



BECOMING CONSCIOUSLY VIBRALINGUAL



BECOMING “vibralingual,” a word I coined almost ten years ago, means becoming increasingly fluent in several forms of vibrational communication. The word is akin to that of “multilingual”: fluent in understanding and speaking several languages. Currently, the most generative exploration of vibralingual skills is being supported by the Fetzer-funded Collective Wisdom Initiative (CWI).

Being vibralingual means proficiency in attending to those aspects of experience that percuss, create sound, or vibrate. It entails listening to and knowing that sound or vibration heard or felt in the moment is information that has meaning. Vibration, in other words, is communication. The sound of the breath, tone of voice, pounding of the heart, visual and audible repetition of a water spigot turning off and on, various textures of chirping exchanged by two or more birds, tightening of the gut—all are signals, indications of an individual’s or a group’s (or a flock’s) state of being

in the moment. For example, the “companion calls” of birds are the lyrical chirps you hear when birds are nearby and eating happily.

In this way they signal to each other: “All is well. I’m here, content. You’re there, content. *Chirp.*” But if a bird’s companion fails to respond with a resonant chirp, you might hear an agitated *chirp, chirp, chirp*: “Where the heck are you? I’m here eating berries. Aren’t you there eating berries, and if you’re not eating berries then are you being eaten!?!”

Being vibralingual means skillfully attending to such moments in flocks of birds or friends or co-workers—to listen, to receive, to find vibrational meaning—at least as much and as fluently as we attend to moments filled with words, linguistic meaning, and information. Attending to the five vibralingual elements of collective experience—breath, intention, tone, rhythm, and repetition—lends our ears to nuanced dynamics, behaviors, and flutterings at the door of the possible. ➔

RACHEL BAGBY

DISSOLVING CONFLICT WITH THE SENSES

Working with these five elements can be especially helpful in groups experiencing the potentially derailing dynamics of creative tension. Let's attend to our breath. Let's attend to the tones of our voices as we consider various agenda items before us. Let's attend to the intentions that we're bringing to our meeting, both individually and collectively. What is repeated as we speak? What do we notice about the polyrhythms of our engagement? What we notice as we attend to these "vibrations" tells us something about what's important to the whole.

Invite your collaborators to give voice to the slightest feeling of being stuck, or confused, or feeling pulled apart. Then invite everyone to notice the details of their breathing, and to try and sense the breathing of others nearby. What intentions are evident in the body language, in the vibe of the individual participants and group as a whole? Are people leaning into or drawing back from engagement in the endeavor?

What are the tones in the voices? Do you hear heat? Do you feel water? Do you wish for a cool wind? Is there a sense of presence or grounding or solidity? And, again, pay attention to the rhythms of repeating themes and images. If you hear something coming again and again, then consider taking a moment to say, "Ah, do we need to breathe into this element of our discussion or action in another way? It keeps coming back as though some aspect of what we've come together to create is not yet receiving the attention it needs."

Consistently attending to and communicating the five vibrational elements creates a shared language that allows a group to amplify those aspects of their interactions that are not limited to linguistic understanding of meanings. Sometimes attending to the kinesthetic, aural, or visual dynamics of a group in tension calls forward truly creative possibilities that would otherwise remain hidden.

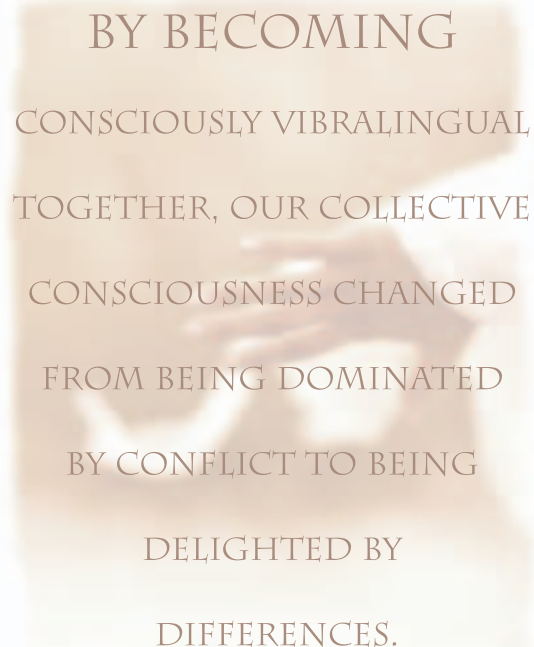
For example, at the CWI Sequoia Gathering (see sidebar) we fine-tuned our shared vibrational language each morning by chanting Sanskrit syllables while focusing on their related energy centers in the

body. Discovering how the repetition of specific tones and intentions affected our perceptions helped us diagnose the heat and insistent themes at the heart of a conflict within our group over scheduling. When the conflict threatened to bog us down for an entire evening, we consciously changed the rhythm and tone of our engagement. The group breathed fresh energy into the conflict by chanting *yam*, the seed syllable for the heart, for two minutes. To intensify the practice, two proponents of conflicting scheduling options chanted while sitting back-to-back in the center of the circle.

