

## Why Things Stay the Way They Are

Someone suggests a great idea. Everyone agrees. But then nothing happens. The group talks about it repeatedly. Everyone affirms the desired outcomes. Still nothing happens. The rhetoric fades over time. Once in awhile the idea resurfaces with the same result. Nothing happens. When we think about it, there are several of those ideas floating around the church - talked about but with unrealized outcomes. What is it that gets in the way of our experiencing the changes about which we talk and for which we long?

Things stay the way things are because we live a set of commitments that keep things stable, predictable, and comprehensible. Our desire and need to maintain stability, predictability and comprehensibility doesn't stop us from wishing for a different reality. But it does create within us a kind of immune response, fighting off new commitments required to experience the change for which we long. **Unless individuals and groups alter their held commitments which compete with the commitments required to sustain a desired new way of being, nothing changes, regardless of how much we bemoan what we do not like or desire what we wish was different.** So how do we nurture the new attitudes, hearts, minds, and commitments that will make possible the new ways of being for which we long?

First, we must surface the commitments we currently live by which compete with the new commitment(s) the change requires of us. Leaders can only help people see internal inconsistency, the dissonance. Leaders cannot change people's commitments. That's a choice individuals and groups must make for themselves, either because they find value in making that shift or achieve a new level of comfort in more consistent living. Leaders *can* help individuals (Kegan and Lahey, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* 2001) and groups (Kegan and Lahey, *Immunity to Change* 2009) grow their capacity of to understand and live in environments that are no longer perceived to be predictable, stable, or comprehensible. Such growth is the adaptive challenge of revitalizing any congregation or organization. (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011)

## If there is one thing that needs to be different right now, this is it!

Look at the 3 Wishes document that you have in your meeting packet. Circle the one item that you personally believe needs to happen right now. Using positive language (your goal is to grow more of something you want) turn you circled statement into a goal and write your goal at the top

of the first column of the chart on page 4. Then, rephrase what you've circled as a commitment: "My goal is [INSERT] because I am committed to [BLANK]."

### Instead I am doing this...

In column 2 on page 4 write down the things you are doing instead of your goal.

- What am I doing or not doing **that prevents** my goal from being fully realized?

If you are working in a group on a common goal, share your answers with one another around your table. Record everyone's answers below the next question.

- What are we **collectively** doing or not doing **that prevents us** from realizing our goal?

### Because I Am Also Committed To...

In column 3 write your answer to this question: What are you afraid of or worried about happening if you actually DO your goal? "I am afraid that if I [INSERT GOAL] that it means [INSERT ANSWER]"

(Be careful NOT to answer the question we are conditioned to answer which is what we worry about if we didn't do column 1.)

Further down in column 3, turn your answer into a statement that begins with:

- I am committed to...

If you are with a group working on a common goal, collect the group's 'I am committed to' statements and list them here:

Now read your columns from right to left beginning with column 3. Write that statement here:

### The Big Assumption I Live By

Complete the following statement using your chart:

I assume that if I... *[INSERT COLUMN 1 HERE]*.

then

*[INSERT OPPOSITE OF YOUR COLUMN 3 COMMITMENT HERE]*

"Be conscious of underlying assumptions." Both awareness of and understanding our underlying assumptions are important to developing and cultivating good relationships with individuals and organizations. Practicing cycles of action and reflection can build one's self-awareness. (Stavros and Torres 2005)

Their research into why change is so often unrealized even though people say that they want it and value it, revealed to Kegan and Lahey that while we may be committed to a goal, we are also committed to something about the status quo. Until and unless we overcome or let go of the competing commitment, we won't realize our goal.

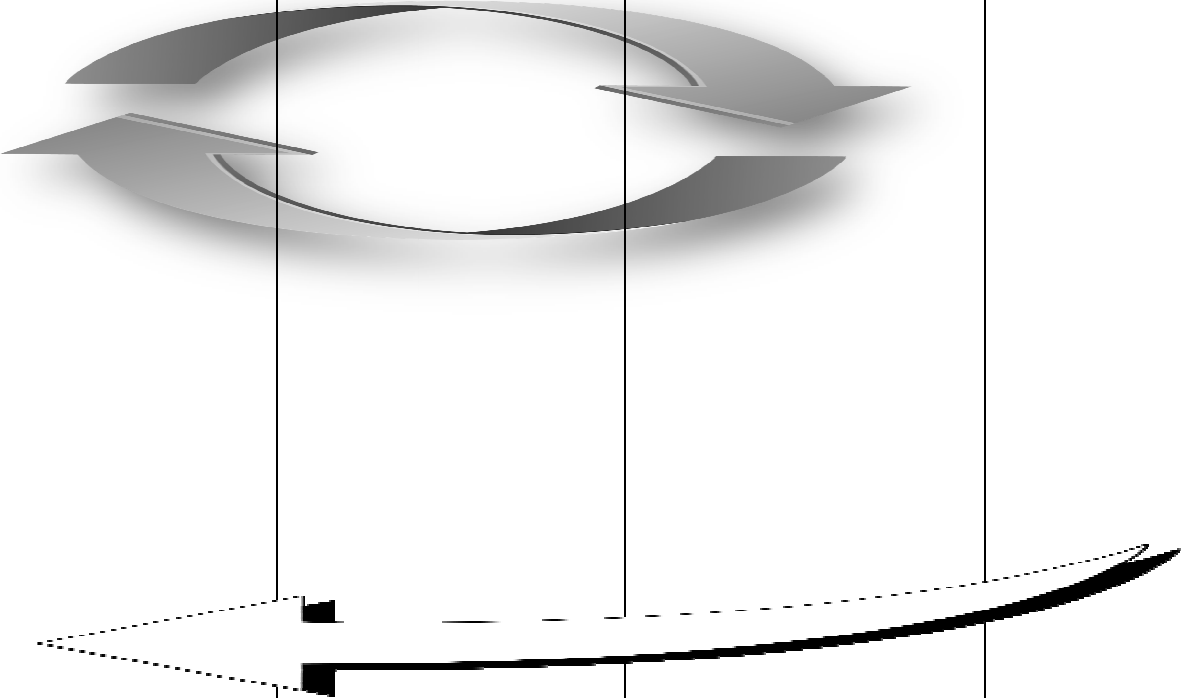
# Overcoming Our Immunity to Change

Surfacing Competing Commitments

Rev. Dr. William M. Lyons

## Example Individual Immunity Map

from (Kegan and Lahey, How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work 2001)

1 <b>If there's one thing that needs to happen/be different this is it:</b>  <b>DESIRED CHANGE/GOAL</b>	2 <b>What am I doing or not doing <u>that prevents</u> Column 1 from happening?</b>	3 <b>I am afraid/worried _____ will happen if I really DO what I wrote in Column 1?</b>  <b>So I must <i>also</i> be committed to ...</b>	4 <b>I assume that if I <i>[insert column 1]</i> then <i>[insert opposite of column 3]</i></b>  <b>BIG ASSUMPTION</b>
			

Immunity Map for Group Process

From: (Kegan and Lahey, Immunity to Change 2009)

# Overcoming Our Immunity to Change

## Surfacing Competing Commitments

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1 Desired Change/Goal	2 Doing/not doing instead (behaviors that work against the goals)	3 Hidden competing commitments	4 Big Assumptions
	Person A:  Person B:  Person C:  Person D:  Person E:	Person A:  Person B:  Person C:  Person D:  Person E:	Person A:  Person B:  Person C:  Person D:  Person E: