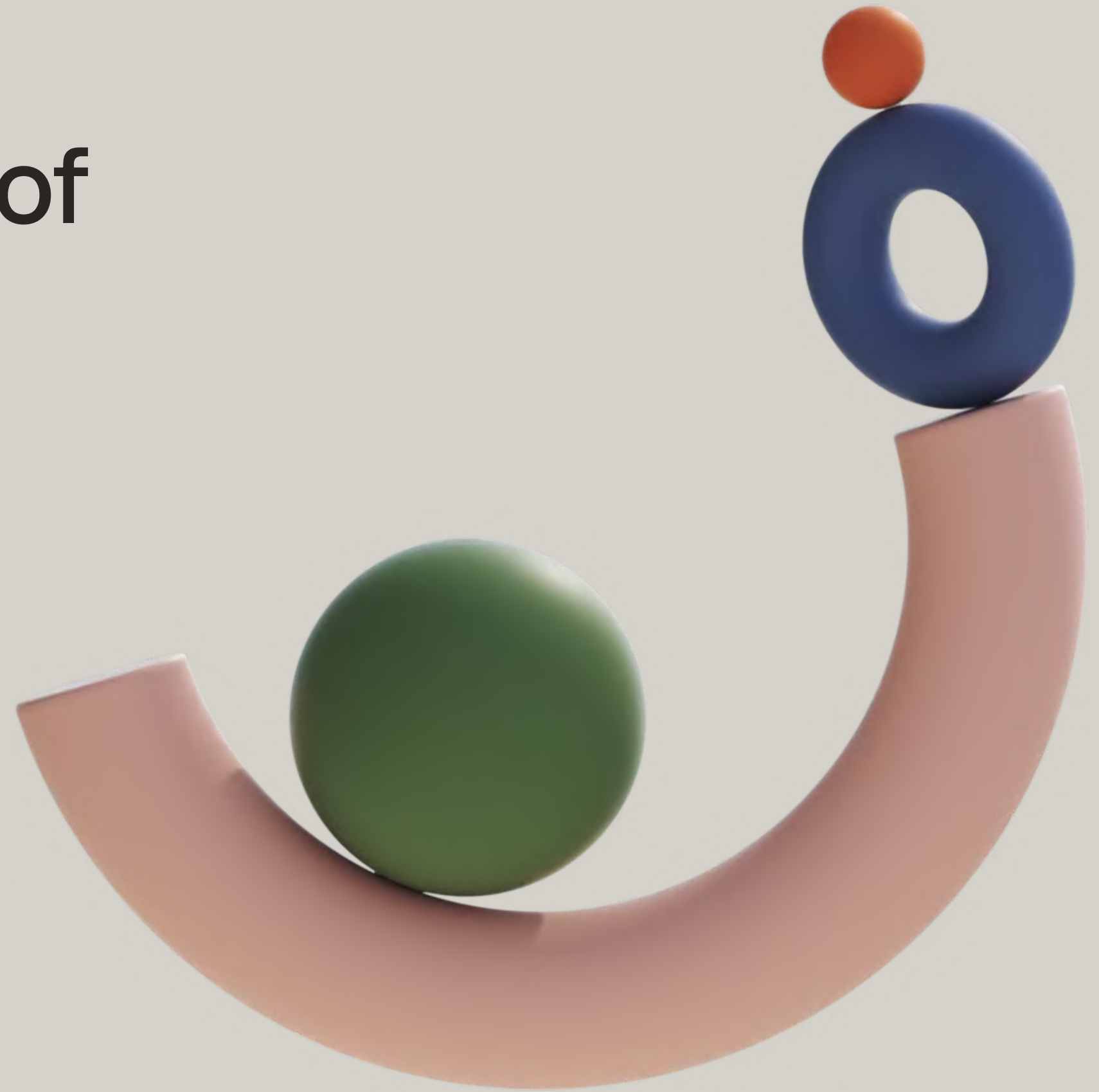


Developing the 'Inner Dimension' of Sustainability Leadership

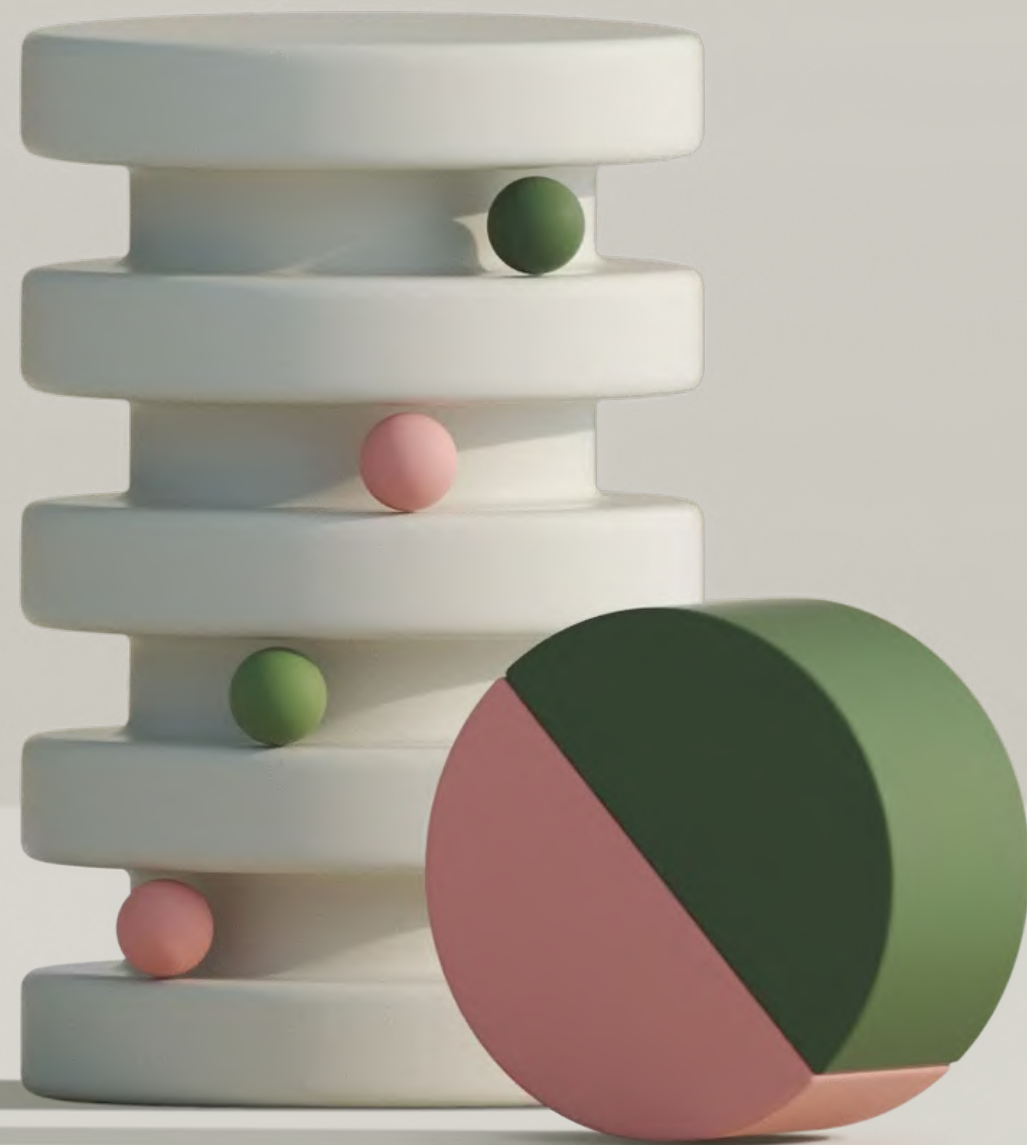
Hosted by the Masters in Strategic
Leadership towards Sustainability (MSLS)



TUESDAY 29 APRIL 2025

Check in - write in the chat

**What would you like to learn about the
'Inner Dimension' of sustainability leadership?**



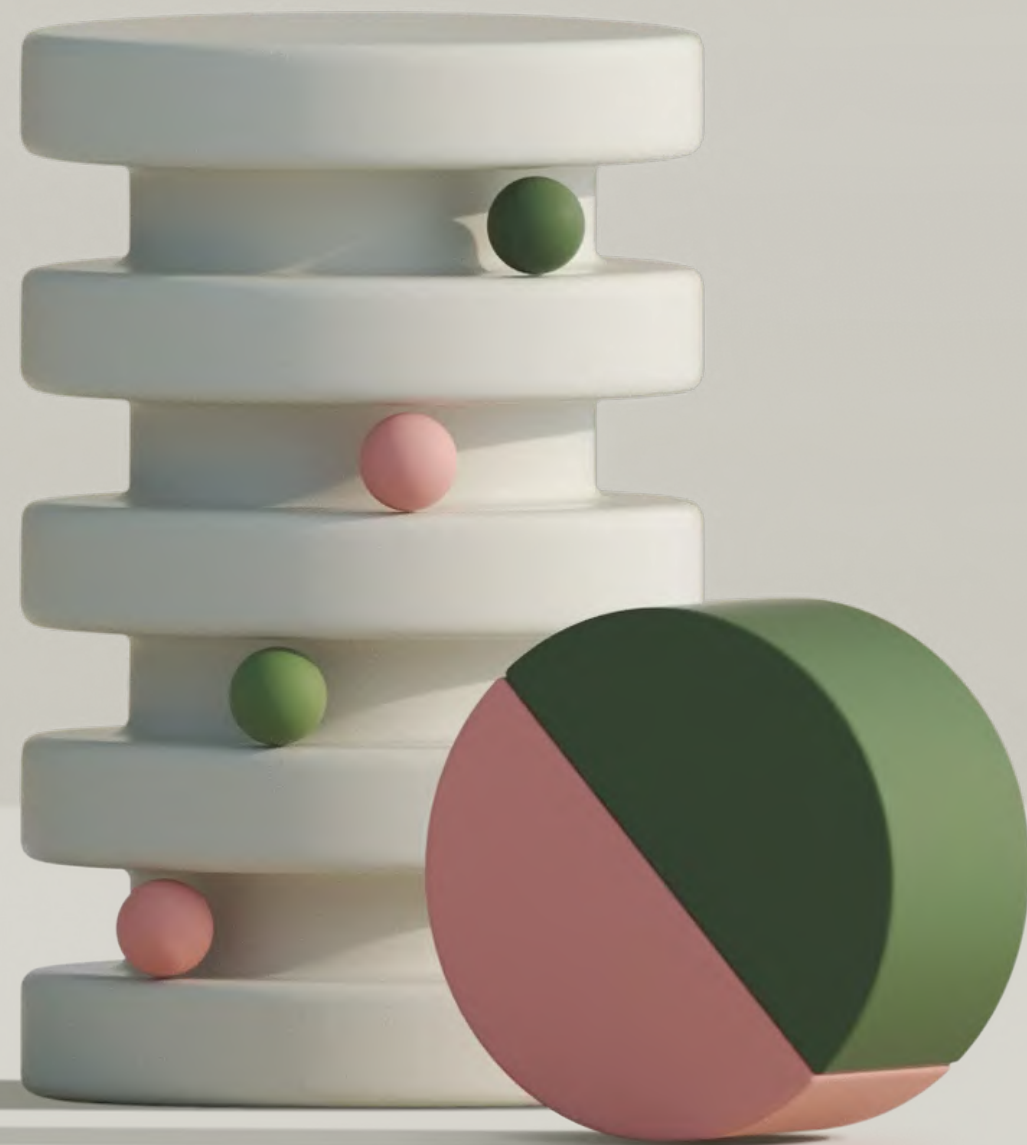
Intention and Aim

There has been much discussion about the role of the 'Inner Dimension' in sustainability work and leadership.

Today we aim to provide:

- An insight into the state of the 'Inner dimension' field and why it is important for sustainability leadership
- An introduction into the 'Intrapersonal Capacities' framework
- The capacity to reflect and consider which 'Intrapersonal capacities' may be beneficial for you to use in your personal and professional world
- Some resources to use in your future work.





Agenda

- Welcome
- Why develop the 'Inner Dimension'?
- The State of the Field - The 'Inner Dimension'
- Our Research - The Intrapersonal Capacities
- Reflecting on the Framework
- Where am I?
- What can I develop?
- Closing and comments.



Who are we?



Dr. Merlina Missimer

Co-Director, Master's in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability (MSLS)
Researcher, social dimensions of sustainability, education for sustainability,
Deputy Head, Department of Strategic Sustainable Development



Dr. James Ayers

Co-Director, Master's in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability (MSLS)
Researcher, leadership in complexity, education for sustainability.
Previous Engineers without Borders,
Monash Sustainable Development Institute,
La Trobe University



Pierre Johnson

Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Strategic Sustainable Development, Teacher,
Strategic Sustainable Development,
Innovation for Sustainability, Strategic Planning for Sustainability, Foundations of Strategic Sustainable Development

Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH)

The Rationale

Why do we need to develop the 'inner dimension' of sustainability leaders?

The Context

We are in a global polycrisis

We face many challenges

429.59

Parts per million

1.2 billion

Estimate climate refugees (2050)

6

Plantary boundaries crossed

2.6-3.1°

Estimate warming 2100
(with action)

47%

Global population in poverty

6th

Great extinction event

That are interdependent

429.59 \longleftrightarrow 1.2 billion \longleftrightarrow 6

Parts per million

Estimate climate refugees (2050)

Plantary boundaries crossed

2.6-3.1°

47%

6th

Estimate warming with action

Global population in poverty

Great extinction event

These problems are complex

These problems are complex

They require effective leadership to address them

We are experiencing the polycrisis

429.59 \longleftrightarrow 1.2 billion \longleftrightarrow 6

Parts per million

Estimate climate refugees (2050)

Plantary boundaries crossed

2.6-3.1°

47%

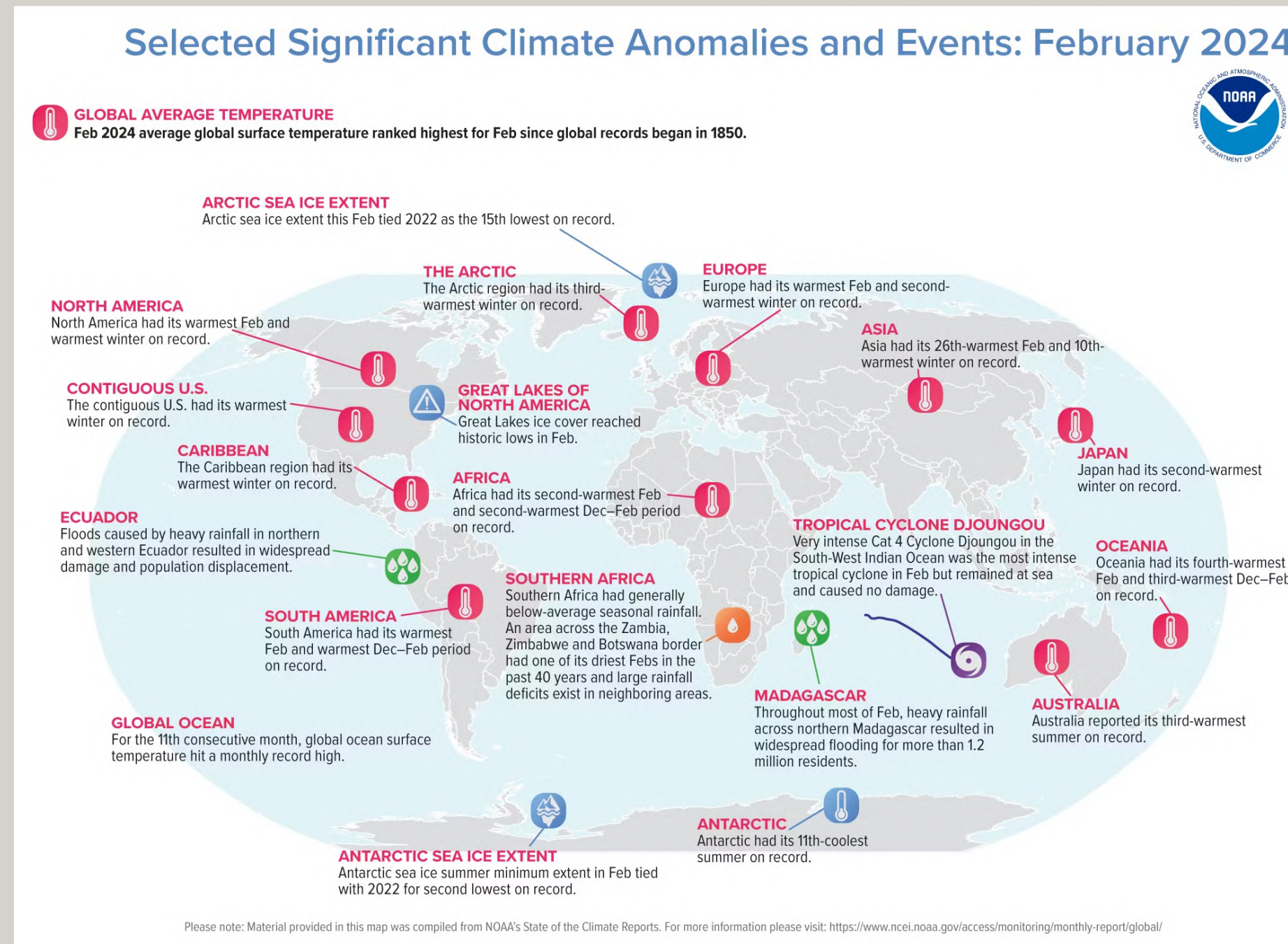
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Estimate warming with action

Global population in poverty

Great extinction event

We are now living through socio-ecological disruption



This context impacts us personally and professionally

'Eco-anxiety': fear of environmental doom weighs on young people

Although not a diagnosable condition, experts say climate anxiety is on the rise worldwide



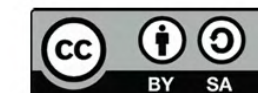
In September children and young people around the world, including Glasgow, took part in protests against the climate crisis. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

The climate crisis is taking a growing toll on the mental health of children and young people, experts have warned.



Heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, floods and hurricanes increasingly feature in people's lives and are predicted to become more frequent and intense in the coming decades. These events are having a significant yet often overlooked

Climate Emotions Wheel



Climate Emotions Wheel © 2024



ClimateMentalHealth.Net

Leaders must learn to cope with the difficulty of the work
and to lead change during disruption

The development of the 'inner dimension' can contribute
by cultivating leaders effective in implementing complex
sustainability transitions and
by building their resilience to this challenge

The 'Inner Dimension' - State of the Field

The 'Inner Dimension' - State of the Field

- Based on the belief that the successful sustainability implementation requires the development of individuals 'inner dimension'
- There is no agreed upon definition or consensus of what is meant by the 'inner dimension'
- The field is situated near a wider discussion regarding 'sustainability competences' as integral for teaching, learning and development (**Brundiers and Wiek et al. 2021; Wiek et al. 2011**)

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- **UNESCO (2017)** presented a “self-awareness competency” in relation to context and as 'the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society; to continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions; and to deal with one's feelings and desires"
- **Wamsler & Brink (2018)** defined the inner dimension as 'subjective domain of individuals mindsets, worldviews, beliefs, values and emotions' (p.55)

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 - "Cultivate presence, be aware of internal and external surroundings, hold contradictory thoughts and feelings, find inner states of compassion for oneself and others"

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 - "Cultivate presence, be aware of internal and external surroundings, hold contradictory thoughts and feelings, find inner states of compassion for oneself and others."
- **Frank (2021), Frank and Stanszus (2019)** researched 'personal' competences for sustainability
 - "Self-awareness, Value clarity, Emotional resilience, self-care, the ability to access and cultivate ethical virtues and mindsets of sustainability"
- The **Inner Development Goals (IDGs) (2021)** presented as a communicative framework for 'inner development' for sustainability

The 'Inner Dimension' - Questions

- There is no real 'consensus' driving this space, but there is some general understanding that
- Tension between the belief that individual 'change' proceeds 'outer' change. Individual vs System?
- Several avenues of critique within this space
- Issues with linear adult development models (**Bateson, 2022**)
- Human Development as an emergent property of 'Bildung' (**Anderson 2024**) that cannot be predefined and 'developed' (**Snowden 2024**).

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- From our perspective:
 - Inner change is not a prerequisite for 'outer' work, it is systemic change we are working towards
 - We focus on trainable, tangible 'capacity building' in context of sustainability implementation, not individual actualisation
 - We offer a process and framework to ground in complexity and sustainability, intention to provide language and agency
 - Aim of the Intrapersonal framework is to be helpful, not 'complete.'

Our Research

Intrapersonal Capacities for Sustainability: A Change Agent Perspective on the 'Inner Dimension' of Sustainability Work

PUBLISHED IN SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE (2023) BY JAMES AYERS, MERLINA MISSIMER AND JAYNE BRYANT.

- We wanted to examine the internal basis of sustainability leadership.

Sustainability Science (2023) 18:1181–1197
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01288-8



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Intrapersonal capacities for sustainability: a change agent perspective on the 'inner dimension' of sustainability work

James Ayers¹ · Merlina Missimer¹ · Jayne Bryant¹

Received: 6 April 2022 / Accepted: 27 December 2022 / Published online: 19 February 2023
© The Author(s) 2023

Abstract

An ongoing discussion in education for sustainable development (ESD) research has focused on defining a list of agreed upon sustainability competencies required for the work of sustainability change agents. This discussion has included the consideration of an 'Intrapersonal' perspective that considers the role of inner qualities in change agents and how this impacts their ability to implement sustainability. While many researchers have looked at the 'inner dimension' of sustainability work, the identification and function of an 'Intrapersonal' competence remains in question. Utilizing practitioner responses, this paper identifies eight Intrapersonal capacities that change agents described as beneficial to their implementation of sustainability. These capacities are the ability to: Hold complexity, Foster a learner's mindset, Deeply value others, Let be, Show up as one's full self, Regulate and manage the self, Persist with lightness and Ensure one's wellbeing. The study provides insights into the identification of the capacities and their relationship to a wider Intrapersonal research field. It also discusses the implications this perspective has on education for sustainable development should it consider incorporating such capacities into teaching and learning. While much literature in the field is of conceptual nature, this paper offers an empirical contribution by including the voice and perspective of change agents to the Intrapersonal discussion.

Keywords Education for sustainable development · Competence · Capacities · Change agents · Intrapersonal · Sustainability

Introduction

The role of the competencies needed by sustainability change agents has been part of a continued discussion within sustainability research and a consensus has emerged suggesting 'specialized' competencies are needed if change agents are to effectively implement sustainability (Burns et al. 2015). The development of several competence frameworks has created some clarity around these specialized competencies, with the framework by Brundiers et al. (2021) in particular gaining significance in this field. While the application of this framework is increasing, further study is needed on numerous fronts, including consideration of an 'Intrapersonal' competence for change agents as

a significant component of the frameworks' evolution and function (Redman and Wiek 2021). The desire for development of an Intrapersonal competence reflects calls by other researchers for greater understanding regarding the role that an individual's inner dimension plays in the implementation of sustainability, a topic seen to be lacking in research and understanding (Frank 2021; Ives et al. 2020; Wamsler 2020). Despite this call, convergence on what exactly constitutes an 'Intrapersonal' competence remains challenged with research considering the ambiguous nature of the concept, the variety of language and terminology used to describe it and how a defined Intrapersonal competence can support the implementation of sustainability (Brundiers et al. 2021; Jaakkola et al. 2022). This study aims to contribute to this discussion by identifying a number of Intrapersonal capacities described as important by sustainability change agents in their work and that could be beneficial in contributing to the development of an Intrapersonal competence understanding.

Handled by Arnim Wiek, Arizona State University, United States.

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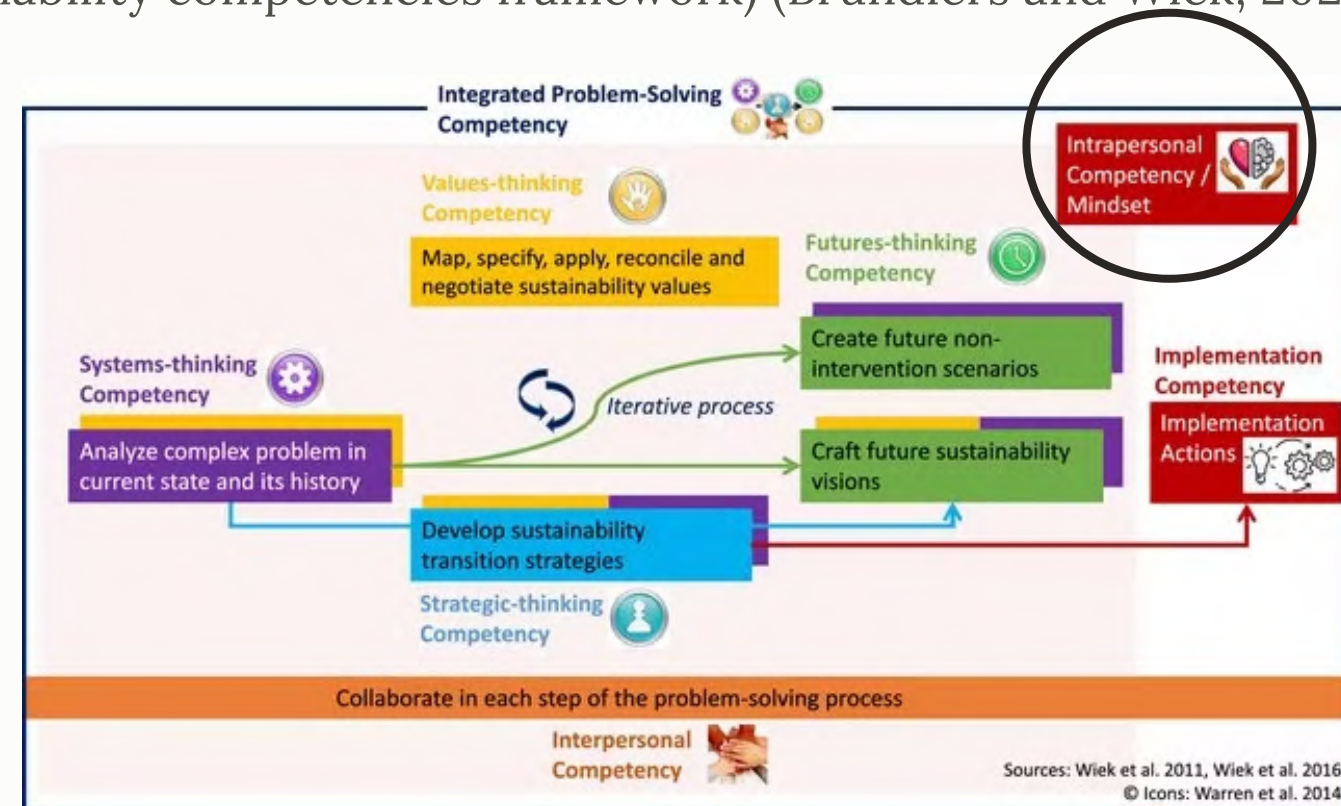
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- Aim was to present a coherent, emerging 'Intrapersonal' competence (in context of the sustainability competencies framework) (Brundiens and Wiek, 2021).



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Handled by Anrim Wiek, Arizona State University, United States.

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- We wanted to examine the internal basis of sustainability leadership.
- Present an emerging 'Intrapersonal' competence (in context of the competence framework).
- **154 change agents** answered questions about the 'inner dimension' and the role of the internal state in effective sustainability implementation.
- **Research Outcomes:**
- Eight Intrapersonal themes emerged that could be used to define an 'better' intrapersonal understanding
- These themes were aligned with relevant research to create a defined framework with intrapersonal 'practices'.
- They can be used to increase effective implementation of 'external' sustainability competences.
- They can be used for learning and leadership development as 'trainable' traits.

Try Pitch

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The Framework

(Ayers et al. 2023)

The ability to...	Description	Practice (developing, cultivating, exhibiting...)
... hold complexity.	The ability to cope with large amounts of information, uncertainty, ambiguity, and paradox.	... sense making ... patience ... presence
... foster a learner's mindset.	The ability to be curious and renew one's knowledge, skills and perspective.	... flexibility, open-mindedness and ability to change ... ability to let go ... humility and the ability to admit when one was wrong ... eagerness to reflect and learn ... curiosity
... deeply value others.	The ability to see and honour diverse perspectives and people.	... inclusivity ... genuine care ... ability to honour and accept multiple perspectives (decentre) ... empathy and compassion ... kindness and generosity ... appreciation for all ... ability to listen
... let be.	The ability to be present, accept what is and let go of attachments.	... presence ... open mindedness and non judgement ... humility ... patience ... ability to contemplate
... show up as one's full self.	The ability to show one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and vulnerability.	... authenticity ... ability to recentre ... a clear identity ... acting from vulnerability ... acting from values ... courage
...regulate and manage the self.	The ability to cultivate self-awareness of one's reactions and balance them when needed.	... self-awareness of values, beliefs, mental models, patterns, triggers etc ... mindfulness, in the moment, of mental, emotional, and physical sensations ... awareness of one's intention, attitude, and motivations ... ability to regulate and manage emotions (grounding).
...persist with lightness.	The ability to persevere with positivity and cultivate optimism and hope.	... lightness, use of humour and imagination ... optimism, positivity, and hope ... driven, passion and purpose ... persistence and agency ... focus and rigor ... courage
...ensure one's wellbeing.	The ability to ensure the mental, physical and emotional resources required.	... resilience ... one's boundaries

Reflecting on the Framework

In break out rooms - Discuss the Intrapersonal Framework

What are your thoughts on the framework?

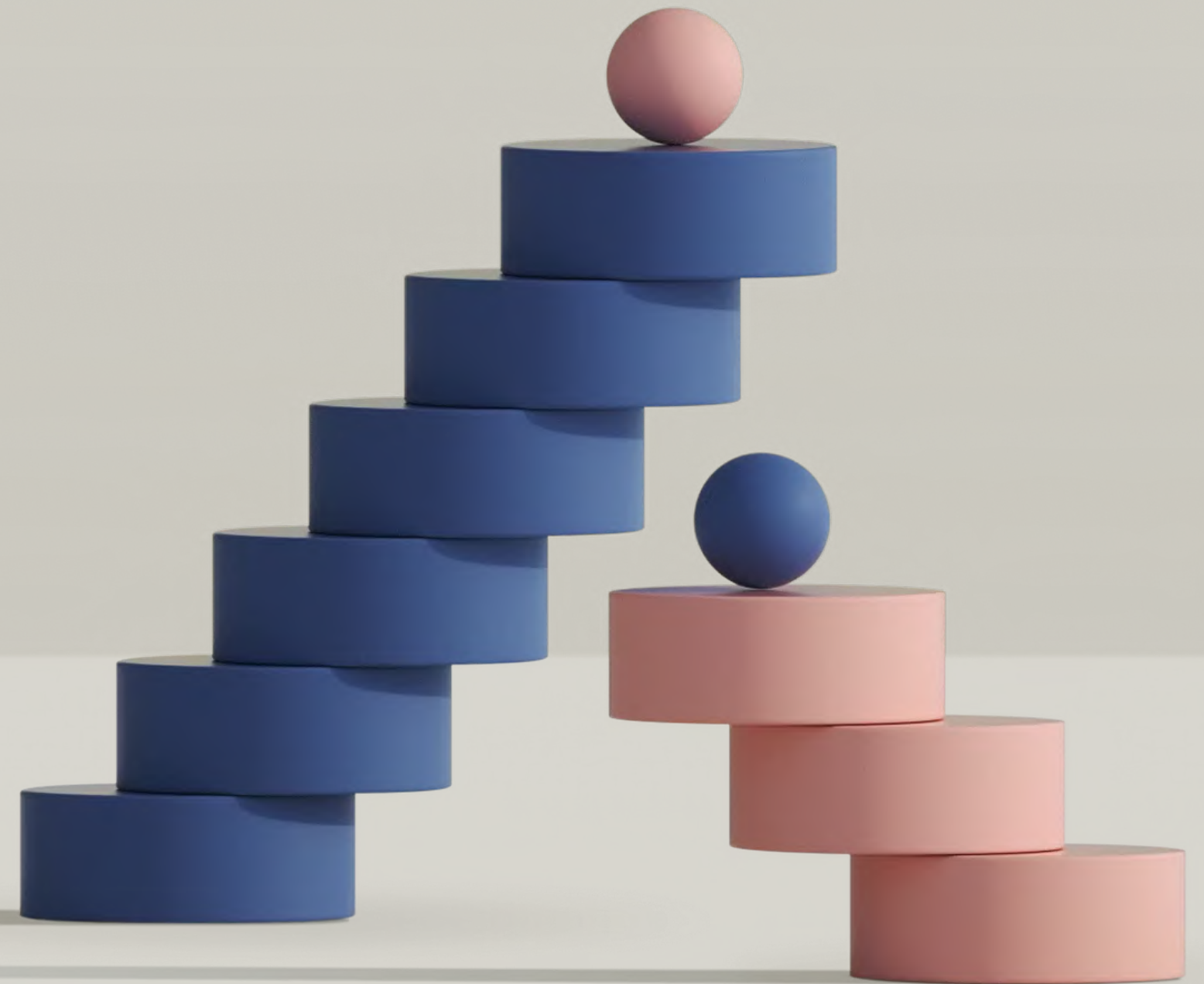
Which capacities resonate with you?

