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IJPLC | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PRESENCING LEADERSHIP & COACHING

EDITORIAL

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I. Introductory Remarks

Welcome to the third issue of the *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching*. Following our inaugural exploration of presencing mastery, and our second issue's deepening into presencing embodiment, this issue turns toward the collective dimensions of presencing leadership.

With this movement, the inquiry extends from the advanced development of the presencing practitioner and the grounding of presencing in lived experience into the shared spaces where presencing begins to unfold between and among us. The focus turns toward how presencing is understood and participated in as a collective phenomenon—one that arises within a shared field of experience and begins to shape how perception, relating, and action take form.

Across leadership, coaching, organizational, and community contexts, practitioners are increasingly encountering moments where insight, direction, and coordinated response arise from a shared space that is neither reducible to individual intention nor fully explained through group dynamics alone. These moments point toward the presence of a presencing field that is emergent, participated in and held collectively.

This issue invites a closer examination of how the field dimension of presencing comes into being, how it is sensed, the conditions under which it becomes inhabitable, and how it begins to function as a generative medium for leadership and coaching. As presencing becomes more fully embodied and developmentally integrated, it reshapes how participation unfolds within collective contexts. Sensing, relating, and responding increasingly emerge through a shared orientation in which attention, perception, and emergence are gathered within a common field of experience. From within this field, new possibilities for collective leadership, coordinated action, and shared meaning begin to take form.

Within this context, collective leadership takes on a different meaning as a dynamic expression of the field itself, arising through the quality of individual and collective presence, relational attunement,

and the capacity of participants to remain in contact with what is taking shape between them. Agency becomes more fluid, participatory, and responsive to the unfolding of shared meaning and direction as participants cultivate the capacity to remain in contact with the presencing field and respond to what is taking shape within it.

The contributions in this issue reflect a growing maturation in how the presencing field is understood and engaged more broadly. Across diverse contexts including coaching, higher education, organizational development, and creative practice, authors explore how collective presencing can be cultivated. These works bring forward new insights into how presencing fields are formed, how they stabilize, and how they give rise to new forms of leadership that are conversational in nature.

The inquiry guiding this issue turns toward these shared dimensions of presencing. How does a presencing field come into view within collective contexts of two or more? In what ways does it begin to organize perception, the relational orientation of participants, and emerging forms of action? What becomes possible when leadership and coaching are approached from within this field as a generative ground of participation?

II. The Presencing Field as a Generative Medium of Collective Leadership

Within this issue lies a growing recognition that the presencing field can be approached as a generative medium through which collective leadership takes shape. While earlier articulations of presencing have explored shifts in awareness, attention, embodiment, and relational participation, several of the works gathered in this issue deepen the inquiry into the field dimension itself, examining how collective experience becomes organized, sensed, and participated in through shared environments of presencing.

As individuals and groups cultivate greater capacities for awareness, presence, participation, and collective sensing, a shared field of experience begins to come into view. Within this field, perception becomes more attuned, relational dynamics become more coherent, and emerging possibilities begin to take form in ways that are sensed collectively.

This shift carries important implications for how collective leadership is understood. Leadership as practice begins to move away from a focus on individual agency or the distribution of roles toward a more relational and field-based orientation. Action arises within a context of shared sensing, where meaning is co-formed and direction emerges through participation in the unfolding of the field itself. The emphasis moves toward how individuals contribute to and remain in contact with this shared field, and how their participation supports the emergence of coherent, responsive action.

The presencing field, in this way, functions as a subtle medium through which collective life begins to organize itself differently. Perception becomes more attuned, relationships become more responsive, and emerging possibilities begin to take shape in ways that are sensed and enacted collectively. The field is influenced by the quality of attention participants bring, their capacity for relational attunement, and their willingness to remain engaged with unfolding experience. When these conditions are cultivated, the field becomes increasingly coherent and generative. When they are absent, collective activity tends to return to more familiar patterns of coordination and control.

Across the contributions in this issue, the presencing field is approached from multiple perspectives. In some cases, it is explored as a subtle dimension of relational experience that becomes palpable through shifts in attention and awareness. In others, it is engaged as a developmental environment that can be cultivated and stabilized over time. In still others, it is framed as an environment which

symbolic, imaginal, and creative processes come into play, enriching the collective experience and opening new pathways for meaning and action.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the presencing field is more than a subjective experience and more than a property of groups. It emerges as a dynamic environment of participation that both shapes and is shaped by the quality of collective engagement. Within this framing, collective leadership becomes less a matter of directing outcomes and more a matter of participating in the conditions through which shared perception, meaning, and action can emerge.

This orientation invites a re-examination of familiar assumptions about leadership and collaboration. Rather than centering leadership in the attributes or behaviors of individuals, attention is directed toward the conditions that allow a presencing field to emerge and the ways in which this field supports shared orientation and coordinated action. Leadership becomes an expression of how well individuals in a group can remain in contact with this field, how it can sustain the quality of presence required for its continuity, and how it can act in alignment with what is emerging within it.

As the presencing field becomes more widely recognized and explored, it opens new directions for both research and practice. It invites further inquiry into how such fields are cultivated, how they evolve across different contexts, and how they support new forms of collective leadership capable of engaging the complexity and uncertainty in our time.

III. Blind Spots and Underexplored Dimensions of Collective Presencing Leadership

As collective leadership gains traction across leadership and organizational discourse, its deeper foundations in presencing remain only partially understood. Much of the existing literature emphasizes structural arrangements, shared roles, and distributed decision-making. While these dimensions offer valuable contributions, they often remain at the level of observable coordination, leaving the underlying field conditions that give rise to collective leadership largely unexamined.

One blind spot concerns the tendency to equate collaboration with collective presencing. Groups may work together effectively, share responsibilities, and coordinate action, while the deeper conditions of a presencing field remain absent. In such cases, interaction is guided primarily by different forms of alignment or agreement. Collective presencing, by contrast, arises through a qualitative shift in how experience is held and participated in, where perception becomes more attuned to and relational engagement begins to organize from a shared depth. Without recognizing this distinction, collective leadership risks remaining confined to surface-level coordination.

Another blind spot relates to the assumption that collective leadership emerges naturally once hierarchical structures are relaxed. While the redistribution of authority can create space for broader participation, it does not in itself give rise to a coherent presencing field. The emergence of such a field depends on the capacity of participants to remain present within unfolding experience, to suspend habitual patterns of judgement, and to attune to one another in ways that support shared sensing. Without this depth of participation, collective processes can fragment or become diffuse, even in the absence of rigid hierarchy.

A third blind spot concerns the role of power within collective contexts. In many discussions of collective leadership, power is treated implicitly or bypassed altogether. Yet power continues to operate through formal roles, informal influence, cultural norms, and relational dynamics. The presencing field does not eliminate these dynamics; it offers a possibility for reshaping how they are engaged. A more nuanced understanding of collective presencing leadership includes sensitivity to

how authority is held, shared, and negotiated within the field, and how these dynamics influence what can emerge.

A fourth blind spot involves the developmental nature of collective presencing. There is often an implicit assumption that groups can access collective presence as a state, without recognizing that collective presencing rests upon the developmental capacities of the individuals who participate in it. A group cannot consistently access forms of collective sensing, relational coherence, or shared emergence that significantly exceed the capacities available within its participants. As individuals develop greater capacities for awareness, presence, relational attunement, perspective-taking, and engagement with uncertainty, new possibilities for collective presencing become available. From this perspective, the development of collective presencing and the development of individual capacity are deeply intertwined. Without recognizing this relationship, moments of collective alignment may arise, yet they often remain difficult to sustain, deepen, or integrate into ongoing practice.

A further overlooked dimension concerns the capacity to perceive and work with the subtle experiential qualities that become available within a presencing field. While collective leadership is often understood through observable interactions, decisions, and outcomes, important aspects of the collective process are also expressed through shifts in atmosphere, resonance, coherence, tension, and emerging meaning. These dimensions can provide valuable indications of what is unfolding within the field and what may be seeking expression through it. The blind spot lies in assuming that such experiences are merely subjective impressions rather than meaningful aspects of collective participation that can inform understanding and action. When these dimensions remain unnoticed, unnamed, or underdeveloped, important aspects of the collective process can be overlooked.

Finally, the role of context remains underexamined. Discussions of collective presencing often focus on the capacities of participants and the dynamics of groups while giving less attention to the environments in which these processes unfold. The blind spot lies in assuming that collective presencing operates similarly across contexts. Yet the same practices, capacities, and intentions may give rise to very different outcomes depending on the organizational culture, history, constraints, and circumstances surrounding them. Collective leadership becomes easier to understand when the field is approached as something that is always situated within a larger context that influences what forms of participation, coherence, and emergence become possible.

Bringing these and other dimensions into view allows for a more grounded and differentiated understanding of collective presencing leadership. Rather than locating leadership solely in individuals, groups, or structures, it becomes possible to approach it as a field-based phenomenon through which collective experience is organized and new possibilities for participation and action emerge.

IV. Toward a Field-Based Understanding of Collective Presencing Leadership

This issue brings together a set of contributions that explore collective leadership as it unfolds through the presencing field. Together, these articles reflect a further maturation in presencing scholarship, one that extends beyond individual and embodied dimensions into the collective as a generative space of emergence.

In *Presence as Originating Ground, Presencing as Way: The Twofold Approach of the Coaching Field in Dynamic Presencing Coaching*, Gunnlaugson advances a foundational ontological reframing of the coaching encounter by clarifying the developmental and participatory relationship between presence and presencing within the coaching field. Moving beyond presencing approaches that primarily treat presence as a practitioner competency or relational quality, the article positions presence as the

ontological ground from which presencing unfolds as a living movement of emergence, participation, and becoming. A central contribution of the work lies in its articulation of Presence Work and Presencing Work as two interwoven dimensions of Dynamic Presencing Coaching that together establish the conditions through which clients can reconnect with deeper dimensions of being while allowing their emerging way of being to gradually take form. Through the introduction of the presencing conduit, the Five Level-Depths of Presence, and the Two Hands of Presencing, the article further develops a sophisticated phenomenology of how embodied presence, relational participation, and emergence become stabilized and sustained within the coaching field over time. In doing so, the work deepens contemporary presencing scholarship by advancing a more fully embodied, developmental, and ontological understanding of coaching as a shared field of participation in which transformation unfolds through the lived continuity between being and becoming.

Complementing this ontological foundation, Carod's *Enacting Presence Through Archetypal Coaching* expands the discourse on collective presencing by introducing a field-based understanding of archetypal and imaginal phenomena within Dynamic Presencing Coaching. Drawing from archetypal psychology, active imagination, embodied awareness, and presencing ontology, the article reframes archetypes as dynamic field intelligences that arise through the embodied and relational coherence of the presencing field itself. A central contribution of the work lies in its integration of Gunnlaugson's gesture of letting be with archetypal coaching practice, demonstrating how symbolic imagery, somatic resonance, dreamwork, and imaginal participation can function as transformative thresholds within coaching and collective leadership contexts. Through detailed phenomenological accounts and coaching vignettes, the article illustrates how archetypal presencing supports clients in moving from unconscious enactment toward conscious participation with deeper symbolic, relational, and generative dimensions of experience. In doing so, the work broadens contemporary understandings of the presencing field by illuminating how imagination, embodiment, and archetypal participation become active dimensions of collective emergence, co-creation, and transformative becoming within the coaching field.

Extending this ontological orientation further, Gunnlaugson's *A Blind Spot of Fourth-Person Knowing: Reclaiming the Role of the Presencing Self in the Field* identifies a central limitation within contemporary field-based approaches to presencing: the underarticulated role of the Presencing Self. While fourth-person knowing has helped name and clarify an important epistemological category of field-based knowing, comparatively less attention has been given to the process through which presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, sustainable, and enduring as a way of being in the field. The article argues that without the emergence of a Presencing Self-Sense, presencing risks remaining episodic, situational, and elusive as a transcendent mode of participation. To address this blind spot, the article introduces three interrelated process methods. The first is the Presencing Conduit, which clarifies how participation becomes grounded in the Ground of Presence, embodied through the Inner Presencing Body, inhabited through the Presencing Self-Sense, and extended through the Presencing Field. The second is the Five Field-Stages of Presencing, a developmental architecture that traces how participation matures from sovereign to sovereign-relational forms of presencing as conversational fields deepen, stabilize, and become increasingly generative. The third is the Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation, which articulates how presencing is sourced from the Ground of Presence, lived as one's presencing nature, mediated through the presencing conduit, and increasingly sensed of the field as collective participation deepens. Together, these contributions reposition the Presencing Self as a dynamic living center of participation within the field. In doing so, the article extends the conversation beyond field-based knowing toward a developmental ontology of participation that clarifies how presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable as a way of being in the field.

Reframing leadership more directly, Fitch and Lynam, in *Leadership In and As the Emergent Field*, introduce an interpenetrative understanding of collective leadership in which individual and collective transformation are approached as inseparable movements of co-emergence within presencing fields. Drawing from nearly two decades of facilitating transformative leadership and collective development through Pacific Integral's Generating Transformative Change (GTC) program, the article explores how leadership gradually shifts from an individual capacity or positional function toward a living process of emergence arising through the field as a whole. A central contribution of the work lies in its portrayal of leadership as a participatory field phenomenon through which individual and collective development unfold together. Leadership, within this framing, becomes increasingly concerned with participating consciously in the movement of emergence itself. In doing so, the article deepens field-based approaches to leadership and collective transformation.

In *The Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing: A Process Field Method for Engaging Presencing Leadership*, Gunnlaugson introduces a developmental field architecture for understanding how conversational life progressively unfolds into shared relational, generative, and flow-based forms of collective presencing. Moving beyond approaches that treat "the field" as a largely undifferentiated social field phenomenon, the article articulates five distinct field-stages through which conversational participation evolves from individual embodied presence into increasingly coherent ecologies of collective emergence. The article reframes conversation itself as an inhabitable participatory field through which perception, meaning, responsiveness, and emergence co-arise relationally. Through the developmental movement from the Leader's Field and Participant's Field into the Relational, Generative, and Flow Fields, it illuminates how collective presencing becomes increasingly stabilized and sustained within conversational life. In doing so, the framework advances a field-based understanding of collective leadership in which leadership becomes increasingly concerned with stewarding the conditions that support coherence, emergence, and collective becoming over time.

Briciu, in *The Inner, Intersubjective, and Transpersonal Experience of Presencing*, offers a phenomenological exploration of how collective leadership emerges through embodied, relational, and transpersonal dimensions of presencing within higher education contexts. Informed by a multi-year participatory inquiry involving educators, students, and coaches, the article examines how contemplative, dialogical, and arts-based presencing practices fostered shifts in self-awareness, relational attunement, shared meaning, and collective agency. The work articulates the intersubjective field as a living environment through which collective leadership becomes possible, particularly through experiences of resonance, empathic dialogue, embodied sensing, and access to what the author describes as the transpersonal source of collective emergence. Drawing from both Theory U and Dynamic Presencing perspectives, the article deepens prevailing understandings of collective leadership by showing how presencing functions as a relational and ontological process through which participants gradually cultivate deeper forms of wholeness, shared purpose, and transformative participation. Through this lens, collective leadership is reframed as an emergent expression of interconnected presence arising within a shared field of meaning, care, and becoming.

In *Cultivating Presencing as an Emergent Field of Learning and Action*, Joshi, Raghavendra, Gupta, Saveland, and Balachander examine the co-creation of transformative social fields within graduate-level leadership and facilitator development programs grounded in Theory U, dialogue practices, systems thinking, mindfulness, and Eastern contemplative traditions. The article offers a phenomenological account of presencing as an emergent collective field that becomes palpable through shifts in atmosphere, relational openness, embodied awareness, vulnerability, shared meaning, and participatory coherence. Drawing from reflexive autobiographical inquiry, facilitator journals, and

lived classroom experience, the authors illuminate how collective presencing unfolds through the cultivation of capacities associated with knowing, being, and doing, while also differentiating between personal growth rooted in ego development and inner growth grounded in surrender, awareness, and connection to Source. Through this lens, presencing emerges as a developmental and ontological practice through which collective fields of learning, transformation, and right action gradually take shape. In doing so, the article deepens contemporary understandings of collective leadership by showing how presencing-oriented environments can foster greater relational sensitivity, shared humanity, and awareness-based participation across diverse educational and organizational settings.

In *The Process of Play Production as an Instrument for Developing Collective Leadership Through Presencing*, Motimele explores how collective leadership emerges through embodied participation within creative ensemble environments. Drawing from Theory U, social presencing theatre, complexity leadership studies, and Dynamic Presencing scholarship, the article approaches theatre production as a living presencing field through which collective emergence becomes directly observable. The study shows how leadership arises through shifts in participation itself rather than through the actions of any single individual, while also revealing the delicate and often unstable nature of collective coherence. Through this lens, theatre becomes an embodied laboratory for understanding how collective presencing unfolds, deepens, and at times fragments within the flow of shared experience.

Taken together, the contributions within this issue reveal a consistent movement across the issue. The presencing field is brought into view as a primary medium of collective life, one that is lived, sensed, embodied, cultivated, and participated in as a shared environment of emergence. Collective leadership, within this framing arises through participation in this field, as perception, meaning, embodiment, imagination, action, and collective becoming are organized from within its unfolding coherence.

V. Collective Presencing Leadership as an Emerging Field of Practice

Taken as a whole, the contributions in this issue point toward an important deepening in how collective leadership is understood and practiced. As the presencing field comes into clearer view as a lived, participatory, and increasingly inhabitable environment, it reshapes how collective experience is engaged across domains. Leadership, in this sense, shifts away from a focus on individual capability or structural arrangement and is understood as emerging through participation within a shared field that influences how perception, relationship, and action unfold.

This orientation carries implications that extend beyond any single context of application. Across coaching, education, organizational life, and creative practice, the capacity to recognize and participate within a presencing field introduces a different way of engaging complexity. Rather than relying on analysis alone or pre-established frameworks, individuals and groups remain engaged with what is unfolding, allowing direction and insight to emerge through a shared attunement to the situation.

As this capacity develops, collective work takes on a different character. Interactions become less centered on coordination and more oriented toward coherence. Meaning emerges through participation in the field itself, while action arises through an increasing responsiveness to what is taking shape collectively. This opens possibilities for more adaptive, context-sensitive, and generative forms of engagement with challenges and opportunities.

At the same time, this issue highlights that such forms of collective leadership depend on the cultivation of conditions that support the emergence and continuity of the presencing field. This

includes a willingness to remain present within uncertainty, to engage relationally with openness and attentiveness, and to participate in ways that sustain the field over time. These capacities develop through practice and invite a gradual shift from episodic experiences of collective presencing toward more stable forms of participation within the field.

As the presencing field comes to be more widely recognized as a generative dimension of collective life, new directions for inquiry and practice open. There is a growing need to further articulate how such fields are cultivated, how participation within them develops, and how they support emerging forms of leadership. This invites continued exploration of the presencing field as both a domain of research and a living practice.

In this way, collective presencing leadership can be understood as an emerging field of practice—one that brings together insights from multiple traditions while opening new possibilities for how leadership is enacted in shared contexts. As presencing becomes more fully integrated into collective life, a further possibility begins to emerge: moving beyond episodic experiences of collective presencing toward forms of participation through which presencing becomes increasingly lived as a way of being together. Through this shift, leadership becomes increasingly concerned with the development of ways of being and participating through which presencing can be more continuously embodied, sustained, and lived within collective life.

VI. Concluding Reflections

This issue marks a further step in the unfolding trajectory of presencing scholarship and practice. With the movement into collective domains, the presencing field comes into clearer focus as a central dimension through which leadership, learning, and transformation take shape. Across the contributions is a movement that invites a re-situating of how leadership and coaching are understood. Attention shifts toward cultivating the conditions that support the development of intrapersonal, relational, and field capacities, and toward the maturation of participation within collective contexts. Through this shift, collective leadership becomes an evolving practice grounded in lived participation and responsive engagement.

At the same time, the contributions in this issue open important questions for continued exploration. How does presencing become increasingly inhabitable as a way of being rather than an episodic experience of insight or emergence? What capacities enable individuals and groups to participate more fully in collective presencing? How do presencing fields emerge, stabilize, and mature through ongoing participation? And what developmental and ontological conditions support their continuity within collective life? These and other questions point toward a growing area of inquiry that calls for both conceptual development and sustained practice.

As the field of presencing leadership and coaching continues to evolve, the collective dimensions explored here offer a foundation for further integration and innovation. Yet beyond the cultivation of collective presence lies a further possibility that several contributions in this issue begin to illuminate: a shift from accessing moments of collective presencing toward developing the capacities through which presencing becomes a more enduring dimension of collective life. Viewed in this way, the future of presencing scholarship may increasingly concern how individuals and groups learn to participate within presencing in ways that deepen leadership, learning, and transformation over time.

We extend our appreciation to the authors who have contributed to this issue for advancing this important area of inquiry. As the field continues to evolve, their contributions help illuminate a growing frontier of presencing scholarship and practice that is increasingly cultivated, inhabited, and sustained within collective life.



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His current research in Dynamic Presencing explores how the inner conditions for transformation can be cultivated across professional and personal life as an integrated whole. It examines how these conditions enable individuals to foster a wisdom way of being, uncover a basis for deep sanity, and thrive with resilience amid an increasingly destabilized and uncertain world. Dynamic Presencing introduces a presence-sourced, presencing-guided, and field-attuned approach to leadership, coaching, and a wisdom-guided way of living.

To date, his research contributions have appeared in over 55 peer-reviewed articles and chapters, and in 15 edited, authored, and forthcoming books, including the three-volume series *Advances in Presencing*, which brings together leading-edge interdisciplinary scholarship from the global presencing community. His latest book offers an introduction to this presencing approach, with two additional volumes currently in development that further articulate its core practices and frameworks.

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He is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Presencing Leadership & Coaching (IJPLC)*, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal supported by Université Laval that bridges emerging scholarship and practice in presencing-based leadership and coaching.

