

Transformations User's Guide v1.2

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Transformations™ is a flexible, user-friendly tool for self-understanding, coaching, leadership development, and culture development. It can be used formally or informally by individuals and groups and of all ages and backgrounds. Among its benefits are the creation of self-insight and dialogue about the stages and processes of human development, in a way that is engaging as well as reflective, playful as well as serious, and impactful as well as fun.

See the **Quick Start Guide** following the Introduction to get started now.

The [“From Here to There” model of development](#) is a good way to use the deck.

[Here is a Forward](#) to this Guide by Bill Torbert.

Introduction

The tool itself is a deck of cards. 84 Life Logic cards plus 50 Catalyst cards use unique labeled drawings to illustrate the seven transformations (or “stages”) of increasing human maturity from youth onward. The simple yet powerful artwork is especially appealing. Transformations has been used with great success all over the world including China, Africa, India, Singapore, Europe, Japan, and the USA.

Transformations based in the research of [Bill Torbert and Associates](#) on *vertical development* during the life span and deeply influenced by the work of Bob Kegan and [Susanne Cook-Greuter](#). Transformations was developed by the Center for Creative Leadership in partnership with Bill Torbert and Elaine Herdman Barker of Action Inquiry Associates.

The tool itself is a deck of cards of two kinds: Life Logic (or “Stage”) cards, and Catalyst cards.

Life logics are ways of thinking and acting in one’s life which mature with time. Life logics are also expressed by group, organizational and societal cultures. Later life logics (“later stages”) transcend and yet still include earlier life logics (“early stages”).

The set of Life Logics cards helps people reflect on the kinds of thinking and actions that guide their lives. These range from less complex or early stage logics to more complex later stage logics. There are 12 cards representing each of the seven stages for a total of 84 Life Logics cards in this version.

The set of Catalyst cards helps people reflect on the processes that influence life transformations, such as work, mentoring, accidents, love, and so on. These cards are used to reflect on what kinds of things in life might be helping or hindering your further

development. There are 50 Catalyst cards in the current version.

A typical application of Transformations involves people mapping their individual life journeys and / or their group histories and shared vision. Guiding questions include:

- What were your typical ways of thinking and acting earlier in your life?
- What are your typical ways of thinking and acting now?
- What are your future aspirations for developing how you think and act?
- What has triggered your own development toward greater maturity?
- What might be triggering your development now?
- What will positive development toward your aspirations look and feel like and what will drive it?
- How can you facilitate the development of other people (each other)?
- How can you build a shared culture for positive development in the direction required by the work of your organization or community?

Applications of Transformations

- Self-development
- Coaching and mentoring
- Leadership development
- Youth and early leadership development
- Change leadership
- Culture transformation
- Leadership strategy
- Classroom activities
- Curriculum design
- Retreat activities
- Career planning
- Team building
- Boundary spanning

Results from Using Transformations

- Self-insight about one's own maturity and growth
- Deep dialogue with group members about mutual development



disturbing the universe



rebirth

- Strategic conversations about leadership development in the workplace
- Accelerated leadership development
- Increased readiness for change.
- Increased potential for personal and collective transformation in beliefs and practices
- Increased effectiveness of coaching and mentoring
- Insightful conversations about human development for families and in school settings
- Awareness of one's own developmental journey through life (life story and identity)
- Awareness of others' developmental journeys through life (life stories and identities)
- Awareness of and appreciation for the vertical aspect of development
- Awareness of one's own and others' potential for further vertical development
- Awareness of the vertical aspect of cultural beliefs and practices
- Understanding how maturity and growth manifests in others
- Engagement in an interesting, fun, and impactful process
- Fresh perspective on one's own life journey
- Fresh perspective on the collective journey of a group
- Insight into leadership culture
- Input into leadership and organizational strategies
- Mutual insights across social boundaries
- Positive reframing of stressful life events
- Planning for future development
- Makes the difficult subject of human transformation accessible
- Combines visual, verbal, and tactile modes of learning
- Facilitates in teaching constructive-developmental theory

Quick Start Guide

Transformations can be used in an introductory way without formal introduction. The background theory need not be introduced in most cases. And, the Transformations tool is often used to explicitly engage and teach the underlying model itself, in classrooms, and as a part of structured, intentional, long-term development.

Try this for an opening safe and inviting exercise in a classroom of 24 people divided into four groups of six people each. Each group of six shares one Transformations deck. This exercise can easily be adapted to a one-on-one coaching, or as a guide to self-

reflection by one person.

First, ask each group to separate the stage cards from a Transformations deck, shuffle them, and then “put them in order” Use the stage cards only for this step, not the Catalyst cards or the instruction cards. The task of the group is to determine what order makes sense to them. Call time after about

10 minutes, even though no one will be finished. Ask them how they went about the task, and what order they found.

