

LIVING SANCTUARY

An organization is a living thing – a complex adaptive system that is born, lives, grows, and dies. It has been said that “*the 20th century gave birth to a new species – the global corporation... a life form that can grow, evolve, and learn*”(1). *Living Sanctuary* is about learning to think about organizations as living beings and respecting the complexity and challenges of creating and maintaining healthy organizations that support the growth, development and evolution of healthy individuals.

Living Sanctuary is a particularly important mission for organizations who hope to help injured human beings because of the parallel processes that occur when individuals interact with systems. It is imperative that we understand how futile and self-defeating it is to think we can promote healthy individual development within a dysfunctional system of care. That is like putting an unhealthy child in an environment where the only food available is toxic. In such a situation, many children will adapt to the toxic food, but they will not thrive and we play them false if we simply redefine health as the ability to adapt to poisonous food. So too, it is toxic to place an injured child or adult within an institution that sustains or even worsens the individual’s emotional injuries and calls it “treatment”.

We now know a great deal about the human body – how it functions in health and the various ways in which health is compromised. The human body can serve as a useful metaphor for understanding and responding to the needs of the organizational body as well. Perhaps we will be unable to design truly humane systems of care until we treat comprehend those systems as living, more-than-human beings, still in the process of evolving and still very immature.

The following pages are a beginning outline for thinking about the various systems of the body, the function of those systems, and how similar systems may be reflected in organizational function and activities, in health and in dysfunction.

1. Senge P, Scharmer CO, Jaworski J, et al: *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Cambridge, MA, The Society for Organizational Learning, 2004.

System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Skeletal	Support, stability, permits movement	Framework that allows movement to occur, that allows organization to function	Mission, Guiding Principles, Constitution
<u>Dysfunction:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Loss of stability, · Inability to move properly. · Collapse 	Framework fails to insure proper movement <i>"if we don't do something the whole thing will collapse"</i> <i>"He's got no backbone"</i> <i>"He doesn't have a leg to stand on"</i> <i>"It costs an arm and a leg"</i>	Mission erosion, failure Guiding principles not upheld Hypocritical, erratic employment of constitution
System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Respiratory	Absorb energy that will flow around body, breath of life	Communal gathering of energy, individuals as vehicles for energy absorption and flow around organizational body	Daily community structure / activities of community
<u>Dysfunction:</u>	Inability to breathe, insufficient oxygen	Energy supply cut off, organization struggling for breath, no flow, not enough air, oxygen, energy <i>"we need some fresh air"</i>	Loss of daily structure, loss of community structure. Loss of sense of individual as part of a whole

System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Circulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regulates flow of energy, nutrients & information throughout the body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affective communication informational cognitive communication Formal and informal communication . <p><i>"let's get to the heart of the problem"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team Meetings, Rounds, Group Meetings, Community Meetings; Email, Memos, Rumors, Lunchroom And Other Conversations, Telephones
Vessels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network that connects all to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide structure for communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical Staff Secretarial Support Staff IT – Computer tech
Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides energy to keep network going 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide energy for communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blockage, organ death; Leakage – loss of vital fluids fluid where it doesn't belong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information flow blocked Information lost Information out where it doesn't belong <p><i>"we need some new blood"</i> <i>"we're hemorrhaging"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Breaks Down – Staff Stop Communicating Information; Certain Parts Of System Stop Communicating With Other Parts; Confidentiality Breaches, Informal Communication And Formal Communication Contradict Each Other; Dominance Of Rumors

System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Muscular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Exercise of power / influence <p><i>"muscle our way in"</i> <i>"use some muscle"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Structured movement
Voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide power for movement of skeleton · Constrain movement · Hold other parts in order (arteries, veins, etc) · Protect vital organs 	Create deliberate, willed form & structure Provide framework for the other components of the system Protect vital parts of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Policies/procedures · Rules and regulations
Involuntary	Automatic – function outside of our awareness	Provide power for operations even without conscious and deliberate control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social Norms clear, positively reinforced, protected · Immediate response to erosion in social norms
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Paralysis – inability to move · Lack of coordinated movement, too much movement · Pain · Inability to swallow, move food through body, focus eyes, hear, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Organizational paralysis · Uncoordinated, random movement · Punitive measures · Loss of ability to function smoothly and automatically <p><i>"we can't move"</i> <i>"we can't make a move without..."</i> <i>"we're paralyzed"</i> <i>"we've got no push"</i> <i>"I've got a weight on my shoulders"</i> <i>"he's a pain in the neck"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unjust rules and regulations · Unfair enforcement · Ineffective, useless policies · Ineffective procedures · Breakdown of social norms · Failure to react to breakdown in social norms