As we chanted, the contested schedule—held in place by what seemed like an entire roll of duct tape—slowly peeled off the wall and slumped to the floor. Eyes and smiles widened around the circle. When we ended, everyone in the group reported experiencing a shift in energy and an appreciation of perspectives that differed from theirs. The sharp-edged voices of a group in conflict became the undulating laughter of a group learning how to leverage its differences in the service of shared intentions.

By becoming consciously vibrational together, our collective consciousness changed from being dominated by conflict

to being delighted by differences. Doing so in ever-widening spheres of influence could potentially help our species evolve into one capable of emulating the ideal of indigenous medicine wheels, where all the energies of life are respected and a sense of wholeness, balance and wisdom can emerge.



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THE COLLECTIVE AND THE CREATIVE

If my experience and the feedback I've received from groups experimenting with becoming consciously vibrational is to be trusted, cultivating vibrationality amps up the courage to be radically creative. This feedback has come from groups as diverse as 90 mixed-race South Africans gathered on Robben Island (the infamous Apartheid-era prison) to study the dynamics of diversity to a continent-wide collection of thousands, both


in-person and via satellite, participating in the Bioneers conference of eco-pioneers and visionaries.

On Robben Island, I stood up and improvised a song about discord over our facilitators' authority, prompting other participants to remind the group about the role of singing in South Africa's freedom struggle. It also caused them to wonder how song could still be helpful at this stage in the country's evolution. Soon after, Afrikaner, Black, and Colored South Africans diffused another tense moment by joining their voices in singing the post-liberation national anthem. I was also drawn into conversations about the need to create new, shared music that reflected the new South Africa, because the older musical traditions were largely segregated.

Apparently, the more that we evoke and exercise vibrational understanding, the more we have access to liberating possibilities. Being consciously vibrational simultaneously loosens up perceptive filters born of our conditioning while inviting a resonant opening to a kind of vertical and horizontal expansion of the perceptual field, often accompanied by a pleurably rippling influx of creative ideas.

What is the music of such fertile moments, when people come together with a shared intention to attend vibra-

lingually to the service of the common good rather than heed the siren overtones of rabid consumerism? At our best, our collective actions can become as resonant as a singing bowl, with a similar clearing, opening effect. And, as is true with the ringing of a singing bowl, a group's vibrant creativity—informed by collective wisdom—requires a sense of emptiness, a lack of attachment to preconceptions, as an organizing principle. But, oh, the vibes that play in such receptive fields of resonant relationships often ring out with a deliciousness that sings through a group's very bones.

Collective wisdom—wisdom larger than one individual's insight—draws near in such moments, as if to say, "Here is a fertile field of people. Here are tenders of spirit. Let's plant this creative possibility, so needed now on earth, right here." 

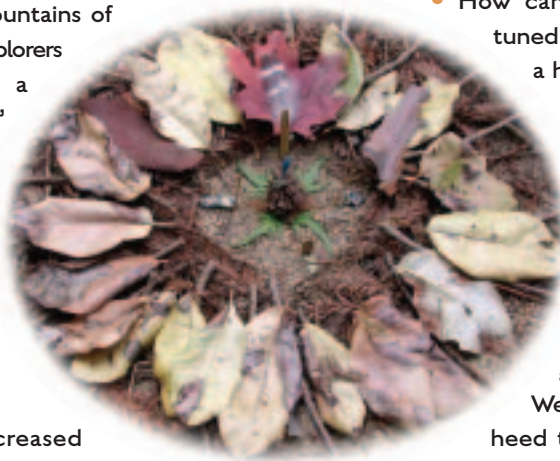
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IN JULY OF 2003, a group of eleven explorers and practitioners came together in a forest of redwoods—long-lived trees that propagate by fire and withstand lightning—in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California. We came together as explorers committed to journeying in a receptive space of "unknowing." We came also with the intent to begin mapping the domain of sound and vibration as it resides within the larger resonant field of collective wisdom.

Our intention was to live into the following questions:

- How does working with increased awareness of vibratory dimensions of group life enable apprehension of nonordinary insights and wisdom?
- How might attention to vibratory frequencies involving voice, sound, color, touch, rhythm, story, and image facilitate our understanding of the invisible dimensions



of group life? What influence might it have on a group's capacity to access collective wisdom?

- How can we consciously tune and be tuned in to groups in ways that allow for a higher intelligence to be present and amplified?

We recorded our explorations while breathing and sounding together for five days in those Sequoias, a magnificent earth altar and home to many sonorous, legged, winged, crawling, gurgling, singing, and silent beings.

We discovered ways to internationally heed the myriad tones of vibrational wisdom that breathe creative possibilities into everyday rhythms of our lives.

Excerpted/adapted from the "Listening Guide" to the Collective Wisdom Initiative's CD/booklet Becoming Consciously Vibrational.