we all may aspire. Here are some characteristics of the **YELLOW vMEME**:

1. **Characterized by freedom from fear and compulsiveness, resulting in a sense of freedom and an ecological view that tolerates both structure and randomness.**

2. Accepts the inevitability of nature's flows and forms.
3. Focus is on functionality, competence, flexibility, and spontaneity.
4. Finds the natural mix of conflicting "truths" and "uncertainties."
5. Discovering personal freedom without harm to others or excesses of self-interest.
6. Experiences fullness of living on an Earth of such diversity in multiple dimensions.
7. Demands integrative and open systems.

*"Authority in **YELLOW** is contextual. The best equipped and most capable gains authority, regardless of rank, tenure, or even feelings. Competence, knowledge, skills, and insight which match the needs at hand are the dominant factors. . . . People begin to do more for themselves through an awakening of individual responsibility and personal autonomy."* ~ SPIRAL DYNAMICS, page 280.

#### Characteristics of **YELLOW** leadership:

1. Recognizes that chaos and problems are the crucible for true creative change.
2. Locates his or her core motivational and evaluative systems within his/herself, thus becoming relatively immune to external pressure or judgment.
3. Is adept at resolving paradoxes, creating abundance, and engineering win-win-win outcomes (the greater society benefits in addition to the parties).
4. Easily sees a broader view of possibility, thus opening to a greater range of solutions and creative responses.
5. Does not respond to threats, coercive power, competition, illogical rules, authoritarianism, or the usual incentives.
6. Creates an organization that trusts its members to be responsible, involved and curious.
7. Strategy is a process of constant adaptation and adjustment.
8. Begins to release the high concern with feelings of others present in GREEN, but retains a highly spiritualized world-view.
9. Is disinclined to spend much energy on perfunctory niceties *unless* they are important to others present.
10. Does not waste time on interpersonal gamesmanship of pointless interpretations or contrived layers of meaning or semantic trivia.
11. Values good content, clean information, open channels for finding out more on his/her own terms, and an attitude of open questioning and discovery.
12. Has no need for status, exhibitionism, or displays of power, unless power is demanded by *life conditions*.
13. Is concerned with the long run of time, rather than his or her own life span or those of other humans.
14. Fully expresses anger, or even hostility, but the emotions are intellectually used rather than emotionally driven, or manipulatively applied.
15. Sees life as an up-and-down journey from problem to solution, so both chaos and order are accepted as normal.

16. Replaces anything artificial or contrived with spontaneity, simplicity, and ethics that “make sense.”
17. Seeks after a variety of interests and will elect to do what he or she likes whether or not it is trendy, popular, or valued by others.
18. Cannot be coerced, bribed, or intimidated since there is no compulsion to control or desire to be controlled by others.

The **YELLOW** vMEME, as opposed to the **GREEN** vMEME, which “has its downside, which includes costs of group-think, opposition to individualism, and difficulty balancing efficiency, effectiveness, and results with time, money and energy consumed. **GREEN** leadership is like herding cats. Because the group is so strong and hates hierarchy, leaders cannot stand above or apart.” – Cowan and Todorovic

And finally, some characteristics of **YELLOW** organizations:

1. Less formal and structured, more pluralistic and active with multiple interlinks to produce synergy through diversity.
2. The inherent value of each person is recognized as a natural, basic idea; there is an expectation that each one will want to perform at a high level and will be allowed to express their inner talents.
3. Business, play, social events, and family are all combined interactively in a whole-brain experience of being, not having, or even doing.
4. Out of boxes, categories, and ranks and into fields, flow states, knowledge contours, and cybernetic loops.
5. More connections among materials, information, products, value-adders, and customers/clients, so the organization is a transition zone within a network rather than a stair step in the production sequence.
6. Intelligences within the human/technological interface with feedback and feed-forward, continual systemic adaptation.
7. A meshing of systems within systems flows within flows, all consciously shaped to fit naturally within the holistic milieu.
8. More independent thinking with appreciation of time and intangibles over material benefits of competitiveness.
9. Greater flexibility to connect to multiple groups and situations in a “plug-in, plug-out” sequence of events.
10. More variety of life and working styles with pieces of many different job functions spread in many geographic areas.
11. Form flextime to anytime; formal work place to my place; having a regular job to working independently.
12. Less loyalty to organization or working group, more loyalty to the function and profession as related to the individual’s life.
13. Open to many jobs and careers, not focused on a single track.
14. More emphasis on social causes and issues at both local and global levels as principles take precedence over rules.
15. Multidimensional interests and expectation of opportunity to exercise mind, spirit, and body simultaneously.

