

Meditate & Mediate

Table of Contents

We Are Part of the Immune System of the World	1
Recap of Previous Sessions.....	2
Containing and Transforming Conflict.....	4
Abilio's Story: Discovering Our Interests Behind Our Positions.....	6
BATNA: Our Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement.....	10
Keeping Our Minds Open to Inspiration in Conflict Resolution.....	15
Recognizing the Symptoms of a Trauma Response.....	17
Abilio's Story: Freedom and Dignity as a Path to Resolution.....	22
Begin Meditation	25
End of Meditation.....	26
Q&A: Finding Seeds of Possibility Through Empathy	26
Q&A: The Freedom to Meet Our Needs Independently of the Other Side	29
Q&A: Inner Practice of Presencing Our Emotions	30
Q&A: Understanding the Components of Rebuilding Trust.....	33

[00:00:00]

Thomas: Hello, everybody.

We Are Part of the Immune System of the World

I would love to take what Robin said in his last sentences. He said, “We are sitting all around the globe.” I think that’s something to spend a moment on. First of all, as Robin said, we are using the technology of our time to meet, and I want to presence that that’s not just a casual thing. I think that the very technology that connects us is actually a key element in resolving global conflicts. I will explain what I mean by that later—maybe later today or maybe later in this course, during this course.

Just for a moment, to take a moment and say, wow, we are sitting, spread around the world, the people that are interested in conflict resolution, in raising consciousness and awareness, in participating in the world’s process, so we are all passionate about something, and obviously there’s a large enough overlap in our passions to meet here. As Robin said: to spend the time, to be engaged, to have a passion, to be curious—there are many aspects that we share about cultural architecture, about the immune system of the world. I thought, when I listened to Robin, I thought, oh, lovely. Let’s spend a moment to just presence the fact that, obviously, out of some reason, we are, given our interest, we are part of the immune system of the world—otherwise we wouldn’t spend our weekends, we wouldn’t spend time, we wouldn’t spend energy. We would do other things.

Obviously, we are not doing other things, which means we are doing exactly what we are doing right now, which is joining a mutual space that is global, which refers to the technology that connects us right now, gives us a global passport, and that passport needs to be filled with consciousness.

I believe, using the very technology that we are using right now and sitting all around the world and feeling that we are sitting all around the world—if that is something that can become a sense, not just an intellectual knowing. And as we go through this course, I think, William and I, we will refer, also, more—now we are still focusing on some basic aspects, also, of our personal, and what a personal domain and basics are around process work and facilitation work, but we will expand it more and more into the collective and the transpersonal dimension.

[00:05:00]

I invite us, because we have the possibility—with like-minded people, with people from all around the world, as messengers of one immune system, one self-healing mechanism of the planet—to synchronize, to bring our passion together, to bring, in a way, our wills and our intentions and our motivations together, which means we are bringing our essential intelligence here, together. That might be an intellectual understanding first, and this brings me, also, to the recap of the last session. Like we said, as human beings, we also build together, we are building together the noosphere, or the mental sphere of the planet—the intellectual understanding, science, technology, everything that we are able to grasp through our mind's, mathematics, and deep, deep understanding throughout the science, and we combine it with the sense of an inner science. Of 'inner science'—meaning in a path of development, a contemplative path, a meditative path, a path of witnessing and presencing and expanding our interior landscape as much as we expand our exterior landscape. We build external architecture according to our internal architecture.

Recap of Previous Sessions

My first invitation is to use, also, our course time, that we are not only intellectually sitting in an intellectual space where we know all of us are here but that we, I believe, through our nervous systems and through our embodiment, when we say, "Walking one's talk is that the word, the body, and the action is not-two." If I can walk my talk, I can live whatever I know in any given moment in my life. Otherwise, I can talk but I cannot walk my talk. Walking means that it's embodied. Walking means that it goes through the system of my nervous system and my body. It's grounded in my life. So the way I talk to people, the way I live intimate relationships, the way I run my work life, the way I participate as a global citizen—all of it is either embodying the understanding that I have, or it's not. So then I, maybe, read a lot, I know a lot, I can talk a lot, but I can't walk my talk.

We talked, in the first sessions, about this embodiment, so that what we know rationally also becomes a felt sense, an embodied sense, and a co-creative process in the world, and that the world actually is our co-creation. The world, the architecture of the world—societies, cultures—are our co-creation. We are not *in* the world, we are co-creating the world, moment to moment to moment. That's an active and creative process.

The last time, I think, also mainly William spoke to us about the fog that we might be in when we walk through difficult territory. We looked at this through the example of the United States and North Korea, or the tension in the world, and that tension, again, being a part of our collective body. The part of our body is hurting. The same metaphor that William used last time—saying there's a kind of a fog we are looking through, and we don't know where is the edge of the cliff and when do we simply fall off the cliff—the same metaphor, I believe, is true for us as practitioners of an embodied global consciousness, because an embodied global consciousness, for me, means that I can feel and sense the planet that I talk about, that I can feel and sense parts of society, culture, that it's not just something that I've learned, that it's something that I can sense through my nervous system, that is a felt experience, that nature... That's, most probably, easier for most of us, that when we walk through nature and we enjoy nature—we enjoy the birds, we enjoy the forest, we enjoy the fresh air, we enjoy the soil—that's something where our nervous system responds and has a felt sense of the environment. But when we sense, through culture, when we sense, in a way, the global sphere or an institution or a current conflict that we are working with, that we are part of, whatsoever, that sensing might be reduced by this fog.

[00:10:00]

I think, later during this course we will look more, okay, what's our process responsibility? How do we stay clear flashlights within the fog, or how does my vision also become foggy? Which means that transference of the fog suddenly also happens me, and I also become foggy—or I can stay a clear present interior within a foggy environment. That's why, I think, the chance that we have here is, let us say, okay, maybe there are healing capacities—some of the wisdom traditions talk about human capacities that are beyond what we see in regular life, and I believe we are also here to train those capacities—or at least everybody who wants to train them—has, basically, access to expand those capacities and become not only a global citizen but a kind of a global facilitator.

One of them is that I get more and more sense of the information field that we are happening in, that we are participating in. I believe that my nervous system and your nervous system has access to much more information, moment to moment, than we often consciously know. Some of it is a blessing, because we don't need to know everything, because we will be overloaded, but some of it we *have to* know, especially when we facilitate processes in the world, because in there, I need to be able to open myself to that information, because that information is crucial.

We talked about this fog and a global dissociation that we are working with, often, like an individual and global dissociation. Last time we went, also, through the beautiful sharing of William and his family and his daughter. We started with, okay, what does it mean to put myself in the shoes of another person—especially when there is a disagreement or a personal trigger point—and how much blessing, actually, can come out of it? I think that's where we will continue today.

There were so many beautiful questions coming in that some of them, I believe, we are going to address today. Maybe, not to make the introduction too long, maybe I will hand it back over—first to Robin, to bring in a question that somebody asked, and then William can take it from there.

Containing and Transforming Conflict

Host: Thank you, Thomas, for a beautiful overview. In the little pre-meeting that we were having, we were surfing the different questions that people had written in. There was a question that Paul wrote to William, that we thought was very helpful to address at the beginning of this call. He said to William, he said, "You said not even to resolve a conflict." Paul asked, "Is that really affordable to not continue aiming forward towards resolution?" I think it's a great question about—if we're not aiming towards resolution, what are we aiming to do, and can we afford not to be resolving the conflicts that we're engaging with?

William: Thank you. It's a real pleasure to be back with this, as Thomas was describing it, this global community. We're all circling the globe, holding the globe. I'm reminded of a line of poetry from Robert Frost that goes, "We all sit around the circle and suppose." That's what we're doing is we're sitting around the circle of the globe and supposing. The second line goes, "But the secret sits in the middle and knows." "We all sit around the circle and suppose, but the secret sits in the middle and knows." I think that's what we're doing here in some ways, is we're sitting around this circle, this globe, and we're trying to discern the secret that knows, when it comes to knowing, what's the path forward? Where are the possibilities? Are we just destined to keep on repeating the traumas of the past, or can we open up new possibilities?

[00:15:00]

In that light, I really, too, did enjoy the questions, which were very powerful, and the commentary, and I could also see how they're forming a fabric, a weaving that really is beautiful. It's like ripples that go out, and I could see how people are being stimulated by questions to go deeper in their own inquiry, as we accompany that thread. I certainly did. They were very touching, the comments.

To come back to Robin's question, or I think it was Paul's question, actually, the question about resolution. I'm trying to remember the context in which I would have said that, but I think, perhaps, the context was North Korea, and I was saying that, in this particular situation—and it's the US and North Korea, that was another good comment. Let's not just focus on North Korea; it's really something *between* the United States and North Korea, which really involves the entire world, all of us, really, because North Korea is us. It's not about... North Korea isn't *the other*. It's *us*. I think, that's the key prism through which we're looking at this situation. But when it comes to resolving, I think what I was saying was that, at this particular moment in a conflict where it's so acute—and some of you may be facing very, very acute conflicts, even in your lives, with your loved ones, with your home, with your community—but when there's an acute phase like this, the focus needs to be more in containment. Like in this particular case, the focus on the conflict with United States and North Korea—which, as you know, took another escalatory spin these past few days, with another test of a missile by North Korea—the window, actually, for interrupting, containing and interrupting the possible escalation into violence and war, is narrowing. Right now we need to contain, to buy time, in order to resolve. Yes, the question is absolutely right. We want to stay on the course to resolution, but our first priority right now is containment, is to interrupt the escalatory cycle, to interrupt the cycle by which the trauma of the past, the first Korean War 60 years ago, doesn't get repeated right now, in our immediate future.

The other thing I'll just say about the word 'resolution' is sometimes, I think, we assume that to resolve a conflict means to put it away, to end it. And there is a sense in which that's true, but oftentimes what I find is, it's actually, a better way to think of it is as: our goal isn't so much, always, to resolve the conflict. In other words, a lot of our conflicts, our relational conflicts, we're going to live with them for a long time. The question is, can we transform the conflict? 'Transform the conflict' means changing the form from a destructive form—which, in its ultimate sense, means violence, but it could just mean emotional violence, it could be verbal violence, it could be destruction—from a destructive form to a constructive form; through deep dialogue, deep listening of the kind that we're talking about, listening to ourselves, listening to the other, through negotiation, through collaborative problem-solving, through mediation, so that we can *meditate and mediate*. Can we move it in that direction, to transform? I think that's what we're being called to do as what Thomas calls 'global social witnesses', to create a container within which conflicts can be transformed. That container is what I call the third side—because we always see conflicts as there are two sides: there's United States, there's North Korea; there's a husband, there's a wife; there's the worker, there's the manager—but there is always this third side, which is all of us, the community, the neighbors. Can we create that container within which even the most potentially destructive conflict, like now, the conflict between the United States and North Korea, can be transformed? Is there a better possibility out there?

[00:20:00]

Abilio's Story: Discovering Our Interests Behind Our Positions

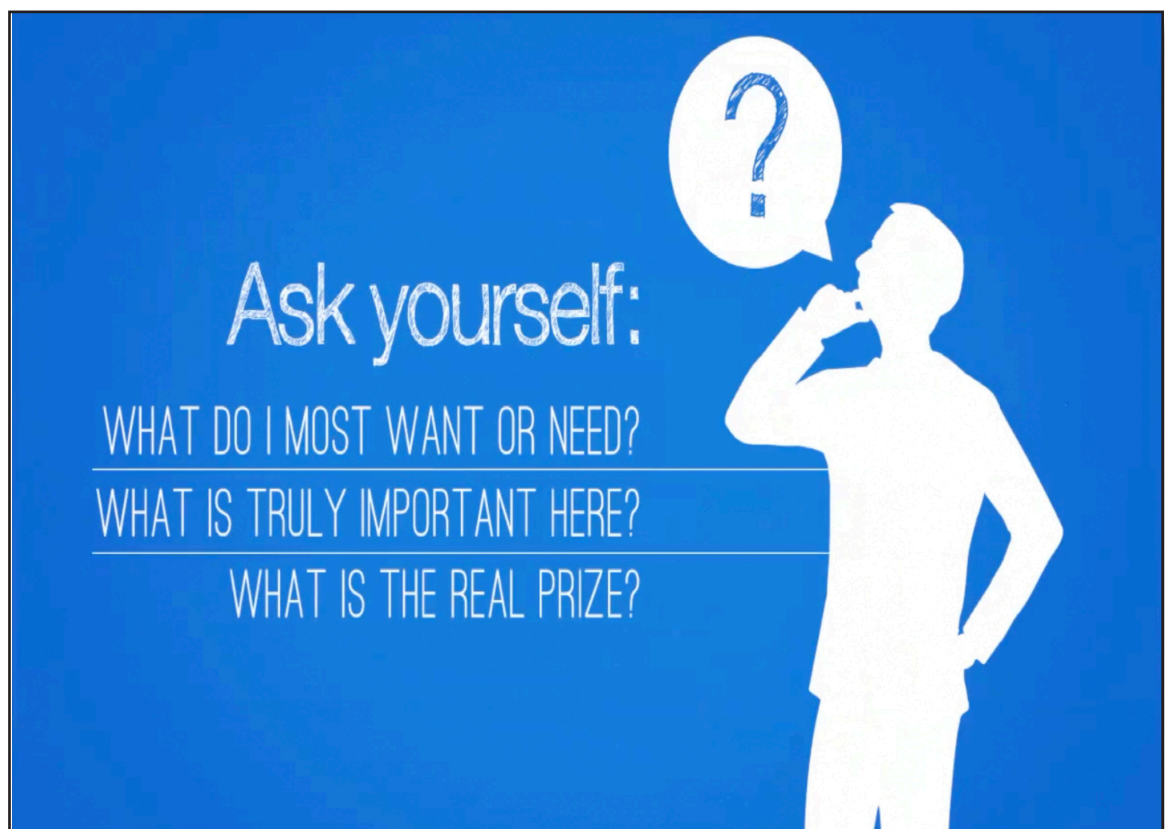
As we've been talking about, the key starts within us. Last session, I was talking about, and I'm going to share a slide right now, just share a slide that we talked about last time, just to do that. As I do that, I want to invite you, as I did last time, to take some conflict situation in your life—and I know there are many, as I read through the questions and the comments—take some situation for you that's very alive right now. It might be the situation you took two weeks ago, it might be a different situation. Take at least one situation so that, as I walk you through these concepts or these principles, I want you to see if you can apply it to your situation so that you'll get more value out of it. It might even generate some very good questions as well. Everyone, just think of a situation you're involved in, some kind of conflict situation. It could be very small or it could be large. Everyone have one in mind.

Then, what I'm going to ask you to do, as I did last time, imagine yourself—I like to use this metaphor of going to the balcony—imagine that the conflict that you just picked is like you're on a stage with the other person, with the other people. You're actors on a stage. Imagine yourself, for a moment, going to a balcony overlooking that stage. What's a balcony? It's a place of perspective. It's place of calm. It's a place of self-control. It's a place of serenity. It's a place we know very well in meditation. It's that place where we have the larger view. It's a place where we can zoom out for a moment, open our lens, see the larger picture, remember what it's all about. And then zoom in, again, and zoom out, and zoom in and zoom out, so that we can really understand the essence of what's going on.



Slide 1

As we talked about last time, in order to be able to listen to the other, it requires, first, listening to ourselves from that balcony perspective, to really listen to what Thomas was bringing us, the felt sense in the body, our emotions, our thoughts, our sensations, and so on. To look beyond that for a moment—and I'm asking you to think about your own situation for a moment—from that balcony perspective, to ask yourself, what do I most want or need in this situation? What's truly important here? It's to keep our eyes on the prize. What is the real prize here? I'm going to come back, for a moment, and tell you a story. As you think about your own situation, what is the real prize?



Slide 2

We're circling the world. Some years ago, I was asked by the daughter of a very prominent business person in Brazil, in the country of Brazil, if I could meet with her father, because her father was embroiled in a very contentious dispute, business dispute with his business partner, over the control of Latin America's largest retailer. It was a business situation, but it was intensely personal. Her father, whose name is Abilio, was in a conflict with his partner who was from France. It was a Brazilian-French conflict, and it was playing out with lawsuits and arbitrations. It was playing out in the newspapers, with attacks on each other's character. It had been going on for two years. There have been many, many efforts to negotiate to resolve it. There were dozens of lawyers involved.

It was widely expected to go on for another eight years, which was the term that Abilio was going to be on the board, and every board meeting was extremely contentious. The 150,000 employees of this company had divided loyalties. It was creating a lot of tension, commercial tension, even between Brazil and France. She had said, "Could you help?" I didn't know if I could help at all, but I agreed to sit down with her father and meet him in his home. He was, then, in his mid-70s; very, very strong, intelligent leader.

[00:25:00]

I began by trying to ask him to go to the balcony, for a moment, with me and ask him, "Tell me something. What do you really want?" This question that I was just asking you to ask yourself, "What do you really want here?" To see if I could, maybe, be of assistance. Like a good businessman, he went immediately to, "There are six things I want. I want this stock at a certain price, I want the elimination of a non-compete clause, which was for three years, I want the company headquarters..." He had about six things that he wanted—very clear, in the right order, very rational.

And then—this is what I'm inviting you to do from the balcony—I asked him, "Yes, but what do you *really* want?" What's behind those things? Because those things, in negotiation, we call your positions, they're the things that we say we want. They're very concrete. It's money. It's numbers. It's, "I want you to do this." That's the position. But underneath the position lie what we call your interests, which are your desires, your concerns, your fears, your needs, your aspirations. They're more intangible. From the balcony perspective, that's what I was asking him to do, was to go behind his position to then say, "What do you really want?" Sometimes we have to go through this process, maybe, five times, and keep on asking, what do we really want? What's that?

In this case, he struggled with that question for a while. We were sitting there in his home, beautiful home there in Sao Paulo. At some point, we got down to what he really wanted. He said, “You know what I really want, William? I want *liberdade*,” which in Portuguese that means ‘freedom’. “I want my freedom.” Once I heard that, even the tonality of it shifted. It was his heart speaking. It was freedom. I had read up a little bit on him before, so I knew that freedom had a particular resonance for him because it was related to a trauma, which was—30 years before he had been kidnapped out of his home, as he was emerging from his home, he had been kidnapped by a gang. A political movement had kidnapped him and held him in a coffin-like structure for an entire week. This is a man who prized his ability to control his life, he was held in this coffin. He thought he would not survive.

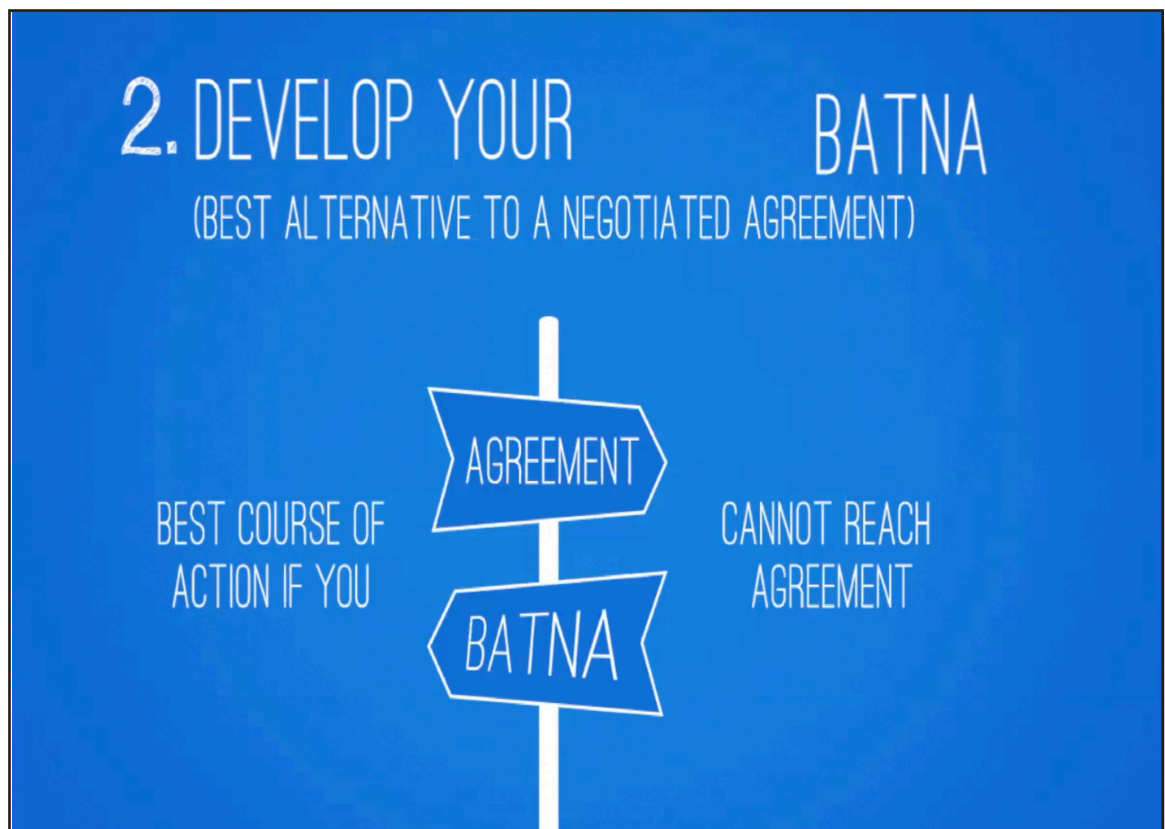
Only by close to a miracle were the police able to find out where he was and were able to liberate him. But I knew that freedom had a real resonance. This is often how we feel in conflicts. He had been held hostage, but we often feel that we’re being held emotionally hostage by our conflicts. He had undergone this very real trauma. The question was, okay, how do you free yourself from that trauma, from that hostage-like situation in which we feel captured by this? We’re trapped in this conflict.

BATNA: Our Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement

Let me just go back to sharing the screen for a moment and talk about, where does the power come from to free yourself? I’m asking you, in your own situation, what is your equivalent of freedom? Ask yourself this question, because I noticed in a lot of the questions, there’s a theme of where is power in a negotiation? Where is this power coming from? How do I deal with an asymmetrical power situation where the other side seems to have a lot more power than my side, for example? There’s an asymmetry in power between the two sides. In negotiation, one thing we have learned and observed is that power comes from many sources, but one of the most central sources that it comes from, it comes from what we call, in negotiation, your BATNA.

BATNA is a simple acronym. It just means your *best alternative to a negotiated agreement*. What's your BATNA? It's your best course of action if, for some reason, you're unable to reach agreement, right now, with the other side. It's like there are these signs where you can go in one direction, you can either go towards an agreement—that's what we often are looking for: we're going towards that yes, we're looking for an agreement—but what if we cannot reach agreement? What's our best alternative for meeting our interests?

[00:30:00]



Slide 3

If I go back to the example of Abilio for a moment, I asked Abilio, once he told me ‘freedom’, I said, “What does ‘freedom’ mean to you? Tangibly, what does it mean to you?” He said, “Well, it’s freedom to spend time with my family.” He pointed to his family members who were there, these little kids in the second family, and so on, his wife and his older kids. He said, “That’s the most important thing in my life, is to spend time with my family, that’s what freedom means to me. And, of course, it’s freedom to pursue my business passions, to make deals. That’s what I love to do. That’s what I want. I want freedom to do that.”

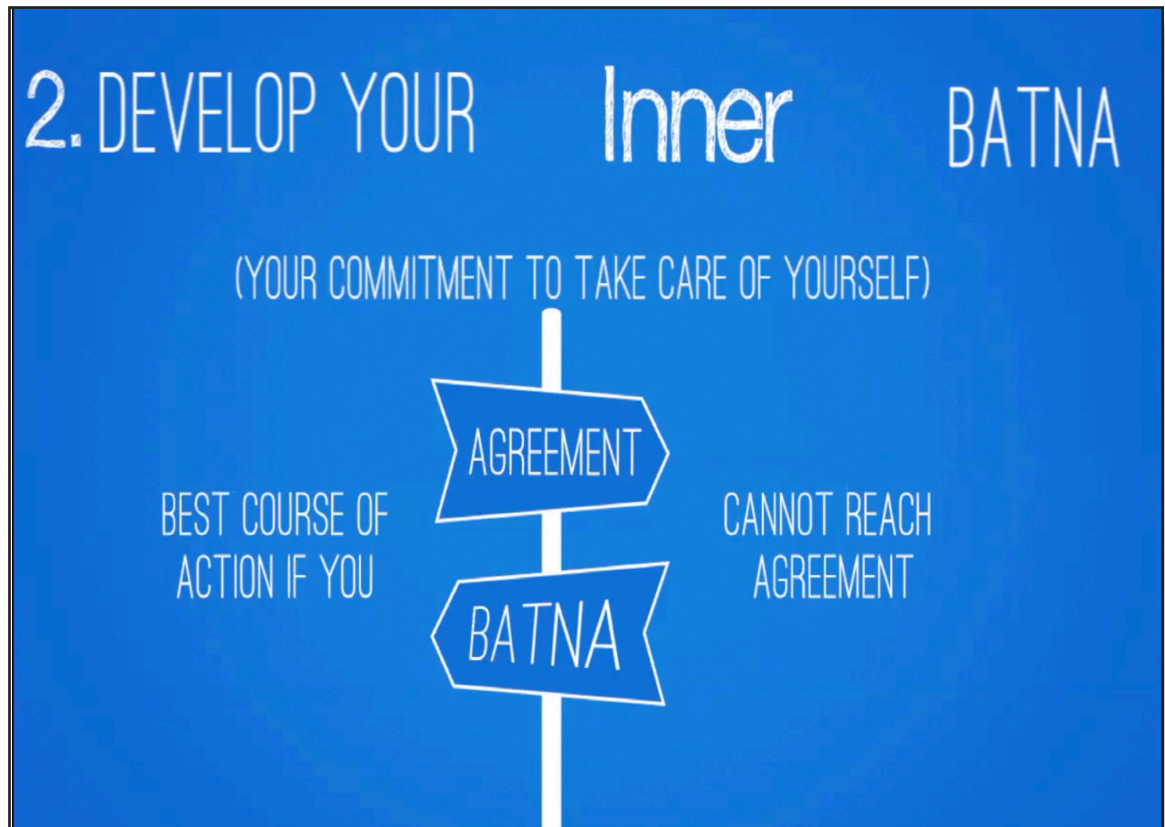
So then I asked him the BATNA question, which is, “Okay. So who can give you the freedom that you want? Is it just your archenemy in this dispute who has the power over you, because only by resolving the dispute can you get your freedom or, in some sense, does that power to meet your essential interests actually reside within yourself? What steps can you do, even independent of what the other side does, to meet your basic needs? That is what your BATNA is.” And so Abilio said, “Well, yes, I can move my office out of this company’s headquarters, so that I can be free, I can actually go on vacations now.” He went on a long vacation with his family. He began to pursue other business deals. In other words, he began to develop or pursue what we call your BATNA, your best alternative to a negotiated agreement.

Paradoxically, by finding this alternative way of meeting his needs, that created the psychic space for, then, us to be able to reach an agreement with the other side. Because as long as you believe you’re held hostage in a situation, emotionally hostage in a conflict, we get so dependent, we act in ways that actually make it more difficult to resolve that conflict. For me, what BATNA means is, it gives you power, actually. It’s power to, in an asymmetrical situation, the stronger you can make your BATNA, you can level the playing field as it were. You can equalize the situation. Also, it gives you a sense of confidence. It gives you a sense of psychological freedom that, then, actually makes it easier to resolve the conflict.

I’m going to ask you, then, what is *your* BATNA, and how can that help you? The key, just to go back to the screen for one last time here, to me, is to—this goes back to our conversation—which is that the key, I would argue, the predecessor to developing your BATNA, your external BATNA, which for Abilio, in this case, was to spend time with his family, to develop other deals, is there’s an inner BATNA, which is something that comes deep within yourself, which is a realization, like Abilio had, that you actually have the power to satisfy your own needs. It’s your commitment to take care of yourself.

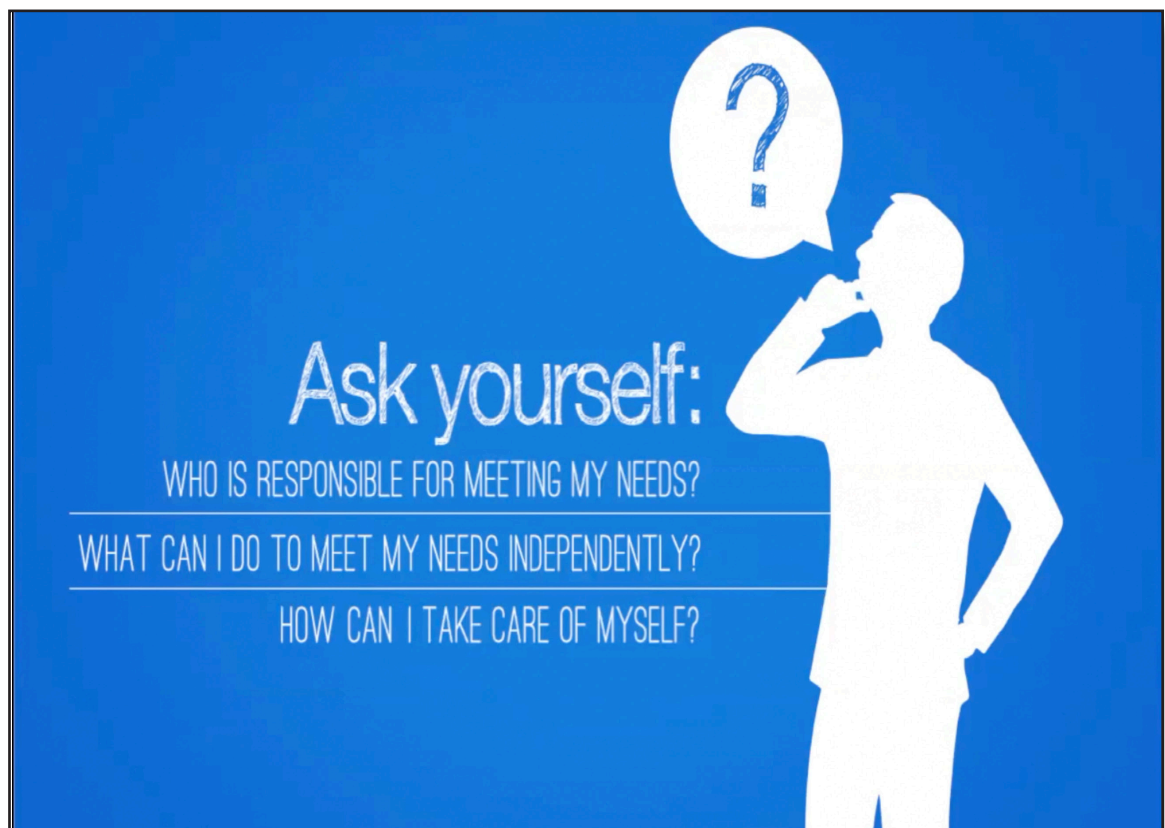
In other words, because if you think about it, if we go deep enough in our needs, what do all of us want at the bottom? It's probably some sense of well-being, some sense of contentment. Is that really dependent on you resolving that dispute or resolving that conflict or, in some sense, does that contentment only come from within, from within you? If you can bring yourself and tap into that deeper source of inner satisfaction, inner contentment, inner fulfillment—through meditation, for example, through the practices that Thomas has been teaching us—then, I think, from that place of knowing that you are okay, then, I think, it will be a lot easier.. It may be still difficult to deal with that conflict, but it'll be a lot easier because you know that, in the end, you're going to be okay, that you can actually meet your deepest needs from within, without being totally dependent on the other side.

[00:35:00]



Slide 4

I just wanted to share that tool with you and ask yourself, who is responsible for meeting my needs? How can I meet my needs independently? How can I take care of myself? A lot of this is about how can I take responsibility? Thomas mentioned that word upfront. How can I take responsibility—*response-ability*—in other words, can I take responsibility for my situation? That is what gives us power. When we blame the other side, when we hold the other side to blame and we say, “They have to change,” then we disempower ourselves. BATNA is about empowering ourselves, bringing the power, recognizing the power. Central power starts from within—that, then, allows us to change the power outside, that, then, allows us to begin to resolve the conflict in a fair and mutually satisfactory fashion. I will stop there and see if Thomas wants to comment.



Slide 5

Keeping Our Minds Open to Inspiration in Conflict Resolution

Thomas: First of all, it's so beautiful to listen to you. Again and again, I find myself—wow, it's so lovely. Also, to listen to all the real-life situations that you share. That's, for me, exactly what I meant at the beginning, that there is embodiment, or walking our talk has a transmission. I think, that's a highly important, much more important aspect of life than we know, and I believe, than we get taught in our schools, universities: that's transmission. I want to talk a little about transmission because I want to talk a little bit about the inner science of what William shared right now.

First of all, when I listen to you, William, I feel your transmission. What is the transmission? It's an embodied experience. It's not a theory. It's interesting to listen, it's intellectually stimulating to listen to the theory, but what I have heard right now is not a theory. It's something that we've learned, put through the tissue of life, like with a needle. It goes through the tissue of life. I think that's a very important quality because not only... I believe deeply that facilitation and work—it doesn't matter if one works as a therapist, as a doctor, as a conflict transformational power or a mediator—I believe, the best and the most impactful work, so to speak, if we call it work at all, is through the alive transmission that is in the room, and that our nervous system, as we said in one of the first classes, that our bodies and our nervous systems are full of information. Every one of us radiates that information. We all are like radio stations, 99.9 FM. If you drive your car and you listen to music, it's a sunny day, and you search for a radio station, it takes your receiver a moment to log in to a frequency, 99.9 FM.

I believe that human relation is exactly the same. We are not just in the room with a person, a group, or in the world with so many billion other people—we are dialed into a very precise radio station, a transmission of a radio station. That needs presence because, on the one hand, we could say, oh, it looks like a protocol. I ask you, what are your needs and how do you get your needs met? But I believe it's much more. What I heard is much more than that. It's being very attuned to feel the right moment for the right question, the right moment and the right step at the right time. That can be seen as a kind of a method or a theory, how to go step by step, but that's, also, in my inner self exploration, it's, okay, I need self-contact, I need a time to really feel myself.

[00:40:00]

When I already see that I'm spinning in my own thoughts about myself, I need a moment, I need a balcony, as William says, just to come back to feel myself. But walking my talk, I cannot without feeling myself. When I'm agitated in a conflict and when I feel that my nervous system is already in a hyper state, so overactive, hyper-activated, the best thing to do is not trying to go on with whatever I'm doing. It's to notice: oh wow, I'm actually way too fast and I need a moment to regulate myself. That self-regulation—being as a facilitator or as a person that experiences a conflict situation right now—I believe, is key, and it starts with the awareness that I'm hyper-activated. Or that I'm numb, I don't feel anything, I'm just like on automatic, and I'm just trying to resolve the situation, but I'm not connected.

The one thing that I heard is, yeah, I asked again and I asked again, until I felt a moment where I felt freedom. What does that mean that I felt freedom? Feeling freedom means that, in William, there needs to be a place that recognizes the openness of a membrane. Where is a person sharing concepts and ideas and positions, and when do we come to a moment when we feel there's a window? I believe, human relation needs an open window. Human relation doesn't work without a window—a more open heart, a more open nervous system, a more open body, a more open emotional system, a more open mind.

We all know how it feels when our minds are circling, when the mind is a bit stuck and contracted, and I'm circling in old patterns. Then, as William says, he loves to go for a walk, or we sit down and we just sit in silence a bit—until I feel, oh, I can open my mind to inspiration. Because if it's working in old patterns, I'm trying to use the old tools that I already know, and I pull out one tool after the other—but those tools led me to the stuck situation that I am in. I cannot expect that those tools will give me a new solution, an evolution.

I deeply believe that there is no fixing of relation. We cannot fix a relation. The only thing we can do is we can grow. One party and another party grows, and there is a new relation that happens here. I believe, at the end, every conflict transformation is an evolutionary step, and the re-relation of two new people. The old people are not finding a solution. Two new people are re-relating. That's one thing that I heard.

Recognizing the Symptoms of a Trauma Response

I heard another thing that I would love to share with you, a brief introduction into the word—we all, most probably, have some kind of understanding of trauma—but when we use the word ‘trauma’, first of all, we are not referring to a situation that happened, we are referring to a response within our nervous system, and that trauma is, actually, a very intelligent response in our nervous system. And I believe that trauma is not something that happens right now in my nervous system if I have an overwhelming situation. Let’s say there’s an overwhelming experience, and in order for the nervous system to keep most of the organism or the system safe, we shut down, usually, one part of our experience—that’s the freeze—we shut down one part of our experience in order, like a submarine where you close off a part that has a damage so that the water doesn’t flood the whole submarine or the whole ship, so you close off one part.

[00:45:00]

When we walk around today—and most of us walk around with either the effect of transgenerational trauma or collective trauma or some biographical trauma, something that happened in my life, So trauma, the trauma response of the nervous system, is a highly intelligent thing. That’s not the problem. We don’t have a problem when we are traumatized. We just need to learn to listen to the intelligence of our nervous system and how brave it was to keep us safe, at least as the highest safety that was possible in that given situation and within the given developmental age that I was in. I think that’s one thing that’s important.

Another thing that I’d really love to think about is: trauma developed, most probably, over the course of hundreds of thousands of years, and more. I think it’s beautiful to put this into a perspective, that this has an evolutionary perspective. We didn’t invent trauma. We have been born with our nervous system’s capacity to deal in a certain way with overwhelming experiences. That wasn’t something that I developed. I developed a certain flavor of it, maybe, but the response, a trauma response in the nervous system, has been developed over a long, long period of time and lifetimes. Through conflicts and difficulties and overwhelming experiences and atrocities, we learned our way, up to 2017, to deal with a highly refined bio-computer response to overwhelming situations.

I believe, in any way, when we take conflict resolution or transformation seriously, I believe we need to have a basic understanding of what that response is and how that response, the trauma response, shows up as symptoms in front of us or within us. Because I might take the symptoms of trauma either personal or I might take it as something else. I need to hear, oh, when is, actually, another person—or in myself—a symptom of a trauma response active? In myself, I can learn to self-regulate myself in a different way, whenever I notice it in myself, but I can also be an amazing grounding, presencing, and stabilizing factor when people around me suddenly show symptoms of trauma reactions or responses. So that I don't take the symptom for real, I see it as a symptom of something much deeper.

I think that's also something that I heard William describe before, and that's where I want to share my screen for a moment. Let's say, here is a person and here is a person. Let's say here, is a developmental trauma. [*Draws two human figures, and a dark spot next to one of them.*] That person carries a trauma fixation inside, and the other person as well [*Draws a dark spot next to the other figure.*]. If these two people meet somehow by life, somehow, even in intimate relationships at the beginning, those trauma structures in each other might feel, actually, lovely. They might be attracted to each other. We might feel safe with the trauma structure of another person. That's very important to know, that, often, intimate relationships are actually based on a shared trauma structure that gives, at the beginning, a feeling of familiarity, that we know that kind of energy field. That's very important because if that's the base, or one of the bases, of our intimate relationship, that has to lead to conflict.

[00:50:00]

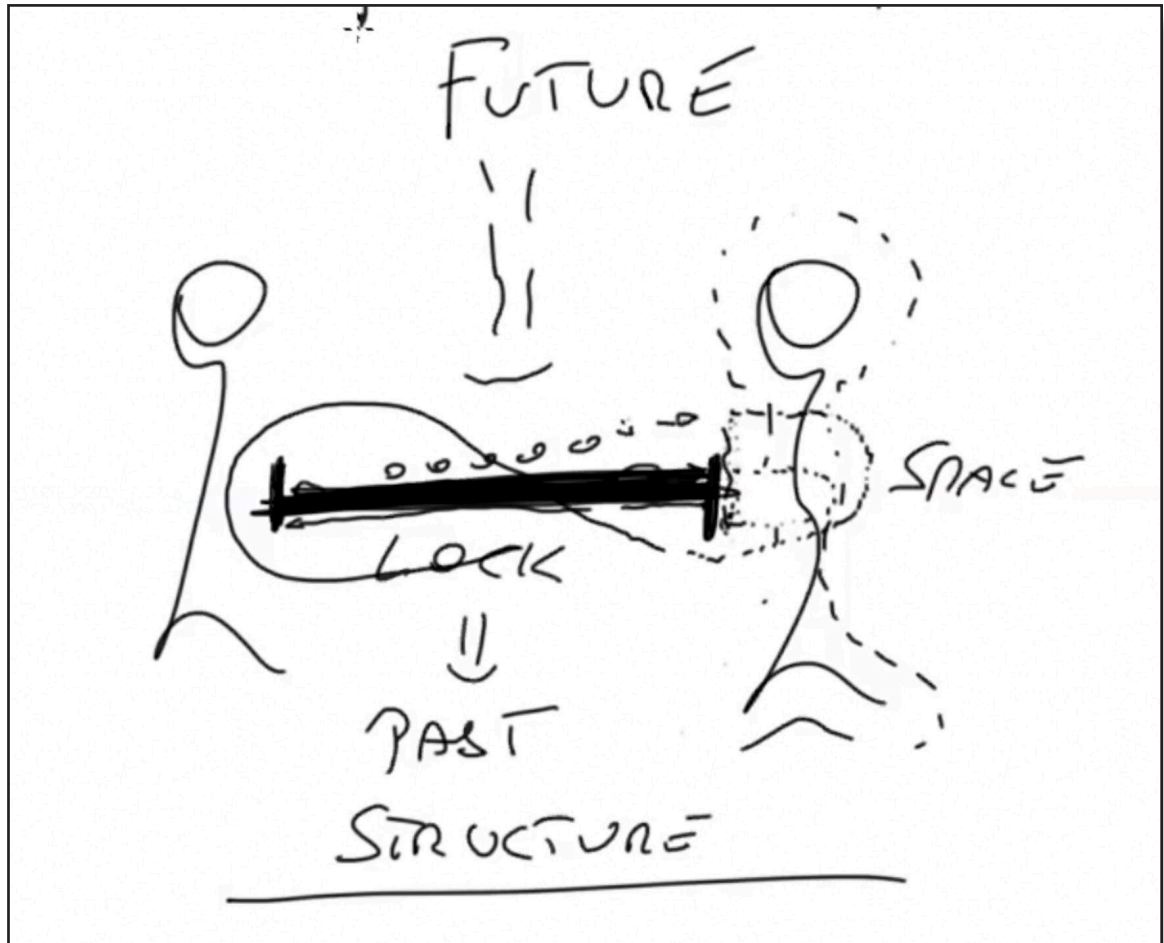
Let's say, those two people communicate. Communication, in this sense, we can see as—let's say, that's a rubber ball [*draws a ball next to the person on the left*], and that rubber ball is being sent over here [*towards the person on the right*], but here it cannot go in, be heard, and come back out [*draws a dotted line through the person's heart and back out*]. That would be the natural way of listening. I hear you. I heard William before. I could let William's words in, resonate deeply in me, and come back with responses. I had many responses while I was listening to you, William, I had many responses inside to what you were sharing. This means my energy field and my nervous system participates in your sharing.

But if what you tell me threatens a part of me unconsciously, so then I am not able to let these words in, I will deflect these words here, in one of my trauma layers [*draws an arrow towards a dark trauma spot*], and then it goes back to the other trauma layer, and then it goes back and it goes back and it goes back. Ultimately, the response becomes a bar, becomes a lock. It's locked. That response has only a past. It has no future. Why? Because as long as this rubber ball goes forth and back between those two trauma layers, I believe, these two people have no tool to resolve their conflict, if that's the situation. Unless one of these people creates a transformational process for him or herself, and that's, in a way, what we heard before. There was a timeout. There was a process. Through you, William, there was a process. There was a vacation. There was a time to grow. There was a time to loosen up part of the.... We saw, oh, it's connected to an earlier traumatization.

Maybe, potentially, this rubber ball that looks like a lock at the moment, like a trauma structure, that past is a structure now—and our collective consciousness, I believe, is full of those bars, full of those fixations, full of those locks, or gridlocks, that have no future. These gridlocks only drive into yesterday. They don't drive into tomorrow. The future is a recreation of the old process. It's an old tool trying to resolve the same situation without any future possibility.

But if that rubber ball enters somehow, through a new development, the energy field goes into space, into deep listening, then eventually it comes back out with a different spin and can, maybe, overcome that trauma gridlock. Because if the rubber ball comes with the same spin, it hits the same trauma structure and it just has a locked situation. But if we change it—that's why true listening is so important, but listening is not just the rational listening. Listening is that I really feel what you say and I resonate, like a guitar, like music. That's feeling—that your sound resonates within my strings. Your tune, William's sharing resonated in my strings, and my strings are happy to resonate—in agreement or disagreement, it doesn't matter—with, and then there's a creative movement forth and back because in my open heart, my open co-creative energy is participating in the dialogue.