System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Nervous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide information · Regulate flow of information · Integrate information · Prioritize information · Decide on use of information 	Provide, regulate, integrate, prioritize, decide on use of information <i>"I'll head up the team"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Vision · Leadership · Development · Collaborative approaches to care
Sensory organs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Perception – provide information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Function of every individual within system · Everybody notices change <i>"he has a good nose for trouble"</i> <i>"keep your ear to the ground"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Entire community
Sympathetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Arousal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ability to respond to arousal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conflict resolution resources, emergency measures
Parasympathetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Soothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ability to modulate arousal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conflict resolution resources, play, staff support
Brain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Integrate information, resolve conflict, make final decisions, see big picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Leadership
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide inaccurate information · Provide too little information · Provide too much information · Information not integrated · Information not prioritized · Information not utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · There is too much or too little information · Information is inaccurately interpreted · Information that is available is not used · Information that is available is not integrated · Lack of prioritization of information · Information is forgotten · Information is not connected to big picture <i>"He's short-sighted"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of ability to resolve competing demands · No one is sure what information is important and what isn't · Interpretations of information about emergencies are inaccurate · Important information gets lost · Bodies of information are not integrated with each other · Information is random and does not fit into coherent overall framework of meaning · Loss of direction, purpose, · Compromised leadership, Inadequate staff · Inadequate staff support

System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Endocrine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation of energy and organ function through feedback mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation of change and growth Regulation of emergency response Regulation through proper feedback mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative therapies, therapeutic programming, training Emergency measures in place Quality assurance, quality control
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over-regulation Under-regulation Inadequate feedback mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate of change too rapid Rate of change too slow Feedback does not influence rate of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaotic, unplanned, poorly supervised change Resistance to change, rigidity Inadequate quality assurance program – does not really measure quality, too slow, too irrelevant

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Immune	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early detection of problems • Internal response to invasion • Rapid response to invasion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection from danger that has gotten inside • Immediate protective response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of all potential sources of internal danger: staff, leadership, clients • Recognition of collective disturbance • Universal safety plans • Recognition of and response plan for erosion of social norms
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False positive identification of invaders – autoimmune problems • Overreaction to invasion – allergic responses • Inadequate response to invasion – immune deficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrongly identifying internal sources of danger • Overreaction to internal sources of danger • Failure to identify internal sources of danger • Failure to respond to internal sources of danger with appropriate intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing and responding only to physical danger • Focusing only on physical forms of security • Failing to respond to sociopathic behavior • Identification with the aggressor • Blaming the victim • Waiting too long to respond to aggression • Responding with greater aggression • Abundant use of coercive measures
System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary between internal and external world • Protection • Sense organ • Contact organ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary between internal and external world • Provides protection from external dangers • Keeps internal world protected and in order • Provides valuable information about external world • Provides valuable form of communication with external world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations • Family program • Reaching out to outside world, family, friends, community • Transparency & Confidentiality <p><i>"we touched them"</i> <i>"we need to be thicker skinned"</i></p>
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of intact boundary • Failed protection • Loss of valuable information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary too rigid • Boundary too permeable <p><i>"He's too thin skinned"</i> <i>"his compassion is only skin deep"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough information gets outside • Too much information gets outside • Loss of program integrity

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Digestive Renal /Hepatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metabolize raw nutrients Convert to energy for maintenance and for growth Balance fluids, minerals, nutrients Cleanse blood Breakdown toxins Eliminate waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure resources Balance and juggle conflicting needs Channel resources to greatest need Keep organization clean and orderly Keep organization maintained Detoxify poisonous materials Eliminate waste <p><i>"no guts no glory"</i> "He's got no stomach for it"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Accounting Food services Maintenance Housekeeping Transportation Security
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to metabolize nutrients Depletion of energy Imbalance of fluids, minerals, nutrients Inability to eliminate waste Inability to detoxify and eliminate toxins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scare resources Lack of energy for change and growth Resources inadequately, inefficiently distributed Physical structures dirty, disorderly, in poor repair Toxic materials are retained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition for scarce resources – infighting Demoralization Contempt for self, for property Noncompliant, incompetent staff are retained
System	Function	Organizational Function	Activity
Reproductive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generativity Preservation of knowledge Preservation of the species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmit information transgenerationally Transmit wisdom transgenerationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientation program that includes organizational norms Mentoring program for staff, leaders, and clients Training, continuing education Plan for succession of leadership
<u>Dysfunction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduction fails Stagnation rather than generativity Death of genetic information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of knowledge Loss of wisdom Organizational loss of generativity; death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate orientation and mentoring programs Inadequate training and continuing education Failure to preserve knowledge of previous generations of staff, leaders, clients Lack of succession plan