

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

NAPMM Conference

Asheville, NC

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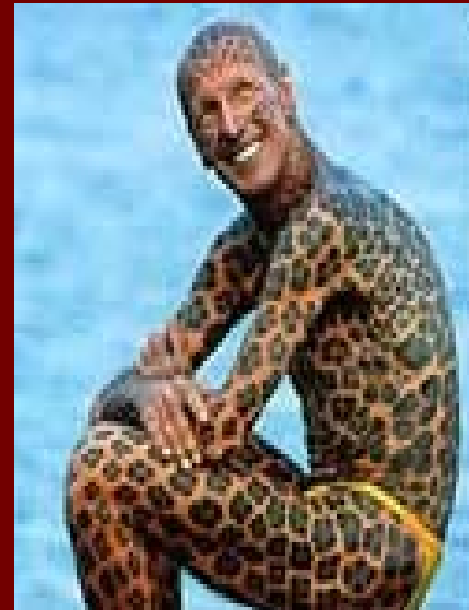
The Nature of Conflict

- The opportunities for misunderstandings are practically limitless.
- Not only do we have legitimate misunderstandings, but we misunderstand the very nature of conflict itself.

Develop Good Communication Skills

- LISTEN – you can't respond appropriately if you don't really understand the issue.
- You can't hear with a closed mind. Hearing is not the same as agreeing.
- Be clear in your response.

Treat everyone with respect.

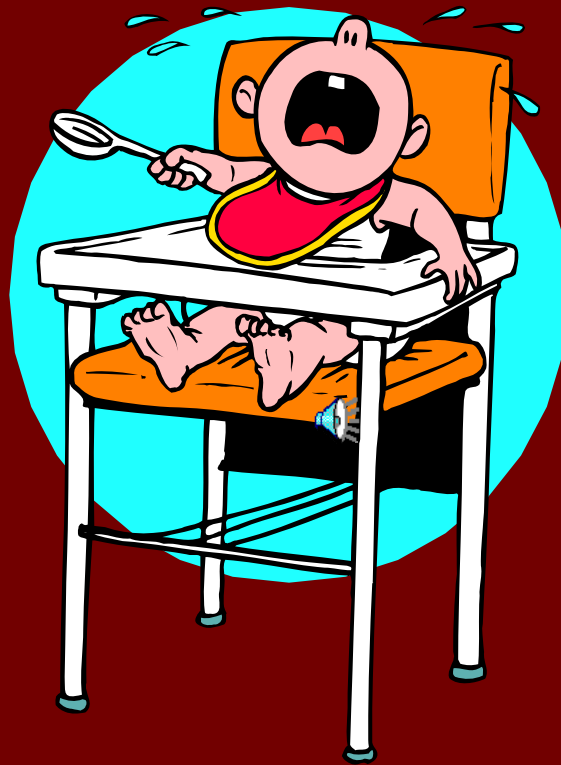


People are not influenced by events as much as they are by their personal perception of those events.

Control

- We can control ourselves.
- We can control the situation.

Believe me – we can't control
other people.



Control of Self

- Look to the yogis – breathe!
- It is always best to wait 3-5 seconds before responding.



Remember the universal sign of
friendliness.



- Know your own hot buttons.
- Pacing is important when a situation is escalating.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Practice tolerance (within limits).

Don't take it personally even when someone is talking about all of the incompetents at The Farmer's Market.



Controlling the Situation

- Listen – REALLY. Hearing and listening are not the same thing.
- Acknowledge their feelings.
- Step into their shoes.



Watch body
language – theirs
and yours.



- It's okay to apologize, even if you don't feel that you are wrong.
- Develop a sense of being on the same team with the other person.



Nothing lowers the level of conversation
more than raising the voice.

Stanley Horowitz



Anger

- Stay calm – it's better to limit the number of unreasonable people present.
- Remember that anger is a secondary emotion.
- Keep a moderate tone of voice.
- Keep yourself out of danger.