He is also the founder of *Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC)*, a transformative coaching approach and living lineage of practice. As his principal focus of applied research, DPC integrates his teaching, coaching, and presencing-related scholarship into a unified body of work that continues to evolve through engagement with global MBA classrooms and international communities of practice.

For more on his research, publications, and latest contributions, visit his profiles on [Google Scholar](#), [ResearchGate](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Amazon Author page](#)

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PRESENCE AS ORIGINATING GROUND, PRESENCING AS WAY *The Twofold Approach of the Coaching Field in Dynamic Presencing Coaching*

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Abstract: Contemporary presence-based and presencing-informed coaching approaches increasingly recognize the importance of embodiment, emergence, relational depth, and the transformative potential of presence. Yet the ontological relationship between presence and presencing remains insufficiently articulated. Presence is often described as a practitioner capacity, relational quality, or condition of effective coaching, while comparatively less attention has been given to how presence functions as the originating ground from which presencing unfolds. As a result, presencing is frequently approached as a conversational process, field phenomenon, or mode of emergence without a corresponding account of the ontological foundations that enable it to become embodied, stabilized, and inhabitable as a way of being. This article addresses that gap by introducing Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC) (Gunnlaugson, 2020–2026), a presence-sourced and presencing-guided approach that distinguishes between Presence Work and Presencing Work as two interdependent dimensions of the coaching field. In DPC, presence functions as the originating ground from which presencing unfolds, while presencing refers to the living movement through which embodied presence becomes generative within experience, relationship, and the coaching field. The article develops a twofold account of the coaching process, clarifying how presence establishes the ontological conditions for transformational emergence and how presencing carries that emergence forward as a lived way of being. Through this distinction, DPC offers a developmental and ontological framework for understanding how presencing becomes embodied, sustained, and inhabitable within coaching practice.

Key words: presencing approaches, dynamic presencing, presencing, ontological, epistemological

I. Introduction

Dynamic Presencing Coaching¹ (DPC) (Gunnlaugson, 2020–2026) is a presence-sourced and presencing-guided approach to coaching that situates the coach's embodied presence, the client's unfolding way of being, and the emergent movement of the coaching field as integrated dimensions of the coaching process. At the heart of this approach lies *Presence Work*: the process through which

¹ Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC) is one applied stream within the broader Way of Dynamic Presencing. Together with Dynamic Presencing Leadership (DPL), it represents a developing body of work concerned with cultivating presence and presencing across individual, relational, and collective domains.

the coach becomes established in presence through the Five Level-Depths of Presence (Gunnlaugson, 2024, 2025), cultivating an embodied, presence-based sensing orientation that transforms the nature of their presencing self. From the seat of presence, the DPC Coach first settles into the *ground-sense* of the ground of presence and the *felt-sense* of the inner presencing body. As this embodied orientation deepens, the *self-sense* of their presencing nature becomes increasingly available. Within the presencing field, the coach then learns to orient through their *field-sense*, perceiving and participating in the emergent movement of the coaching field. Together, these four sensing orientations function as subtle somatic registers that gradually bring the presencing conduit (Gunnlaugson, 2025b) into fuller embodiment and participation, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

The presencing conduit names the living vertical integration through which Presence Work becomes embodied as the inner interface for presencing-guided coaching. The conduit becomes active when the ground of presence, the inner presencing body, the presencing self, and the presencing field align as one continuous interface that the coach embodies. Within this interface, the coach learns to root presence in their ground-sense, activate presence through their felt-sense, stabilize presence in their self-sense, and participate in the coaching field with their field-sense. These four sensing orientations eventually integrate as one coherent sensing interface. As the interior of the DPC Coach becomes more attuned to this conduit, presence becomes the living medium through which the coach listens, senses, witnesses, responds, and participates in the client's unfolding process. In this sense, the presencing conduit plays a central role in establishing Presence Work as the precondition for *Presencing Work* within the coaching field. From within this presence-led orientation, Presencing Work unfolds as coach and client participate in emergence as it takes shape within the coaching encounter.

It is from this presence-based orientation that the DPC Coach enters the coaching field from the living depths of presence. As the ground of presence, inner presencing body, presencing self, and presencing field become increasingly embodied, activated, and participated in, the coach begins to engage the coaching encounter through the presencing conduit. The coaching field becomes available through this inner sourcing, as the coach's presence is no longer organized primarily around a personal or interpersonal stance, but through a deeper participation in the living dimensions of presence. As the field-sense awakens, the presencing field increasingly reveals itself as a lived dimension of the coach's own presencing conduit.

DYNAMIC PRESENCING

• THE PRESENCING CONDUIT •



FIELD SENSE

Tuned into the intelligence of the whole.

We begin by sensing the field that holds us.



SELF SENSE

Awakening through self-awareness into the witnessing self.

We turn inward and recognize the one who is aware.



FELT SENSE

Activation through felt-sense into aligned presence.

We drop beneath thinking into the wisdom of the body.



GROUND SENSE

Rooted in the living field. Embodying presence.

We anchor in what is real and alive.



THE PRESENCING FIELD

The living field of emergence where presence becomes relational and generative.

We participate in the field through which presencing comes into form.



THE PRESENCING SELF

The deeper self of presence that witnesses, relates, and responds from within presencing.

We awaken as the self that can live from presence.



THE INNER PRESENCING BODY

The subtle inner body through which presence is felt, sensed, and embodied.

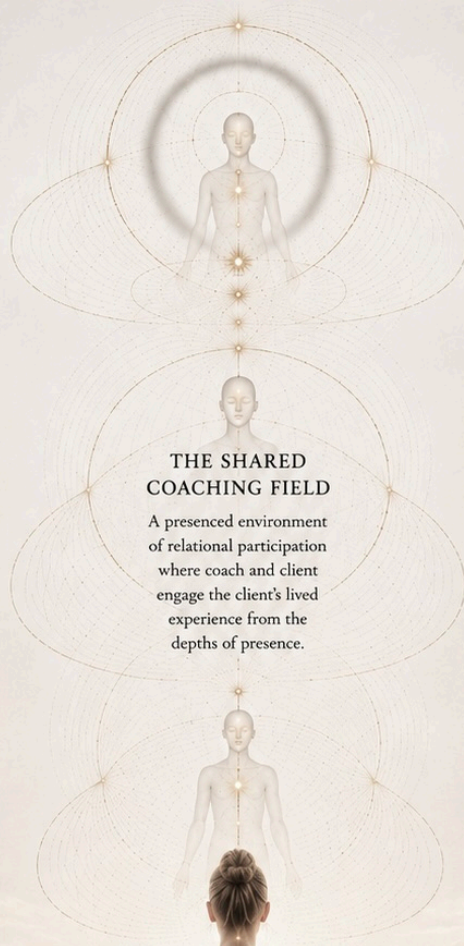
We become intimate with the body of presence.



THE GROUND OF PRESENCE

The living ground of what is, where presence becomes rooted and real.

We stand in the ground that supports presencing.



THE PRESENCING CONDUIT

GROUND. EMBODY. AWAKEN. PARTICIPATE.

FROM PRESENCE WORK TO PRESENCING WORK



SOURCE
Establish presence from within.



ATTUNE
Sense the field and attune.



PARTICIPATE
Engage relationally in the field.



UNFOLD
Allow presencing to unfold.

Figure 1: The Presencing Conduit

The coaching field is therefore encountered less as a transcendent social field to be accessed and more as a shared field of participation that is opened and conducted through the coach's inhabitation of presence while inviting the client into progressively deeper participation.

As the DPC Coach establishes themselves in this presencing orientation, the client becomes increasingly immersed in and available to their lived experience. Through the coach's inhabitation of presence, the client often discovers a greater capacity to rest with, sense into, and relate to their experience from within. This marks the primary movement of Presence Work, where coach and client become established in a shared environment of embodied presence. Within this environment, the client's contact with lived experience becomes increasingly grounded, immediate, and coherent.

Presence Work reaches a developmental threshold when coach and client become established in this shared environment of embodied presence. From this foundation, Presencing Work begins as coach and client participate more consciously in the unfolding movement of emergence arising within the coaching field. The coaching field now functions as a living environment of presencing through which new possibilities, meanings, insights, and ways of being can gradually emerge, unfold, and take form.

The emergence of this living environment of presencing establishes a new basis of participation between coach and client. From within this shared field, the client's lived situation is engaged through presencing as it unfolds from the depths of presence. Experience is no longer encountered solely as content to be explored, understood, or resolved, but as an unfolding movement through which new possibilities for being can gradually reveal themselves. Here presencing is lived as an embodied and participatory process carried through the coach's sustained inhabitation of the presencing conduit and the client's increasing participation within the coaching field as it becomes actively presenced through the coaching encounter.

Within Dynamic Presencing Coaching, the coaching field is worked with explicitly as a living environment of presencing through which emergence can unfold. From the presence-based orientation illustrated in Figure 2, the coaching field becomes actively presenced through the integrated functioning of the coach's ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense as the presencing conduit. Through this fourfold interface, the coach participates in the coaching field from within the living dimensions of presence itself, allowing client experience to be sensed, received, and engaged through presencing as it unfolds within the encounter. Rather than functioning as a field to be accessed, the coaching field emerges as a participatory environment

DYNAMIC PRESENCING COACHING

• THE SHARED COACHING FIELD •

From the coach's embodiment of presence, a shared field of participation opens where the client's lived experience can be engaged and transformed.



THE COACH'S PRESENCING CONDUIT

The coach enters the field from the inside out through the embodied dimensions of presence.

Presence is sourced through the conduit.



THE CLIENT'S LIVED EXPERIENCE

The client's situation becomes available as a living threshold for presencing.

Experience begins to open from within.



FIELD SENSE

Tuned into the intelligence of the whole.

We sense the field that holds us.



SELF SENSE

Awakening through self-awareness into the witnessing self.

We recognize the one who is aware.



FELT SENSE

Activation through felt-sense into aligned presence.

We drop beneath thinking into the wisdom of the body.



GROUND SENSE

Rooted in the living field. Embodying presence.

We anchor in what is real and alive.

PRESENCE WORK

Grounding, embodying, awakening, and participating in the living depths of presence.

The work becomes established in presence.



THE SHARED COACHING FIELD

A presenced environment of relational participation where coach and client engage the client's lived experience from the depths of presence.



THE EMERGING WAY OF BEING

The client's deeper way of being begins to unfold through the shared field.

Presencing comes into form as lived transformation.



RESPONSIVE PARTICIPATION

The client participates from within, sensing, receiving, and responding.

The field invites and supports participation.

THE LIVING GROUND OF PRESENCE

We connect with the living ground that supports an active and continuous presencing.

FROM PRESENCE WORK TO PRESENCING WORK



SOURCE

Establish presence from within.



ATTUNE

Sense the field and attune.



PARTICIPATE

Engage relationally in the field.



UNFOLD

Allow presencing to unfold.

Figure 2: The Shared Coaching Field in DPC

opened and sustained through the coach's inhabitation of the presencing conduit and the client's growing participation within it.

As Presence Work matures in DPC, the coaching field gradually becomes available as a shared ontological environment that supports the client's emerging way of being. Embodied through the coach's presencing conduit and increasingly sensed by the client as an environment of depth, participation, and transformation, the field provides the structural conditions through which presencing can unfold. The DPC Coach enters the coaching encounter through the integrated functioning of the conduit itself: ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense.

Together, these sensing orientations enable the coach to participate from within the living dimensions of presence while remaining attuned to the client's unfolding experience. The coaching field thereby becomes a shared environment of participation within which presencing can unfold and emergence can gradually take form. Coaching becomes a participatory engagement with the unfolding movement of presencing, allowing the living depths of presence to inform and shape the transformational process of the encounter.

Figure 2 illustrates this architecture by situating the coach's presencing conduit, the client's lived experience, and the coaching field within the wider ground of presence. Presence Work establishes the ontological foundation through which the coach becomes available to the ground of presence, inner presencing body, presencing self, and presencing field. From this foundation, Presencing Work becomes possible as the unfolding movement of emergence within the coaching field, supporting the gradual revelation of the client's emerging way of being.

II. The Five Level-Depths as Ontological Regions of Presence

In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, presencing is grounded in the lived inhabitation of presence prior to any engagement with emergence, process, or field dynamics. This grounding takes place through five ontological regions of presence known as the Five Lifeworlds of Presence (Gunnlaugson 2020, 2024b). Each lifeworld discloses a distinct level-depth through which presence can be entered, inhabited, and stabilized in one's being. Together, these level-depths form the developmental architecture of Presence Work, establishing the ontological ground from which presencing can later unfold in a fuller, more dimensional, and more sustained manner.

Each level-depth is situated within a corresponding lifeworld of presence that provides an ontological anchor through which the coach's presencing nature becomes increasingly stabilized and oriented. These lifeworlds are inhabitable regions of presence that disclose distinct ways of sensing,

relating, and participating. When entered and embodied, they shape how client experience is met from within presence itself. From the seat of presence, the appropriate level-depth comes forward as experience organizes, without directing or managing the process. In this way, the Five Level-Depths articulate the inner developmental terrain of Presence Work through which presence gradually becomes inhabitable as a way of being for the DPC Coach.

The first level-depth is encountered in the lifeworld of Being Real, anchored in the seat of unfiltered immediacy. When this depth is inhabited, experience gathers into what is existentially present, beneath narrative expression, socialized or role-based identity, and habitual self-positioning. Attention settles into the concreteness of one's actual lived reality, allowing what is most alive and often most vulnerable in the moment to surface. For clients, this frequently involves a felt recognition of the gravity points of their situation and where the living edge of vulnerability exists. For the coach, inhabiting Being Real involves remaining grounded in Immediate Presence, allowing the encounter to rest with what is here without prematurely assigning meaning or interpretations. This depth establishes a shared contact with reality itself, forming the existential ground from which deeper presencing may unfold. In this way, Being Real supports the arrival into presencing by establishing a shared contact with reality as it is, from which presencing can begin to unfold with integrity and depth.

From this grounding, the next lifeworld is Being Witness. Within this level-depth of Expansive Presence, experience is held within a wider horizon of presence that allows a broader perspective and clarity to arise organically, without distancing from what is being lived. Vulnerability remains present, yet it is now held within a meta-awareness that is at once dispassionate yet embodied. Clients often experience themselves as being held within a larger embrace of witnessing awareness, enabling patterns, emotions, and meanings to reveal themselves from a new liberated vantage point that is not personally identified. In contrast to Being Real, experience becomes comparatively more spacious while remaining intimately connected. For the coach, inhabiting Being Witness supports a transcendent mode of participation that widens the perceptual and relational experience of being, where there is a sensing of the broader contours of the client's experience as it emerges. This allows experience to be seen and held in new ways. Here, Being Witness supports the emergence of presencing by enfolding into a spacious, timeless wisdom orientation that reveals new movements of unfolding.

As presence deepens further, the territory of Being Essence is contacted. This level-depth of core presence is characterized by felt soul resonance and a sense of inward truth that is known from

within. Experience gathers around what feels most essential to the client, carrying a quality of Soul-to-Soul recognition that is both intimate, grounding and empowering. Clients often experience this as contact with something core and familiar, an inward sense of “this is who I really am” that is accompanied by deeper soulful qualities of being oneself more fully. This contact arises as a lived recognition that settles into the body and reshapes one’s sense of self from the inside out. Within Dynamic Presencing Coaching, Being Essence contains Core Presence which supports soul-level experience to unfold and be trusted. The DPC Coach remains seated in Being Essence, allowing their Essence and Core Presence to speak through felt resonance rather than through explanation or guidance. As Core Presence stabilizes, presencing gains a depth and integrity through a lived sense of who the client is at their core. In this way, Being Essence allows presencing to surface the client’s inner truth as a living source of being who we are. To invite this into the coaching field, the DPC Coach anchors in their seat of Being Essence to meet the client from the same essential ground.

From here, our descent continues into the next lifeworld Being Source, where Originating Presence is encountered. This dimension is lived as contact with the generative origin from which presence itself arises. Deeper than our presencing nature, Being Source is a continual wellspring of being resourced from a deeper unmanifest current. Originating Presence is lived in a way that is continually arriving. For clients, Being Source is often experienced as touching into an inner flowing dimension of being. For the coach, inhabiting their seat of Being Source involves yielding into a deeper underlying current of generativity. Participation becomes receptive in a deeper sense, allowing presencing to be guided by what is arising. This involves a disciplined openness in which emergence is sensed as it comes into form from the source of presencing itself. In this way, Being Source provides a basis for Presencing Work by reconnecting emergence to its originating ground, enabling presencing to unfold as an ongoing act of creation from a regenerative way of being rather than an extension of what has already been known or embodied.

The final lifeworld is Being Presence, which receives the capacities cultivated through the four previous lifeworlds and their level-depths of presence, holding them implicitly as a unified way of being in presence. Within this depth, existential immediacy, spacious awareness, core resonance, and sourced vitality remain available as facets of a more dynamic presencing reality. Here Dynamic Presence is lived as living whole, allowing responsiveness to arise fluidly through each of the previous level-depths. For both coach and client, Being Presence supports a transformed

THE FIVE LEVEL-DEPTHS OF DYNAMIC PRESENCING

01

BEING REAL

Immediate Presence

Activates the lifeworld of Being Real, uncovering the existential dimension of immediate presence.



02

BEING WITNESS

Expansive Presence

Activates the lifeworld of Being Witness, opening the spacious dimension of expansive presence.



03

BEING ESSENCE

Core Presence

Activates the lifeworld of Being Essence, uncovering the soul-depth of core presence.



04

BEING SOURCE

Originating Presence

Activates the lifeworld of Being Source, opening the formless depth of originating presence.



05

BEING PRESENCE

Dynamic Presence

Activates the lifeworld of Being Presence, integrating the prior dimensions into dynamic presence.



Figure 3: The Five Level-Depths of Dynamic Presencing

mode of participation in the coaching field that is attuned, responsive, and grounded in an ongoing way, while remaining open to what is emerging. From this lifeworld, presencing unfolds naturally into movement, articulation, and action. In this way, Being Presence integrates the trajectory of Presence Work and establishes a unified ground of being from which Presencing Work may unfold, allowing presencing to be lived as a dynamic way of being within the coaching encounter and carried forward beyond it.

Taken together, the Five Level-Depths (Figure 3 above) articulate the dimensional richness of presence as a living wisdom-based ontological terrain. They reveal presence as a multidimensional phenomenon composed of distinct regions of presence through which experience may be grounded, opened, sourced, and integrated in qualitatively different ways. For presence-based coaching, the Five Level-Depths provide a developmental architecture for understanding how presence deepens and becomes increasingly inhabitable as a way of being. For presencing-informed coaching, they illuminate the ontological conditions through which presencing becomes embodied, stabilized, and sustained within lived experience and the coaching field. Within Dynamic Presencing Coaching, these dimensions interweave in response to the needs of the coaching moment, guided by the intelligence and wisdom inherent within presence itself. The DPC Coach's role centers on taking their seat of presence across these depths, allowing Presence Work to establish the ontological ground from which Presencing Work can unfold generatively as a way of being in the coaching field.

III. Presence Work in DPC

Having established the ontological architecture of Presence Work through the Five Level-Depths of Presence, we can now examine how Presence Work functions within the coaching process itself. In DPC, the coaching field is entered through two connected movements that together organize the developmental architecture of the method: Presence Work and Presencing Work (see Figure 4 below). Presence Work establishes the ontological ground of the coaching encounter through deepening the coach and client into embodied contact with presence itself. Presencing Work unfolds subsequently as this depth of presence begins expressing itself through the generative movement of emergence within the coaching field. What distinguishes DPC is the understanding that presencing develops from the prior inhabitation of presence. The more deeply presence becomes embodied, stabilized, and lived from directly, the more capable the coaching field becomes of supporting transformational emergence for both client and coach.

The movement of Presence Work unfolds through *enfolding into presence*. *Letting Go* initiates

this movement as habitual patterns of attention, interpretation, emotional contraction, and self-organization begin loosening their hold on experience. Through *Letting Be*, attention gradually settles into a deeper contact with the immediacy of lived reality. Presence begins registering somatically through the inner presencing body as the ground-sense and felt-sense become increasingly available within experience. As this deepening unfolds, the presencing self-sense gradually awakens and stabilizes, allowing the coach and client to participate from progressively deeper regions of presence. Over time, these sensing orientations begin cohering as the presencing conduit, establishing the embodied basis through which Presence Work matures and Presencing Work can later unfold.

As this shift deepens, the client's relationship to experience begins subtly reorganizing. Attention slows. Experience becomes more directly inhabited from within. What first appears as moments of stillness or bodily immediacy gradually opens into a more intimate contact with the inner dimensions of reality itself. Emotional textures often become more differentiated and coherent, while previously unnoticed dimensions of depth begin entering awareness. Presence increasingly functions as the medium through which experience is encountered. Through this deepening contact, clients begin rediscovering themselves from within the living textures of their own experience rather than primarily through narrative interpretation or habitual self-reference.

Throughout this process, the coach's role is engaged through sustained inhabitation of presence itself. The DPC Coach remains grounded and sourced from their seat of presence, allowing stillness, receptivity, and embodied depth of presence to shape the coaching encounter as a whole. This orientation functions as a non-verbal ontological invitation within the coaching field. Clients begin sensing their experience differently because the relational environment itself has changed. Nervous system responses gradually recalibrate toward greater attunement with depth, immediacy, uncertainty, vulnerability, and existential contact. Presence increasingly becomes the living medium through which clients learn to remain with what is true, alive, and emerging within experience. Over time, this reconditioning reshapes the client's relationship to difficulty itself, allowing a more stable and presenced self-sense to emerge.

