

SENIOR FELLOWS AND FRIENDS

Alert. Relaxed. Collegial.



Recap of 2/21/23 session with Estève Pannetier, Green Elephant *Transform Conflicts Into Trust with Metacognitive Communication*

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

Estève Pannetier has applied his deep grounding in behavioral science knowledge and tools in many different contexts. He began this work after trying to fix an old family conflict when he was a teenager, realizing after he was thrown out of the house that he was dealing with a black box he didn't understand at all. That led to the study and empirical research on which his work as an adult is based. It's clear that he stays in continuous learning mode.

His current venture is Green Elephant, a social enterprise that provides training, coaching, and consulting aimed at improving the quality of communication at four interconnected levels: Micro, Meso, Macro, and Mundo. Estève mentioned The Art of Hosting, a leadership approach that considers the same four levels as those that must be accounted for in order to respond to systemic complexity: the individual, the team, the organization or community, and the global. The goal is mindful intercultural communication, or Conscious Communication, that can overcome the unintentional divisions that so easily occur between people, groups, and cultures.

From Estève:

When each of us communicates, things are happening on four levels simultaneously:

- Verbal (Say & Write)
- Non-Verbal (Do & Act)
- Intentions (Feel & Intend)
- Mental Models (Think & Understand)

We were asked to guess the typical proportions of My (left-hand circle) blue and green statements to You (right-hand circle), and then Estève told us what his research indicated were optimal proportions:

- 75% green acknowledgement of the other's point of view, praise, transparency about intentions
- 20% blue statements – what I want
- 5% red statements – action for us to take

His point was that we get it backwards, communicating too much ego too early in the conversation, which leads to avoidable conflict. We have to unlearn how we use blue communication by developing micro-habits, and we have to get better at "talking green" and teach it in schools.

The color scheme also helps clarify problems that can be caused by feedback, which tends to start conflict when it's not solicited. The learning: ask for consent, e.g., by saying something like, "Would you be willing to receive feedback, and on what would it serve you best?" Nonviolent communication flows like this: Facts -> Feelings -> Needs. Don't confuse empathy with obedience; empathy involves *holding space*. Estève mentioned Otto Scharmer's Presencing, the art of holding space without giving your opinion.

Look at shared purpose and shared values – where are we the same and how can we grow that? Focus on similarity, not difference.

From the group:

One participant who serves on an international board mentioned that it would be nice to have a better way to deal with misinterpretations that often arise in meetings. One piece of good advice we heard was to start by assuming the best when intentions are unknown.

Another related a situation that comes up in her role as a project manager, when it's necessary to get the team to stop long enough to see that there's a problem without acting like a buzzkill – to detect and defuse conflict early.

We sometimes listen to respond, and we listen from who we are.

How do we know when to give more benefit of the doubt?

It's important to build relationships, which make it more likely that we'll be given the benefit of the doubt.

The Platinum Rule came up: "Treat others the way *they* want to be treated."

When things are digital and even more so with remote work, everything has to be explicit. Start with curiosity, not assumptions.

In the recap, let's emphasize the point about giving others (and ourselves) some grace when listening and sharing.

In closing:

As Estève says, we must take personal responsibility for the individual s**t we bring to the world. It can't be okay not to. And we need to approach that process with empathy for ourselves and others.

The Arbinger Institute came up in this context. Two members of the Senior Fellows and Friends network taught Arbinger's Leadership and Self-Deception in American University's Key Executive Leadership Program for several years, and at least one of this session's participants has been planning to read it.

The insightful HUD visualization is available at <https://greenelephant.org/>, along with a number of short videos that explain the Green Elephant approach. Coaching and community (via LinkedIn group, YouTube, and elsewhere) are available to anyone who wants to take a deeper dive and practice together.

Participant affiliations

ASPA National Capital Area Chapter
BM Martin Solutions
Department of Education/Federal Student Aid
Department of Education/Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
Department of Health and Human Services/ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Engaged Organizations
Green Elephant Oy
International Game Technology/Agile Center of Excellence
Procurement Pros Group, LLC
Securities and Exchange Commission

Participants joined from Helsinki, Finland; Hyderabad, India; Andover, MA; Valencia, PA; Colorado Springs, CO; and the Washington, DC Metro Area.

Each time, we begin with a round of introductions to warm up the space. Afterward, participants are sent a "Who was in the room" message to facilitate ongoing connection. Please consider joining us in the future. If you know of others at any level of experience who are in favor of better public leadership, who would like to be part of this flat conversational network, please invite them to contact me so I can add them to the list.

Sincerely,
Kitty Wooley
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HOW WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Cooperating freely, learning on the fly, empowering ourselves, and navigating unknown waters beyond the edge of the comfort zone are the name of the game. We began our public leadership journey in calm harbors, and now we're surrounded by the white water of constant change. Business as usual isn't working well enough. We choose to gather our strengths and lead from wherever we are, applying our best efforts to the challenges of our time. Are you coming?

Header photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kayakers_in_Redwood_City,_California.jpg