- Agreement is a disarming tool.
- Sometimes it is best to pass the person on to someone else.
- Address their **behavior**.
- Explain consequences of continuing disruptive behavior.

Real Problems

- Stay calm and keep others calm.
- Pass problem on to your supervisor or to external entities as needed.
- Safety first.

- Don't touch.
- Maintain physical space.
- Arrange signal.
- Pass information on about "regulars."

“Employees should use
their own best judgment at
all times.”

~ Complete Nordstrom Employee Manual

An Invitational Conflict Management Model

- The test for “invitational people” is to deal with CONFLICT in an effective and inviting manner. With this in mind, the process of the “Six C’s” was developed.
- This approach to managing conflict will not work in every situation, but it does give us a helpful model to use.



Goals for Conflict Resolution

RESOLVE:

- . . . At the lowest possible emotional level
- . . . With the least expense of energy
- . . . In an appropriate and caring manner
- . . . In a potentially growth producing way

(From *Inviting Educational Leadership* by John M. Novak,
2002)

Step 1: Concern

The first C deals with whether action is really necessary in a potential conflict situation. What may be at issue is really a preference rather than a concern.



Step 2: Confer

In managing conflict, we should aim to invite voluntary compliance with reasonable rules.

If this doesn't happen, we should initiate, in private, a conversation about what the concern is, why it is a concern, and what is proposed to resolve it and then obtain voluntary verbal compliance.

The +3 Approach

Establish positive non-verbal contact, then

1. "Michael, your arriving late to work keeps us from opening the market on time."
2. "Will you please arrive on time?"
3. "Will you do this for me?"

Step 3: Consult

The move to consultation is a move to a more formal stage of clear and direct talk. We remind the individual of what was agreed upon and assist them in coming up with an acceptable way to meet the agreement.

Step 4: Confront

Confrontation is an attempt to resolve the concern at a no-nonsense level. While respectful, we will point out that this situation has been addressed previously and repeatedly, that the student gave his or her word that it would be resolved, and that the problem still continues. It is here that logical consequences will be mentioned.

Step 5: Combat



Combat, as used here, is a verb meaning to reduce or eliminate the situation, not the person! Because the conflict has not been resolved at each of the lower levels, it is now time to follow through on consequences with direct, immediate, and firm action.

At this level, stakes are high and there can be winners and losers. Results are unpredictable. Having to combat a situation takes time and energy, so this level should be entered into carefully.

Step 6: Conciliate

Following the combating of a conflict, it is vital to restore a non-combative quality to the education environment. Former combatants and noncombatants need to find ways to carry on and possibly grow from what has taken place.



Three principles are used at this stage.

- Do no harm (avoid fanning the flames of tension).
- Allow some distance (this is not the time for “in your face” interactions).
- Start fresh.

Be Prepared

- We can't resolve everyone's concern to his/her satisfaction.
- Help people find other resources.
- Use outside resources for staff.

Process after
occurrences.



A Note on Culture

- Researchers (e.g., Hall 1959; Vargas 1986) identify high-contact cultures such as Arabs, Latin Americans, Greeks, Turks, French, and Italians, who usually keep small distances among themselves; and low-contact cultures who "stand further apart," like the Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Germans, Dutch, and North Americans (Vargas 1986:106).

Multi-Cultural Awareness

The PLATINUM RULE...

“Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.”