In the moment the spin has changed, the potential future comes in. I believe that our current notion of time, that the past is yesterday and tomorrow is the future, is outdated. I think that keeps us in a lot of trouble because I think it's like the world was a disk and then a sphere. I think that if yesterday is the past and tomorrow is the future, that's the same jump in realization—but I will talk about this more later.



Drawing 1

[00:55:00]

I wanted just to share a bit about the trauma and how the capacity that I notice, if I'm in a conversation or a conflict and I feel that my nervous system goes into a hyper-activation, that's usually not the place where I'm equipped to resolve a situation creatively. The more I go into this, by tendency, I become more defensive. The more I can regulate myself and see, oh yeah, what happened? Okay. I'm afraid. I can ground myself. That's exactly what William... What do I need in the current situation to contain my own emotional, physical, and mental responses and have enough space inside to respond—then I'm *response-able*. And if not, then I become reactive and I just send this impulse back, and if it lands in you in the same contraction, we are locked.

And then, maybe, we need a third party, either a third side in the world, for a collective trauma gridlock, or we need a third person, like William came into the picture, and there's somebody that can listen to put feedback information into that system from a different place. I think, all of us that are facilitating processes, that's what we do. We allow information to go in and come back out with a different spin. It's almost like a laundry machine. I know, that doesn't sound so sexy, but we take the past in and we allow a new future to emerge.

That's also what the wisdom traditions say: creation is not something that happened in the past, the world is being reborn moment to moment to moment, again. That's what is exciting because that means that, potentially, every situation holds its own answer inside already. The difficulty is pregnant with the resolution.

The wisdom traditions talk about the pregnancy with the light, so the situation that is difficult and locked is pregnant, has a seed of its resolution already inside. I believe, the true listening that we heard before is listening to that seed, so that we reinforce the resource in the current situation.

I know this was, maybe, a little bit much of theory, all of that I heard when I listened to you, William, before, and so I thought it's good to give a little bit of context also, about how at least I and, I believe, we used the word 'trauma', and that to listen to the trauma—because so often those, often forgotten or suppressed, past experiences participate in the current situation, and the more trauma-sensitive we are—so that we recognize trauma symptoms, we see them emerging within conversations, within groups, within societal movements—so we will be aware not to fall into them and become blind and being reactive, but really allowing a deeper listening, which is to insert the future, to come up with a new tool.

Abilio's Story: Freedom and Dignity as a Path to Resolution

William: I just want to highlight and underline something you said. There was a theme of that seed, because that's what I find at least when I'm in my practice, in my mediation practice, I'm trying to listen for possibility. People often ask me, are you a pessimist? Are you an optimist? Because I deal in very tense, very difficult situations where there doesn't seem to be much hope. In one sense, of course, I am an optimist, because an optimist is looking for the opportunity in every problem. But in a deeper sense, I think, I'm a *possibilist*. That's what I am, a *possibilist*. In other words, I'm listening for the possibility, for that possibility of that alternative future, for the way of unlocking the situation so that we're not just repeating the past, we're not just repeating the trauma pattern.

[01:00:00]

In that story that I gave you with Abilio, for example, the astonishing thing was—they were so stuck and they were very much in that locked situation. Almost everyone thought this was an impossible situation. The question in people's mind was, who's going to win? Who's going to lose? For them, it was that. I'll just tell you, the denouement of this situation was one side understood that freedom—I'd listened to that. Once I heard that—and there was a tonality to it; you're right, it's not just a protocol, it's to listen for when that tonality—when I heard the word freedom, then inside me, for one, I heard, well, maybe I can be helpful. I don't know if I can help you get the stock and the thing and all that, that's maybe not my... but can I help you get your freedom? If I can focus in on that, I can lock in on that, then...

As it turned out, when I met with the representative of the other gentleman who was involved, embroiled in this dispute, in Paris, in a restaurant there, it was on a Monday, he asked me, "Why are you here?" The words that came to me were, "Parce que la vie est trop courte", "Because life is too short. That's why I'm here." Life is too short. That was the tone. Life is too short for these kinds of conflicts in which everyone loses. My friend, his opponent, they were losing their emotional, their well-being. They were so consumed by this conflict. Their families were suffering. The employees of the company were suffering. Even their two nations were a little bit... There was so much suffering generated by this conflict. I said, "Life is too short for this. There has to be a better way." In other words, listening for that possibility.

And he said, “So, what would you propose?” I said, “If we can only agree to respect two basic principles here, two basic needs, human needs, I think we might be able to find a way out.” He said, “What are those?” I said, “One is freedom, freedom for both.” They want to be free of the situation so they can move on with their lives. “The second is dignity,” because that’s such a root human need in every conflict, I found, is dignity. There’s so much of the wound of humiliation which comes from traumatized situations. Neither one, because it was so public, could afford to be seen as backing down, as being weak, either to themselves or to the key people that they thought about. “If we can find a way out of this through freedom and dignity.” He said, “Fine. When are you going back to Colorado?” I said, “Tomorrow morning.”

I was going for a walk, as out going to the balcony to kind of reflect on this after the lunch, and I got a call from him, and he said, “Could you come see me tomorrow?” I said, “Fine.” In 45 minutes in his office, we sketched out on a single piece of paper something that lawyers had been working on for 18 months, just a few simple principles of how you would apply freedom and dignity to this situation. That was on a Tuesday. By Friday, we had both parties sitting at a law office in Brazil, signing an agreement, ending this dispute, agreeing to a joint statement, wishing each other well, going to the company, making a joint statement to the executives and to the employees, explaining what they had agreed upon, and it was over. It was something that people thought would take eight years, and the whole question was, who would win? Who would lose?

The interesting thing my friend, my client said to me, Abilio said to me afterwards, he said, “You know, I got everything I wanted here.” He went back through his positions, he got just about everything he wanted. He said, “The most important thing I got was I got my life back. I got my freedom.” And I’ve watched him as he’s used his freedom over the last four years. He’s used it to spend time with his family, to pursue new deals, to be vibrant, and to really use the years of his life well—because life is too short. And when I asked the other side how did they feel about it, they felt highly satisfied, too.

This is what I’m saying, if you can get to the root of things—it doesn’t always happen this way, but it happens more often than not—you can find that seed. You can find that, inside the problem, there’s a seed of something that’s actually better for both sides, better for everyone in this situation than could have been possibly imagined.

Thomas: It's so beautiful. I want to, before we go to the contemplation, I have to say something else, while I listen. You said, "The words that came to me." And I want to highlight that sentence. I think, maybe it's not the time now to talk about it, but I love the phrasing, "The words that come to me." I think it's a beautiful phrasing of being the tongue of the possibility, being the voice of the possibility that is in in the room. I think that's not something that one can do by applying a method. We can only become that voice, "The words that came to me." I think that's a very important way to say it, that I'm so connected to the situation that I become the voice of the situation. I'm not only the voice of the situation, the voice of the possibility.

I liked that you said you are a *possibilist* because I think we should... I marked already for myself that we should talk about how fragmentation actually can be either represented or split the third side. If you're an optimist or a pessimist, it's part of the split. I think, if we are in tune and we are neither/nor, we are present. In presence, I don't need to be pessimistic and I don't need to be optimistic, because that's already part of the past.

You said, okay, I'm attuned to the possibility. That's also something mystically very relevant, and I think it's a very important aspect for us. Am I falling into the split that might surface in myself, to take sides? Are we taking sides now, right now, when we talk about the conflict between North Korea and the US, or many parties in the world that are hidden behind it, however we see it? Or are we staying, in a way, present? We can notice the fragmentation or the split, but we actually don't become part of it. That's, I think, very important, too.

There were many aspects in what I heard you say that do represent very important principles. When we can take this, in order to have, also, a bit of time to contemplate what happened today, we can park it for now, but I think it was a very rich sharing, and I hear many principles speaking as you share your life wisdom. Thank you for that.

Maybe, because I believe in order to become the voice of the possibility, which is the voice of the future, and I believe every excellent process facilitation has that part open. Everybody who does excellent interpersonal, intercultural conflict transformation, therapeutic work, has words coming to him or her. I'm sure, if you would ask different people that are excellent in that work, that we will get a similar description. We see, okay, but in order for me to sense, to feel, to be in tune with that possibility, I need a very present interior, and I need to be very much connected within the moment, within the big moment, the eternal moment.

[01:10:00]

Begin Meditation

Let's take a moment, now, to let everything that we heard, again, like seeds, drop into our bodies. William's journey through conflict transformation, finding alternative paths, finding one's power and one's needs met. There were many things, also, in the sharing about the actual example.

Whatever resonated for you whatever touched you, sparked you, made you think, explore, creative, curious, to let the information, as if the information was raining and fertilizing the earth of your body, the ground of your body. My body is a composition, is an achievement of millions of years of life, cells collaborating, hormone systems, nervous systems, all the functions, cultures. Learning is an embodying of inspiration, wisdom, new information, knowledge. In the soil is the past of humanity.

I take enough space to digest what I hear. I go to the balcony and listen. I take a walk. I sit down and listen to the reverberations of my experiences, and I just listen and sense.