Eventually, unfolding into presence begins maturing into sustained *indwelling in presence*. Letting Be stabilizes as presence becomes increasingly inhabitable as both an inner and shared inter-environment within the coaching field. Experience often takes on a different phenomenological



Figure 4: Presence and Presencing Work

texture during this phase. Time appears to slow. Relational contact gains depth and density. Bodily resonance, existential immediacy, and subtle forms of attunement become more perceptible within the session as the coaching process increasingly rests within the depths of presence itself. It is from within this indwelling that the Five Level-Depths of Presence are given space to emerge organically, allowing clients to gradually recognize that experience can be inhabited through multiple depth-horizons of being.

What begins in Presence Work is a return into the deeper wisdom dimensions of our presencing selfhood that have remained implicit, underdeveloped, or uninhabited. Presence becomes increasingly embodied as an orienting ground that clients can re-enter and live from across changing situations and contexts. Continuity develops through repeated returns into this felt ground of experience, including moments previously experienced as fragmented, destabilizing, or overwhelming. Through sustained indwelling in presence, the coaching field gradually acquires greater coherence, density, and stability as an ontological ground from which Presencing Work can later unfold.

IV. Presencing Work in DPC

Presencing Work (see Figure 4 above) unfolds from within the depth and fullness of presence established through Presence Work. Whereas Presence Work deepens the coaching encounter through the movement of Letting Go into Letting Be, Presencing Work unfolds through the ascending movement of Letting Be into Letting Come. The emphasis now gradually shifts from grounding into presence toward participating with emergence as it begins taking shape within the coaching field. What was previously enfolded, contacted, and stabilized through indwelling in presence begins carrying itself forward through inquiry, dialogue, perception, relational participation, and action. The depth established through Letting Be remains present, yet a new movement begins to unfold from within it. Indwelling in presence gradually gives way to *unfolding into presencing*, where Letting Come becomes the expression of what presence has already prepared, gathered, and brought into readiness.

Unfolding into presencing arises organically as the coach settles more fully into the inner presencing body and presencing self-sense. Gradually, the inner presencing body, presencing self, and presencing field begin cohering as an integrated presencing conduit (Gunnlaugson, 2025b) through which presencing can unfold within the coaching field itself. The coach increasingly

participates through this integrated interface rather than primarily through reflective cognition, technique, or interpersonal positioning. Expression, inquiry, and relational participation begin arising through the conduit as presencing unfolds within the field. Rather than directing the process conceptually, the coach learns to participate with emergence, allowing presencing to carry itself forward as a living continuation of Presence Work.

As this movement deepens, the client's relationship to experience begins unfolding from the depth established through Presence Work, gradually becoming more generative. What has been grounded through enfolding into and indwelling in presence begins expressing itself through new relational, existential, emotional, and practical forms. This shift is often accompanied by a greater sense of coherence and ease in how expression unfolds. Words begin surfacing with less strain. Insights arrive with greater bodily resonance and existential clarity. Emotional movement becomes more directly lived from within. Clients frequently describe this phase as a sense of moving with their experience rather than against it. Presence increasingly carries itself forward into expression, creating a living continuity between inner contact and outer participation. What emerges is often first recognized within the inner presencing body before it is fully understood conceptually.

Attunement becomes especially important during this phase of the work. The coach remains steadily oriented from presence while sensing how emergence is taking shape through the client, the coaching field, and the movement of presencing itself. Some forms of emergence are ready to enter language and expression, while others remain in earlier stages of formation and require further indwelling before clarification becomes possible. Presencing Work therefore requires sensitivity to timing, pacing, and the phenomenological texture of emergence itself. A disciplined willingness to remain with ambiguity becomes essential so that what comes forward can arise from depth rather than from urgency, premature interpretation, or the impulse to resolve experience too quickly.

The quality of Presencing Work also depends directly upon the depth of presence established through Presence Work. Enfolding into presence and indwelling in presence create the ontological conditions through which unfolding into presencing can unfold with coherence. As the coach inhabits the Five Level-Depths of Presence more fully, the client's relationship to their lived situation gradually reorganizes at increasingly deeper levels. Presencing experience becomes more inhabitable. Relational participation gains depth. Previously fixed orientations begin loosening as new possibilities for perception and engagement gradually become available. From within this stabilized ground of presence, Letting Come unfolds more organically through the coach's participation with the field, allowing expression and response to emerge while remaining anchored in

the depths of presence itself.

Rather than unfolding in a linear sequence, these movements continually interweave throughout the coaching encounter. A session may move through repeated cycles of Letting Go into presence, renewed indwelling via Letting Be, and emergent moments of Letting Come between coach and client. At times the process deepens back into stillness and grounding. At other moments emergence begins moving forward with greater clarity, energy, and directionality. The coaching field remains fluid, recursive, and dynamically responsive throughout.

As this developmental rhythm matures across coaching sessions, clients begin recognizing that their emerging way of being develops through repeated returns into presence and the ongoing unfolding of presencing arising from within it. What is most essential within the client increasingly becomes embodied and lived from directly as presencing continues shaping how life is perceived, related to, and engaged in the immediacy of experience.

Understood in this way, enfolding into presence reconnects individuals with deeper dimensions of who they already are through awakening increasingly subtle levels of presence across the Five Level-Depths. Indwelling in presence stabilizes these territories as inhabitable grounds of being. Unfolding into presencing allows this embodied depth of presence to become generative within the coaching field, carrying emergence forward into participation, relation, expression, and lived engagement. Together, Presence Work and Presencing Work reveal presencing as a living embodied process through which being gradually unfolds into becoming within the shared environment of the coaching field.

V. The Two Hands of Presencing: *Letting and Holding in the Coaching Field*

The process of Dynamic Presencing Coaching is shaped by the Two Hands of Presencing (see Figure 5 below), a guiding metaphor for how the DPC Coach engages the unfolding movement of presencing through the letting gestures of the left hand and the holding gestures of the right hand. These two hands name the co-arising gestures through which presencing is modeled, shaped, and supported with the client in the coaching field. Emerging from the coach's presencing nature, the interplay of letting and holding supports a more nuanced participation with the process of emergence. The letting gestures open the coach and client to what is releasing, unfolding, and coming into form, while the holding gestures sustain the inner conditions of presence, depth, and emergence. In this way, the Two Hands of Presencing make explicit what remains underdeveloped in the Theory U account of presencing: the disciplined holding conditions through which presencing



Figure 5: The Two Hands of Dynamic Presencing

becomes embodied, coherent, and sustained within the coaching field.

Through these integrated presencing gestures, the DPC Coach participates from within presencing as it unfolds. The letting gestures, modelled through the coach's way of being receptive, open space for presencing to arise and deepen, while the holding gestures, likewise embodied by the coach, subtly shape what is emerging within the coaching field. This shaping does not impose form or structure; rather, it reflects an attuned responsiveness lived through the coach's way of being, supporting presencing to take shape in its own way. In this sense, the two hands articulate how presencing is engaged in coaching, allowing depth, continuity, and emergence to be shaped while working with the client.

The letting gestures describe how presencing is invited to come forward through a responsive way of. Through Letting Go and Letting Be, attention releases its grip from habitual ways of being organized around our everyday sense of self. This movement involves a deeper ontological Letting Go in which experience is allowed to settle into the depths of presence as it is embodied by the inner presencing body from one's ground of presence. As this occurs, presencing becomes engaged, where experience is shaped by our presencing nature, rather than around what is familiar, expected, or identity-bound.

Within Theory U, presencing is accessed primarily through the receptive movements of Letting Go and Letting Come. These gestures orient participants toward contacting source in service of sensing and actualizing an emerging future, rather than toward inhabiting a stabilized depth of presence. As such, Theory U does not articulate a distinct movement of Letting Be, nor does it work with a sustained holding environment through which presencing can become an emerging way of being. The emphasis rests on opening to emergence and allowing insight and direction to arise from the transcendent social field and source. From the perspective of Dynamic Presencing Coaching, this leaves presencing underdeveloped as an embodied, developmental, and ontological practice. DPC addresses this limitation by introducing Letting Be as a distinct presencing movement and by articulating the holding gestures as the inner conditions through which presencing can become grounded, deepened, and sustained within the coaching field.

Letting Go and Letting Come can be effective in collective and large-group contexts, where agency is distributed, participation is diffuse, and the social field itself functions as the primary carrier of emergence. In such settings, openness and receptivity can be sufficient to allow insight or future-oriented movement to arise. Coaching unfolds within a fundamentally different relational ecology. It is an intimate, sustained encounter in which presencing is being asked to be explored in

conversation.

Within this context, receptivity to the transcendent dimensions of experience alone (e.g., the social field or Source) remains insufficient for the sustained development of presencing. Presencing requires the ontological movement of Letting Be, together with the support of the holding gestures, to enable what emerges to take root, stabilize, and become integrated within one's presencing nature. Without these gestures, presencing can become overly field-dependent, privileging transient experiences of self-transcendence over the gradual development of a presencing self capable of carrying these discoveries forward as a lived way of being. Consequently, presencing may remain episodic, lacking integration within the deeper developmental structures of the coach's being (Gunnlaugson, 2024, 2025).

The holding gestures address this requirement for continuity and ontological stability. (Gunnlaugson, 2025). Holding Presence anchors presencing in the inner presencing body, establishing somatic grounding as the process unfolds. Holding Depth engages the presencing self, supporting the integration of presencing into the deeper structures of being so that it becomes increasingly inhabitable as a way of life. Holding Emergence supports the unfolding of presencing within the coaching field itself, allowing emergent possibilities, meanings, and directions to take form while remaining rooted in the deeper ground of presence. Together, these holding gestures establish the ontological conditions through which the letting gestures of presencing can come into full expression.

The Two Hands of Presencing serves as a guiding heuristic for understanding how the DPC Coach works with the letting and holding gestures. Letting opens experience for both coach and client, allowing movement, softening, and emergence to come forward in lived immediacy. Holding stabilizes the ontological environments through which this opening can be sustained, supporting coherence, continuity, and depth as the client's experience unfolds across the encounter. These gestures are mutually implicative, functioning as complementary aspects of a single presencing ecology shared by the DPC Coach and their client. Through their interplay, presencing becomes increasingly inhabitable for the DPC Coach as an orienting way of being, while simultaneously generating conditions for the client to sense, trust, and engage emergence.

This dynamic can be clarified through the alchemical metaphor of the crucible. The crucible emerges through the ongoing interplay between the letting and holding gestures. Letting Be initiates entry into the crucible by relaxing the need for control and inviting a deeper trust in presence.

Holding Presence allows this opening to be sustained, creating the conditions for presence to deepen and become more fully inhabited. Holding Depth supports the gradual emergence of the presencing self, allowing presence to take root as a lived way of being. Holding Emergence creates the conditions through which what is emerging can gradually reveal and express itself while remaining connected to depth. Through these gestures, the crucible becomes a lived ontological environment in which presence can deepen, presencing can unfold, and an emerging way of being can gradually take root.

Within this crucible, indwelling in presence becomes possible. Indwelling emerges as the natural maturation of enfolding into presence. What begins as moments of entering and contacting presence gradually develops into a more sustained inhabitation of its depths. For both the DPC Coach and client, presence becomes a living environment for the session. Through shared indwelling, the coaching field develops greater coherence, depth, and stability, creating the conditions through which presencing can gradually begin to unfold.

As this transmutive environment stabilizes, Letting Be reveals its deeper function. What begins as a release of effort matures into an increasing capacity to dwell within the depths of presence. The Five Level-Depths become increasingly available as inhabitable dimensions of being, allowing presence to function as an ontological ground rather than a temporary state. In this way, indwelling serves as the developmental bridge between enfolding into presence and unfolding into presencing.

Seen in this light, the crucible of Letting Be functions within a larger ecology of presencing gestures. Letting Go into Letting Be supports the movement of enfolding into presence, allowing coach and client to descend into the ontological depths of presence. Through sustained indwelling, these depths become increasingly inhabitable as a way of being. From this ground, Letting Be into Letting Come supports the movement of unfolding into presencing, allowing what has been contacted, inhabited, and stabilized through presence to begin revealing and expressing itself within the coaching field. The Two Hands of Presencing thus support the developmental progression through which presence becomes inhabitable and presencing becomes increasingly generative within the coaching encounter.

VI. Implications for Coaching Practice

Presence Work and Presencing Work function as two interdependent dimensions of the coaching process within Dynamic Presencing Coaching. Presence Work establishes the ontological

ground through which presence becomes embodied, inhabitable, and developmentally integrated, while Presencing Work unfolds from this ground as a living participation in emergence. Together, they organize the developmental architecture of coaching, shaping how transformation is entered, sustained, and carried forward within the coaching field.

At the level of Presence Work, the coach's primary responsibility is to master inhabiting presence as a lived orientation and way of being. This means developing the capacity to remain grounded, receptive, and embodied throughout the coaching encounter, rather than accessing presence only periodically. In DPC, this involves stabilizing the inner presencing body from one's seat and ground of presence. The coach enters the session already established in presence, allowing depth to fill out through stillness, receptivity, and embodied ways of engaging the conversation. From this orientation, the coach's presence becomes a stabilizing condition that supports the client in coming into more immediate contact with their lived experience. Coaching then unfolds through the quality of presence being inhabited and sustained, allowing the encounter to remain close to what is most real and alive in the moment.

This orientation redefines the DPC Coach's understanding of effectiveness by placing the continuity, depth, and quality of presence at the center of client transformation by the coach's capacity to remain grounded in presence as the client's experience unfolds. Through Presence Work, the coach develops the ability to remain oriented within the level-depths of presence as experience shifts, allowing the coaching field to include the full complexity of the client's experience. Presence itself becomes the living medium through which the encounter is guided, shaping how the client's experience is met, held, and allowed to unfold.

As Presence Work deepens, Presencing Work gradually begins to unfold. What has been contacted through enfolding into presence and stabilized through indwelling in presence now begins moving into expression within the coaching field. The emphasis gradually shifts from inhabiting presence to participating in the unfolding movement of presencing. The coach remains grounded in presence while attuning to what is emerging and becoming ready to take form. Language, inquiry, and relational participation arise in resonance with this unfolding movement. Expression becomes a continuation of what has already been contacted and inhabited through presence, allowing depth to move into form while remaining connected to its source. The coach participates in this process through a sustained attunement to the unfolding life of the coaching field.

In DPC, training emphasizes the cultivation of Presence Work and Presencing Work as two interdependent dimensions of practice. Presence Work provides the foundation, supporting coaches

in becoming established in the ground of presence, inner presencing body, presencing self, and presencing field as the living architecture of the presencing conduit. From this foundation, coaches apprentice into the Five Lifeworlds and Five Level-Depths of Presence as inhabitable dimensions of being.

Presencing Work develops from the foundation established through Presence Work. What has been enfolded and inhabited through presence gradually begins to unfold through inquiry, dialogue, perception, and relational participation within the coaching field. The DPC Coach learns to sense and participate in this movement, supporting what is becoming ready to emerge, reveal itself, and take form. Over time, presencing becomes a lived process through which an emerging presencing way of being can be embodied and coached from.

Taken together, these implications point toward a reorientation of coaching practice grounded in the dynamic relationship between Presence Work and Presencing Work. Presence establishes the ontological ground of the coaching encounter, while presencing unfolds as the living movement through which that ground becomes generative. The coach's task centers on inhabiting presence and participating in presencing in service of the client's transformative way of being. Through this twofold movement, coaching becomes an engagement with the intelligence of presence as it unfolds into presencing, supporting deeper shifts in clients that are embodied, sustained, and increasingly inhabitable within their everyday life.

VII. Closing Thoughts

This article has sought to clarify a relationship that often remains implicit within presencing-oriented approaches to coaching. The distinction between Presence Work and Presencing Work reveals that presence and presencing represent related yet developmentally distinct dimensions of practice—together illuminating a shift in understanding the deeper potential of presencing itself. Where presencing has often been approached as a way of knowing through which emergence is accessed, Dynamic Presencing Coaching proposes something further: a way of being through which the deeper potentials of presencing become increasingly inhabitable. In this framework, Presence Work provides the ontological depth through which a transformed presencing becomes possible, while Presencing Work provides the unfolding movement through which that depth comes into embodied expression within the coaching field.

Central to this inquiry is the development of a transformed relationship to presence itself. Presence and presencing thus appear as complementary movements within a larger developmental

movement through which being becomes increasingly capable of carrying its own unfolding and transformation. This distinction also helps illuminate why presencing may at times appear fleeting, episodic, or difficult to sustain. Experiences of emergence, insight, and transformational possibility can arise without the developmental foundations required to integrate them into one's way of being. Presence Work addresses this challenge directly, attending to the ontological conditions through which presencing becomes embodied, coherent, and enduring. Presencing Work unfolds from this ground, allowing what has become rooted in presence to move into expression, participation, and lived embodiment in one's coaching and life as a whole.

The contributions of Dynamic Presencing Coaching extend beyond distinguishing two dimensions of practice. Through the five figures developed across the article, a developmental and ontological architecture of presencing gradually comes into view. Together, they illuminate the relationship between presence and presencing, clarify the foundations through which presencing becomes embodied and stabilized, and articulate a pathway through which presencing becomes increasingly inhabitable as a way of being.

Ultimately, Dynamic Presencing Coaching proposes that what becomes possible through presencing is always shaped by how deeply one has learned to dwell in and orient one's experience through presence itself. As that relationship matures, presence becomes increasingly inhabitable and presencing increasingly available as a way of being one draws from in their coaching and lives. The relationship between Presence Work and Presencing Work therefore reveals a developmental pathway through which presence becomes lived, presencing becomes embodied, and transformation of one's life as a whole becomes integrated within the ongoing unfolding of human becoming. In Dynamic Presencing Coaching, presence gradually becomes a home one learns to inhabit; presencing, the way one learns to live from it.

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² All conceptual models, figure structures, and theoretical language in the figures were developed by the author as part of the Dynamic Presencing framework. Visual renderings of selected figures were generated with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool and subsequently revised, selected, and finalized by the author.



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ENACTING PRESENCE THROUGH ARCHETYPAL COACHING

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Abstract: This article draws on the integration of Gunnlaugson's (2020-2025) gesture of letting be with findings from recent research on archetypal coaching (Carod, 2021, 2025). It situates archetypal engagement within the framework of Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC). Archetypal coaching reframes archetypal images as field-mediated phenomena emerging within embodied presencing. In this view, archetypes arise as dynamic field intelligences rather than as internal subpersonalities. As the field emerges through the quality of presence co-enacted within the coaching relationship, archetypes, once presenced through the gesture of letting be, become active collaborators in co-sensing, co-creating, and co-evolving. They support coherent, intentional action grounded in sourced wholeness rather than habitual patterns. In doing so, this article offers an integrative contribution to DPC discourse by bridging active imagination, presencing ontology, and coaching practice.

Key words: Dynamic Presencing Coaching, Archetypal Coaching, letting be, active imagination, embodied awareness.

I. Introduction

Over the past two decades, presencing has emerged as a central orientation within leadership, coaching, and systems change practice. Rooted most prominently in Theory U (Scharmer, 2007–2018), presencing has been articulated as a way of knowing that enables individuals and collectives to sense into and act from emerging futures.

Alongside these developments, Dynamic Presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2020–2025) and its applied methodology, Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC), introduce an ontological refinement of presencing practice. Rather than approaching presencing primarily as a mode of knowing, DPC

frames presencing as a dimensional way of being—one that becomes coherently accessible through the embodied integration of the inner presencing body, presencing self, and presencing field.

This article addresses a gap within this evolving landscape: the role of archetypal and imaginal phenomena in presencing-based coaching. While archetypal work, dreamwork, and active imagination have long histories within depth psychology and transpersonal traditions, they are often treated as intrapsychic processes or symbolic representations of unconscious content. Less attention has been given to how archetypal images may arise as emergent expressions of the presencing field when presencing is enacted as an embodied, relational practice.

Central to this integration is Gunnlaugson’s (2024a, 2024b, 2025) gesture of letting be—a foundational presencing move that stabilizes the practitioner’s inner presencing body and establishes an ontological ground for field emergence. By adopting this stance, practitioners cultivate a stabilized embodied presence that allows symbolic imagery and somatic experience to arise as transformative guides. This approach shifts the orientation of coaching toward alignment between imagination and action, enabling clients to act from sourced wholeness.

II. Presencing Archetypal Imagery as Dynamic Field Intelligences

Based on extensive research with innovators across science, business, and social change, Theory¹ U articulates *presencing* as its core movement—understood as the integration of sensing and presence that enables individuals and collectives to suspend habitual patterns of thought, emotion, and will in order to access deeper sources of knowing and action.

At the bottom of the U Theory lies an inner gate: a threshold that requires letting go of habitual identities and control structures and letting come a deeper sense of purpose or future potential. When crossed, this threshold reorganizes individual and collective perception, enabling groups to “see and act from the whole” (Scharmer, 2016).

This framework emphasizes the emerging future as a directional orientation. Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC), however, reframes the role of time within the presencing process. Rather than privileging the future as the sole leading edge, DPC articulates a dimensional ecology in which the emerging past, deep present, future, and the eternal co-arise within the coaching field (Gunnlaugson, 2025). The future remains present, yet is situated within a wider presencing field.

As the coach supports the client in resting in immediate, embodied awareness, beneath

¹ Theory U, developed by Scharmer (2007–2018), offers a widely influential framework for leadership, organizational learning, and systemic transformation grounded in the capacity to sense and act from emerging futures.

habitual narratives and identity structures, archetypal material may surface as images, dream motifs, somatic sensations, or symbolic language. This can be understood as a threshold where archetypal intelligibility and openness converge.

Archetypal coaching operates at this threshold by supporting clients in inhabiting a mode of presence in which symbolic forms are neither reified nor dismissed, but engaged as living expressions of sourced wholeness. Clients become less driven by unconscious archetypal patterns and more able to participate with them consciously, echoing Theory U's emphasis on acting from the whole.