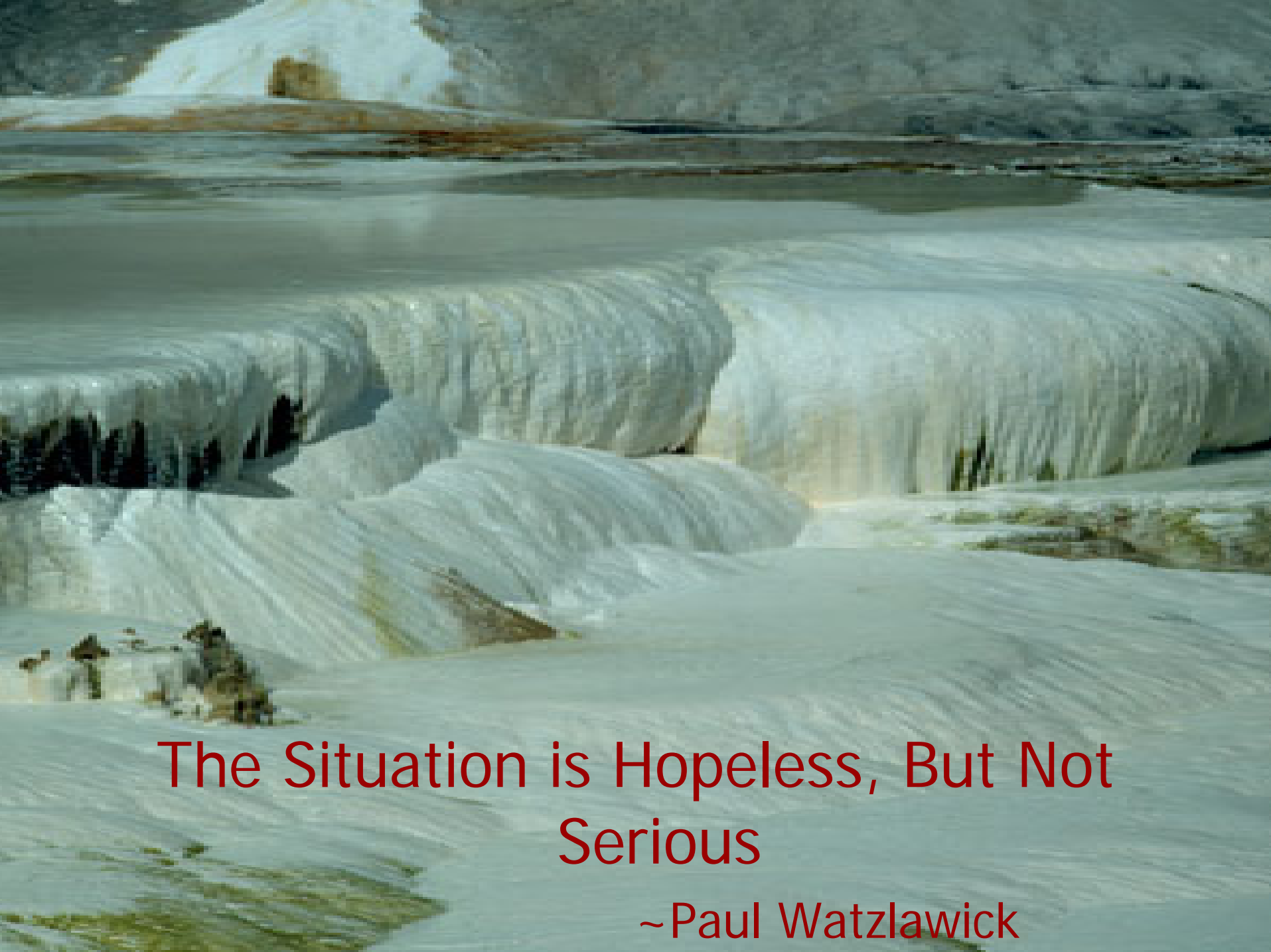
Scenarios

- Group Discussion

Conflict does take energy!

- Find ways to be personally and professionally inviting
- Create respite from the feelings engendered during conflictive situations
- Provide inviting moments for yourself and for others.