## RESOURCES

### Books:

1. Beck, Don & Cowan, Christopher, SPIRAL DYNAMICS, 1995, Blackwell Publishing.
2. Beck, Don, SPIRAL DYNAMICS INTEGRAL, CD Set, National Values Institute, Sounds True, 2006.
3. Cowan, Chris & Natasha Todorovic, THE NEVER ENDING QUEST: Clare W. Graves Explores Human Nature, 2005, ECLET Publishing.
4. Dalawabi, Said, MEMEnomics: The Next Generation Economic System, SelectBooks; 1 edition (September 17, 2013)
5. Beecroft, Nicholas, The Master Code-The Theory that Explains Everything (The Future of Western Civilization Series 1), Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

### Other:

1. NIV Consulting, Inc., (Chris Cowan), [www.SpiralDynamics.org](http://www.SpiralDynamics.org)
2. Spiral Dynamics Integral, (Don Beck), [www.SpiralDynamics.net](http://www.SpiralDynamics.net)
3. Wikipedia.com, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral\\_Dynamics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiral_Dynamics)
4. SD Online Test (\$\$): <http://www.onlinepeoplescan.com>

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## APPENDIX A

## The 12 Gravesian Principles

(Clare W. Graves)

1. Human development is an emergent, oscillating process that subordinates older, less complex ways of thinking/being to newer, more expansive, more complex ones. Older systems do not disappear, but are subsumed within the more elaborate ones and can be reactivated when older problems resurface.
  - a. **This means that life is evolving toward greater complexity, at both the individual and species levels. You retain the energies that you pass through as you develop greater capacities for complexity.**
2. People tend to change their bio-psycho-social beings as their Conditions of Existence change.
  - a. **This means that you continually re-create yourself as you develop; the neural structure of your brain-body, and your psychological makeup.**
3. Value Systems alternate between a focus on the external world (how to change & control it) and the internal world (how to come to peace with it).
  - a. **The levels alternate between individual and communal world-views, between Express Self and Sacrifice Self.**
4. Value Systems arise from the interaction of two sets of forces:
  - a. Existential problems of a living milieu.
  - b. Neuropsychological equipment in the brain.
    - i. **As living conditions change, your system is designed to adapt both physically and mentally.**
5. People centralized in a Value System are psychosocially congruent with components of that system.
  - a. **This means that when you have everyone at the same vMEME, they tend to see the world from the same level of complexity. They may disagree, but they understand each other pretty well.**
6. A person may not be equipped to move to more complex systems, even if the Conditions of Existence demand it.
  - a. **Sometimes one lacks the necessary capacities for greater development due to injury or some other defect.**

7. A person may stabilize at one or at a combination of Value Systems if the Conditions of Existence are stable.
  - a. **When Living Conditions become stable, people in those situations tend to become stable at a vMEME.**
8. Within each Value System is a range of *positive* and *negative* characteristics and behaviors – adaptive and maladaptive elements.
  - a. **This means that vMEME's work well for living conditions to which they are suited, but as things begin to change, they may actually create problems – this is the sign that the vMEME needs to change.**
9. When Problems/Conditions warrant, a person or group may regress to a previous Value System.
  - a. **If Living Conditions regress, greater complexity may be a liability, so people may adapt to lower vMEME's.**
10. A person may function in Open, Arrested, or Closed states in different areas.
  - a. **This is the range of willingness to see other points of view within a vMEME, and speaks to the ability to change easily.**
11. Intelligence, gender, race, and age DO NOT correlate with Value Systems, although they can impact one's Conditions.
  - a. **Research shows that none of these is a significant factor in your ability to adapt to new Living Conditions.**
12. No Value System is inherently “better” or “worse” than another. *APPROPRIATENESS* to the milieu and *CONDITIONS OF EXISTENCE* are the key.
  - a. **It is not better to have the capacity for more complexity if you are living in very simple Living Conditions. If there is a “better” it is that it is better to be able to adapt across the spiral as the situation demands.**