This methodological stance reflects a key distinction emphasized in DPC: the presencing field comes into being through the quality of presence enacted within the coaching relationship. The dyad becomes a co-creative dimension of engagement rather than two parallel processes. Through empathic resonance, the coach senses the essence of the client's experience. In this state, archetypal presences are co-enacted. Dialogue becomes participatory and unfolding, shifting the relational orientation toward sensing within a shared domain rather than resolving a problem. Jung emphasized that archetypes are living patterns that manifest through images, myths, affects, and relational dynamics. Primordial images, he argued, are collective in nature and recur across cultures because they arise from shared ancestral experience rather than personal biography alone (Jung, 1960a). He also pointed to the dynamic interplay of archetypes, suggesting that they operate in constellations (CW 9i, para. 222), shaping perception and behavior in interconnected ways.

Within this reframing, archetypes are no longer approached as static mythic structures or intrapsychic contents inherited from the past, nor as forces that operate behind the scenes to determine behavior. They are understood as dynamic field intelligences that arise through the co-emergence of past, present, future, and eternal dimensions of experience. This perspective aligns with Theory U's emphasis on co-creating and acting from the whole, while extending it into the imaginal domain.

If we wish to transform our lives, it becomes essential to engage the unconscious images and subpersonalities that shape perception and action. Through practices such as active imagination, individuals enter into a dialogical relationship with these dimensions, consciously engaging what is often lived unconsciously.

A third domain—the imaginal—can be understood as a mediating space between physical and spiritual experience, where archetypal symbols and dream imagery function as receptive and expressive interfaces. These images operate both as channels of insight and as field-mediated

phenomena. While they are experienced within the individual psyche, they are also participatory expressions of a broader field of wholeness.

When presented rather than enacted, archetypes function as allies in co-sensing, co-creating, and co-evolving. In this capacity, they support action that emerges from sourced wholeness rather than from conditioned repetition. Insights from quantum theory further support this relational perspective, suggesting that reality emerges through participation. Experience becomes fluid, relational, and responsive to the quality of attention brought to it (McTaggart, 2007; McDonald, 2015). In coaching, this corresponds to a field that is continuously shaped through relational and embodied coherence.

Archetypal coaching, in this sense, reframes “reality” as a dynamic field rather than a fixed set of circumstances. The coaching field arises through the quality of presence co-enacted by coach and client. The reality of the session remains fluid, continually shaped through relational participation.

III. The Gesture of Letting Be and the Emergence of the Archetypal Field

In the framework of Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC), the gesture of letting be serves as a foundational move that stabilises coaching fields by shifting the practitioner’s orientation from personality-level reactivity to a more spacious mode of being. Generativity arises less from reaching toward what is coming and more from deepening into a sourced wholeness already moving as and through the practitioner.

In Gunnlaugson’s gesture of letting be, transformation arises through disciplined receptivity. Experience is allowed to disclose itself in its own way, enabling latent meanings and field intelligences to emerge within the relational space. Emotional reactions can then be met with strength, compassion, courage, and openness, allowing previously hidden resources and forms of wisdom to surface. Presence, from this perspective, is not a technique to be applied but a cultivated stance that creates the conditions for insight, integration, and emergent transformation.

This ontological reframing has significant implications for how archetypal and imaginal phenomena are understood within presencing-based practice. In many psychological, organizational, and cultural contexts, archetypal patterns tend to operate implicitly—enacted unconsciously through roles, projections, and systemic dynamics. From a presencing-based orientation, however, archetypes need not remain unconscious determinants of behaviour. When presencing is stabilized through the gesture of letting be, archetypal patterns can be presented. That is, consciously encountered,

embodied, and dialogued within the field of awareness.

Gunnlaugson's presencing gesture of letting be, emphasizes a stabilizing inner space that aligns with the Tibetan Dzogchen concept of *alaya*, the natural awareness of mind that rests in presence. This space functions as a presencing threshold through which symbolic intelligence emerges as a dimension of the field rather than as intrapsychic content.²

When the coach stabilizes their own presencing self-sense through the gesture of letting be, they create a subtle space where mutual sensing and co-enactment takes place. In this framing, archetypal images are neither produced by the individual nor received from a transcendent realm. They arise as participatory expressions of the field itself through the relational and embodied coherence of the presencing field. The image does not belong to the coach or client; it belongs to the presencing process. When coaching presence is anchored in this witnessing awareness, archetypal forms can function as active collaborators and allies in co-sensing, co-creating, and co-evolving. In this capacity, archetypes serve as organising principles that support coherence and intentional action within the coaching field.

Within Archetypal Coaching, such imaginal engagement is reframed as archetypal participation within the presencing field. Symbols are not imposed, decoded, or explained; they are encountered as living presences that arise within the field. In this context, archetypes function neither as deterministic forces nor as abstract universals, more as dynamic field intelligences that can be consciously embodied and co-created with rather than unconsciously enacted. This distinction is crucial. When archetypal patterns remain unconscious, they often manifest as automatic behaviours, projections, or subpersonalities that override conscious intention. When presenced, however, these same archetypal energies become available for integration, creativity, and agency. Archetypal work thus supports Theory U's emphasis on co-creation by enabling practitioners to act *with* archetypal intelligence rather than being driven *by* it.

IV. The Resonant Body as a Shared Field Threshold

When we incorporate somatic awareness into our coaching, we intentionally focus on our bodily sensations and reactions. This enables us to identify the emotions or physical responses that are triggered when we envision a particular activity with our clients. Before implementing a specific

² Germano and Waldronu (2006) describe *ālaya* as a foundational layer of consciousness that underlies ordinary mental activity and holds latent tendencies, impressions, and formative potentials. While historically debated as either conditioned or originally pure, *ālaya* functions pragmatically as a background field from which patterns of experience arise.

practice, we can practice empathic resonance through inner awareness to sense in our bodies if the activity resonates as coherent with our client in the here-and-now.³

Building on the understanding of empathic resonance and the presencing field, the process unfolding in Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC) can be further illuminated through Anderson and Braud's (2011) notion of direct knowing. Through empathic resonance, both client and coach cultivate emotional self-awareness as subtle feelings, bodily responses, and relational shifts are treated as meaningful data within the intersubjective space of transformation. This resonance allows the coach to receive the essence of the client's trigger kinaesthetically, not primarily through conceptual analysis but through embodied participation. In DPC, such resonance is experiential evidence of a shared presencing field emerging through the quality of presence co-enacted in the relationship.

Practicing a mindful state with the client allows us to prepare the soil for empathic listening; by focusing on our kinaesthetic responses while listening, we can receive confirmation through inner resonance that we are getting the essence of their trigger. As the client describes their issue and current mental and emotional state, we focus on both the message and our embodied response.

I noticed that when I allowed for some moments of silence between symbols (words and images) in the held space, the essence of the felt sense was captured, enabling clients and myself to participate in an embodied spirituality. This process involves recognizing feelings, reactions, and subtle bodily responses from both parties as meaningful data within the transformative intersubjective space.

By focusing on our embodied response to the client's message, the coaching goes beyond reality maps and into an ontological reorientation. The resonant body and the vibrational nature of matter mirrors the DPC understanding of the inner presencing body and the emergence of a shared field.

V. Archetypal Images as Field Phenomena

Within Jungian and post-Jungian traditions, archetypal images are understood to carry numinous charge and transformative potential, functioning as mediators between conscious

³ Modern physics has provided us with the insight that all matter is in a constant state of vibration. Whether it is a chair in a library or a cell in the human body, everything vibrates. In light of this knowledge, the term "resonant body" can be interpreted to refer to the actual resonance that occurs within the body when it responds to the materials and stimuli of the environment (Walsh, in Carod 2023).

awareness and unconscious dimensions of the psyche (Jung, 1960). An Archetype is an image charged with an emotion by the client; it contains psychic energy and dynamism. This special feeling tone of the archetype can enable for a transformative experience within therapy or coaching.

Traditionally, such images have been approached as symbolic expressions of inner psychic material, accessed through dreams, fantasies, or active imagination. While these perspectives illuminate the depth and autonomy of imaginal life, they often remain situated within an intrapsychic or interpretive framework.

While informed by Jung's use of active imagination, this approach does not prioritize individuation stages or linear developmental goals. Instead, it encourages dialogue with images and personified archetypes as they appear in consciousness, according to the client's imaginative capacity (Carod, 2025). Rather than treating archetypes as intrapsychic symbols or static mythic structures inherited from the past, they emerge as dynamic field intelligences, emergent expressions of the presencing field itself.

When archetypal patterns remain unconscious, they often manifest as automatic behaviours, projections, or subpersonalities that override conscious intention. When presenced, however, these same archetypal energies become available for integration, creativity, and agency. Archetypal work thus supports Theory U's emphasis on co-creation by enabling practitioners to act *with* archetypal intelligence rather than being driven *by* it.

From a presencing-oriented perspective, archetypes function not merely as internal symbols arising from the individual psyche, but as *field phenomena*—intelligences that arise in and through the relational and imaginal field between individuals, cultures, and time. My research participants described their archetypal experience as access to a shared, collective domain rather than something owned by the individual psyche, echoing Jung's notion of the collective unconscious (Carod 2021, 2025). However, this unconscious archetype emerges through the specific quality of presence enacted within the relationship between client and coach. It is through the relational and embodied presence of both parties that images co-arise. In this context, the symbol or image does not "belong" to either the coach or the client; instead, it belongs to the presencing process itself.

Central to this approach is the process of *soul-making*, which involves engaging images as living presences within an imaginal realm that mediates between body and spirit, cultivating imagination, fantasy, and reflective depth. Soul-making draws from emotionally engaged practices such as active imagination, through which individuals enter into dialogue with archetypal images. Jung conceptualized this dialogical engagement as the transcendent function—a generative process

through which polarized psychic forces are integrated into a new symbolic configuration (Jung, 1960b, pp. 67–91). Within a presencing-based orientation, this integration unfolds somatically, relationally, and temporally. Archetypal images become living thresholds through which past conditioning, present-moment awareness, and emergent future potential converge, allowing transformation to arise as an embodied and relational process rather than a problem to be resolved.

Archetypes are therefore not treated as symbolic overlays imposed upon experience, nor as unconscious forces that determine behaviour from below awareness. Instead, they are approached as emergent field intelligences that become accessible when presencing is sufficiently stabilized. In such moments, archetypal images, affects, and gestures arise organically from within the shared coaching field.

In practical terms, archetypal coaching within DPC supports clients in recognizing how deep patterns often experienced as limitation, or repetition can be met as meaningful intelligences seeking integration. Dream symbols and archetypal imagery become gateways into this field as co-arising expressions of the presencing process itself. In this way, archetypal coaching offers a methodology through which archetypal engagement becomes a grounded practice, rooted in presence rather than projection.

V. Stabilizing the Anchor through Presencing Practice

Coaches and therapists guide clients toward an embodied state, fostering presence and connection to bodily sensations while exploring their inner world. Surrendering control and staying connected to bodily sensations facilitate deeper creativity and insight. Allowing moments of silence in the process enables awareness of how images relate to body sensations, fostering a fertile interaction with archetypes and dream images rather than engaging what might be viewed by some as a form of fantasy.

Interacting with symbols while in an expanded state of mind and body allows insights to imprint on the subconscious. This imprinting takes place through the use of somatic and symbolic anchors. To ensure the alchemical exchange flows without interruption, archetypal coaching prioritises *aesthesis* as the sensory and imaginal engagement with symbols over analysis that Neoplatonist Iamblichus⁴ and Jung identified as essential for transformation.

⁴ Iamblichus, a 4th-century CE philosopher, who introduced the practice of theurgy—embodied, symbolic rituals through which archetypal presence actively participates in human transformation (Carod, 2025).

In the process of active imagination, we guide our clients to interact with archetypes and symbols. By focusing on the sensations and emotions within the body, one can tap into the deeper layers of the unconscious mind where archetypal imagery resides.

Here presence can be understood as receptive awareness oriented to the immediate now without judgment or habitual reactivity (Parker et al., in Carod, 2023). Embodied presence deepens this awareness as the client begins to sense and inhabit experience through the inner presencing body, where bodily sensation and affective tone become the primary medium of knowing. Gunnlaugson (2024a) points to the presencing self-sense as a subtle, lived structure of experience. It does not correspond to a developmental stage or altitude. It comes into coherence as the inner presencing body, the presencing self, and the presencing field begin to align within a dynamic, generative unfolding.

This alignment is exemplified by my client Elisabet Fábregas, whose poem *Shelter in the Fig Tree* illustrates this process:

I wrap myself among the rough leaves of the ripe fig.
I gather the fallen twigs
I light a small fire.
I bring some fruits closer, they open slowly
I open my hand
I feed myself with the bright descent
of a cold milk that burns the skin.
I wrap myself among the rough leaves of the ripe fig,
I unpack the fruit in my mouth,
I strip its membrane, empty the pulp.
The seeds crouch under the body of the animal walking nearby,
it looks for the torn parts in the gaps,
knowing that sweetness always yields
and by loving it opens with a slight pressure.

Approached as field phenomena, archetypal images are not interpreted for meaning but entered into as relational events. The coach's role is not to decode the image, more to maintain presencing coherence so the symbol can unfold, deepen, or transform in its own rhythm. In this way, archetypal engagement becomes a presencing act: the fig's gradual opening, tactile intimacy, and

the animal's attentive presence symbolized the senses as conduits of the presencing self, through which nurturance, patience, and receptivity emerged organically. By integrating body, imagination, and symbolic material, the client's presencing self-sense—understood as an inner alignment between self and field—was strengthened, illustrating how embodied symbolic engagement grants access to latent psychological and somatic resources.

Archetypal coaching within DPC becomes a presencing-based practice of re-enchantment. Re-enchantment, in this sense, does not imply a return to mythic belief systems, but a restoration of symbolic participation. It is an art of aligning with the deeper generative currents already moving through the field, where self, symbol, and presencing co-arise in an imaginal, transformative ecology.

The following vignette offers another example of how archetypal work unfolds as a presencing practice. Roshani, a filmmaker and teacher experienced multiple losses and bodily injury, creating profound emotional turbulence. She described this period as “like a fire... being cooked slowly” (Carod, 2021, pp. 91–92). In early sessions, Roshani reported that old identity structures were breaking down, triggering anxiety and engagement with unconscious fears. This process was mirrored in the coaching work through recurring dream symbols, including images of elevators that would not stop at her floor, reflecting a stalled or misaligned movement. In a later dream, she saw three butterflies fluttering and aligning, symbolizing her inner child at three different developmental ages.

“I had a dream of three butterflies fluttering, and in the meditation I felt them on my skin, the ephemeral butterfly dust from my childhood.” (pp. 45–46, in Carod, 2021)

Roshani explored these images through active imagination, somatic awareness, and reflective dialogue. She voiced the needs of her inner children at different ages: the youngest requiring safety, the middle child joy, and the oldest security. Her dreams were approached not as problems to solve, but as emergent phenomena within the presencing field. These archetypal presences were co-enacted with the coach, integrating her emotional, somatic, and symbolic experience.



Figure 1: Fluttering butterflies

The fluttering butterflies of her dream became embodied anchors, connecting her inner children to her present moment experience. The resulting painting (Carod, 2021, pp. 45–46) captured the coherence and alignment of these internal dimensions, stabilizing access to the emergent presencing field. Creative acts, such as painting, allow clients to capture the coherence and alignment of various internal dimensions. For example, in the case of Roshani, the "fluttering butterflies" from her dream were translated into a painting that connected her inner children at different developmental stages to her present moment. In this way, Roshani inhabited the field of presencing rather than conceptually analyzing it, allowing archetypal intelligence to support insight, emotional regulation, and generative action.

The coach maintains presencing coherence so the symbol can unfold in its own rhythm, ensuring transformation is an embodied and relational process rather than just a mental insight. By interacting with archetypal images such as a fig tree or butterflies as relational events within the field, the anchor itself is stabilized. For example, the "ephemeral butterfly dust" or the "rough leaves of the fig" act as embodied anchors that connect the imaginal encounter to the present moment. This prevents the transformation from becoming a purely high state of consciousness and instead anchors it as a lived dimension of being.

VI. From Reality Maps to Archetypal Presenting

Traditional coaching frameworks such as NLP and goal-oriented models like GROW are grounded in the premise that human experience is shaped by subjective maps of reality, formed through perception, language, belief, and embodied habit. Change within these approaches occurs by expanding choice, reframing meaning, and anchoring desired states so that new patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour can be enacted in everyday life. The GROW model in particular offers a clear structure for goal attainment by clarifying intention, current reality, available options, and commitment to action (Whitmore, 2009).

Archetypal presenting deepens traditional coaching by shifting the emphasis from modifying internal representations to *inhabiting symbolic intelligences as lived dimensions of being*. In doing so, it enriches goal-oriented work with depth, resonance, and generative presence.

In this context, archetypes are approached as *field intelligences* with recurrent patterns of meaning, motivation, and action that become available for conscious participation when presenting is sustained. When such patterns are presented rather than unconsciously enacted or just logically interpreted, they function as organizing principles that support coherence and intentional action. When anchored through presenting, archetypes function less as metaphors and more as participatory field intelligences.

Following Gunnlaugson (2025), the presenting field is understood as a living, co-creative dimension of presence, emerging relationally through the coach and client. In this framework, archetypes function as symbolic and somatic anchors that broaden a client's internal map of possibilities. For example, when exploring habitual patterns or internal conflicts, clients can engage subpersonalities or archetypal images as active collaborators. One research participant, Spring, illustrates how archetypes and dream symbols can be engaged as field intelligences within coaching practice (Carod, 2025, p. 45). In a dream featuring a wise old man and exploding clay balls, the imagery was explored as expressing a dynamic tension between impulse and containment. Through active imagination, Spring embodied the archetypal pattern of Saturn as the wise protector, discovering its role in sensing boundaries, grounding action, and preventing overwhelm. By physically embodying this archetype, she experienced Saturn not as limitation but as an intuitive, ever-present guide that balanced assertive energy with discipline. This dialogical, embodied engagement transformed Saturn from a perceived obstacle into a supportive intelligence, enabling Spring to integrate focused action with grounded presence (Carod, 2025).

I encouraged her to engage in a creative work incorporating the archetypal qualities of her

personality in a unifying symbol as an anchor to focus her attention and manifest her vision. Spring's artwork was prospective and anticipatory, revealing what was emerging for her. For the representation of her inner Saturn (structure in the physical world), she decided to build a container with clay and burned some sage as a symbol of her potential transformation.



Figure 2: Journeying into Saturn

She described her experience as “journeying into Saturn” and named the integration of her opposed needs – freedom and efficiency – “centered freedom.” The visual image of this integration acted as a powerful anchor, helping Spring approach her tasks with greater focus and balance, allowing her to harness her creativity while staying disciplined in her intellectual pursuits (Carod 2025, p. 149).

Creative work transforms a fleeting imaginal encounter into a stable, inhabitable inner orientation, ensuring that the insights gained in the presencing field remain accessible and generative in the client's everyday life. Self-knowledge through awareness of the archetypes of the collective unconscious and dream symbols brought Spring a sense of unity and belonging to the cosmos, as well as a sense of collective freedom coming from a transpersonal field of information.

I feel bigger. I feel way bigger than this body. My body is like a vessel for these energies that want themselves to be known in the world. (pp. 96–98, in Carod, 2021)

Through embodied engagement, Spring did not merely *think differently* about discipline, but experienced discipline as an inhabitable inner orientation that reorganizes choice, pacing, and self-

trust. In this way, anchoring shifts from triggering a desired state to stabilizing a way of being.

Reality maps expand into presencing fields; anchors become embodied symbolic alignments; and archetypes shift from unconscious drivers of behaviour to conscious collaborators in co-creation. In this way, archetypal presencing supports a form of coaching that fosters meaning, agency, and coherence—enabling clients to act from a deeper alignment with who they are becoming

VII. Challenges and Considerations

From a Dynamic Presencing Coaching (DPC) perspective, the central challenge in archetypal work lies not in the emergence of symbolic material itself, but in the quality of presence through which it is engaged. When archetypal imagery arises without sufficient grounding in the inner presencing body and the shared coaching field, symbols may become inflated, over-interpreted, or unconsciously enacted rather than consciously presenced. Archetypes can then solidify into fixed identities, projections, or compensatory fantasies instead of functioning as living relational intelligences.

There is therefore a risk in reducing archetypes to rigid classificatory systems or predetermined identities. Archetypes express potentials rather than destinies and can manifest in multiple ways according to personal history, cultural context, and degree of consciousness. Each archetype contains a range of expressions—including balance, excess, polarity, and shadow. When coaches prematurely identify clients with labels such as “Hero” or “Caregiver,” symbolic complexity may collapse into psychological fixation, reinforcing certain patterns while constraining others.

From a presencing-based orientation, these distortions often emerge when the gesture of letting be is absent or unstable. Without the stabilizing ground of unconditional presence, the process can shift toward interpretive control, symbolic inflation, or spiritual idealization. Fascination with archetypes, dreams, and inner processes may also reinforce narcissistic self-preoccupation if symbolic exploration becomes disconnected from embodied presence (Welwood, 2000). Within DPC, transformation does not arise through interpretive mastery, but through disciplined receptivity that allows archetypal meanings and field intelligences to emerge organically within the relational space.

Another challenge concerns the stability of the presencing field itself. Because the field emerges through the quality of presence co-enacted within the coaching relationship, insufficient grounding on the part of the coach may lead to emotional fusion, projection, or confusion between

empathic resonance and personal identification. Archetypal material often carries strong affective intensity, and without witnessing awareness the coach may unconsciously shape the client's experience according to personal assumptions or unresolved material. Maintaining presencing coherence therefore requires continual somatic awareness, reflexivity, and the capacity to remain open without collapsing into enactment.

Finally, archetypal coaching requires sensitivity to cultural and epistemological diversity. Archetypal images emerge through culturally mediated forms of embodiment, myth, and symbolic meaning and should not be universalized into fixed interpretive frameworks

VIII. Closing Remarks

This article has explored how archetypal work can be reframed as a presencing-based coaching practice within Dynamic Presencing Coaching. By situating archetypal images as emergent phenomena of the presencing field rather than intrapsychic symbols to be interpreted, archetypal engagement becomes an enactment of presencing itself.