Guidance from the Masters

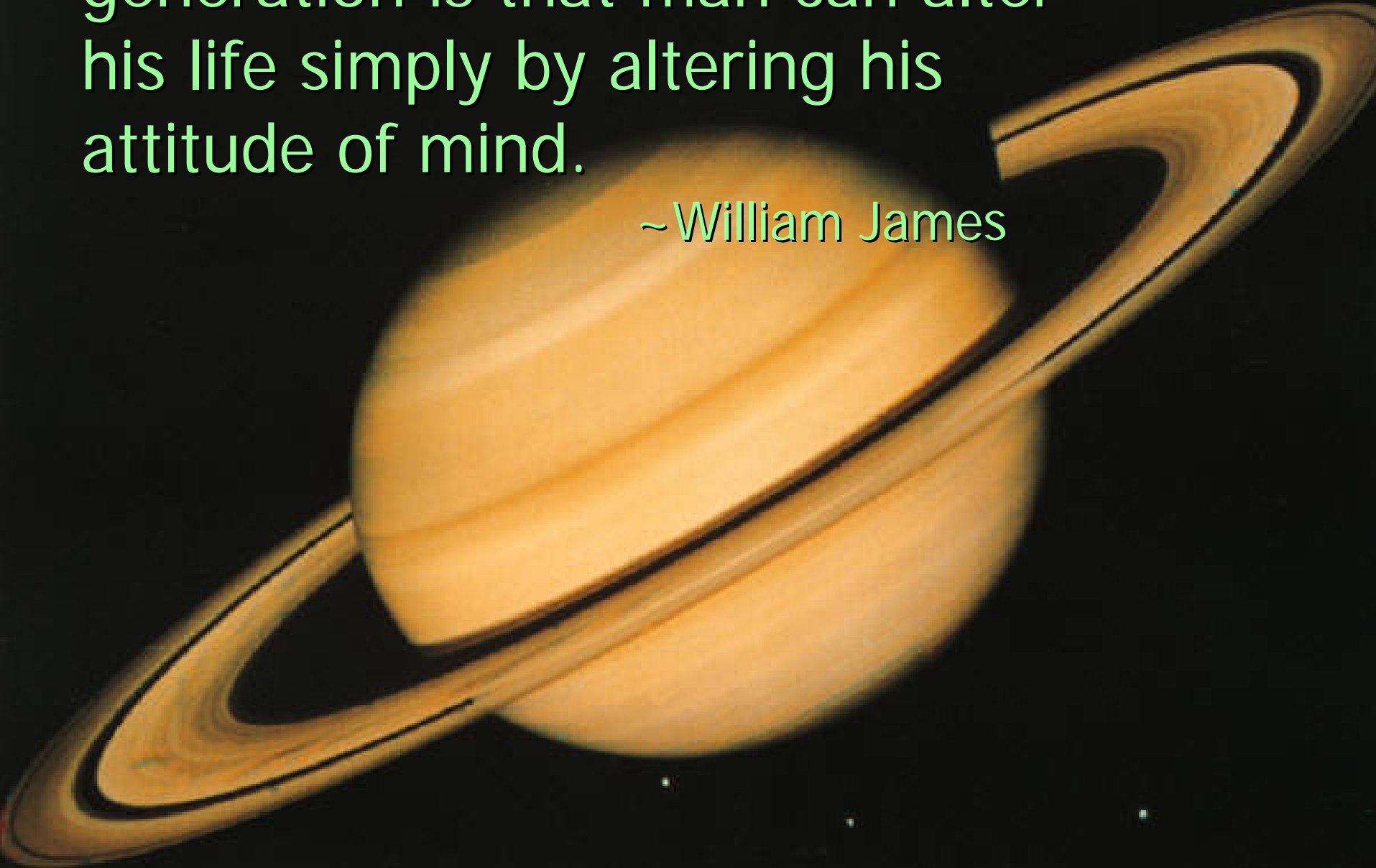


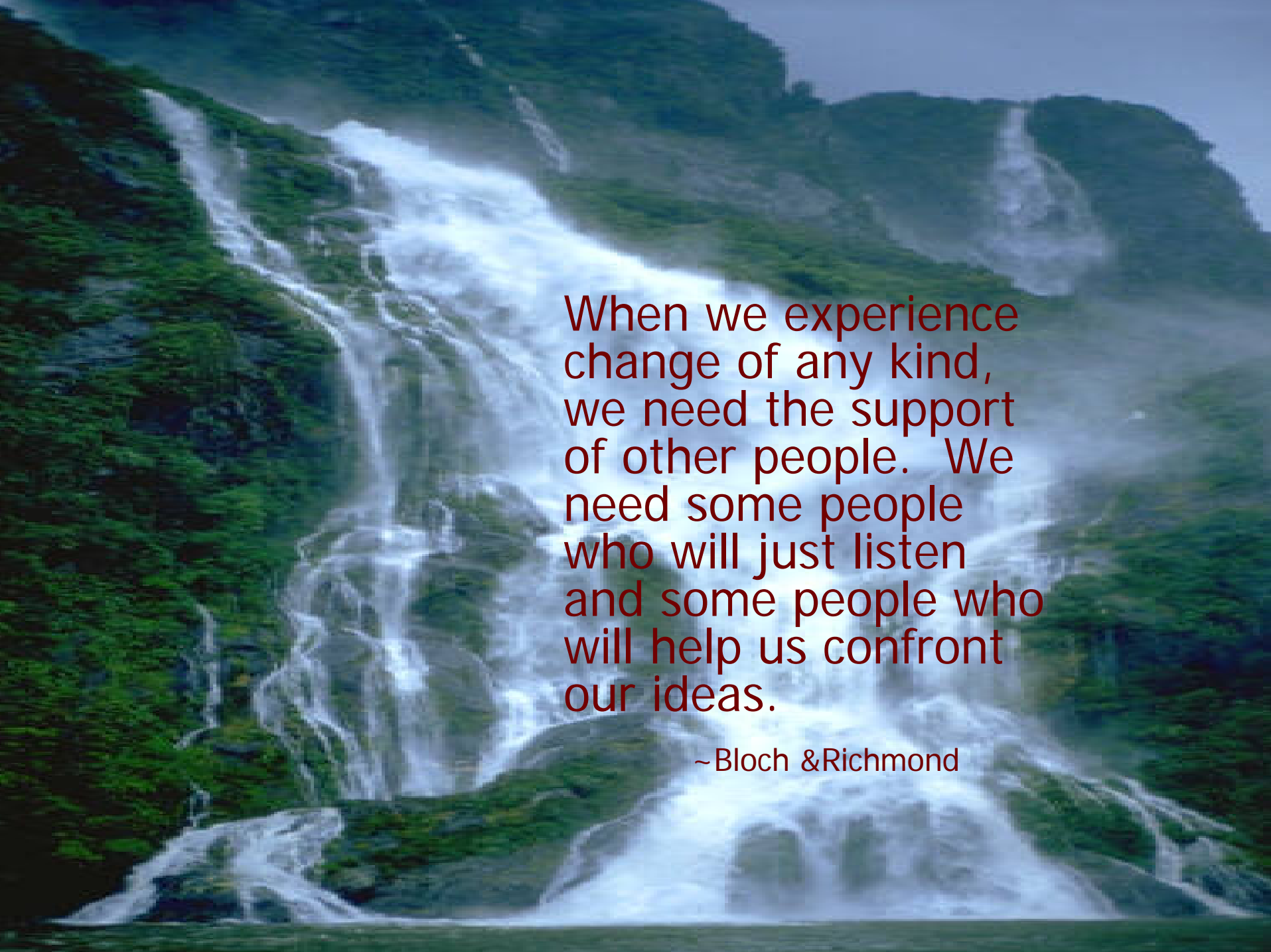
The Situation is Hopeless, But Not
Serious

~Paul Watzlawick

The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind.

~ William James



A large, multi-tiered waterfall cascading down a lush green mountain slope. The water is white and frothy as it falls, creating a misty atmosphere. The surrounding vegetation is dense and vibrant green. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