Sometimes our breath and our exhale is a good partner in deregulating our nervous system, switching our nervous systems from activity into relaxation, digestion, so that information can become the fertile soil of the next moment.

There is a physical and an emotional and a mental response to today's session so far, and to see, what's your physical, what's your emotional, mental response? What's the resonance?

Also, maybe to connect to William's offer, if there is any recurrent or very acute or more chronic conflicted situation in your life, that you use this moment as a balcony moment to let the components of the tension or conflict simply rest in you, and to sense it, feel it, see it—whatever is your channel to access your inner contemplation. And to hold a bigger perspective, what's really the composition of that situation? When I'm just here, I feel it in myself. I allow myself to listen deeper to the more unseen components, to the unseen needs within myself or other people, also the potential trauma gridlock.

[01:15:00]

I can also feel the way I host or approach that situation when I allow it to land in me, I can see how open is my energy, my attention. Or do I get tense, do I distance myself, pull away, try to get rid of it? Or can I breathe the situation within me, as if you hold the stage that William said, with all the actors of the current situation, inside? The capacity to listen to the possibility, to listen to the potential future, the growth, the evolution.

If you want, you can just let all of that go, again. Before we finish, just to sit in your own inner space, emptied out, and just listen to the depth of your own presence without any given situation.

If there is anything that wants to surface that's important for your life right now, anything that needs to be listened to, that your awareness wants to become aware of, now is the moment to surface in your awareness.

And then, maybe, to take some deeper breaths, feel your body sitting, your feet on the ground, and then slowly come back with open eyes.

End of Meditation

Q&A: Finding Seeds of Possibility Through Empathy

[01:20:00]

Host: Thanks, Thomas and William, again, for this beautiful weaving together of the practice of mediation and the inner science that underpins it. I think it's very rich and powerful. You can see that by the number of questions that are coming in. I want to try to weave together a few questions that relate, in a way, to how to be active when we're witnessing the kind of conflict that we're talking about, between the US and North Korea. Tara, for example, writes that she's presencing her feelings. Is that enough? Does that have an energetic impact, or is there more? She feels a calling to contribute more. Other people are writing about how do we build a collective third side with regard to that kind of a conflict? Could we, for example, write a collective petition, or what would it mean to build a collective third side to the conflict between the US and North Korea?

Somebody else writes, also in this context, how do we create a BATNA in that kind of situation? What does a BATNA look like for a nation or for a global conflict of that nature? There's a drive through some of the questions to say we witness this, we host it, we feel it as much as we can, and there's a desire to engage more fully, somehow, with it. What might that look like as a skillful practice?

William: First of all, I do think the first and necessary step is to witness it within ourselves and to just take a moment, just right now, where we invoke that circle, that third side. We're circling the globe right now, in this very moment, with our presence right now in this course, in this moment. What would it mean to actually, for us, to be able to witness what is really going on in this moment, where it's very much like Thomas has been saying, where the two sides are locked into this trauma lock? Each step that they take almost re-traumatizes the other. They get locked into this dance, which we know so well from conflicts like this.

You can see it, for example, in the situation of North Korea and the United States. You can see it. Every move—North Korea makes a move, the United States makes a move. President Trump tweets and insults the leader of North Korea. There's an insult that comes back. Yet, it's a very, very dangerous game because... One of the themes through some of the questions is the importance of culture. If we try empathetically to look into the psychology, into the empathy of, say, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, his own history, his traumatic history, his traumatic childhood, growing up as he did, with a very authoritarian father, being told, it's like kill or be killed, survive or not. It's replicated on the other side, as far as we can understand. Both having strong fathers, grandfathers, there's that father wound in them.

The sphere of humiliation, the sphere of failure—each one has to dominate, so they are playing this game of nuclear chicken where each side is hurtling down a highway headed straight towards each other. Neither side showing any willingness to veer off. They are holding humanity hostage with the situation, we're being held hostage—but actually we are them as well. That's the other thing.

[01:25:00]

One of the questions was, what can we do? One thing we can do is, from witnessing, is to empathize, to listen deeply within the situation, to see where are the seeds that Thomas talked about, where are the opportunities, where are the seeds for a different narrative than the narrative of chicken. As I listen to that situation, and any one of us can do this. It does require, as Thomas said, some information, some knowledge. It's not just about presence. It's about really diving deep, learning the cultural knowledge.

I remember, I might have mentioned this on a call before, but we asked a North Korean expert, a woman who really spends her life as a scholar, interviewing people who were coming out of North Korea, and asked her, “What’s the impact in North Korea of President Trump’s tweets, where he demeans the leader of the other side?” She said, “Well, imagine that you were in a Muslim country, and someone was insulting Allah. Or imagine you’re in a Christian country, and someone is insulting Jesus Christ. That’s the effect, because for them in North Korea, to understand the culture there, it’s a little bit like the Japanese and their emperor back before World War II. There’s a cult of worship of the leadership as being the symbol of the country. Everyone, whether they believe it or not inside themselves, they’re part of this collective thing. When you insult the leader, it’s an insult to the country. It’s a humiliation. There’s shame, and it requires revenge. It requires payback.”

Just to understand that culture, just to understand, put ourselves in the shoes of each culture, understanding what’s going on, that’s what we can do so we can move beyond witnessing to empathy.

Out of empathy, then you might see where the possibility is, where are the seeds, for example, going to the question around BATNA, what’s the alternative, for each side, to this collision? What’s an alternative way in which they can get their own needs met? Because, I think, each of those leaders, as I understand them, wants to be a hero, wants to be the savior of their nation. A lot of it, actually, is coming from deep survival—wants to protect, wants to secure. Is there an alternative way in which they can achieve that, other than colliding with each other?

Can they find, through a peaceful resolution, find ways that they can actually become heroes to the rest of us, to the world, which is to their own people, to the people that they care most about? Can the game not become about military confrontation but about helping grow your economy and serving the well-being of their people—which both leaders have expressed strong interest in? In other words, can there be a pivot from a military confrontation to economic growth? Can in solving a situation or resolving a situation that, in each case, President Trump’s predecessors could not resolve and the leader of North Korea, his father and grandfather couldn’t resolve, can they actually do something and go in the history books as great leaders? In other words, can we imagine that? Can we imagine an alternative scenario whereby they can meet their deepest psychological needs so as to help save humanity?

That comes back to what we can do. What can we—because we're the audience—what can we do as the third side to help encourage them to become heroes to the world in a different way than through confrontation? Those are just a few thoughts that come to me in response to those questions.

Q&A: The Freedom to Meet Our Needs Independently of the Other Side

[01:30:00]

Participant 1: I think William just answered this question a little bit. Zooming into something very, very small, the situation that I was imagining when you were first talking, William, was with regard to my family, my ex-partner and my son and my current partner. I thought, well, what's my BATNA in terms of conflict? Anyway, the long and short of it was that really what I want is for us all to be in a very healthy ecosystem where growth is promoted, we are all able to be free and to grow and to move into our potentials, but seems to me that that's not really a BATNA, that that's something else, that a BATNA is more personal. I wonder if you could talk to that a little bit. What is effective as a BATNA? Is it something that I want on my side of the negotiating table or could it be something that I want for the whole system? Do you know what I mean?

William: I think I do. Thank you, Cabot. BATNA is actually, it seems a very simple concept, but actually once you try to apply it to your situation, it's not always that simple. Just to go back to what it actually means—what you were imagining as a healthy ecosystem, that's your vision. That's your interest. That's your dream. That's the prize for you, right? That's what you're trying to achieve.

One way to achieve it, maybe the most desirable way to achieve that right now is through some kind of agreement—and I don't know if the conflict is with your ex or who—but some kind of agreement. Given that that's often difficult to achieve, one of the questions that you can ask yourself from a balcony perspective is the BATNA question, which is, "If for some reason I'm not able to reach agreement with my ex—let's imagine that at least for now, because of the trauma, because of the difficulty of the situation, I'm not able to reach agreement—what can I do independently? What can I, Cabot, do independently to move towards the healthy ecosystem that I want for everyone here and that I want for myself, independent of an agreement with the other side in this situation? That's your BATNA.

If you can just reflect and say, what can I do? How can I take *response-ability* for this situation? What can I do? While we're waiting to reach an agreement, what can I do? For my friend, Abilio, it was his freedom, freedom to spend time with his family. He went out and spent time with his family. He didn't wait for the dispute to end. He went out and started to make deals. That psychologically freed him enough that then he was able to relax enough to be able to reach the agreement that we ultimately did reach. That's your BATNA.

Your BATNA is your freedom to go ahead and meet your deepest needs independently of resolving the conflict, independently of reaching an agreement, now, with the other side. If you can reassure yourself that inner BATNA is, "Yes, I'm going to be okay regardless of how this plays out, then from that place of confidence and assurance and emotional freedom, it actually is much more likely that you're going to be able to reach agreement with the other side in a difficult situation and create that healthy ecosystem that you aspire to. Does that answer your question?

Participant 1: Yeah. That's cool. In a way, it combines the best of both, or combines them both somehow together.

William: That's it. That's exactly it.

Participant 1: Thanks.

William: Good luck. Much success.