Typical responses are “from individual to group” and “from all about me to caring about the group” and so on. These responses are typically on target and insightful and should be encouraged during a brief discussion led by the facilitator. This initial exercise warms people up to the idea of development and gives them an overview of what’s in the deck.

Try this next: *From Here to There.*

Now working as individuals, have each person create a life journey map. Use only the Stage cards, not the Catalyst cards, yet. A group can share a single deck, or each person can be given a deck. The task is to illustrate “from here to there in your life,” using a sequence of the cards. The sequence of cards in the map is in this order: Where are you coming from (the past)? Who are you now in your life? Who are you becoming, or what are your aspirations for the future?

Say something like: “Think of a span of your life starting with youth (or, 10 years ago), to the present, to 5-10 years in the future.” Adapt the time span to the type of group. Younger people are usually focused on a shorter time span. If the group has a shared mission, then you might talk about the future state as “where you need to be to for



success of the mission.”

Say something like: “From the deck of cards, choose 1-2 cards that best describe you at these key points in your life: past, present, and future. Lay the cards you have chosen in a sequence that describes your life. When did transformations occur? Why? What is the life story or journey described by your cards?”

First reflect privately, then in groups of 2-3, in the group of six, and finally have a dialogue which includes everyone in the room.

Encourage people to take photos of their maps to help preserve their insights.

Try this using the Catalyst Cards. Start with the life journey map (sequence) created in the previous exercise. Ask: “What processes (or triggers, forces, or events) have been key in your development? What processes are you dealing with right now? What will help you develop in the future? How can you help others develop? Don’t limit yourself to the cards. Use blank cards to identify additional processes.” Ask them to place as many of these cards as they want in parallel with their journey, in a way that shows triggers or influences on their life-long development.

Try this to begin to discuss shared development in a community, organization, or team. After the previous exercises, then ask: “Which cards do you recognize as action logics in this (your) organization? Which action logics are prevalent among us? How do people typically think and act in this organization? How do our best leaders typically think and act? Choose cards and tell stories that represent those action logics.”

Additional questions are: “Which actions logics (cards) support our best work? Which get in the way of our best work? Which ones might we cultivate in order to realize our mission? How do these action logics influence the creation of shared direction, alignment, and commitment?”

Deepen and extend the dialogue around key questions that are important to the group.



Use sticky notes to label clusters of cards around the themes that emerge.

Take photos of the clustered cards and notes to capture insights for communication and future reference.

Try this to welcome people into the class or program session or to pique curiosity and interest in a crowd of people.

Take some or all of the cards and simply spread them on a table or on the floor. Put some outside the room to attract people passing by. The first people coming into the room will see the cards and often they will pick some up and start talking about what they see. Sometimes people will spontaneously start arranging and sorting the cards according to their own experience in the community or organization. In any case it can help set a positive and fun tone before diving into the substance of the meeting or program.

Try this as a quick assessment of the culture of a group, organization, or community.

Divide the deck into seven piles according to the seven transformations. Put the Catalyst cards aside for now.

Invite a group of people from the organization (or, one person at a time in one-on-one interviews) to go through each pile, starting with Opportunist. Identify any cards that “we often see in this organization.” Identify any cards “we need more of” in this organization. After doing this for each pile, discuss the cards that are most typical of the organization, which are least typical, and which you may need more of. Where is the “center of gravity” (most frequent stage of development)? How might the organization need to change to realize its vision and mission? Use the Catalyst cards to discuss how change might occur in individuals and as a collective.

Constructive-Developmental Theory

The section below is adapted from McCauley, C. D., Drath, W. H., Palus, C. J., O'Connor, P. M. G., & Baker, B. A. (2006). **The use of constructive-developmental theory to advance the understanding of leadership.** *Leadership Quarterly*, 17, 634–653.

Constructive-developmental [also referred to as vertical development] theory is a stage theory of adult development that focuses on the growth and elaboration of a person's ways of understanding the self and the world.

The term “constructive-developmental” was first suggested by Bob Kegan (1980) to refer to a stream of work in psychology that focuses on the development of meaning and meaning-making processes across the lifespan. The theory is “constructive” in the sense that it deals with a person's construals, constructions, and interpretations of experience, that is, the meaning a person makes of experience. It is “developmental” in the sense that it is concerned with how those construals, constructions, and interpretations of experience grow more complex over time. Constructive-developmental theory thus takes as its subject the growth and elaboration of a person's ways of understanding the self and the world. It assumes an ongoing process of development in which qualitatively different meaning systems evolve over time, both as a natural unfolding as well as in response to the limitations of existing ways of making meaning. Each meaning system is more complex than the previous one in the sense that it is capable of including, differentiating among, and integrating a more diverse range of experience.

Constructive-developmental theory is built on the seminal work of Jean Piaget (1954), which he referred to as “genetic epistemology”—the genesis or successive unfolding of the capacity for rational thought in the developing child. For Piaget, development was not a gradual accumulation of new knowledge, but a process of moving through qualitatively distinct stages of growth, a process that transforms knowledge itself. As a constructivist, Piaget believed that categories of thought—such as number, space, time, and quantity—are not given a priori, but are actively constructed by the individual in response to the need to understand the world. When contradictions arise in individuals' current ways of constructing the world (as, in a famous experiment, when a child learns that the volume of water in two differently shaped containers is actually the same in each), they reconstruct how they understand the world to eliminate the contradiction.

The basic propositions of constructive-developmental theory are the following:

1. People actively construct ways of understanding and making sense of themselves and the world (as opposed to “taking in” an objective world).
2. There are identifiable patterns of meaning-making that people share in common with one another; these are variously referred to as stages, orders of consciousness, ways of knowing, levels of development, organizing principles, or (in this article) orders of development.
3. Orders of development unfold in a specific invariant sequence, with each successive order transcending and including the previous order.
4. In general, people do not regress; once an order of development has been constructed, the previous order loses its organizing function, but remains as a perspective that can now be reflected upon.

5. Because subsequent orders include all earlier orders as special cases, later orders are more complex (they support more comprehensive understanding) than earlier orders; later orders are not better in any absolute sense.
6. Developmental movement from one order to the next is driven by limitations in the current way of constructing meaning; this can happen when a person faces increased complexity in the environment that requires a more complex way of understanding themselves and the world.
7. People's order of development influences what they notice or can become aware of, and therefore, what they can describe, reflect on, and change.

Constructive-developmental theory concerns itself with two primary aspects of development: (a) the organizing principles that regulate how people make sense of themselves and the world (*orders of development*) and (b) how these regulative principles are constructed and re-constructed over time (*developmental movement*). An organizing principle itself is subjective, because the person is subject to its capacity to make meaning; it cannot be reflected on itself, since it is the regulative means by which the person engages in reflection. Developmental movement involves the person's gradually increasing awareness of his or her current subjective organizing principle until the person is able to reflect on the organizing principle itself, at which point what was subjective becomes objective. Of course, there will then be a new organizing principle to which the person is subject. When operating from this new principle, which takes the former principle as an object of reflection, a person is capable of differentiating and integrating more complex life experiences.

Developmental movement is driven by new challenges that reveal the limitations of the current organizing principle. An order of development is a complex interaction between the individual's meaning-making capability and the holding environment, which is the totality of the surrounding and embedding social and interpersonal world of love, family, work, and play. The holding environment may confirm and support a person's current order of development or disconfirm and challenge it. Developmental movement is thus conceived as an interaction between the achievement of stability and order through making meaning of the holding environment and the challenge of new environments with new relations and roles that reveal the limitations of that achievement.

Bill Drath (2001) proposes three generalized ways of understanding and recognizing leadership, based on the Bob Kegan's three adult orders of development. Hypotheses about differing implicit theories of leadership can be derived from his framework. *Dependent* individuals—because they look to important others to gain a sense of themselves—are more likely to expect a formal leader to personally create direction, inspire commitment, and deal with challenges the group encounters. *Independent* individuals—because they are self-governing and self-defining—expect a formal leader to interact with them as autonomous individuals, reasoning and negotiating with them to set direction and gain their commitment, and providing help when needed to deal with challenges the group encounters. *Inter-independent* individuals—because they see

themselves as continuously recreating themselves in interaction with their environment—expect a formal leader to create conditions that allow groups of people to find a shared direction that they become jointly committed to and that encourage them to deal collectively with their challenges.

Bill Torbert and associates' early work (Fisher, Merron, & Torbert, 1987; Torbert, 1987) applied Jane Loevinger's framework and the WUSCT to the context of managerial work. However, as this work evolved, Torbert developed his own framework more applicable to organizational contexts. Susanne Cook-Grueter worked with Torbert to evolve the WUSCT in ways consistent with the new framework, including more rigorous definition and measurement of later stages (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Torbert & Associates, 2004). The latest version of this customization of the WUSCT is now called the Leadership Development Profile (LDP).

