The Regenerative Practitioner™ Video Transcript

Three Lines of Work
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Regenerative development derives much of its power from understanding how life and living systems work and evolve. Nested and interdependent relationships are a fundamental quality of how all life organizes and sustains itself. Arthur Koestler coined the term holarchies for this embeddedness of natural entities, which we often symbolize as three nested circles. When we drop the quality of embeddedness out of our thinking, we are no longer working in and for a living world—we are no longer able to work regeneratively.

We see holarchies or nested systems everywhere in the physical world—a family within a neighborhood within a community; cells within organs within organ systems in a body. Each of the projects we work on is nested within a holarchy. To do regenerative work, we need to be able to hold the interrelationships between and among at least three levels of system in our minds at the same time. This is essential in order to work consciously and creatively with the complexity of living systems. Being able to define and understand those distinct and dynamic interdependent levels is the key to tapping new sources of creativity for working on regeneration.

Because humans are also living systems, that same principle applies to the holarchies or nested relationships we form in our work lives. The Three Lines of Work Framework is a developmental
holarchy that depicts the nature of relationships required to support and sustain regenerative work.

Third Line Work has to do with working to improve the health and value of some larger system. In Second Line Work, I’m working to grow the capability of my work community or team to serve our shared third line aim. First Line Work has to do with working on the necessary growth in myself that is required to really make a difference at these other two levels.

This framework is an instrument for integrating and aligning the developmental work we are doing at all three levels—for aligning our personal and professional development, our values and the work we do in the world. The premise behind the framework is that if we are to be agents of our own evolution, we must pursue all three lines of developmental work together and simultaneously. If we drop away any one line of work, eventually the others also collapse and we become increasingly mechanical in how we think and work.

To test this, think about people you have known or read about who worked selflessly and with dedication on a great cause, but were unconscious of how their own fluctuating state of being impacted their cause. Or about what happens when people work diligently on growing their own consciousness but never bring that into a life or work arena where they seek to make a contribution to the development of something larger than themselves.

Becoming a regenerative practitioner is as much about developing the regenerative capability and potential of ourselves and our teams as it is about developing those qualities in our projects. The Three Lines of Work Framework helps us design work processes that can more effectively sustain alignment among all three lines of developmental work.