

Adapted from the Emergent Strategy Exercise by adrienne maree brown at the Global Art Forum 10: The Future Was Collective in Dubai April, 2016.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIFPEWDDDAc>, exercise begins at 21:25.

I recently met Adrienne Maree Brown, social activist and educator in New York. She recently published a book called Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds and I want to do an exercise with you that I saw her do at the Global Forum in Dubai. The exercise is a really great way to remind us that we are all in this goal for social change together, and that this begins with the opportunity to be a witness to each other's lives. Together we are co-creating the future that we desire, one that is more equitable, and more humane.

Step 1 – Set Up

- **30 seconds:** Everyone stand up, and turn to face someone who you don't already know. Someone you didn't come here with. Someone you've never worked with.

Don't run away if you are terrified by other people. Just notice that terror and don't say anything. Just shut up and be totally quiet. Totally quiet. This is going to be awkward only for like two minutes.

Step 2 – Acknowledge

- **30 seconds:** The first thing you should notice is if you are able to stand – face to face – with this person which means your forehead and your heart, and your toes would line up with this person.
- **1 minute:** Second, notice the connection between the two of you. Are you crossing your arms, are your hands in your pocket? Are you doing anything else that's kind of a blocking move? Just relax yourself. Let your arms drop to the sides. Be in your body, and these are the ways you signal to someone, "Oh you're not a danger to me in this moment, and I'm not a danger to you in this moment."
- **2 minutes:** So now I want you to focus on each other. You don't have to look at me anymore. Focus on the other person in front of you. Forget everyone else in the room. Really tune in to this person in front of you. Notice how FANTASTIC their humanity looks to you. This is a miraculous creature. You could never recreate this person. They have the whole life of experience spilling out of them that you don't know about. Think about what they've survived – about what they have already created. And I want you to extend to this person that their life is worthwhile. Just their existence is worthwhile, and even miraculous. That you are looking at an element of the divine. And here's the more awkward part that YOU are being seen as the element of the divine – a creator, a co-creator of the future, and that this person might be relying on you for the future they need. Just consider it. Again, notice your body. Are you tense, are you giggling? Are you looking away? Allow yourself to open more to this person.

Step 3 – Connect

- **2 minutes:** One way to do that is to think there's a little nexus, a little line between your heart and this person's heart. You can do this with your eyes open or with your eyes closed whichever is more comfortable. This is not me saying this. This is science. Barbara Smith teaches us that the heart creates a vibration ten feet around our bodies in every direction. Strongest directly in front of us. So you are in this person's vibrational field and they are in yours. And there is a little channel between your hearts and just imagine what you would need to do to fully clear it. To totally forgive this person for anything they've ever done wrong. To totally be forgiven. To totally release the stereotypes that you've been taught about this person and to let yourself be seen without the stereotypes they've been taught of you. Then imagine how clear it would have to be to co-create with this person a future where both of you could exist.

Step 4 – Share

- **1 Minute:** Take a moment – the person with the longest hair is going to share first. So take a moment to figure that out. The person with the longest hair will share one thing that you have already created in this world. Briefly.

The short haired person says thank you – it's hard to create in this world, and this person has done it. So just say thank you for creating, for making something and launching it into the world.

Now switch!

- **1 minute:** Short haired person, it's time for you to share something that you have created. Short or no hair, whatever you've got going on. What is one thing you have already created in this world?

Step 5: Thank you

- **1 minute:** Thank your partner for this experience. The person that you just spent this time with might become your lifelong friend, or collaborator, or you may never see them again. The more likely thing is that you may never see each other again. We have converged here in Minneapolis but from here we go back to our homes, our communities, our families so you may not see the person you just shared this experience with again. That's what normally happens. We run into each other we exchange ideas, thoughts, we fall in love a little bit and then we keep moving on with life. So "I wish you well" is a good offering. I wish you well in all that you create, and in your life.

And this is what we want to leave you with. The radical idea that we are all in this together, whether we see each other always or never again. We are connected in this universe, through our hearts, and our work. You are not alone.

And as such, Sarah and I and everyone at Groundswell, invite you to co-create the future with us.