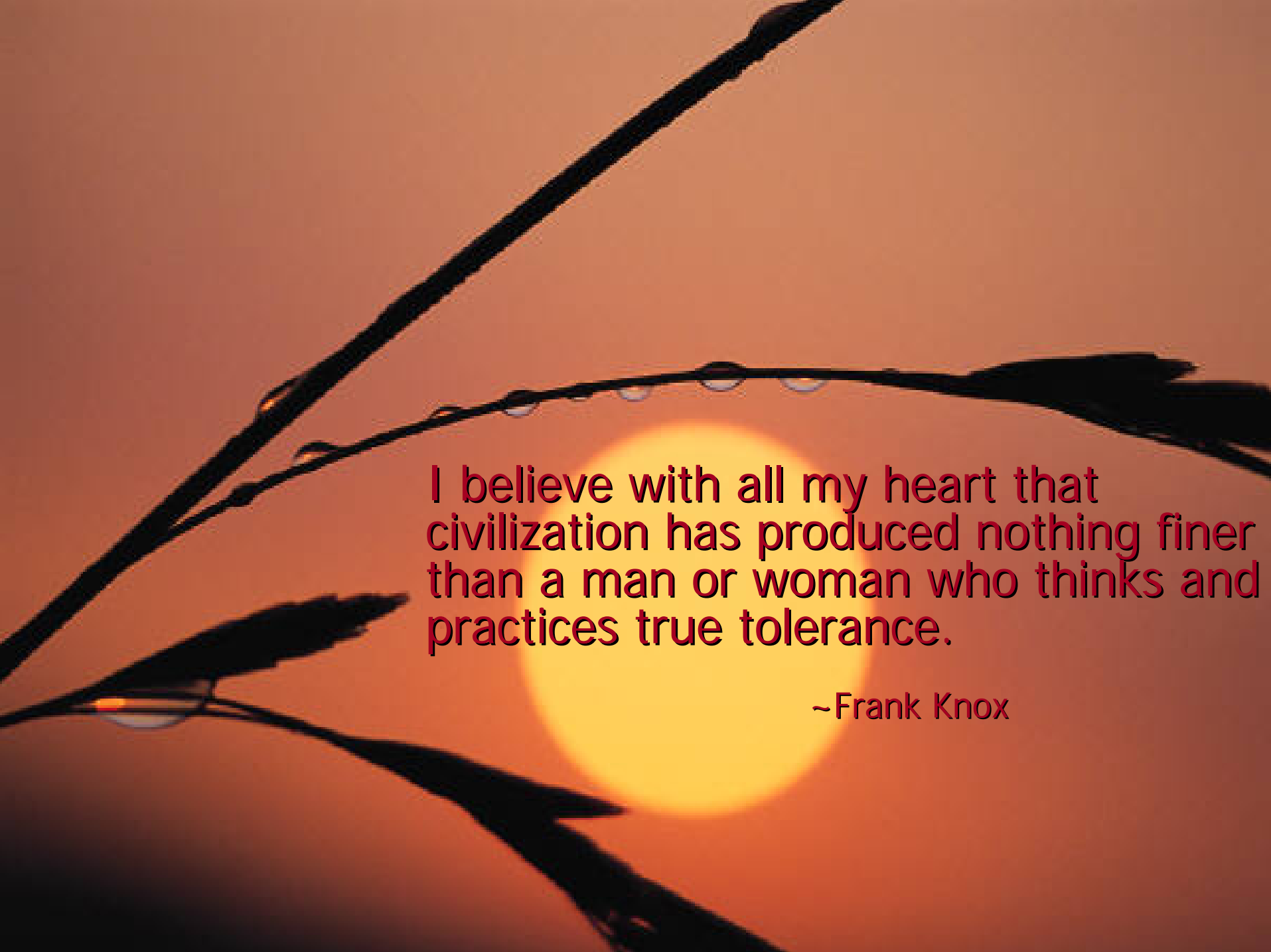
When we experience
change of any kind,
we need the support
of other people. We
need some people
who will just listen
and some people who
will help us confront
our ideas.

~Bloch & Richmond

Life can only be sustained by care in
relationships.

~Carol Gilligan



A photograph of a sunset with a bright orange sun in the center. Silhouetted branches with dew drops are visible in the foreground, creating a frame around the sun. The background is a gradient of orange and red.