Through the gesture of letting be, the coach stabilizes the conditions that allow imaginal intelligence to surface as a living dimension of the field. In this space, embodied imagination and presence converge, enabling archetypal images to function as transformative thresholds.

Within the broader field of presencing leadership and coaching, this perspective offers a way of integrating imagination and archetypal intelligence without departing from presencing practice. Archetypal coaching, when grounded in Dynamic Presencing Coaching, becomes a sacred yet pragmatic art—one that invites coaches and clients alike to meet the deeper fire of transformation where archetypes and symbols co-arise and interact in the field.

A mindful state of awareness is therefore essential, as it helps the coach notice subtle emotions, bodily sensations, beliefs, and unconscious reactions that shape the coaching relationship. In expanded states of awareness, understanding shifts from rational analysis toward direct embodied knowing, where intuition emerges through felt sensations, emotional shifts, and kinaesthetic responses.

What matters most in this methodology is not that the coach correctly interprets symbols, but that the client develops a fuller awareness of the depth inherent within the image and its connection to present existential concerns.

In sum, integrating archetypal coaching with Dynamic Presencing Coaching situates symbolic exploration within a living, co-created presencing field that supports embodied meaning-

making and the emergence of generative potential. Archetypal images and dream symbols provide a symbolic language through which clients can reframe limitations, activate latent strengths, and align their growth with their unique psychological architecture. In this way, archetypal reframing fosters not only cognitive insight, but also a felt sense of participation in something larger, allowing personal challenges to be experienced as part of a broader journey toward wholeness, meaning, and conscious co-creation.

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<https://www.routledge.com/Archetypal-Coaching-Creating-Synergies-Through-Astrology-and-Dream-Work/Carod/p/book/9781041041900>

A BLIND SPOT OF FOURTH-PERSON KNOWING:

Reclaiming the Role of the Presencing Self in the Field

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Abstract: Recent developments in presencing scholarship, particularly fourth-person knowing (Scharmer & Pomeroy, 2024, 2026), have deepened the conversation around how individuals and groups access, sense, and know from the field. Yet this field-centric orientation leaves a fundamental question comparatively underexplored: What enables presencing to become embodied, inhabitable, sustainable, and lived as a way of being in the field? This article argues that a blind spot within contemporary presencing scholarship concerns the role of the Presencing Self. While Theory U–based approaches have clarified how the field becomes accessible and knowable, drawing on recent developments in Dynamic Presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2020–2026), this article argues that comparatively less attention has been given to the embodied, phenomenological, relational, ontological, and developmental dimensions of the presencing self through which presencing gradually becomes embodied, inhabited, and sustained as a living mode of participation. This article also explores how the gradual shift from an Everyday Self-Sense to a Presencing Self-Sense enables presencing to become embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable as a lived way of being in the field. This emerging self-sense functions as the practitioner's lived center of participation and is essential for transforming presencing from a temporary experience of field awareness into an embodied and enduring way of being in the field. Without the emergence of a Presencing Self-Sense, presencing risks remaining episodic, situational, and difficult to sustain as an ongoing mode of participation. To illuminate this developmental trajectory, the article introduces three interrelated contributions. The first is the Presencing Conduit, which clarifies how participation in presencing becomes grounded, embodied, and lived through the practitioner. The second is the Five Field-Stages of Presencing, which map the progressive unfolding of presencing with oneself, with others, and within the emerging we-field. The third is the Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation, which articulates four foundational domains through which presencing becomes lived: the Ground of Presence, the Inner Presencing Body, the Presencing Self, and the Field. Together, these contributions reclaim the role of the Presencing Self within presencing scholarship and clarify the conditions through which presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable as a way of being in the field. In doing so, the article extends the conversation beyond questions of field-based knowing toward a deeper understanding of how presencing becomes a lived and enduring mode of participation.

Key words: presencing approaches, dynamic presencing, embodiment, ontological, epistemological

I. Introduction: *The Presencing Self as a Living Center of Participation*

Over the past two decades, presencing scholarship and practice have been shaped largely through inquiries into how knowing arises within attentional and field-based conditions. Within this broad orientation, the Presencing Field has been explored as a generative domain through which new forms of awareness, intelligence, and understanding emerge. In *Theory U* (Scharmer, 2007, 2018), the Presencing Field is described as a social field shaped by collective attention, intention, and quality of listening. Across leadership, organizational learning, and systems change processes, presencing has supported shifts in how individuals and groups sense, participate in, and learn from emerging realities. Recent developments in fourth-person knowing (Scharmer & Pomeroy, 2024, 2026) have further deepened this trajectory by illuminating how knowing can arise through participation in the social field.

Yet a significant blind spot remains. While presencing scholarship has devoted considerable attention to how individuals and groups access, sense, and know from the field, it has given comparatively less attention to the role of the presencing self through which these capacities become embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable. As a result, the field has received substantially more theoretical attention than the living center of participation through which presencing becomes lived. What remains comparatively underarticulated in *Theory U*-based presencing is how a presencing self develops and why its emergence is essential for realizing the full developmental capacities of presencing. Within *Dynamic Presencing*, presencing is understood as involving both the field and the evolving self through which participation in the field becomes increasingly embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable.

This question becomes increasingly relevant as presencing matures from a methodology for sensing and knowing into a path of mastery concerned with the cultivation of the capacities required to inhabit presencing as a way of being. Experiences of field awareness, emergent insight, collective flow, and presencing can be powerful and transformative. Yet such experiences do not necessarily explain how presencing becomes integrated into one's way of being. Nor do they fully account for why some practitioners gradually develop an enduring capacity to participate from presencing while others experience it more intermittently. These questions suggest the need for a complementary inquiry into the nature and development of the center through which presencing becomes lived.

Recent developments within *Dynamic Presencing* (Gunnlaugson, 2020–2026) bring this developmental horizon into clearer view. *Dynamic Presencing* proposes that the maturation of presencing involves more than learning to access or know from the field. It also involves the gradual emergence of a *Presencing Self-Sense*—a living center of participation through which practitioners

engage themselves, one another, and the field. From this perspective, the development of the Presencing Self becomes central to understanding how presencing becomes increasingly grounded, relationally available, inhabitable, and enduring as a way of being.

This article explores that developmental trajectory through three interrelated contributions. The first is the Presencing Conduit, which clarifies the architecture through which presencing becomes grounded and increasingly inhabitable. Central to this architecture is the cultivation of a Presencing Self-Sense through apprenticing with four interwoven dimensions of participation: one's ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense.

The second contribution is the Five Field-Stages of Presencing, currently being developed within Dynamic Presencing Leadership (DPL), an emerging stream of Dynamic Presencing focused on ontological conversational fields and collective presencing within leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and group contexts. These field-stages articulate how presencing progressively stabilizes, deepens, generates emergent possibilities, and enters shared flow in conversation.

The third contribution is the Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation. This framework articulates four foundational domains of participation within Dynamic Presencing: the Ground of Presence, the Inner Presencing Body, the Presencing Self, and the Field. Together, these domains provide an ontological grammar for understanding how presencing is experienced, inhabited, and lived.

Together, these three contributions explore a complementary trajectory within presencing scholarship concerned with the emergence of the Presencing Self and its role in enabling presencing to become a lived and enduring mode of participation in the field.

II. Two Orientations to Presencing

Recent developments in fourth-person knowing (Scharmer & Pomeroy, 2024, 2026) have brought greater coherence to a field-centric understanding of presencing already implicit within Theory U (Scharmer, 2007, 2018). Their work clarifies how awareness, intelligence, creativity, and transformative capacity emerge through participation in larger social fields and offers a more explicit articulation of the field as a primary domain of presencing inquiry. In doing so, fourth-person knowing brings important dimensions of collective emergence and field participation into sharper focus.

Scharmer and Pomeroy (2026) explicitly frame this movement as both an epistemological and ontological shift. They characterize it as a movement “from an ontology of objects and a

reductionist world of separate parts to an ontology of fields in which living wholes presence themselves through the parts that constitute them” (p. 10). They further describe this movement as a form of participatory wholeness in which “the social field discloses itself through the parts” (p. 10). The social field therefore becomes more than a context for interaction. It becomes a living reality capable of disclosing intelligence, possibility, and emergence through those who participate within it.

As Scharmer and Pomeroy observe, the social field “comes into being through the individuals that constitute it but is also a whole greater than the sum of its parts” and “can be thought of as a living entity in its own right” (2026, p. 2). Within this formulation, inquiry increasingly concerns how fields disclose themselves, shape collective awareness, and participate in the emergence of new realities.

This ontological orientation also has significant implications for understanding the nature of the self. If the field becomes primary, the self is increasingly understood as a field phenomenon. Scharmer and Pomeroy describe the self as “a field phenomenon, a spheric (or decentered) manifestation of the self” (2026, p. 10). As participation deepens, “the boundary between individual and collective perception loosens” (p. 10), allowing awareness to become increasingly responsive to larger patterns of emergence. The self functions primarily as an instrument of inquiry and participation through which the field becomes knowable. In this formulation, the self “turns into a blank canvas, or an empty holding space, that allows deep emergence to happen... as an emerging whole” (p. 10). Knowing, agency, and transformation are therefore understood as arising through participation in larger field dynamics.

Yet as the ontology of the field becomes increasingly clear, the question of the presencing self becomes increasingly difficult to ignore. As the field is more fully articulated as a source of presencing, a corresponding question emerges: What account is given to the development of the presencing self through which participation in the field becomes embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable? While fourth-person knowing offers a refined understanding of the field and its disclosure through participation, it provides comparatively less articulation of the developmental center through which such participation becomes lived. The result is a growing clarity regarding the ontology of the field alongside a comparatively underdeveloped account of the presencing self.

Dynamic Presencing begins precisely within this territory. The central question is no longer how the field becomes available as a source of knowing. The question becomes: What develops within practitioners that enables presencing to become a stable and enduring mode of participation?

What capacities must emerge for presencing to become lived rather than intermittently accessed? Rather than locating presencing primarily in the field, Dynamic Presencing investigates the developmental conditions through which participation in presencing become sustainable, and ultimately transformative. Particular attention is given to the ways participation becomes grounded in the Ground of Presence, embodied through the Inner Presencing Body, and organized through an emerging Presencing Self-Sense while simultaneously extending into the Presencing Field. The inquiry therefore concerns the developmental, phenomenological, somatic, and relational conditions through which presencing becomes increasingly embodied, stabilized, sustained, and lived as an orienting way of being.

Within Dynamic Presencing, the presencing self is not treated as a pre-given identity, personality structure, narrative construct, or developmental stage. It is understood as an emergent center of participation that gradually develops through sustained engagement with presencing. Its maturation becomes essential because it provides the living center through which presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable over time. The primary question is therefore no longer only how awareness becomes responsive to the field, but how practitioners gradually develop the capacities required to inhabit presencing as a way of being.

In Dynamic Presencing, the emergence of the presencing self can be understood through four interwoven dimensions of participation that together comprise the Presencing Conduit. The first is the ground-sense of the Ground of Presence through which presencing is rooted ontologically. The second is the felt-sense of embodied immediacy through which presencing becomes tangible within the Inner Presencing Body. The third is the self-sense of one's presencing nature through which a presencing center of gravity gradually emerges and matures. The fourth is the field-sense of relational and collective participation through which presencing extends into shared environments of emergence and co-creation.

Viewed in this way, the distinction between these two orientations cannot be reduced to epistemology versus ontology. Both approaches understand presencing as involving an ontological transformation. The deeper distinction concerns where the primary locus of that transformation is situated. Fourth-person knowing locates this transformation principally in the field and its disclosure through participation. Dynamic Presencing investigates the emergence of a Presencing Self through which participation in the field becomes embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable as a way of being. The field remains essential within both orientations. The difference lies in whether the field or the presencing self serves as the primary developmental focus.

Fourth-Person Knowing Orientation	Dynamic Presencing Orientation
Primary Question: How do individuals and groups know from the field?	Primary Question: How does presencing become inhabitable as a lived mode of participation in the field?
Presencing as field-based knowing	Presencing as an evolving mode of participation
Learning from the emerging future	Learning from the Deep Present, Past, Future, and Eternal that Presences
Ontology of the Field	Ontology of the Presencing Self in the Field
Participation in the social field	Participation through the Ground of Presence, Inner Presencing Body, Presencing Self, and Presencing Field (dimensions of the Presencing Conduit)
Self as a field phenomenon	Presencing Self as a living center of participation
Fourth-person knowing	Development of the Presencing Self through the Presencing Conduit
Field-mediated awareness and emergence	Emergence and maturation of the Presencing Self in the Field
Focus of Development: Cultivating the capacity to perceive, sense, and respond to the transcendent social field	Focus of Development: Cultivating the emergence and maturation of the Presencing Self in the Field

Figure 1. Two Orientations to Presencing

Figure 1 summarizes two complementary yet distinct orientations within contemporary presencing scholarship. While both contribute important insights into the nature of presencing, they foreground different developmental questions, ontological assumptions, and trajectories of practice. One seeks to understand how the field discloses itself through collective participation and how individuals and groups learn from the emerging future. The other seeks to understand how a Presencing Self develops and how practitioners cultivate the capacities required to participate in the

field as a grounded, embodied, relational, and enduring mode of presencing. The three process methods developed in this article emerge from this latter inquiry. Together, they provide a framework for understanding how the emergence and maturation of the Presencing Self unfolds through the Ground of Presence, the Inner Presencing Body, the Presencing Self, and the Presencing Field as a singular embodied presencing interface.

In this respect, the article explores a complementary developmental horizon to fourth-person knowing by investigating the conditions through which the Presencing Self-Sense emerges and matures. Rather than focusing primarily on how the field becomes available as a source of knowing, the inquiry concerns how practitioners develop the capacities required to engage presencing as a living mode of participation in the field.

III. The Presencing Conduit as an Embodied Interface of Dynamic Presencing

If the emergence of a Presencing Self is essential for transforming presencing from an accessed experience into a lived mode of participation in the field, a further question arises: Through what architecture does this development unfold? Dynamic Presencing approaches this question through the Presencing Conduit, an ontological process architecture that articulates how presencing becomes grounded and embodied individually, then extended into relational and collective participation.

The Presencing Conduit consists of four interwoven dimensions of participation: ground-sense, through which the Ground of Presence becomes experientially available; the felt-sense of embodied presence within the Inner Presencing Body; the self-sense of one's presencing nature; and the field-sense arising through relational and collective participation. Together, these dimensions provide the developmental architecture through which presencing becomes increasingly available as a lived reality.

The ground-sense provides the foundational ontological interface through which presence is stabilized as the ground from which presencing can be entered and sustained. The felt-sense provides the primary somatic interface through which presencing becomes tangible within the Inner Presencing Body (Gunnlaugson, 2025). Through embodied immediacy, presencing becomes directly lived rather than conceptually understood. The self-sense provides a fluid structure through which one's presencing nature may gradually emerge and mature. Through sustained participation within the Five Level-Depths of Presence (Gunnlaugson, 2024, 2025), a transformed Presencing Self-Sense grows as a new center of gravity through which presencing perceiving, relating, communicating, and

sensemaking increasingly unfold. In this way, the Presencing Self-Sense functions as an organizing center of participation through which presencing becomes increasingly available as an enduring orientation.

The field-sense extends participation into relational and collective domains of emergence while remaining rooted in the Ground of Presence, embodied through the Inner Presencing Body, and oriented by the Presencing Self-Sense. While participation may include social and collective fields, the Presencing Field in Dynamic Presencing is understood as encompassing multiple field locations, including individual, relational, collective, transpersonal, and more-than-human.

Together, these four dimensions function as a living architecture of presencing participation. While each dimension serves as an embodied interface, their mature functioning is experienced as a unified process. Our ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense continuously inform and deepen into one another, helping presencing become an integrated, fully embodied mode of participation. This formulation shifts attention from presencing as primarily an event of field disclosure, where the self is understood principally as a vehicle for emergence, toward presencing as a developmental process through which a Presencing Self gradually emerges and matures through participation in the field. The question is no longer only how presencing emergence becomes available through the field, but how practitioners develop the interior capacities required to participate more fully, coherently, and sustainably within that emergence.

Figure 2 below illustrates the Presencing Conduit and its four interdependent dimensions: the Ground of Presence, the Inner Presencing Body, the Presencing Self, and the Presencing Field. The Ground of Presence stabilizes the ontological basis from which presencing can be entered and sustained. The Inner Presencing Body grounds stillness, immediacy, and embodied depth. The Presencing Self provides the developmental center through which practitioners learn to inhabit and orient from within the Five Level-Depths of Presence. The Presencing Field becomes increasingly available as participation extends into relational, collective, and transpersonal dimensions of emergence.

Within the Presencing Conduit, the two hands of presencing, expressed through the letting and holding gestures (Gunnlaugson, 2026a), arise as distinct yet inseparable movements of a single presencing dynamic. These gestures function as living ontological movements through which presencing opens, stabilizes, deepens, and unfolds across ground, body, self, relation, and field. It is through this integrated architecture that the emergence and maturation of the Presencing Self in the Field becomes possible.

DYNAMIC PRESENCING

• THE PRESENCING CONDUIT •



FIELD SENSE

Tuned into the intelligence of the whole.

We begin by sensing the field that holds us.



SELF SENSE

Awakening through self-awareness into the witnessing self.

We turn inward and recognize the one who is aware.



FELT SENSE

Activation through felt-sense into aligned presence.

We drop beneath thinking into the wisdom of the body.



GROUND SENSE

Rooted in the living field. Embodying presence.

We anchor in what is real and alive.



THE PRESENCING FIELD

The living field of emergence where presence becomes relational and generative.

We participate in the field through which presencing comes into form.



THE PRESENCING SELF

The deeper self of presence that witnesses, relates, and responds from within presencing.

We awaken as the self that can live from presence.



THE INNER PRESENCING BODY

The subtle inner body through which presence is felt, sensed, and embodied.

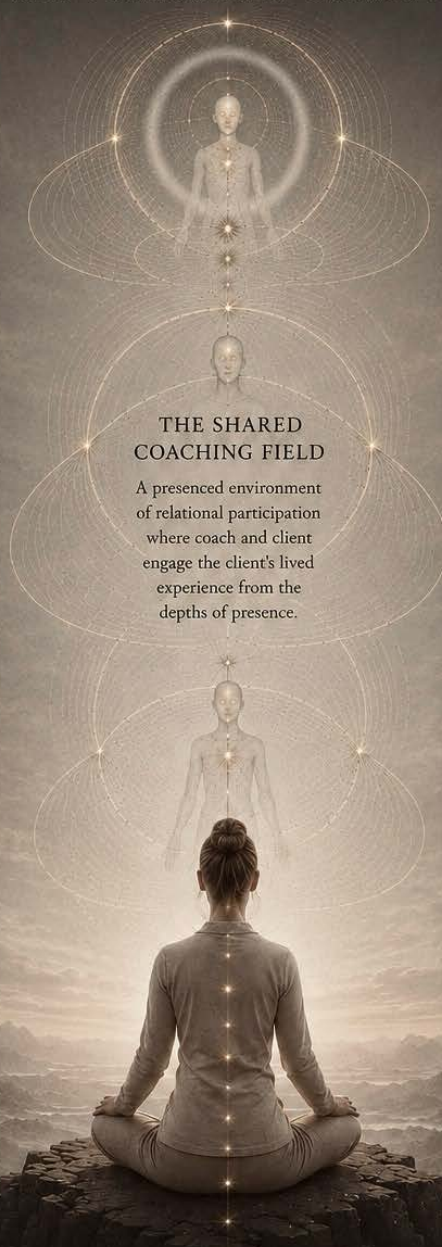
We become intimate with the body of presence.



THE GROUND OF PRESENCE

The living ground of what is, where presence becomes rooted and real.

We stand in the ground that supports presencing.



THE SHARED COACHING FIELD

A presenced environment of relational participation where coach and client engage the client's lived experience from the depths of presence.

THE PRESENCING CONDUIT

GROUND. EMBODY. AWAKEN. PARTICIPATE.

• FROM PRESENCE WORK TO PRESENCING WORK •



SOURCE
Establish presence from within.



ATTUNE
Sense the field and attune.



PARTICIPATE
Engage relationally in the field.



UNFOLD
Allow presencing to unfold.

Figure 2: The Presencing Conduit in Dynamic Presencing

Understanding presencing through the integrated functioning of one's ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense is therefore essential for understanding how the Presencing Field becomes inhabited as a living ontological environment. The presencing conduit allows the practitioner to track somatic coherence, relational attunement, and one's field-sense together, so that presencing can be held as a state of being rather than approached as a transcendent field-contingent state of knowing. Through the Presencing Conduit, participation in the field becomes increasingly grounded in presence, embodied through the Inner Presencing Body, organized through the Presencing Self, and extended through the Presencing Field. The conduit therefore provides the developmental architecture through which presencing becomes a stable and enduring mode of participation rather than a temporary experience of field-based emergence.

IV. The Five Field-Stages of Presencing as a Developmental Field Architecture

The implications of the Presencing Self and presencing conduit become increasingly visible when attention shifts from individual participation toward the developmental unfolding of the Presencing Field itself. If the Presencing Self serves as the lived center through which presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, sustainable, and enduring, then an important question follows: How does the Presencing Field develop as the quality of participation develops? Put differently, if presencing becomes increasingly available through the maturation of the Presencing Self, then the field itself may also become available through progressively deeper configurations of participation. This developmental relationship between participation and field coherence reveals a further dimension of ontological presencing: the Presencing Field unfolds through distinct stages of participation that become increasingly relational, generative, and collectively inhabitable.