What questions remain?

Discuss in groups for around 15 mins

Framework on Miro, Space for Harvest if needed.

<https://tinyurl.com/2k2jhced>



Reflections on the framework

What resonated with you? What questions do you still have?

Rating your current Intrapersonal capacity

Using Miro - rate yourself on each capacity

Consider:

Which do you feel you practice well?

Which do you struggle with or need to practice?

Around 10 mins - we'll stay in the main room.

Scale on Miro

<https://tinyurl.com/2e8enkkw>



Developing your Intrapersonal Capacity

Break Out Rooms

Pick one capacity - Start to fill out the capacity development plan

Share with the others your initial plan

Around 20 mins - 10 mins alone and 10 discussion

Development Plan is on Miro
<https://tinyurl.com/2e8enkkw>

And in a Word Doc in the chat

You are welcome to use the Spider graph to map your development post session.

Intrapersonal Capacity Development Plan

Capacity Title: I.e Holding Complexity

Goal
What is the overarching goal you want to achieve in relation to this skill?
What does success like?

My Goals
If you break down your goal into smaller elements, what are the different skills and sub-goals you want to achieve?

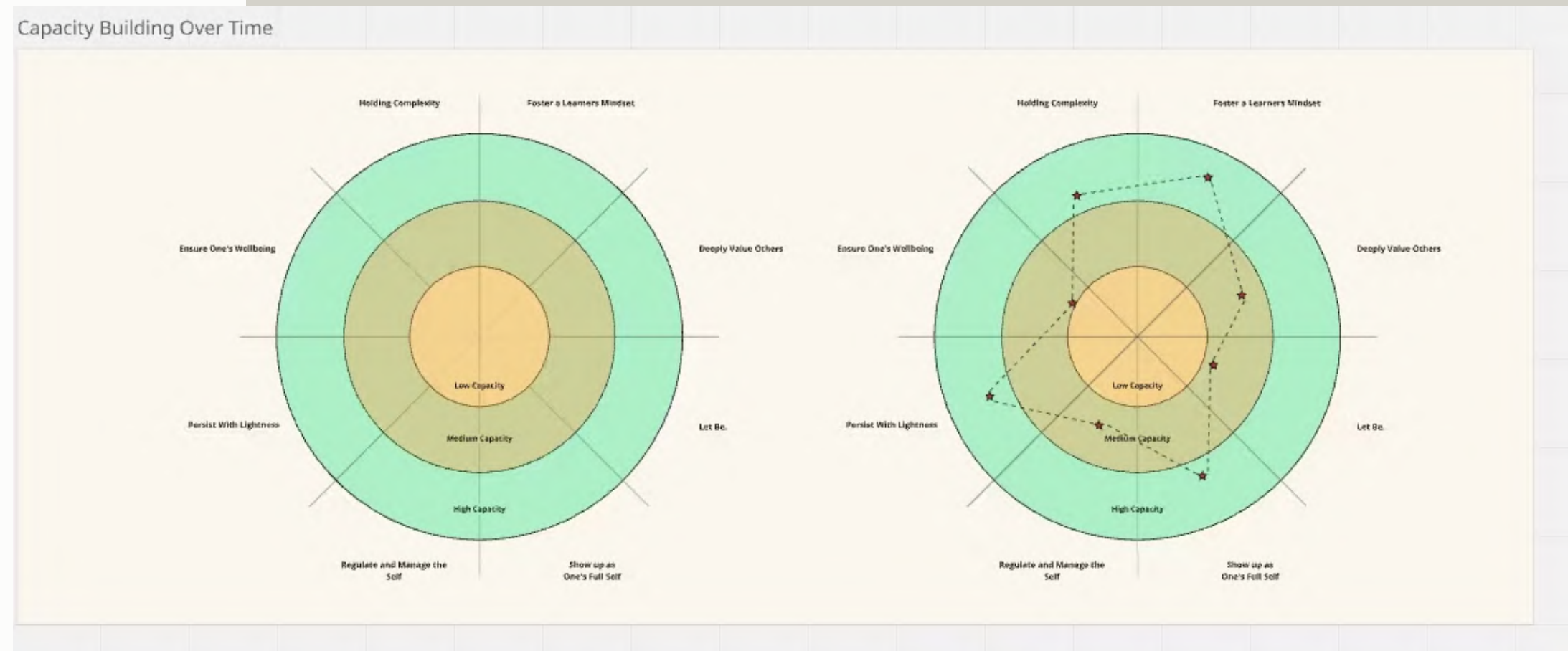
Focus
What is this skill worth focusing on? What is the purpose of acquiring this skill?

