

THE HEART –

Rob inserts inspirational quotes throughout the book.

I would like to share one of the quotes at the beginning of this section: This one is from Ted Trainer:

“To save the planet, we do not need miraculous technical breakthroughs, or vast amounts of capital. Essentially we need a radical change in our thinking and behavior.”

The Heart section talks about how Peak Oil and Climate Change can be intense and distressing; both in their implications and in the effect they will have on us.

Alongside an understanding of this, it covers how it is important not to pretend that we can keep our awareness of these issues on a purely intellectual 'head' level, but that we need to address the 'heart' too, ...acknowledging that this is disturbing information, that it affects us, and that how it affects us in turn shapes how we respond - or don't.

Also important (and explored in this section) is the concept of visioning, and the power that a vision of the future can have.

Too often environmentalists try to paint apocalyptic visions of the future as a way of scaring people into action.

The question this part of the book asks is what would happen if we came at this the other way round, painting a picture of the future so enticing that people instinctively feel drawn towards it.

Rob sets out a vision to engage creatively with this process of adaptation to energy descent, - seeing our future in increased resilience, more localized economies and greatly reduced energy consumption.

Ultimately, at the heart of this section is the understanding that the scale of this transition requires particular inner resources, not just an abstract intellectual understanding.

The Heart section covers 5 chapters -

- How peak oil can affect us
- Understanding the Psychology of Change
- Harnessing the Power of Positive Vision
- A Vision for 2030: Looking back over the Transition and
- Kinsale - A First Attempt at Community Visioning

The first Chapter is titled:

5 - How Peak Oil and Climate Change Affect Us - 'Post Petroleum Stress Disorder'

For some it is a traumatic shock - for others an affirmation of what they always suspected. Rob lists 8 different ways peak oil and climate change might affect us:

1. Clammy palms or nausea and mild palpitations

Finding out about something with such profound ramifications for the way we live can be a profound shock to the system. There are certain ways our bodies respond to this, and for many people the first manifestation of this disorder is physical discomfort.

2. A sense of bewilderment and unreality

This is where the nature of the emptiness of reality is revealed and we are forced to let go of the understanding to which we have become attached. What we had seen as being permanent and real is in fact a fragile illusion. When you see the illusory nature of the world around you, it can leave you feeling bewildered.

3. An irrational grasping at unfeasible solutions

This is when someone has a confident belief that there is a silver bullet out there that will enable business-as-usual to continue uninterrupted, steadily growing our economies ad infinitum.

Richard Heinberg calls this: 'Waiting for the Magic Elixir'

4. Fear

We should not lose sight of the fact that for many people this is a very frightening subject. Indeed, one could argue that if you don't find it scary, you haven't really got it. For some, that fear can be paralyzing, and for others it can trigger a shut-off mechanism. It is important that we don't just dump potential scary information on people, but rather we need to allow an exchange of information and room for people to digest what they have been told.

5. Outbreaks of nihilism and/or survivalism

For some, peak oil can affirm their long-held belief that people are inherently selfish anyway and what is the point - we've all had it.

The survivalist response differs in that rather than thinking it is not worth doing anything, it assumes that one should prioritize self and loved ones above all else, that one should design for one's own survival - this response is a particularly North American one.

Ultimately, any response that is sufficient to the scale of the challenge is about coming home, about being aware that we are a part of the networks around us, and that we need to nurture and rebuild them, rather than imagining that we can survive independently of them.

6. Denial

There is no way of completely avoiding denial, as none of us is beyond it. It pops up in all kinds of unexpected guises, and it is a natural reaction.

It becomes a problem when it *closes* us to the realities of the issue, and *inhibits* our ability to respond.

Denial is a natural response, but we need to remain vigilant to it.

7. Exuberant optimism - Bring it on!!

As the Hirsch Report identifies, to make the transition away from the oil-based economy will require at least ten years, preferably twenty and a failure to adequately prepare would be disastrous. Responding to peak oil with exuberant optimism needs to be balanced with an appreciation of the massive challenge it presents.

8. The 'I always told you so' syndrome

The temptation to say "I told you so" can also mean that we neglect to *really analyze* the strengths and weaknesses of our proposed solutions in the context of diminishing net energy.

We need to really think through the implications of our proposals, and not remain too attached to our long-cherished beliefs and ideas.

We may find instead that by letting go of them we actually come up with something better and more appropriate to a culture in transition.

The next chapter goes into depth about:

6 - Understanding the Psychology of Change

Here Rob talks about the whys and hows of successes and failures in making change happen. He delves into where it has been successful and why - and why it is important to know what it entails to bring change about. He gives several examples - many from the field of addiction.

Chris Johnstone is interviewed in this chapter where he is asked how and why the work of addiction and change can be applied to the issues around peak oil and climate change. Chris has written a book - Find your Power; he edits *The Great Turning Times*, and holds workshops called: *The Work that Reconnects*.

The Transition approach is, in many ways, informed by some of these insights.

