

## Human Systems Dynamics: Building Complexity Capacity

The rules that guide effective action in organizations are changing. Technology, diversity, customer focus, collaboration, globalization, and a myriad of other factors are shaping new environments that challenge our old ways of thinking and acting responsibly. Individuals, teams, and organizations must develop new concepts and skills to help them build competence to cope with these new and emerging landscapes. Chaos Limited can help.

The new sciences of nonlinear dynamics, chaos theory, self-organizing, and complex adaptive systems are generating new ways to think about and work in organizational systems. A new field, Human Systems Dynamics, is emerging to bring together the theory and practice of effective action in complex, unpredictable, and emergent environments. Principles of Human Systems Dynamics are based on a few simple assumptions:

- Human systems are inherently unpredictable.
- Over time, patterns emerge in human systems that can be recognized and understood.
- Actions of individuals and institutions will be more effective and responsible when they are based on fundamental understanding of those patterns.

Dr. Glenda Eoyang of Chaos Limited has designed a collection of teaching and practice sessions that help groups build their capacities to cope with complexity. The sessions described on the following pages are designed to help participants understand the dynamics that shape organizational and individual behaviors, recognize patterns that influence their actions and the actions of others, and take steps to respond effectively and responsibly to patterns as they emerge.

Each of these sessions is available in three versions.

- **Overview** is a two-hour presentation that introduces the concepts and models through storytelling, small group conversation, and lecture.
- **Concepts and Skills** is a four-hour presentation that provides more in-depth analysis of ideas and tools through stories, small group workshop activities, lecture, and demonstration.
- **Practice** is an eight-hour presentation that allows time for participants to use the concepts to analyze and plan action in response to case studies and common situations.
- **Application** is a multi-day session that brings the participants' issues and challenges into the classroom. Structured exercises help participants apply their new concepts and skills to respond to concerns they bring with them to the class.

The sessions include:

- Introduction to Complexity
- Facilitating Organization Change: Lessons from Complexity Science
- Coping with Chaos: Seven Simple Tools
- Resilience in the Workplace: Managing Personal Stress
- Leadership in a Complex Adaptive System
- Teams Work: Building Generative Relationships
- Excellence and Evaluation in Emerging Environments
- Conditions for Self-Organizing

For more information about these sessions or to arrange a meeting to discuss the needs of your organization, contact Glenda Eoyang at Chaos Limited, Inc.

## **Introduction to Complexity**

Rapid change and diverse constituencies bring an element of unpredictability to institutional life. Innovative theories from chaos and complexity provide new ways to think about organizations and the people who make them successful. This session provides an overview of the principles and patterns that shape emergent phenomena in complex adaptive environments. You will learn how to:

- Distinguish between the complex and the "merely" complicated.
- Explore options for responding in unpredictable situations.
- Think and talk about the unexpected without blaming it on others.
- Respond responsibly to change, even when it is impossible to predict the outcomes of your actions.

## **Facilitating Organization Change: Lessons from Complexity Science**

Traditional views of organizational change are based on machine models where a single cause has a single and predictable effect. Today's organizations seldom fit these traditional assumptions. Change in a complex environment depends on self-organizing processes that are neither predictable nor controllable. This session provides insights into a new, self-organizing model for change. In this session, you will learn:

- The conditions for self-organizing in a complex system.
- Guidelines for shaping change in unpredictable environments.
- Tips for planning for an unknowable future.

## **Coping with Chaos: Seven Simple Tools**

Each of us works in the midst of organizational patterns that shape and are shaped by individual choices. Some patterns are characteristic of complex environments, and people can be more effective when they recognize and respond to these patterns appropriately. This session presents:

- Seven common patterns that shape organizational behavior.
- Tips about how to recognize the patterns and their effects on productivity and employee satisfaction.
- Approaches that help you use these patterns to build more effective relationships and organizational structures.

## **Resilience in the Workplace: Managing Personal Stress**

Increasing workloads, performance expectations, technological developments, and customer expectations place new burdens on service delivery personnel. Individuals develop their own techniques for responding to these increased levels of stress, but these efforts are more effective when they incorporate shared understandings and strategies for a working group. This session will help you and your team:

- Acknowledge the complex and emergent nature of your work.
- Recognize the sources of stress in your environment.
- Work together to shape organizational and individual responses.

### **Leadership in a Complex Adaptive System**

At one time, leadership was an art of prediction and control. In the complex environments of today, leaders cannot know what the future will hold, so their roles are changing. This session presents three modes of leadership and explains how all are required to respond to the challenges of today. In this session you will learn:

- Three dynamics that shape organizational performance.
- Leadership competencies that are required for each.
- Tips for leading effectively in self-organizing and emergent environments.

### **Teams Work: Building Generative Relationships**

Today's work environments demand that individuals and groups coordinate to produce outcomes that they share. Working together requires more than frequent and unending meetings or policies and procedures for team work. This session presents a model for building relationships in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. During this session, you will learn:

- STAR Model for building generative relationships.
- Tools to evaluate the current strength of your teaming relationships.
- Tools and techniques for improving the energy and productivity of your team.

### **Excellence and Evaluation in Emerging Environments**

Outcome evaluation is all the rage in social service organizations these days. The problem is that outcomes are unknowable in systems that are changing to respond to emerging needs. How can an individual or group investigate the effectiveness of its work if long-term outcomes are unpredictable? This session provides:

- Principles of complex and emergent systems that interfere with traditional outcomes measures.
- Adaptive alternative to outcomes measures.
- Tips, tools, and techniques to help design and implement measurement programs that respond to emerging environments.

### **Conditions for Self-Organizing**

Complex systems generate their own patterns and structures. This process, called self-organization, gives life and energy to individuals and organizations. It also makes it difficult to design and implement new ways of working together. This session provides options for shaping the path, speed, and outcomes of self-organizing processes in teams and organizations. In this session, you will learn:

- To define and recognize self-organizing processes in your organization.
- To identify the three conditions for self-organizing processes.
- To reflect on the conditions that produced current patterns and structures.
- To use the conditions of self-organizing to participate in shaping new, and more productive, patterns of behavior.