The distinction between epistemological and ontological Presencing Fields becomes increasingly visible through the differing forms of generativity that unfold within them. Within epistemological orientations to presencing such as Theory U-based approaches, generativity commonly expresses itself through awareness-based insight in the social field. The Presencing Field functions as the principle generative environment for sensemaking, supporting shifts in perception, understanding, and collective orientation. Across diverse leadership and organizational contexts, this orientation has advanced the capacity of practitioners and groups to navigate complexity and sense emerging futures with greater depth and clarity.

As presencing practice deepens, a further dimension of generativity comes into view. Within the ontological orientation of Dynamic Presencing, generativity unfolds through a transformed

understanding and embodiment of presence. The emphasis shifts from accessing a social field toward inhabiting the Presencing Conduit through which knowing, relating, and emergence become possible. As the Presencing Self-Sense matures, participation within the field becomes increasingly embodied, inhabitable, and sustainable. The Presencing Field therefore becomes more than a shared space of attention or collective sensing. It becomes a developmental environment whose coherence depends upon the quality of embodied presence, sovereignty, relational attunement, and field participation brought forward by those inhabiting it.

From this perspective, the movement from epistemological toward ontological presencing calls for greater precision in articulating how the Presencing Field unfolds across distinct modes of participation. The Five Field-Stages of Presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2026b) emerge from this developmental need. Each field-stage articulates a distinct ontological configuration through which the Presencing Self progressively participates within emergent dimensions of relational and collective presencing. The field develops through each stage with an increasing capacity of participants to inhabit presence, sustain sovereignty, and engage one another through the presencing conduit.

Each field-stage marks a distinct way the Presencing Field gathers, stabilizes, deepens, and becomes available for participation. The progression begins through individual field activation, deepens through relational participation, and culminates in increasingly generative and flow-based forms of collective presencing. The collective is therefore not assumed as a phenomenon that appears fully formed at the outset. Rather, it emerges progressively as practitioners increasingly source their presence from the Ground of Presence while participating within the Presencing Field through sovereign and sovereign-relational forms of presencing.

This developmental articulation matters because ontological presencing requires a reorganization of participation itself. As the Ground of Presence becomes increasingly tangible through the presencing conduit, participants begin relating from a more stable basis of embodied presence within their Presencing Self-Sense. This gradual phenomenological shift transforms how practitioners source their presence and participate within the Presencing Field. As the coherence between Ground and Field deepens, each field-stage becomes capable of sustaining greater depth, supporting more differentiation, holding greater relational intimacy, and remaining increasingly open to emergence. The field becomes more inhabitable because the conditions of participation mature.

Within Dynamic Presencing Leadership (DPL), the Five Field-Stages of Presencing (see Figure 3 below) describe how presence first stabilizes within the initiating participant, then becomes activated within others, before unfolding into shared relational, generative, and flow-based field

conditions. Within this progression, rather than indicating a formal role or hierarchical position the term “leader” refers to the participant who initiates or helps steward the presencing conversation. This function may be held by a coach, facilitator, teacher, host, formal leader, or, in more mutual contexts, by two or more participants together.

The architecture reflects a developmental movement from individual field activation into collective we-space emergence. At a deeper level, it traces an unfolding movement from the activation of each participant’s presencing self-sense, into relational presencing, generative presencing, and ultimately flow-based presencing as a collective field condition. The progression begins with the Leader’s Field, where ontological coherence is established within the leader’s embodied presence. At this stage, they activate the Ground of Presence, Inner Presencing Body, and presencing self as the foundational conditions through which the presencing conduit becomes available for field-based participation. Presence becomes inwardly stabilized and embodied, allowing the conversational leader to remain immersed in presence while entering the conversational field.

The Leader’s Field establishes the initial ontological grounding for presencing because the integrity and depth of any conversational field are closely related to their capacity to remain attuned to the source of their own living presence. Within DPL, leadership begins as an ontological practice of stabilizing the conditions of presence from which relational and collective presencing can gradually unfold. The leader’s conduit within their Presencing Field becomes the initial self-sustaining environment through which others can begin sensing, orienting toward, and entering the deeper atmosphere of presencing within the conversation. In more mutual contexts, this initial field may be co-stabilized by two or more participants who share the intention to enter and sustain presencing together.

As this grounding stabilizes, the Participant’s Field emerges as the second field-stage. At this stage, the leader supports the activation of each participant’s individual presence and awareness of the Presencing Field of conversation. In coaching contexts, this may appear through the client’s field. In leadership, facilitation, dialogue, or group environments, it may emerge through a colleague, participant or team member. The leader remains grounded within their own seat of presence while orienting toward the field of the participant’s experience. Here the leader is sourced from presence while supporting the participant’s presence to gather, deepen, and become increasingly available within the unfolding conversation. The first two field-stages establish the individual field conditions through which presencing begins stabilizing interpersonally. Presence becomes shared across participants, preparing the conditions where presencing can become the focus.

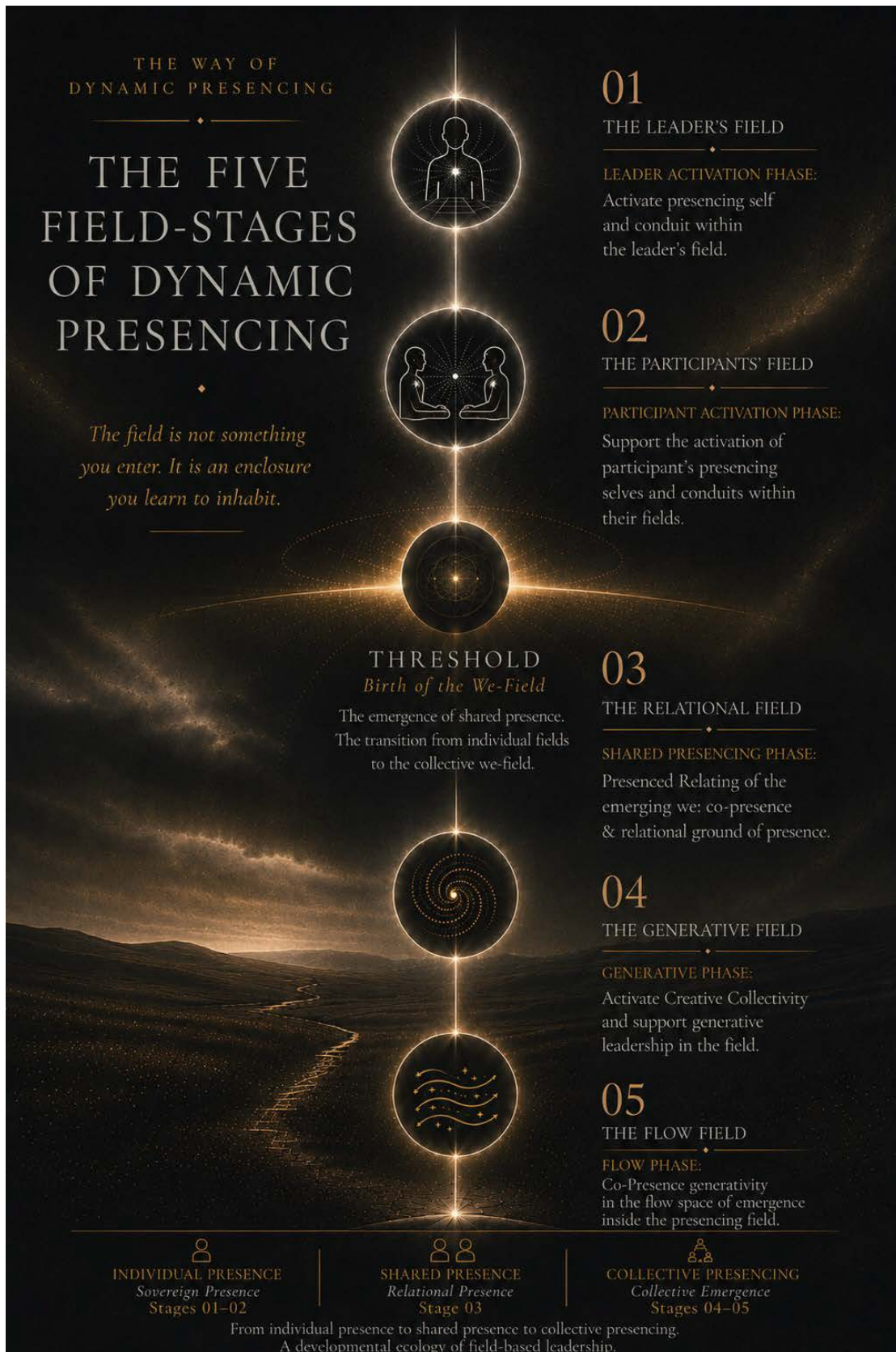


Figure 3: The Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing

As presence becomes activated across both persons, presencing begins cohering within the Relational Field. At this stage, presenced relating emerges as a shared ground of participation through co-presence, relational attunement, and mutual inhabitation of the conversational field. Presence gathers as an emerging we-space where resonance deepens, attunement becomes more palpable, and the field itself begins participating more actively in sustaining the depth and quality of the unfolding encounter. The Relational Field marks an important ontological threshold within DPL because presencing now begins functioning as a shared relational atmosphere rather than remaining localized primarily within individual participants as with the first two field-stages. The conversational field gradually develops its own living depth and participatory intelligence as collective presencing becomes increasingly inhabitable. Relational presencing thereby becomes a living medium through which participants sense, respond, and orient together within the unfolding field.

As shared inhabitation deepens, the Presencing Field unfolds into the Generative Field, where emergence increasingly becomes the organizing principle of participation. The relational coherence established within the Relational Field creates the conditions through which new meanings, directions, possibilities, and insights can arise within the conversational environment. As collective presencing matures, the field develops greater carrying capacity for emergence, allowing participants to engage dimensions of generativity that exceed the contribution of any individual alone. The leader increasingly functions as a steward of the conditions through which emergence can reveal itself. In more mutual contexts, this stewardship may become distributed across participants as collective participation deepens. The emphasis shifts toward sustaining the openness, responsiveness, and developmental depth required for emergence to unfold. The field increasingly participates in revealing possibilities, patterns, and directions that become available through collective presencing. The Generative Field therefore marks the transition from co-presence into co-emergence.

The progression culminates in the Flow Field, where presencing stabilizes as shared flow within the conversational field. Here, the flow zone sustains generative emergence through fluid, dynamically responsive participation. Participation becomes increasingly seamless as the conversational field develops continuity, with distinctions between guiding, participating, sensing, and being guided by the field softening within a more integrated rhythm of collective presencing. Emergence becomes increasingly lived as a shared movement unfolding through the field itself, allowing the conversational environment to function as an ecology of presencing participation. Within the Flow Field, the Presencing Field becomes integrated with greater fluidity, responsiveness,

and integrative coherence across the whole conversational ecology.

Taken together, these Five Field-Stages articulate a developmental progression through which the Presencing Field becomes increasingly inhabitable as a conversational environment. The first two stages establish the individual field conditions of presencing through the Leader's Field and Participant's Field. These may be understood as Sovereign Field-Stages because they stabilize the embodied presence, presencing activation, and individual field coherence through which conversational presencing becomes available interpersonally. The final three stages unfold as Sovereign-Relational Field-Stages through the Relational Field, Generative Field, and Flow Field. Here, presencing becomes increasingly shared, generative, and flow-based as the field develops its own coherence, carrying capacity, and participatory intelligence.

Sovereignty occupies a central place within this developmental architecture. Within ontological presencing, sovereignty expresses itself through clarity of embodied presence and being across participants. Relational depth and intimacy unfold alongside increasing differentiation and coherence, allowing shared participation to deepen while preserving embodied integrity within the field. As participants remain grounded within their own presencing orientation, relational participation becomes increasingly synchronized and resonant. The Presencing Field coheres through this dynamic balance of embodied individuality and shared immersion, forming an ontological environment capable of sustaining collective depth, emergence, and generativity.

Sovereignty establishes the ontological ground from which deeper forms of synchrony, resonance, and collective immersion naturally unfold. These capacities emerge through embodied participation rather than through premature identification with the collective field. Participants enter shared presencing without dissolving into the field, losing the integrity of embodied presence, or allowing fourth-person field awareness to eclipse first-, second-, and third-person participation. One of the defining characteristics of ontological field practice is that collective presencing deepens through the strength of individual presence. Embodiment, relationality, discernment, and field awareness remain dynamically interwoven.

From this embodied orientation, conversational participation reorganizes significantly. Presence increasingly becomes the primary medium through which participants experience themselves, one another, and the unfolding conversational field. The Presencing Self-Sense becomes more transparent and available within participation, allowing relational depth, responsiveness, resonance, and attunement to unfold with greater continuity. Sensitivity to the field develops through synchronized energetic coherence, relational responsiveness, and collective alignment.

Participants increasingly sense how the field gathers, stabilizes, opens, deepens, contracts, reorganizes, and sustains itself through the quality of participation contributed within it.

Overall, this field process architecture clarifies how presencing unfolds from individual embodied participation into relational coherence, generative emergence, and shared flow. It also demonstrates why an ontological account of presencing requires a developmental architecture of participation. As the quality of participation changes, the field itself changes. The Five Field-Stages of Presencing therefore reveal how conversational fields become progressively more coherent, inhabitable, relationally differentiated, and generative through the maturation of sovereign and sovereign-relational participation. Ultimately, the field develops because the Presencing Self develops, and collective presencing becomes possible through the progressive transformation of participation itself.

V. The Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation

The central blind spot explored throughout this article concerns the underarticulated role of the Presencing Self within field-based accounts of presencing. When presencing is understood primarily through the field, important questions remain regarding the role of the practitioner who participates within it. Through what inner structures does field participation become possible? How does presencing become stabilized as a way of being rather than remaining an intermittent experience of field-mediated knowing? And how does participation mature as practitioners increasingly learn to inhabit the Ground of Presence, Presencing Self, and Presencing Field as a coherent whole?

The preceding sections have approached these questions through the concepts of the Presencing Conduit and the Five Field-Stages of Presencing. Together, these two contributions reveal that presencing involves the maturation of the practitioner as a living participant within the field. Within this broader context, Theory U's articulation of fourth-person knowing marks an important development in presencing scholarship by clarifying how knowing can arise from the field and come through the practitioner as a form of field-mediated awareness. This movement expands knowing beyond first-person subjectivity, second-person intersubjectivity, and third-person observation into a more encompassing mode of sensing the larger field and its emerging possibilities. Fourth-person knowing therefore gives language to an important threshold in presencing practice: knowing no longer appears to originate solely within the individual, nor only

between participants, nor only through reflective observation. It arises through participation in a larger field of emergence that becomes perceptible through the practitioner.

Dynamic Presencing affirms this field-mediated dimension while asking a further question: through what ontological conditions does such knowing become grounded, embodied, sustained, and developmentally inhabitable as a way of being? This question shifts attention from the epistemological event of knowing from the field toward the conditions through which field-knowing becomes stabilized within the practitioner and the conversational field. The issue is therefore how knowing comes through the practitioner from the field and how the practitioner becomes capable of inhabiting the ground, body, self, and field conditions through which such knowing can deepen into a sustained presencing way of being. From this perspective, the Presencing Conduit and the Five Field-Stages provide the ontological architecture through which fourth-person knowing becomes progressively embodied, stabilized, and developmentally inhabitable. Together, these two contributions prepare the ground for a fuller ontological presencing participation.

Within Dynamic Presencing, the practitioner does not simply become an open channel for field-mediated knowing. The practitioner becomes a living conduit through which the Ground of Presence, Inner Presencing Body, presencing self, and Presencing Field function together in a seamless and integrated manner. The ground-sense of the Ground of Presence, the felt-sense of embodied experience, the self-sense of one's presencing nature, and the field-sense of relational participation provide the inner conditions through which presencing can be interfaced, stabilized, and extended. Through this embodied structure, field-knowing becomes grounded in embodied sovereignty rather than floating above or bypassing the practitioner's own depth of presence.

This distinction is important because fourth-person knowing can be interpreted primarily through a transcendent orientation where knowing comes through the "I" from the field or future. Dynamic Presencing includes this movement while clarifying its immanent dimension. Presencing comes through the practitioner, becomes lived as the practitioner's own presencing nature, and is sourced from the Ground of Presence stabilized within embodied participation. In this sense, presencing becomes more than a field-mediated event of knowing. It becomes an ontological way of participating in which the practitioner's grounded presence, somatic coherence, and presencing maturity actively shape how the field gathers, deepens, and becomes generative.

The Fourfold Grammar of Presencing Participation helps clarify this deepening: *from*, *as*, *through*, and *of*. Presencing is sourced from the Ground of Presence, where embodied sovereignty and somatic coherence stabilize the practitioner's participation. This *from* dimension grounds

presencing in the depth of presence rather than locating its source primarily in the emerging future or larger social field. It clarifies that the practitioner's own grounded participation matters. The field becomes more coherent when those participating remain sourced in the Ground of Presence rather than seeking emergence apart from embodied depth.

Presencing is also lived as one's presencing nature. This *as* dimension marks the shift from presencing as something that comes through the practitioner from the field toward presencing as something that can also be inhabited *as* a way of being. Here, presencing becomes an embodied, relational, and ontological mode of participation through which transcendent field participation *and* immanent embodiment become increasingly integrated. This is one of the central contributions of Dynamic Presencing: field-knowing becomes more fully integrated when presencing is experienced as one's own presencing nature rather than remaining primarily an intermittent field experience of insight, awareness, or future-sensing.

Presencing is mediated through the presencing conduit and relational field. This *through* dimension is where Dynamic Presencing most directly meets Theory U's account of fourth-person knowing. Theory U already gives strong language to knowing that comes through the practitioner from the field. Dynamic Presencing fills out this through dimension by articulating the inner structure through which presencing moves. The ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense function together as the living interface through which presencing becomes somatically coherent, relationally available, and field-responsive. The *through* of field-knowing is therefore a receptive opening to the field and a structured, embodied, and developmental capacity of the presencing conduit.

Presencing is eventually sensed of the field as collective presencing deepens. This *of* dimension honors Theory U's central insight into the knowing of the field while situating it within a developmental field architecture. In Dynamic Presencing, knowing *of* the field matures through the Five Field-Stages of Presencing. It emerges through the progressive movement from the Leader's Field and Participant's Field into the Relational Field, Generative Field, and Flow Field. Field-knowing becomes more reliable, inhabitable, and generative as sovereign participation deepens into sovereign-relational participation. The field is then sensed as a living ecology of participation that

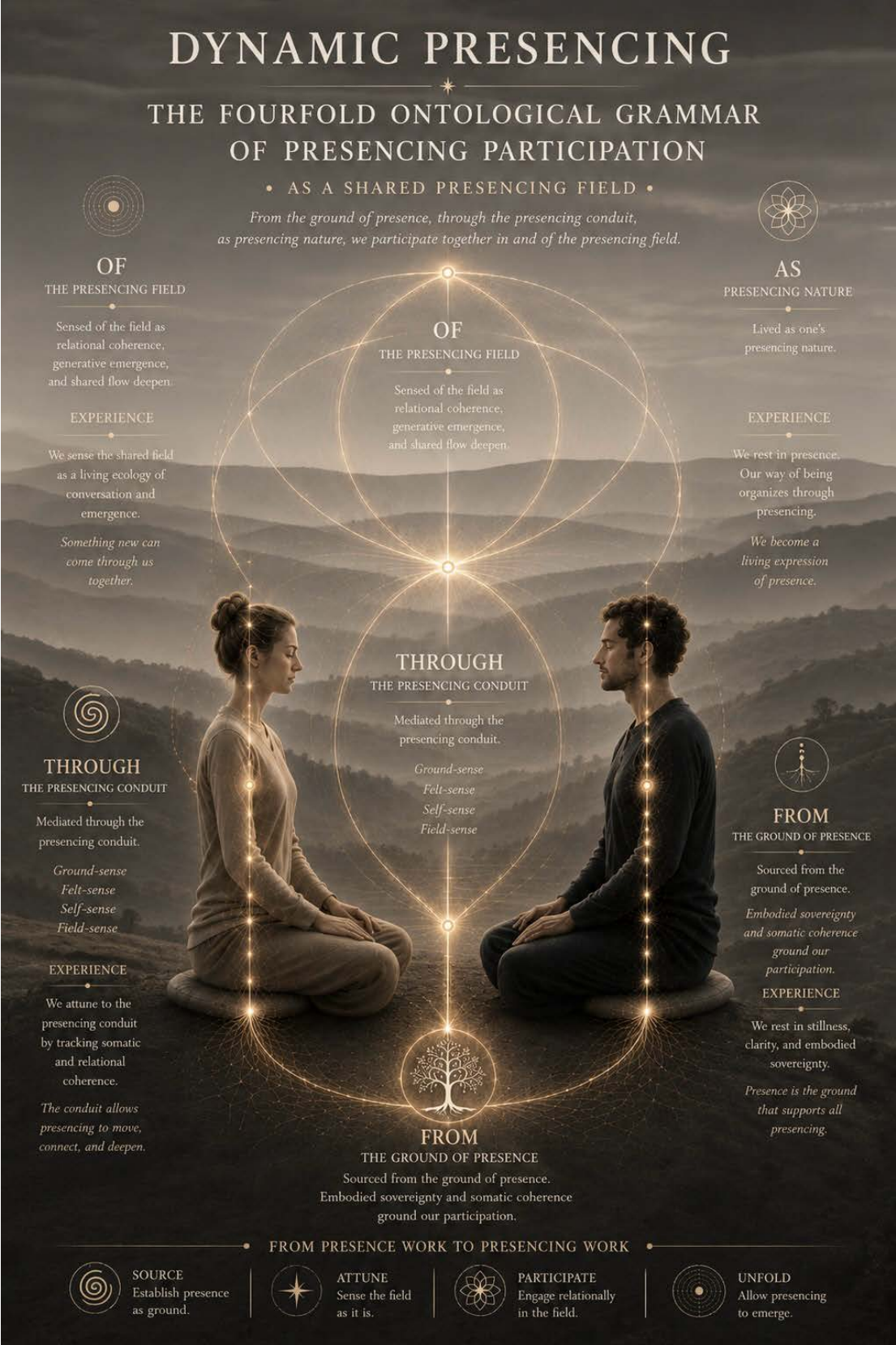


Figure 4: The Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation

has been gradually stabilized through embodied presence, relational coherence, generative emergence, and shared flow.