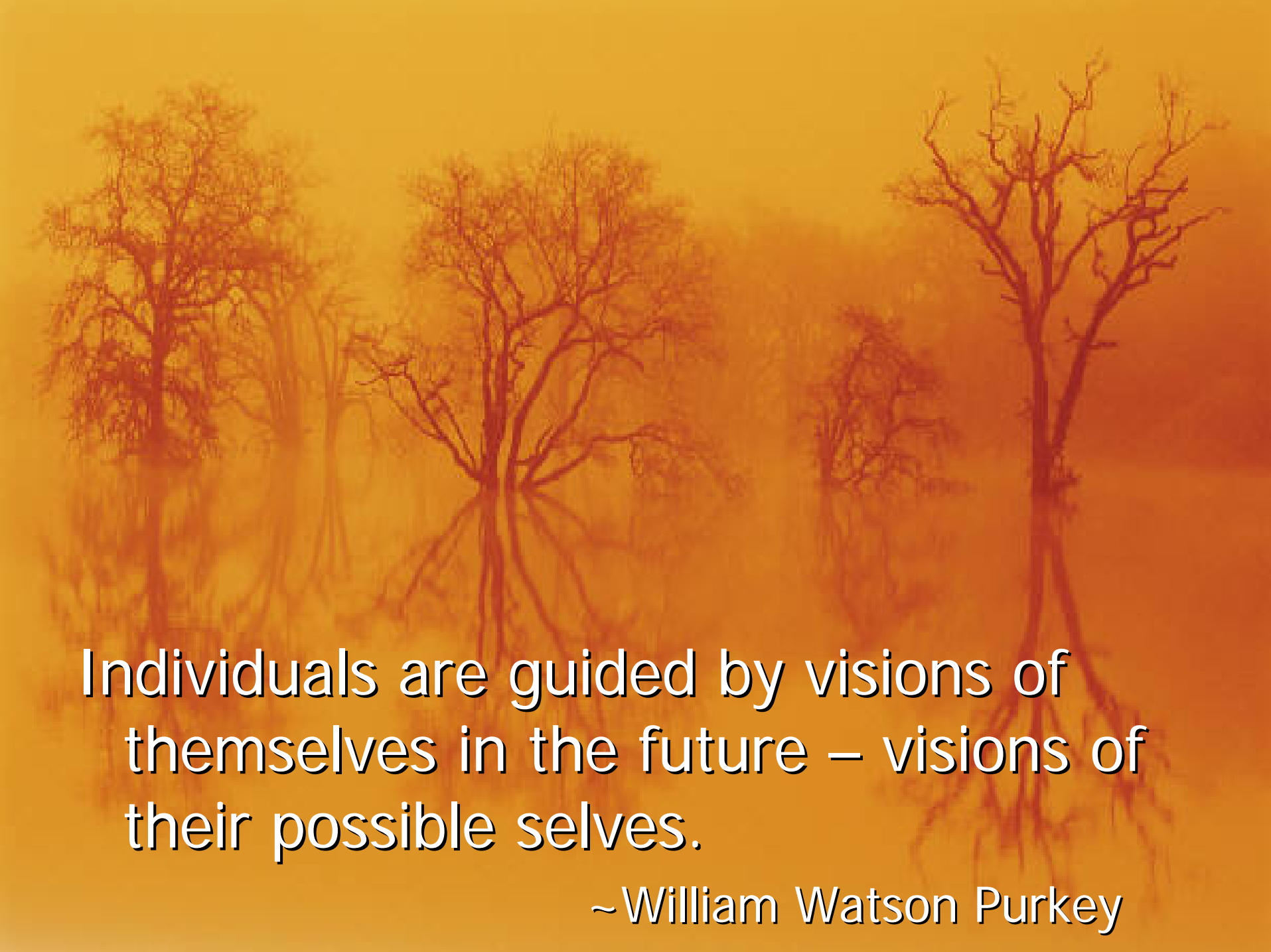
I believe with all my heart that civilization has produced nothing finer than a man or woman who thinks and practices true tolerance.

~Frank Knox



People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

~ Mother Teresa



Individuals are guided by visions of themselves in the future – visions of their possible selves.

~ William Watson Purkey





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