The Stages of Change model was developed by psychologists Carlo DiClemente and James Prochaska in the early 1980s, they wanted to map out a framework for understanding

change that could apply to many different types of behavior and that could also be used by people from varying theoretical backgrounds. For this reason it became known as the 'trans-theoretical approach'.

It holds an obvious idea: change doesn't happen all at once. Rather it occurs in increments or stages. (HANDOUT)

At the top of this page is a small map that lays out the path of how change might occur through these stages. It can be a useful in finding where people might be in their journey of change and what is needed for recovery.

- Pre-contemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance
- And the Relapse and Recycling Stage

This chapter lays out the understanding about these different stages, makes it easier to see what might be blocking change, and what the strategies might be for moving forward.

What the addictions field is good at is working with and understanding resistance to change.

During this chapter Hopkins talks about our addiction to oil. The value of recognizing dependence (or addiction) is that it allows you to anticipate, and deal with, the additional obstacles to change that this brings. Recognizing oil dependence makes it easier to understand why it might be difficult to wean ourselves off our oil habit, while also pointing us towards proven strategies from the addictions field that might help us move forward.

Another example of ways to deal with mixed feelings was an approach called Motivational Interviewing. By providing a listening space where someone can voice both their concerns and their resistances, ambivalence is brought into view where it can be dealt with. This helps people get clearer about what they really want.

Chris Johnstone, when asked in his interview about how insights from addictions could be utilized *practically* by Transition Initiatives, boiled it down to 3 principles:

1. Pay attention to the steps of change that happen *inside* people.

Giving people information isn't enough - you must pay attention to the *steps* of change and *the blocks* to change. We must address issues like motivation, resistance and ambivalence. (Ex: Heart and Soul groups)

2. Create spaces for people to feel heard in making their own arguments for change.

A core insight of **Motivational Interviewing** is that when people make their own argument for change, they talk themselves into tackling an issue.

When we express our concerns, we talk ourselves into addressing them. When we give voice to our visions, we identify the destinations we want to move towards. And by describing the steps we can take, we prepare ourselves for action.

3. If a change seems too difficult, have a preparation stage for training ourselves.

The Preparation phase is where we train ourselves to strengthen our capacity to respond.

Transition Initiatives are strengthened when they take account of **both the inner and outer dimensions of change**. Without this, when we encounter resistance to change we're in danger of falling into complaint and blame, rather than developing understanding and insightful responses.

Here is when the book gets into the FRAMES model (devised by Miller and Sanchez). It offers a template for how we can apply insights from addiction to practical responses to energy descent.

In essence, the FRAMES model comprises six elements commonly included in brief interventions to addiction that have shown to be particularly effective.

FRAMES is an acronym for Feedback, Responsibility, Advice, Menu of options, Empathy, and Self-efficacy:

Feedback is offering the client an honest assessment of their addiction problem and its potential consequences - Ex: the *End of Suburbia*, a frank assessment of the peak oil challenge

Responsibility relates to making an addict aware of the degree of personal responsibility that breaking the addiction will require. The emphasis here is on individual responsibility and choice, rather than merely telling people what they should do.

Clear **Advice** needs to be offered to break an addictive pattern. It should be given as a recommendation not as a prescription; firstly, advice to individuals for modifying their own lifestyles, secondly, as community-scale strategies for energy descent.

Menu of options - In order to feel ownership and a sense of responsibility for an Energy Descent Action Plan, people need to feel that they have explored the alternatives. Scenario planning and visioning both enable people to project forward and explore different possible outcomes.

Empathy - What is now accepted as better practice is for the role of the counselor to be supportive, friendly, encouraging and empathetic. Similarly, any approach that seeks to engage a significant proportion of the population in responses to energy descent has to skillfully engage with people and instill a sense of optimism regarding the possibility of change, rather than berating them for their planet-wrecking ways.

Self-efficacy - the term self-efficacy refers to an individual's personal judgment of his or her own ability to succeed in reaching a specific goal - like reducing their degree of oil dependency. Building a sense of 'can do' is essential in catalyzing change on the scale we are talking about.

Here is another quote that I pulled out - from Willis Harman: *“Throughout history, the really fundamental changes in societies have come about not from the dictates of governments and the results of battles, but through vast numbers of people changing their minds, sometimes only a little bit.”*

The next chapter is called

7 – Harnessing the Power of Positive Vision

Rob Hopkins begins this chapter talking about how we are only just beginning to scratch the surface of the power of a positive vision of an abundant future: one which is energy-lean, time-rich, less stressful, healthier and happier.

Being able to associate images and a clear vision with how a powered down future might be is essential.

According to Rob, environmentalists have often been guilty of presenting people with a mental image of the world's least desirable holiday destination. The logic and the psychology are all wrong.

We have become so accustomed to campaigning against things that we have lost sight of *where it is we want to go*.

Visioning has the added benefit of counteracting despondency. (Climate change and peak oil can be terrifying, bewildering or seen as inevitably catastrophic.)