This fourfold grammar clarifies how Dynamic Presencing deepens fourth-person knowing while preserving its significance. The *through* and *of* dimensions are already central to Theory U's account of knowing from the field. Dynamic Presencing extends this account by clarifying the *from* and *as* dimensions that allow field-knowing to remain grounded in embodied sovereignty, somatic coherence, and one's presencing nature. In doing so, it integrates the transcendent and immanent dimensions of presencing. Knowing can come through the practitioner from the field, while also being sourced from the Ground of Presence, lived as one's presencing nature, and matured of the field through collective participation.

This also clarifies why the individual practitioner's interiority remains central within collective presencing. Field-centric knowing becomes most generative when the practitioner remains deeply grounded in the full embodiment of their presencing nature while opening into relational and collective emergence. The presencing practitioner is neither dissolved into collective awareness nor reduced to an isolated subjective standpoint. The practitioner participates as a living conduit through which the Ground of Presence, embodied coherence, Presencing Self-Sense, and field participation function together as one. Presencing can then unfold from the Ground of Presence, as one's presencing nature, through the conduit and relational field, and of the field as collective participation deepens.

Through this ontologically resonant grammar, fourth-person knowing becomes situated within a fuller field practice of presencing. Knowing from the field is then deepened by the conditions that allow it to become embodied, relationally coherent, developmentally inhabitable, and sustained as a way of being. This prepares the ground for understanding ontological presencing as a field practice in which leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and collective engagement cultivate the conditions through which presencing can be lived, held, and matured within the field.

VI. Closing Remarks

This article began by identifying a central blind spot within contemporary presencing scholarship: the underarticulated role of the Presencing Self as the lived center through which presencing becomes embodied, inhabitable, sustainable, and enduring. While recent developments in fourth-person knowing have significantly deepened our understanding of how individuals and groups can access, sense, and know from the field, comparatively less attention has been given to the

developmental conditions through which presencing becomes lived as a way of being in the field. The central argument advanced here is that collective presencing does not arise independently of the practitioner, nor solely through the field itself. Rather, it unfolds through the maturation of a Presencing Self-Sense capable of participating in increasingly coherent relationships with the Ground of Presence, the Inner Presencing Body, and the Presencing Field.

The movement toward presencing as a way of being in the field therefore marks a significant deepening in how presencing is understood and practiced across leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, organizational life, education, therapeutic practice, and collective participation. Presencing is no longer approached solely as a transcendent social field-mediated event. It increasingly becomes a sustained mode of participation through which practitioners learn to inhabit the Ground of Presence, embody their presencing nature, and engage relational and collective fields with greater depth, coherence, and maturity.

The Presencing Conduit clarifies the inner architecture through which this participation becomes possible. By illuminating the integrated functioning of the practitioner's ground-sense, felt-sense, self-sense, and field-sense, it reveals how the Ground of Presence and Presencing Field become increasingly coherent within experience. Presencing becomes grounded, embodied, stabilized, and extended into relational and collective life. This contribution provides an ontological account of how presencing can be sustained as a way of being rather than accessed only as a temporary experience of field-mediated awareness or insight. It also clarifies why embodied participation matters: the practitioner's somatic coherence and presencing maturity actively shape how the field gathers, deepens, and becomes inhabitable.

The Five Field-Stages of Presencing extend this account developmentally by showing how conversational fields mature through distinct modes of participation. The Leader's Field and Participant's Field establish the sovereign field conditions through which presencing first stabilizes individually and interpersonally. The Relational, Generative, and Flow Fields then articulate how presencing deepens into sovereign-relational participation through co-presence, co-emergence, and shared flow. This developmental architecture demonstrates that the Presencing Field changes as the quality of participation changes. Conversational fields become increasingly coherent, inhabitable, differentiated, and generative as practitioners mature in their capacity to remain grounded while entering deeper forms of collective emergence.

The Fourfold Ontological Grammar of Presencing Participation further deepens this account by situating fourth-person knowing within a broader ontology of participation. Presencing is

sourced from the Ground of Presence, lived as one's presencing nature, mediated through the presencing conduit, and increasingly sensed of the field as collective participation deepens. This grammar preserves Theory U's important contribution concerning knowing *through* and *of* the field while clarifying the *from* and *as* dimensions through which field-knowing becomes grounded in embodied sovereignty, somatic coherence, and presencing maturity. In doing so, Dynamic Presencing integrates the transcendent and immanent dimensions of presencing within a more complete account of field participation.

Taken together, these three contributions address a central blind spot within field-centric approaches to presencing. The Presencing Conduit, Five Field-Stages of Presencing, and Fourfold Ontological Grammar illuminate different dimensions of how presencing becomes embodied, developmental, and collectively inhabitable. Together they reveal that collective presencing unfolds through the increasing coherence of Ground, Self, Conduit, and Field as practitioners mature in their capacity to participate from presence. The field develops because participation develops, and participation develops through the maturation of the Presencing Self-Sense.

This reorientation carries important implications for leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and collective engagement. These practices can be understood as forms of field stewardship grounded in the quality of presence brought forward by those inhabiting the field. Presencing leadership becomes the art of helping groups enter, stabilize, deepen, and sustain the conditions through which presencing can unfold.

More fundamentally, this article invites a shift from understanding presencing primarily as an event of field disclosure toward understanding presencing as a lived mode of participation. In this view, the Ground of Presence serves as the deeper ontological source, the Presencing Self as the embodied center of participation, the presencing conduit as the living interface through which Ground and Field become coherent, and the Presencing Field as the participatory environment through which relational and collective emergence unfolds. Presencing thereby becomes both a way of knowing from the field and a way of being in the field through which transformation can be lived, held, and matured over time.

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¹ All conceptual models, figure structures, and theoretical language in the figures were developed by the author as part of the Dynamic Presencing framework. Visual renderings of selected figures were generated with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool and subsequently revised, selected, and finalized by the author.



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For more on his research, publications, and latest contributions, visit his profiles on [Google Scholar](#), [ResearchGate](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Amazon Author page](#)

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Leadership In and As the Emergent Field

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Abstract: This article explores leadership as an emergent and co-participatory process arising within collective presencing fields. Drawing on nearly two decades of experience facilitating transformative individual and collective development through Pacific Integral's *Generating Transformative Change* (GTC) program, coaching, and practice-based leadership initiatives, the authors examine how leadership unfolds through shared participation in presencing processes. Moving beyond conventional distinctions between leader and follower, self and other, the article proposes an interpenetrative understanding of individual and collective development in which transformation and emergence co-arise through relational and field-based participation. Grounded in Theory U and informed by developmental and transpersonal perspectives, the article explores how emergent leadership develops through practices that deepen collective awareness, relational trust, embodied participation, and openness to future possibility. Particular attention is given to the role of collective presencing, developmental maturity, and field-based emergence in cultivating new forms of leadership capable of responding to complex individual, organizational, and societal challenges. The article concludes by reflecting on leadership as a living movement of participation within an unfolding field of collective emergence.

Keywords: presencing, collective leadership, emergent leadership, Theory U, collective emergence, transpersonal development, participatory leadership, coaching field, collective presencing

I. Introduction

How do we conceive of and support leadership in an emergent practice field where notions of self, other, leader, and follower become more complex and recognized as interpenetrative? In this article, we explore our experience with collective leadership informed by and embedded in a presencing process. We draw on our work teaching and facilitating individual and collective presencing in Pacific Integral's *Generating Transformative Change* (GTC) 9-month program, *Leading Through Emergence*, a 9-week online practice-based course, coaching, and other programs.

Over the past 22 years of experimenting with and developing approaches to holistic and integral development, we have arrived at a framework that views individual and collective development and leadership as co-emergent. Our approach has presencing as a core model and practice for transformative change. In this essay, we explore how leadership emerges as a movement towards awakened wholeness (the fulfillment of wisdom and care). This emergent leadership can take form in individual and collective action, is fluid and contextual, and centered in a sense of a higher future. It cultivates and is supported by an orientation to the I, We, and the domain of care being in a continual process of presencing. We discuss the qualities, practices, and design approaches to maturing leadership in collective spaces. We reflect on presencing and its implications for future conceptions of leadership.

We draw on Scharmer's Theory U (2018) as a map for the depth of change individuals and groups can go through in a transformative process. Theory U and presencing are integrated throughout our work, as the foundational structure of the curriculum, in the arc of a workshop or retreat, and as a set of practices for individual and collective development and leadership. Presencing refers to the deepest and most profound form of change, where novelty emerges from source or ground of being. It involves sensing into and sourcing our ideas and actions from a deeper ground beyond the ideas and intuitions of the ordinary self, and "learning together from the emerging future by collectively sensing into and intuiting not yet embodied or known possibilities" (Gunnlaugson, 2011, p. 3).

The way we work with Theory U is interpenetrative, meaning interdependent and co-arising (Fitch & Lynam, 2019). An interpenetrative approach arises out of the view that a deeper wholeness exists, a process beyond our mapping, with which we are participating. From this perspective, we hold the tensions and paradoxes that exist in and between our models, and our perspectives on them, as generative and central to the process of emergence. Sensemaking is contextual, provisional, and often paradoxical, and is coincident with witnessing. This supports an openness that allows novelty to emerge, and mastery of the different aspects of the U.

II. The Co-Evolution of Individuals and Collectives

To address the topic of collective leadership, we expand on our understanding of the emergence of collectives and leadership through this interpenetrative view. Working in intimate settings with small groups over extended periods of time, we came to understand individuals and

collectives, and their unfolding, as co-emergent and co-evolving.

“Interpenetration” refers to a movement beyond both/and toward a recognition of “one within the other,” and applies equally to the dimensions of individual and collective life. Because no one is fully independent of the collectives in which they participate, transformation in individuals also involves transformation in relationship. In a similar way, social systems transform through changes occurring within the individuals involved (Fitch & Lynam, 2019).

We distinguish individual and collective emergence because doing so reveals the capacities within each that support development. At the same time, individuals and collectives remain in a continuous process of co-evolving with, for, and as each other. They interpenetrate and co-emerge through a prior unity: a whole in which individuals and collectives occupy the same participatory space (Smith & Berg, 1997; Kesler, 2014).

This orientation points toward a deeper sense of participatory wholeness expressed in the following reflection: “We are not outside observers of the world. Neither are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity... knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part” (Barad, 2007).

III. Perspectives on Leadership

Our exploration of this interpenetrative view of individual and collective life, as well as the application of Theory U, has also been deeply informed by theories of adult development (O’Fallon, 2020, etc.). This gave rise to an exploration of how leadership can be understood through a developmental lens (Lynam, Fitch, & O’Fallon, 2022). As individuals deepen in practice and in their own developmental unfolding, they may begin to experience leadership as a new way of being and acting in the world, grounded in increasingly mature subtle states and stages of consciousness. We came to refer to this orientation as Emergent Leadership (originally causal leadership) (Ramirez, Fitch, & O’Fallon, 2013). Development is not leadership, but development informs how we conceive of leadership and the actors in a system who are leading.

The word “leadership” carries different meanings for different people. One researcher identified more than fifteen hundred definitions of leadership and over forty theories of leadership (Kellerman, 2012). As we look toward the essence of leadership beyond the distinctions of “I” and “We,” beyond leaders and followers, and beyond capacities, behavior, being, and doing, we join with the understanding of leadership as a movement called forth by an emergent future.

Leadership, in this sense, has three essential qualities. First, it is value oriented. The emergent future carries the possibility of a more whole, more just, more effective, and more beneficial state. It is involutory in that it involves the integration and manifestation of a deeper reality, including greater wisdom and a more encompassing sense of wholeness, into the present moment. Second, leadership involves an energetic movement toward this future potential. It expresses through action, participation, organization, and the collective movement toward what is seeking to emerge. Third, it is evolutionary in that the integration of involutory insight and energetic engagement moves the present toward a “transcendence of the limits and realization of what is manifest or unconsciously predictable” (Ramirez, Fitch, & O’Fallon, 2013).

Emergent Leadership, then, is both a commitment to and a realization of a more just and whole future for all of life, arising from a potential beyond the current limitations of individuals and collectives. This understanding coincides with the transpersonal view of the concrete and subtle interpenetration of the I and We, leading toward an understanding of leadership as emergent within the field as a whole. By transpersonal, we refer to states of awareness and stages of development grounded in awareness beyond the ordinary self (subtle ego), including, for example, the 5th- and 6th-person perspectives from the STAGES model of adult development (O’Fallon, 2020). This transpersonal orientation begins to open toward a collective of collectives that includes all of life, from cells to the cosmos.

Where does this movement of leadership come from? From you? From me? From us? From Source itself? As these questions deepen, familiar distinctions between leading and following, being and doing, become increasingly fluid and participatory. The movement toward a greater future may be experienced as emerging through us, taking hold of us, and guiding us as we participate in bringing it into form. Leadership, in this sense, is often experienced as a resonance with the emergent future and a free flow of energy toward its realization.

Emergent leadership is an enactment that is continually energized towards the emergent future through a process that is itself emergent in the collective. In practice this means the collective is continually in touch with the flow of presencing, crystallizing, and enacting both the subject and object of its leadership.

IV. How the Collective U process works in GTC

To support development and transformation within GTC, we begin with the principle that

individuals grow and develop in the context of relationships and groups, and vice versa. By integrating intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective development, each dimension can be reciprocally deepened. We support the development of both the individual and the collective through engaging multiple U-processes that presence the future for individuals and for the collective as a whole.

Structurally, GTC includes four residential retreats of five days each, with individual and collective learning, coaching, and exploration taking place between retreats. Cohorts typically consist of 12–15 participants with 2–3 faculty members supporting each cohort. The collective U process unfolds across the full arc of GTC and, in one sense, begins for the cohort when the program officially ends. By this, we mean that the program supports the development of capacities within the individuals and the cohort to engage in collective emergence together. The fuller realization of that emergence often occurs as facilitators step back and the cohort begins to own and source its future collectively.

During the early phases of GTC, we focus on building relationships and cultivating a collective field of trust, connection, and truthfulness. At the same time, we support the development of capacities for deepening over the course of the nine months. We work with the polarities and paradoxes present in group life, attend to habit patterns within the group, and engage individual and collective shadow processes that support both a deepening of trust and the liberation of the group and its members. As the field, and the relationships within it, deepen and mature, the orientation shifts more fully toward a collective presencing process.

Prior to presencing, the process involves examining, encountering, and letting go of what has been. Through willingness and surrender into a deeper source and ground of being, the collective becomes more capable of sensing the future seeking to emerge in and through them, including the healing and growth possible for both the individuals and the group. Enactment begins as individuals and the collective enter into a process of sensing and bringing this future into form in the world.

We work to cultivate the capacities to open toward a greater wholeness through developmental unfolding; to source ourselves from awareness itself while learning to sustain these capacities personally, interpersonally, and collectively; to engage conflict and contraction as opportunities for deeper growth and integration; and to engage with the broader systems and contexts within which our individual and collective lives are embedded.

The collective presencing dimension of the process is chaotic, not in the ordinary sense of being confusing or disordered, but in the original sense of “the primordial state that precedes Creation. Chaos is an emptiness, but a fertile emptiness, a nothingness that contains the mysterious seeds of all that is, a vast and formless potential capable of bringing forth all form into expression” (Golabuk, 2012). This space of presencing is unpredictable and often gives rise to insight, sensing, and a calling toward an emergent and transformative future.

This process of presencing occurs both individually and collectively. The world seeking to emerge is a world of both I and We. We can engage deliberately in presencing for the self and the collective by becoming receptive to their futures and giving them voice. Ultimately, these futures are deeply interconnected, so within the complexity emerging through presencing, it becomes important to hold these emergent futures sincerely and lightly as they gradually take shape and cohere.

Within the evolution of transformative change in the field, this phase gradually matures into a more coherent system that begins to live and act from a newly emerging order. We co-enact the emerging ontology by taking seriously the future seeking to emerge through us: speaking, thinking, feeling, and working from it. This calls for a sincere and vulnerable care for that nascent future while remaining in relationship with the realities of the present. We practice sustaining a connection to the ground of being from which this future is emerging while continuing to engage it creatively and responsibly.

V. Practices that support emergent leadership

Practices that support the emergence of leadership from the field can be understood through four lenses: the differentiation and integration of the individual; the differentiation and integration of the collective; the development of MetAware capacities of awareness and sensemaking; and the cultivation of a welcoming field grounded in awareness.

The emergence of the I and We can be supported through processes of differentiation and integration (Lynam, Fitch, Androsoff, & Wood, 2022). An essential movement in opening emergent leadership involves the differentiation of the individual toward an identification with a deeper ground and a sense of self that is authentic and ultimately transpersonal. This differentiation is psychological and spiritual and includes coming into a sense of self that is more true and free. From this place, speaking and action can emerge more freely from source and remain connected to a larger whole. In this way, what is spoken or enacted becomes increasingly attuned to a larger movement

unfolding in concert with others and with the future that is emerging.

This realization is supported through a range of practices including nervous system regulation, shadow work, authentic communication, awareness practices, play, experimentation, somatic awareness, reflexive awareness, and intimacy and relationship that allow a deeper sense of “I” to emerge and take expression within the collective. This expression is sourced in a practice of individual presencing and experimentation that supports participants in engaging the process as an ongoing emergence into selfhood. In the language of Theory U, we open the mind, heart, and will in order to drop into a deeper ground and source of being, while prototyping what is emerging and allowing feedback from the field. This includes “failing early and often” and continually returning to Source.

The U process is dynamic, iterative, and interpenetrative in that all points on the U remain available within any moment, while the process itself continues to move fluidly. Within this process emerges the discovery and enactment of a self that is more at home and whole, more awake, more attuned, more truthful, and more free. At the same time, participants often become less constrained, less self-referential, less polarized, and less shaped by triggers, contractions, projections, and introjections.

The emergence of the collective is supported through a coincident process of collective differentiation and integration. This begins through the cultivation of foundational collective capacities and skills, followed by a phase of the work in which the collective engages in a presencing process designed to support the emergence of a transpersonal we-space that becomes increasingly self-guided and self-transforming.

Practices that support collective emergence include navigating generative conflict, deepening intimacy and truthfulness, engaging collective challenges, collective sensemaking, play, improvisation, dance, collective shadow work, engagement in each other’s lives, navigating polarities and paradoxes, giving voice to the collective, collective reflexive awareness, and collective presencing. We also attend to patterns and habits within the collective, noticing what supports the collective’s evolution and what creates limitations or recursive dynamics, while engaging these patterns as catalysts for further growth and development.

The emergence of the I and We is further complemented by the cultivation of transpersonal states and perspectives described within the STAGES model’s MetAware stages (O’Fallon, 2020). These capacities include access to forms of awareness beyond the ordinary self and therefore less

identified with the concrete and subtle ego. This also includes awareness of the collective beyond concrete collectives, such as families, neighborhoods, or organizations, and beyond subtle collectives, including contexts shaped by shared principles and practices that create a particular quality and depth within the relational field.

These capacities also include 5th-person perspectives that are construct-aware and transpersonal in nature, recognizing that concrete and subtle boundaries and definitions are constructed and therefore malleable. In addition, 6th-person perspectives open toward the recognition that our larger sense of self participates within something even greater, including the whole of the Kosmos itself and a broader sense of boundlessness and wholeness.

These capacities form an open ground through which leadership can emerge from the larger field, transcending familiar notions of “I” and “We.” Conceptually, we could say that when we “let go and let come,” the movement of emergence can no longer be located solely within you, me, or us, even though we may still describe it in those terms. This openness allows for a more fluid and enlivened unfolding of what we call leadership.

In practice, this movement of emergence from the groundless ground can appear tentative, surprising, or even unnoticed. Developing the capacity and confidence to recognize and trust this ground, and the process of emergence itself, takes time. Participants often need to surface, examine, and release subtle and sometimes unconscious assumptions, expectations, and identities that shape the way they relate to themselves and the collective.

The transpersonal ground rests upon a developed foundation within the concrete and subtle dimensions of experience, requiring a degree of agility and capacity. Collectives gradually learn to recognize and make sense of trauma reactions, projections, habitual roles and responses, and limiting communal patterns, while also cultivating deeper states of awareness together. In this process, participants begin to inhabit perspectives that include and transcend the I and the We while continuing to weave individual and collective identities into the larger unfolding process.

An essential aspect of this work involves cultivating a loving, open, and playful field within which the work can unfold. These qualities are central to supporting the movement of Open Heart and Open Will. A sustained atmosphere of welcoming and mutual embrace supports the cultivation of sincerity and trust. Many participants enter these spaces carrying defenses rooted in painful collective experiences. Questions often arise such as: “Will I fit in?” “Is this a place for me?” As trust and connection deepen, a stronger bond often forms among participants. Over time, further

questions emerge: “Can I express my full self?” “What happens when I reveal the parts of myself I normally hide?” Through the risk of greater truthfulness and courageous honesty, including collective shadow work, the collective deepens in trust and expands to include fuller expressions of each individual.

Part of the journey into leadership involves a movement toward essential self-acceptance. As this develops, layers of judgment, cynicism, and fear that shape defensive patterns begin to soften. A central support for this movement is the space holding of the program itself, grounded in a deep recognition of essential wholeness that excludes nothing. What is, is received as part of the sacred ground of the work. This also expresses itself through play, humor, movement, dance, and the enjoyment of one another.

This space becomes both a deep acknowledgment of ourselves and a mirror reflecting places of self-rejection that remain unresolved. Through this process, a greater wholeness gradually becomes available for both the individuals and the collective. Facilitators ground themselves and hold the program from this deeper ground of being while participating in the emergence and supporting participants, and their collective, in developing the capacity to do the same.