[01:35:00]

Q&A: Inner Practice of Presencing Our Emotions

Host: *Thank you, William, for that. I want to phrase a question from Margaret, which I think, maybe, Thomas, you could start to respond to, and I'm sure William has something to add to as well. It's about the relationship between how we feel our emotions and let the nervous system settle and the process of recognizing what we want or what we need, like what's the prize, if you like, also? She says, "It sounds as if there are two different ideas there," but I think it'd be interesting to tease out the relationship between that. How do we... We can feel our emotions and let our nervous system settle, and is that the same process or is it a linear process? She's asking about how do we, then, from that place, know what it is that we truly want or need?*

Thomas: I love to see our—when we look at our systems, our bodies, for example—that there is a body, there is an emotional system, and then there’s a rational system, and they are logged into each other. When we, for example, take Cabot’s situation from before, yes, there is obviously an emotional or conflicted story before. Now we can see, okay, when I really let this this situation land in me, so where do I feel that I turn away from the situation emotionally? Even if it seems like I understand it, most probably when there is, especially an intimate relationships, and we have conflicts, usually there is an inner distancing. That inner distancing is something that I can become aware of. That’s one way to work on it.

The other way to work on it is to say, okay, whenever I feel I get triggered by something, there might be different things I feel. One is, let’s say, the integrated version is, I have an emotion, I feel an emotion. I can tell what emotion I feel. I feel ashamed. I can say, if you ask me, “How do you feel?” and I feel ashamed, I can say I feel ashamed. If you asked me, “Where in your body do you feel you’re ashamed?” I could say, maybe in my face, maybe in my chest—or I feel afraid. I hear news or I hear something and I see, oh, I’m afraid. Even to re-confirm this feeling in myself is, oh yeah, I’m afraid. When I say I’m afraid, I agree, in a way, to feel fear. Fear is a human emotion. We all feel fear at times. We all feel anger at times. We all feel ashamed at times, and joy, and sadness, and so on.

What I’m saying is that, because emotions are often whirlwinds, when they are disembodied or we learn in certain stages of our development that we disconnect from our physical body because it was too intense—I often tend to say, often children are the prisoners of their parents because children cannot leave their parents, they have to stay there. If the party is good, it’s a good party. But if the party is not so good, or even bad, so then we don’t go anywhere to save ourselves, usually. That means that we have to overregulate our interior world. We need to tune down the pain inside in order to stay in a given external situation, but after some time, we become specialists in overregulating our interior world. But relation is a regulation in the agreement.

When William says, “Finding a yes, *Getting to Yes*,” we are getting to a yes in between us. In us—but also in between us. If I learn to overregulate my interior, so I took the regulation from the relational space back into me, and I need to learn how to bring it back, again, into the space. For other people, they learn to shut down their interior, and they are too much with the other and have no sense of themselves in that moment.

What we learn is to say, okay, my body is a very important anchor. My emotions are happening in and through my body. My thoughts are happening within and through my body. Then I don't have a racing mind, I have a mind that is congruent with the emotions, so when I say something and when I feel something and embody something, it's one message. That's why sometimes in the—because usually we ask that question not from the integrated places in us, because it's clear, and where it's clear, is not a question. When we ask the question, it means that we hit some sort of disconnect within ourselves where that comes up as a question. And then it's true. I feel either hyper-activated, so I feel too fast and active in my nervous system, or I feel hypo-, which means I feel numb and I am more frozen and I don't feel myself, really. I cannot tell you what I feel.

[01:40:00]

When I get triggered, the first thing, okay, if I'm confused, okay, what do I feel? If I say, okay, I cannot say, even to myself, I take a minute and see what's happening in me, and I don't know, in order to find... Instead of trying to find out, I just confirm in myself that I feel numb. Because often, we are trying to produce something, finding clarity when there's un-clarity. Sometimes confusion was easier than to feel. In the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu has a beautiful quote that says, "Do you have the patience to wait until the mud settles and the water is clear?" If I don't feel or I'm confused inside or I'm very triggered, do I have the patience to wait and I can downregulate my system—I can breathe, I can feel my body, I can come back to myself until I can feel again. Sometimes accepting that we don't feel is an equally important thing than to say, okay, yes, I'm scared. Yes, I'm scared. That's right now. And if my fear is too overwhelming, then my responsibility is to find support, make connection, find somebody that can listen to me, or I can sit with it and simply presence my fear until I can relax my nervous system into the sensation—which, maybe, sometimes makes it even appear a bit stronger, but then I will ground myself through the fear, and once I can experience it in the body, my body becomes a magnet, an anchor, and then the fear is less scary. The fear is a feeling that I can hold in myself.

Usually, when I do it, then the fear starts to dissolve, and I become, again, reconnected to the current situation. That's a very important inner practice where we combine presencing, deregulating our nervous system, learning about the emotional cake and embodiment, and many things. Maybe, that's enough from my side for now, if you want to add something, William.

William: No, just to say that, in my mind, there is a sequence that, unless we can learn to regulate our nervous system, it's going to be hard for us to listen to that inner voice that's going to tell us what we really need.

Q&A: Understanding the Components of Rebuilding Trust

Participant 2: I did send in a written question. It's about how, back to the North Korea situation and the word 'trust', when there's been a vow not to trust and the claim that trusting has been the problem in the first place. How does that come in?

William: Trust is such an important word in conflict situations. This situation, the United States and North Korea, is no exception. There is no trust. There's deep, deep distrust between the parties. I often hear, "You can't trust them." I'm just about to go to Washington tomorrow and meet with some government officials, and so on, and that's kind of like a mantra, which is, "You cannot trust the other side." My colleagues just got back from North Korea last week, and it was clear that the North Koreans do not trust the United States at all. Each has their own narrative about how the other side has always cheated, how they've always broken their word. There's this deep suspicion. The question is, trust as we know is so important, how do we begin to reverse that process? How do we begin, slowly, to build some trust?

[01:45:00]

Oftentimes, this is where the third side, this is where the third parties can play such an important role because neither side may trust each other, but they may both trust a third party. An example, in that situation I was describing earlier, between my Brazilian friend and his French partner turned opponent, enemy, there was no trust, but I was able to establish some modicum of trust with the representative of the other side. Together we were able to create a bridge of trust that there could be some clear communication that then led to an agreement.

I think, in this particular case, that may very well be necessary between the United States and North Korea. In the absence of trust, are there third parties, for example, just as one example, there's, as it turns out, the United States' interest in North Korea is represented by the country of Sweden. The United States has some trust for Sweden. The North Koreans also have some trust for Sweden. Sweden is in a role to be able to play, perhaps, a trusted intermediary. We need to look for ways to do that while we engage in the longer term process of each side. Can we send signals of trust to the other side? Can we test, do they actually mean what they say? If we relax, if the United States, for example, were to relax its military posture a little bit, could North Korea relax its military posture? We learn all sides, we all learn to take baby steps that each side can take that can begin to deescalate the situation. How do we identify those baby steps? How can we agree those baby steps so that neither side is taking too much risk in the situation by trusting the other side when there's clearly no trust at this point?

Thomas: I would love to add, on a more personal, or at least it looks like a more personal perspective, on trust. What do I actually say when I 'don't trust'? What does it mean not to trust? Because if relation is the underlying data connection, if I meet somebody, and it's really dangerous, or the person is not congruent with the words and the actions, or whatever, then I feel that something is not reliable, that something is not on, or somebody is lying, or somebody is saying something that wants to hurt me. There is an intuitive felt sense of the situation. But usually when we say, "I don't trust," it means that I say, "I don't feel." Then it's, again, very interesting—what am I saying? Because usually it starts with, okay, what am I not feeling in myself? Maybe, I'm afraid. Maybe, I'm... whatever, there's my own trauma playing, or there are different things.

I think it's very interesting to slow down the movie of life, and when I say I don't trust—I'm talking, also, now about everyday life situations—if I don't trust somebody, is it really that I don't trust this person, or is it that I start, in the presence of that person, I feel something, and I'm not aware of what I feel, and then I make that about the other person, I project the disconnect inside on to the other person? That's different from really sensing a danger.

[01:50:00]

I think, also, in a bigger, on a political landscape, it may be more complex, but I think, as a cultural learning, is trust and not trusting, and how much that's, again, based on my past, something that we as practitioners are going to dismantle more and more and more? Because either I feel a situation and then I feel that there is a danger or I don't feel the situation, but then when I say I don't trust you, I'm not saying anything about you, I'm just saying about myself that I feel disconnected. Or I disconnect from my feelings right now and my past, and I project that on to you. I think, it's a complex thing that I would love us to contemplate. Maybe we can talk next time more about the trust, because I think it's a very important... it runs so many situations, and I would love for us to take it a little bit more apart and see, what are the components of mistrust?

William: Very important, too. I think, trust, I would really love for us to talk more about trust and its different dimensions in the body and the emotions and the mind and so on, because to me, maybe, in some ways the crisis of our era is the distrust, the increased distrust of people for each other, for government, for the world, and this is, to me, a key role of the third side. How do we as a whole start to reconstruct and create a container of trust within which the difficult conflicts can be resolved and transformed? I know that a lot of you are mediators, are facilitators. You're playing that role of knitting together some modicum of trust within which conflict can then be more usefully dealt with, so thank you.