Practice Plan
What are you actually going to do to achieve the goals you set?
How will you practice?

Repeat
What element is so essential that you will repeat it relentlessly to achieve mastery over this skill?

Feedback
Who will give you feedback? Who will you practice together with? How will you give yourself feedback?

Review and Celebrate
How will you record and review the progress you've made? How will you celebrate? What are the stakes?



Comments and Reflections

What did you choose and why?

Comments and Reflections

Share an insight that has emerged for you during the session

Thank You

If you're interested in our education:

MSLS: Applications Still Open

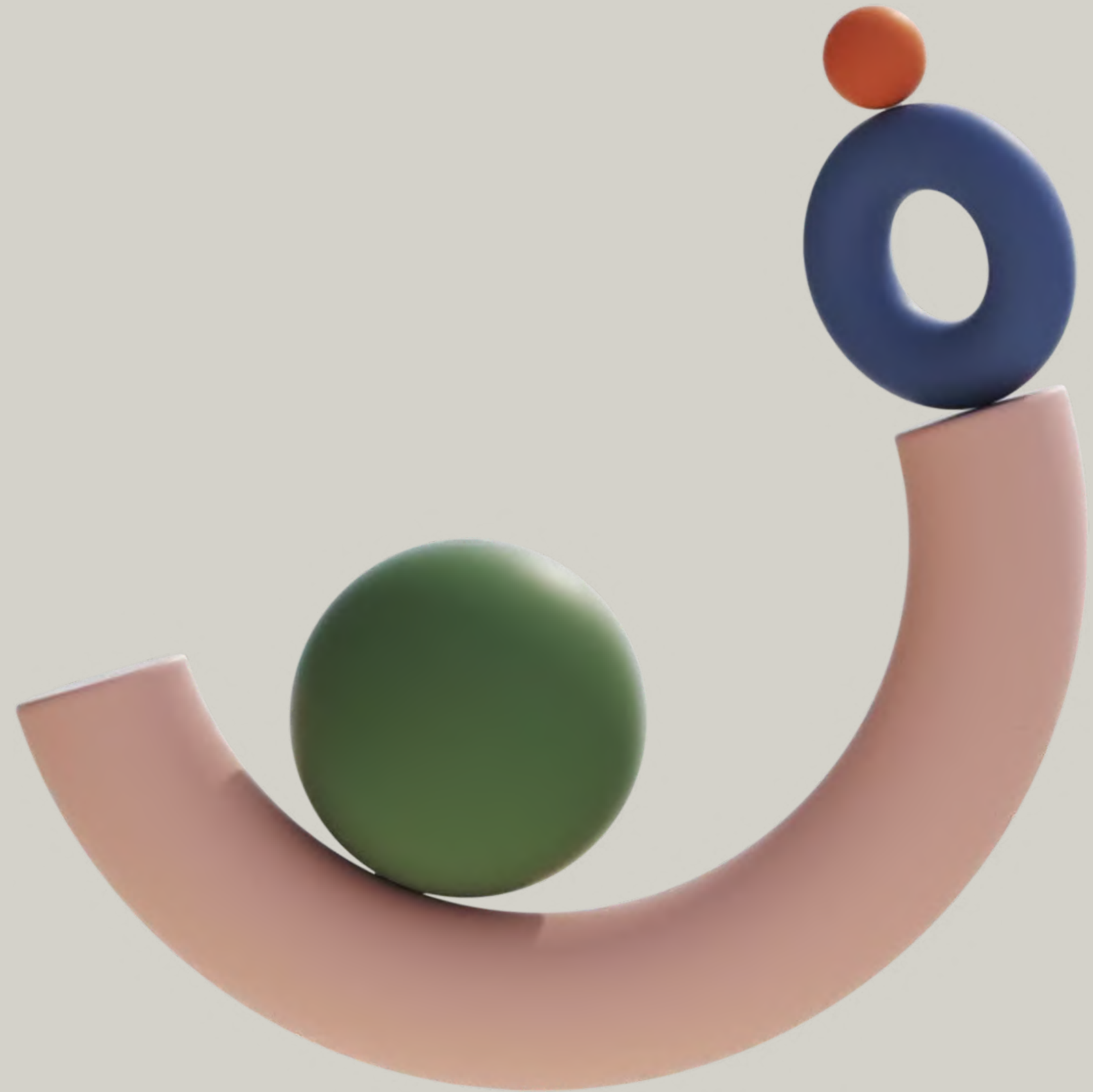
<https://www.bth.se/eng/education/masters/msls/>

Stand Alone Courses:

<https://www.bth.se/eng/about-bth/departments/tisu/courses/>

Intrapersonal Resources will be available at:

msls.se



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