Bill Torbert's framework is a seven-stage model with each stage representing an "action logic," that is, an overall strategy that thoroughly informs an individual's reasoning and behavior (Torbert & Associates, 2004). The first stage, Opportunist, is prior to any orders we are describing here. The next six stages represent three pairs of stages which can be organized into the broad developmental orders of Dependent, Independent, and Inter-independent. The second stage in each pair is portrayed as a transitional stage in moving toward the next order. Individuals at different stages organize their experiences in terms of a particular logic (e.g., norms, craft logic, system effectiveness) with the logics becoming more complex as individuals develop. The logics shape a main focus of attention at each stage. An individual's focus broadens with each successive stage.

Bill Torbert's framework has been used to understand various aspects of managerial behavior and organizational change. Four propositions have been central to this work: (a) An individual's order of development influences his or her approach to managerial tasks; (b) Leaders at later orders of development are more effective at leading transformative change; (c) Developmental movement is facilitated by action inquiry; and (d) Organization development can be understood from a constructive-developmental theory perspective.

Torbert and colleagues (Fisher & Torbert, 1991; Rooke & Torbert, 1998; Torbert & Associates, 2004) argue that the logic of the Inter-independent order (Strategist) is especially relevant for leading transformative organizational change—changes that focus on whole-system improvement and that require fundamentally changing the culture, practices, and underlying assumptions of the organization. Only when leaders reach the Inter-independent order are they open to the possibility of rethinking and altering their assumptions and purposes (i.e., can engage in double-loop learning, Argyris & Schön, 1978). This is in contrast to the Independent order with its emphasis on executing rationally related steps from presenting problem to solution. They also argue that Inter-independent leaders believe that change requires new shared understandings discovered through mutual exploration of differences among organizational members, whereas Independent leaders believe that change requires single-framed hierarchical guidance. They conclude that it is only power exercised in a

mutuality-enhancing, empowering manner that can generate wholehearted transformation rather than conformity or compliance; and that this type of power is most often exercised by the Inter-independent leader. Weathersby (1993) found some support for this argument. She examined essays written by managers about their leadership models. Managers at later stages put more emphasis on the leader's role as an agent of cultural change.

A more direct test of this hypothesis was undertaken by David Rooke and Bill Torbert (1998). They examined ten longitudinal organization change efforts. Seven of these efforts resulted in transformative change and three did not. Of the seven successful efforts, five were led by CEOs measured at the Inter-independent order and two were led by CEOs measured at the Independent order. All three unsuccessful efforts were led by CEOs measured at the Independent or Dependent order. The correlation between CEO development order and degree of transformative organizational change was significant.

However, Torbert and Associates (2004) also advocate for an additional developmental practice: action inquiry. Action inquiry is a disciplined practice of integrating action and inquiry in the present moment that helps individuals, groups, and organizations become more capable of self-development. In a given situation, a person engaged in action inquiry is doing several things at once, including paying attention to the developing situation, accomplishing tasks as they are prioritized, and revising the tasks or actions as needed. Action inquiry requires people to carefully attend to three types of data: internal subjective data (first-person data), data generated in interaction with others (second-person data), and external objective data (third-person data) in an effort to learn from experiences. Action inquiry is expected to increase the likelihood that individuals will notice and come to understand the limits of their current meaning structure.

Finally, it is important to note that developmental theory is evolving toward a more holistic, integrative perspective that views individual development as one facet of a developing system.

Ken Wilber's notion of "integral theory" (2000b) is one of the most well-developed models reflecting this perspective. Integral theory is not a single theory; rather it is a comprehensive model attempting to coordinate numerous theories that describe development. The model looks at four domains of reality: the internal self, the external self, the internal collective, and the external collective. In the model, developmental movement through similar developmental orders characterize each domain, and this movement is interconnected across domains. In the integral model, development cannot be understood from the perspective of one domain; instead, an all-domain, multiple-order perspective needs to be invoked.

This perspective fits well with recent applications of constructive-developmental theory to leadership in which the development of individuals and of the collective are seen as interrelated (Drath & Palus, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004; Wagner et al., 2006).

Integral theory points to a potential new domain of leadership research: *research on the development of social systems that produce leadership* (not just on the development of individuals who are part of these systems), addressing such questions as: Do the shared meaning-making structures of groups, teams, and whole organizations move through developmental orders similar to those observed in individuals (as Torbert suggests)? What do leadership processes look like at different orders of collective development? What stimulates the developmental movement of leadership processes in a collective? How does the mix of individual developmental orders within a collective impact the leadership processes of the collective?

Leadership is a complex social phenomenon. The effort to understand leadership and how it develops has accordingly called forth a wide array of concepts and theoretical approaches. Because it deals with an aspect of leadership that may be taken as basic—the generation and development of meaning for individuals and social systems—constructive-developmental theory has the potential to act as an integrative framework in the field. This potential can only be realized to the extent that theorists, researchers, and practitioners work in more interconnected ways to test and refine the propositions generated by applying this theory to leadership.