Creating a positive vision works in interrelated ways:

Tom Atlee's work is given as an example - something Atlee called an '**alternative story field**' - it is where you begin to formulate what a desirable sustainable world might look like. He talks of the potential power of bringing together activists, creative writers and journalists to form 'think-tanks' that *create new stories* for our times.

What Atlee calls 'imagineering' is the creation of what he terms *The Ecotopian Grapevine Gazette*. The *Gazette* is described as containing imaginary news stories about events or about innovators that have not yet happened, but which people *want* to have happen, and *written* as if they *have* happened. At the end of each article in the *Gazette*, he puts the contact name of someone readers could call and participate in making that story a reality.

The telling of *new* stories is central to visioning.

Another quote – this time from Henry David Thoreau: “*If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost, that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.*”

Near the tail end of this chapter Hopkins gives examples of 5 people's visions for the future - and a quote from Dennis Meadows, one of the authors of the Limits to Growth series of books, he said: “*If you think about the degree of change you saw in the last 100 years – social, technical, cultural, political, environmental, all those changes – it's less than what you'll see in the next twenty years.*” Rob really wanted to make the point that these are extraordinary times.

8 - A Vision for 2030: Looking Back Over the Transition

Hopkins **contributes** to all this visioning idea in the next chapter "**A Vision for 2030: Looking Back Over the Transition,**" It consists of newspaper articles from various times along the *future* continuum.

Here are a few examples from the book - please, just pass them around -

These articles also make it is clear that this is a movement with a sense of humor and a sense of fun as well as mission.

Richard Heinberg is famously quoted as saying that the Transition Movement looks "more like a party than a protest march."

9- Kinsale - A First Attempt at Community Visioning

Hopkins explores the first attempt at creating a community-scale vision by students at Kinsale Further Education College in early 2005. This project has since become the foundation and the inspiration for the rapidly growing Transition movement.

At the heart of the Transition movement is the core message carried over from the Kinsale project - that alongside the desire for change, we need to create a vision of where we want to go.

Joel Barker said it well: "Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision just passes the time; vision with action can change the world."

The Head

This section includes an excellent summary of peak oil and climate change, and why these “twin challenges” need to be addressed together. “Climate change says we should change, whereas peak oil says we will be forced to change.” Hopkins also surveys a spectrum of “possible ways forward,” details the necessity of rebuilding resilience, not just cutting emissions, and the inevitability and the opportunities of relocalizing our lives.

Hopkins thoroughly explores the implications of the insight that peak oil, the point at which world oil production reaches its maximum and then goes into terminal decline, is the critical point for an oil-dependent society, rather than when the oil is all gone. As Patrick Whitehead observes in his review of the book in *Permaculture* magazine, “If you want to know what all the fuss is about or to explain it convincingly to others without having to trawl through long books and obscure websites, look no further.” This in itself makes the book extremely valuable in this age of information overload and busy lives.

Resiliency is the ability of a system, such as a community, to absorb shocks, such as the effects of peak oil and climate change, and continue to function. Our present condition of being dependent on long supply lines and liquid fuels may be understood as the antithesis of resiliency. Hopkins reminds us of the elements of resiliency that once gave our communities fundamental self sufficiency in the necessities of life, and points to the many new understandings, such as Permaculture, that we may employ to build a new and richer resiliency in the present. Convincing arguments are advanced that with the advent of peak oil, the debate about local versus global economic strategies is effectively over. All the lines of our present situation converge in the need to rebuild our lives and our economies in our communities and our local region.

The Heart

This is the heart of book in both senses. I believe it is the principles and practices here that will potentiate and give staying power to Transition Town communities as awareness and understanding flower into sustained community action. Here you will find a rich and convincing exploration of the logic, the psychology and the basic common sense of the energizing power of a positive vision in driving actions. The psychology of change and the way people respond when faced with a “challenging reality” such as peak oil are also well mapped. Numerous anecdotes relate these principles to their real-world verification in the self-sustaining energy of the Transition process in communities in the UK and elsewhere.

In one of the useful figures, this one comparing conventional environmentalism and the transition approach, one of the contrasting pairs is “fear, guilt and shock as drivers for action” and “hope, optimism and proactivity as drivers for action.” To mobilize to bring a positive vision of the future into being, we need to be able to attach images and feelings to that vision. Hopkins contributes to this in the chapter “A Vision for 2030: Looking Back Over the Transition,” consisting of newspaper articles from various times along the future continuum. These articles also make it clear that this is a movement with a sense of humor and a sense of fun as well as mission. Richard Heinberg is famously quoted as saying that the Transition Movement looks “more like a party than a protest march.”

The Hands

This section explores the philosophical underpinnings of the Transition Movement and quickly moves to the nuts and bolts of how to start a Transition Initiative in your own community. Everything you need to know to get started is here, including the “7 Buts,” common beginning questions, and the Twelve Steps of Transition beginning with “forming an initiating committee” and ending with #12, writing an Energy Descent Action Plan, at which point the transition of the community truly begins. Inclusive public process such as “Open Space” is explored, as well as the fundamentals of launching “The Great Reskilling” – reviving and extending skill sets, preparing us for a more self-reliant and more hands-on world.