In this process, we discover together the future seeking to emerge through the particular group of individuals and their collective life, including how they will engage with one another, what they may offer each other and the world, the practices that may support their ongoing evolution and presencing, and the next steps in prototyping their future.

VI. Conclusions

In the 9-month program, GTC, we do not know where cohorts will ultimately arrive, nor what forms their work together may take, because we are engaging a process of collective emergence while cultivating capacities for emergent leadership through presencing. The process unfolds differently within each cohort and cannot be fully predicted or designed in advance. What gradually emerges depends upon the unique constellation of individuals, the quality of participation within the field, and the capacities that develop through the collective journey itself.

One graduate shared that GTC truly began when the program ended, because that was when the cohort started to manifest and experiment with its own individual and collective future. This reflects an important aspect of the work. The deeper purpose of the program is not simply the completion of a curriculum, but the cultivation of capacities that continue to unfold beyond the

formal structure of the program itself. In many cases, cohorts continue together after the completion of GTC, practicing collective emergence and serving as communities of practice, friendship, inquiry, and mutual support.

For participants who continue to engage these practices, the capacity to cultivate and participate in emergent processes becomes increasingly tangible. Leadership, creativity, action, and collective intelligence begin to arise more naturally from this deeper ground of participation. Over time, participants often develop a greater sensitivity to the movement of emergence itself, including the ways insight, direction, relationship, and action can arise through the collective field.

This work also points toward broader implications for leadership and transformative change within organizations, communities, and society. Many contemporary approaches to leadership continue to emphasize the capacities, behaviors, and competencies of individuals. The work explored here suggests that leadership can also be understood as a relational and participatory phenomenon emerging through the field as a whole. From this perspective, leadership involves cultivating the conditions through which greater wisdom, care, creativity, and collective responsiveness can emerge within groups and systems.

Presencing, in this sense, offers more than a method or facilitation process. It opens a way of participating in collective life that supports deeper listening, relational sensitivity, developmental unfolding, and openness to futures seeking to emerge through individuals and collectives together. As individuals and groups learn to inhabit these processes with greater maturity and trust, new possibilities for collective leadership become available.

Ultimately, we see this work as part of a larger unfolding of our collective capacity to manifest greater wisdom and care. This unfolding arises within a paradoxical recognition of the profound needs and challenges present in the world at this moment in history, alongside an awareness of reality as an expression of an underlying wholeness that is already, in some deeper sense, complete. Within this tension, presencing becomes both a practice of transformation and a participation in the ongoing emergence of individual and collective life.

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THE FIVE FIELD-STAGES OF DYNAMIC PRESENCING: *A Process Field Method for Engaging Presencing Leadership*

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Abstract: How does the presencing field develop within shared contexts of leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and collective engagement? This article introduces the Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing, a developmental field process model that explores how presencing unfolds within conversational environments involving two or more participants. Presencing is approached as an ontological and field-dynamic phenomenon through which individual and conversational fields progressively gather, stabilize, deepen, and support increasingly relational, generative, and flow-based forms of participation. The framework identifies five successive field-stages that illuminate qualitative shifts in how the presencing field organizes perception, participation, emergence, and collective leadership. Beginning with the Leader's Field and Participant's Field, presencing first becomes established through sovereign participation before crossing a central ontological threshold into the collective we-field. Through the Relational, Generative, and Flow Fields, participation becomes increasingly shared, generative, and responsive as the field develops greater coherence, carrying capacity, and collective intelligence. Situated within the emerging body of work known as Dynamic Presencing Leadership, the Five Field-Stages offer a developmental account of how collective presencing unfolds through distinct modes of participation and how conversational fields become increasingly coherent, generative, and collectively inhabitable.

Key words: presencing approaches, collective leadership, presencing, conversational fields, field-stages

I. Introduction: The Five Field-Stages of Presencing

The Five Field-Stages of Presencing (Figure 1, below) introduce a field-based approach to understanding how presencing emerges, deepens, and becomes collectively inhabitable within conversations involving two or more people. The framework describes distinct stages conversation progressively unfolds and transforms through the embodied participation of participants.

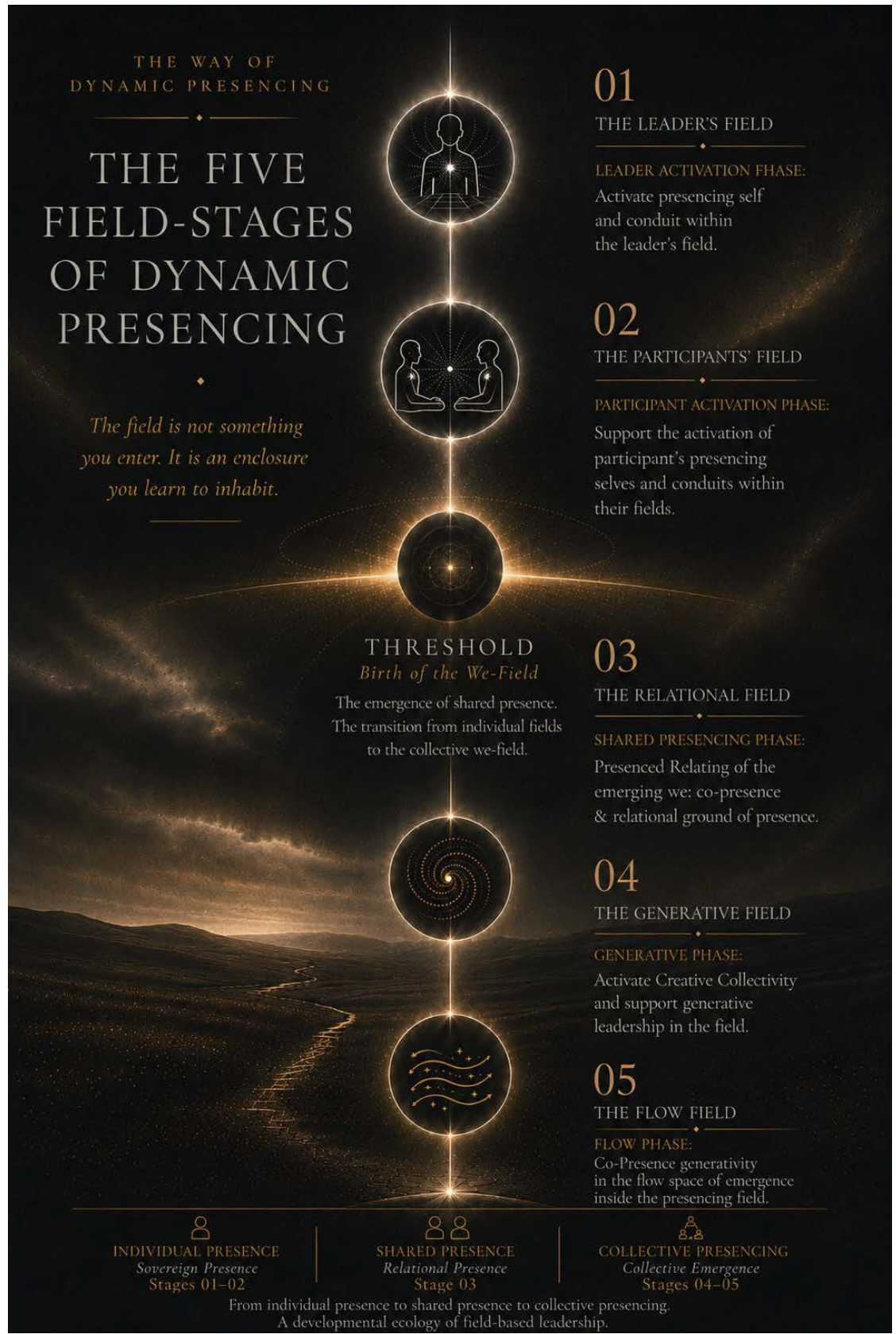


Figure 1: The Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing

Each field-stage illuminates qualitative shifts in how presencing develops across individual and conversational fields, with the model's central ontological transition occurring between Field-Stage 2 and Field-Stage 3 through the emergence and inhabitation of the collective we-field.

In Dynamic Presencing Leadership (DPL) (Gunnlaugson, 2026), presencing is understood as an ontologically grounded and field-emergent phenomenon that progressively unfolds from individual presence into shared relational presence and eventually collective presencing. The Five Field-Stages function as a process heuristic that articulates this developmental unfolding, tracing how conversation evolves from each individual participant's field activation into shared relational, generative, and collective flow-based participation.

Central to this framework is the shift from individual fields into a shared collective field. The first two field-stages articulate the developmental sequence through which the foundational conditions of presencing are initially established within and between individual participants before cohering at the collective level. These stages describe the early order of operations through which embodied presence and presencing progressively stabilize and integrate as a generative way of being within the conversational field.

In DPL, the term leader within the context of the Leader's Field refers to the host who initially activates and stewards a presencing conversation. In practice, particularly in group contexts, this initiating function gradually gives way to fuller collective engagement as participants increasingly begin sensing, inhabiting, and contributing to the unfolding presencing process together. Because these transitions involve increasingly subtle forms of embodied, relational, and field-sensitive participation, Dynamic Presencing Leadership exists as a developmental practice path through which practitioners cultivate the capacity to consciously facilitate, embody, and sustain these evolving field conditions in conversational life.

This practice path begins with the presencing leader's activation of their ground of presence, presencing self, and presencing field as the foundational ontological conditions through which the conversational field begins cohering. Their embodied presencing functions as a catalytic orienting condition through which others begin sensing, attuning to, and progressively participating with the unfolding presencing process of the conversation.

Participants in the conversation work with a co-activation of shared presence and awareness of the emerging presencing field, which supports inhabiting presencing more consciously as a relational way of being with one another. Together, these first two field-stages establish the initial

conditions through which presencing becomes experientially alive within each participant and the conversation itself, progressively emerging as a shared interpersonal reality.

In Dynamic Presencing Leadership, sovereignty refers to the capacity to consciously steward one's own presence and presencing self-sense across the evolving contexts of the field-stages. Presencing initially begins through one's own embodied presence and Presencing Conduit (Gunnlaugson, 2026a, 2026b) within the field of conversation, gradually extending into shared relational participation and eventually unfolding through the wider collective field of presencing. Sovereignty reflects the capacity to remain grounded and attuned to one's own agency and voice across each of these evolving contexts as the conversational field progressively deepens and expands. Presencing in DPL weaves individuality and collectivity together, with individual presence becoming increasingly differentiated, relationally attuned, and collectively participatory within the unfolding ecology of presencing.

As sovereign participation stabilizes, presencing progressively gathers into sovereign-relational field conditions through the Relational Field, the Generative Field, and the Flow Field. The transition into the Relational Field marks a significant developmental threshold within DPL: the birth of the we-field between two or more participants, as introduced above and depicted in Figure 1 above. At this threshold, presencing begins gathering beyond individually inhabited presence into a more consciously shared relational field of participation. Through co-sourced presence, relational attunement, and engagement with emergence in the presencing field, a shared we-space progressively becomes experientially tangible as a living field reality.

In the Generative Field, emergence becomes increasingly sourced through the presencing field, allowing generative insight and wisdom to arise through shared presencing participation. Whereas earlier field-stages primarily involve participants engaging the conversational field through their own embodied Presencing Conduit and individual field-sense, the Generative Field marks the emergence of a more consciously shared field-sense within the conversational ecology itself. Individual sovereignty remains present within the collective field while becoming progressively woven into a wider ecology of generative participation unfolding through the presencing field.

In the Flow Field, presencing stabilizes as a fluid and dynamically responsive ecology of collective participation through which emergence unfolds with increasing continuity and coherence. The we-field matures into a sustained atmosphere of collective presencing where sensing, dialogue, creativity, and emergence become accessible as collective flow within the presencing field, allowing

participation itself to unfold with a heightened sense of fluidity, synchronization, immediacy, and shared generative absorption.

As a whole, the Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing trace a developmental process movement from individual presence into shared relational participation, then into generative and flow-based collective presencing. Within this framework, leadership becomes a shared stewardship of the ontological conditions through which conversational fields can sustain coherence, emergence, relational depth, and transformed participation.

II. Field-Stage 1: *The Leader's Field*

Field-Stage 1 articulates the initial activation of presencing within the presencing leader's own embodied field of participation prior to broader relational engagement. This stage establishes the foundational ontological conditions through which Dynamic Presencing Leadership becomes lived as a sovereign way of being. The work at this stage involves cultivating an increasingly attuned relationship with the ground of presence, the inner presencing body, the presencing self, and the presencing field (Gunnlaugson, 2025) as interconnected dimensions of one's unfolding presencing nature.

Field-Stage 1 begins through the activation of the presencing leader's own field of embodied presencing participation. Prior to collective engagement, the presencing leader gradually settles into an increasingly grounded orientation in the depth of presence from their presencing nature. In DPL, this vertical orientation establishes the initial ontological conditions through which the conversational field later begins cohering. The presencing leader gradually learns to orient from within the ground of presence as a living basis of participation from their presencing self. Through practices of attuning, descending, and settling into Being Presence, the presencing leader self-activates these dimensions as conditions of their presencing nature and overall inhabitation of presence. Presence gradually stabilizes through what Dynamic Presencing describes as taking one's seat within presence (Gunnlaugson, 2025). This movement reflects the establishment of a stable inner orientation in the unfolding field of presencing participation.

Here we become capable of remaining grounded inside presence while participating responsively within the unfolding movement of conversation. Taking one's seat of presence marks an important ontological threshold in the Leader's Field. Presence becomes increasingly lived as a stable condition of being through which conversational participation unfolds. The presencing leader

no longer relates to presence as a temporary attentional state. Presence becomes inhabited as an inner environment capable of sustaining grounded relational participation, attunement, receptivity, and continuity across the unfolding field.

Within this stabilization, our participation gradually develops increasing depth, fluidity, continuity, and responsiveness. Conversational life begins carrying a different atmospheric quality through our embodied inhabitation of presencing. In Dynamic Presencing Leadership, the quality of presence begins forming within the leader's and participants' fields before it becomes visible at the collective field-stages. In DPL, as noted previously, a group refers to any conversational field involving two or more participants. Presencing initially unfolds as a felt quality carried through the depth and quality of presence with which one inhabits the conversation.

The presenced pacing of attention, the quality of listening, the grounded depth of embodied presence, the openness of relational attunement, and the capacity to remain connected to the field-stages from the outset all help the conversational environment reorganize around deeper conditions of attunement, receptivity, groundedness, and relational presence. As presencing stabilizes and becomes increasingly sourced within our participation, the leader's field coheres through the leader's capacity to stabilize and conduct presence in the unfolding relational environment.

Field-Stage 1 also involves the gradual activation of the Presencing Conduit within the leader's presence as a basis for presencing participation. As embodied presence stabilizes, the leader explores sensing, receiving, and responding from within the field, where presence begins functioning as a living participatory medium through which conversational life unfolds. In DPL, the Presencing Conduit emerges through the leader's attunement across the dimensions of their ground of presence, inner presencing body, presencing nature, and presencing field. These dimensions gradually gather into alignment in the field.

In Field-Stage 1, presence increasingly functions as one unfolding movement of presencing. At this field-stage, stillness develops greater vitality and participation develops greater depth within the unfolding conversational environment. In Dynamic Presencing trainings, presence is cultivated through the Five Level-Depths of Presence (Gunnlaugson, 2025a) as a way of supporting each participant's capacity to optimally embody and orient their experience from presence.

As our individual field coheres, the embodied stability of sovereign participation begins establishing the initial ontological conditions through which others can more consciously attune to and participate in the emerging presencing field of conversation. The collective field has not yet emerged, though the ontological conditions for its unfolding have already begun gathering.

III. Field-Stage 2: *The Participant's Field*

Field-Stage 2 marks the activation and stabilization of embodied presence in the Participant's Field in direct relation to the unfolding conversation. Building on Field-Stage 1, where the Leader's Field establishes the initial conditions of presence, participants now begin inhabiting their own presence more consciously within the conversational field. Within Dynamic Presencing Leadership, the Participant's Field functions as the context through which participants develop greater groundedness, openness, responsiveness, and continuity of presence in relation to one another. Presence begins shaping participation from the inside outward as participants become increasingly aware of how the quality of their own presence influences the unfolding atmosphere and depth of the conversation itself.

As Field-Stage 2 deepens, participation becomes increasingly immediate, grounded, and unguarded. Presence gathers through atmospheres of openness, receptivity, silence, slowing, emotional contact, and embodied sensing. This movement often unfolds through subtle phenomenological shifts. Speech slows down and becomes more embodied. Breathing deepens and becomes more self-regulated. Attention settles into subtle contact with presence. Silence becomes inhabitable. Participants gradually begin recognizing presenced participation arising from embodied contact with one another in their emerging field. Each participant supports the other in remaining more fully present with what is emerging within their lived experience relationally, emotionally, existentially, and situationally.

A central contribution of Field-Stage 2 is the differentiation and strengthening of the Participant's Field. As each Participant's Field stabilizes, individuals become less externally organized and increasingly sourced through their own unfolding presence. Attention turns inward, responses carry greater depth and substance, and participants become more capable of remaining grounded in their own lived experience while participating in the conversation.

In the Participant's Field, participants increasingly acclimate to shared atmospheres of relational coherence through embodied participation. As relational attunement deepens, they begin sensing the emerging field through one another's participation. Presence becomes amplified relationally as openness in one participant supports grounding in another, silence deepens collectively, emotional contact becomes mutually regulating, and attentiveness gathers the field into increasing alignment. Each participant's field coheres through this reciprocal amplification of presence, both within their own being and in shared relation.

The conversational atmosphere begins carrying an increasingly attuned “within” and “between” quality of presencing participation, as participants become more grounded within themselves while becoming more sensitive to what is emerging between them prior to the fuller emergence of the relational we-space. Presence progressively extends beyond individual stabilization toward early forms of shared field-awareness and reciprocal participation. Individual sovereignty continues functioning as the primary organizing condition within Field-Stage 2, while the conversational field gradually develops increasing capacity to support collective forms of presencing participation.

In Field-Stage 2, presencing leadership involves supporting the formation of each participant’s embodied field of participation. Listening becomes attentive within one’s own field in relation. Attention includes the subtle atmosphere of the field while attuning to subtle indicators of connection emerging in as well as between each participant. Presence becomes increasingly self-sustaining within the participant’s own field.

As this field-stage matures, participants begin sensing how the conversational field is shaped through the quality of presence contributed by each participant, while also becoming attuned to presence unfolding across the interaction. Attention becomes increasingly responsive to the conditions of the field. These early forms of inner while also distributed sensitivity prepare the ontological conditions necessary for the emergence of Field-Stage 3: the Relational Field.

Field-Stage 2 therefore prepares the key threshold of the work through which collective presencing can begin more fully in Field-Stage 3. When participants can sustain embodied sovereignty, relational depth, coherent shared meaning, and early forms of shared field-awareness, the conditions are established for the emergence of the Relational Field.

IV. Field-Stage 3: *The Relational Field*

Field-Stage 3 marks a significant ontological transition in the Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing. Where Field-Stages 1 and 2 establish the individual field conditions of embodied presence and presencing across participants, Field-Stage 3 marks the threshold where collective presencing begins to engage as a shared relational “we” field. Conversation shifts here from separate individuals into an increasingly inhabitable we-space of shared presencing participation.

This transition marks the emergence of the collective we-field and the beginning of relationally shared participation within the Five Field-Stages. Here, the conversational field begins

organizing collectively through co-presence, attunement, resonance, mutual responsiveness, and the shared inhabitation of the emerging we-field. Within the Relational Field, the relational zone of emergence becomes foregrounded as participants increasingly attend to and participate within the shared field of relationship. As the field continues to deepen, the Generative Field foregrounds the generative zone of emergence, where collective participation becomes increasingly oriented toward the emergence of new meanings, possibilities, and directions. This progression culminates in the Flow Field, where the flow zone of emergence becomes the primary focus through shared flow, collective responsiveness, and sustained participation. In this sense, the zones of emergence function as different ways of focusing and participating within the Presencing Field as it unfolds through the later field-stages.

This transition into Field-Stage 3 resonates with de Quincey's (2000) articulation of ontological intersubjectivity, where relationality is reclaimed as a primordial condition of our existence rather than a secondary construction arising between already separate selves. From this orientation, relational participation precedes individuality. The field therefore emerges as an always-participating dimension of relational life that becomes increasingly recognizable through presencing participation. In *Dynamic Presencing Leadership*, Field-Stage 3 establishes the first relational field condition through which participation becomes collective, relational, and field-aware. The field begins functioning as an encompassing we-space that is collectively inhabited rather than a collection of individual fields. Phenomenologically, Field-Stage 3 is marked by the emergence of a triadic relational structure: participant, other, and encompassing conversational field. Meaning, movement, responsiveness, and relational depth become accessible from a more collective vantage point.

As the Relational Field develops, participation increasingly unfolds through what Benjamin (2004) describes as thirdness: a shared relational dimension that exceeds purely dyadic exchange while preserving the differentiated integrity of each participant. In Field-Stage 3, the conversational field begins functioning as this living third space of between. Participants increasingly sense the conversation as unfolding within a shared relational atmosphere that is no longer experienced solely through their own individual participation. Relational attunement, resonance, timing, and conversational openings increasingly emerge through inhabiting this shared field of presencing together. In this sense, the conversational field begins functioning as an active relational medium through which presencing unfolds between participants.

This emergence of thirdness marks the beginning of collective presencing participation. The conversation gradually develops a subtle holding environment through which participants remain grounded in their own embodied sovereignty while entering deeper relational attunement with the unfolding field. Participation becomes increasingly organized through shared presencing rather than through separate acts of individual contribution.

Presence gathers through resonance, co-presence, attunement, pacing, embodied responsiveness, and sensitivity to the shared atmosphere of the field. Listening, speaking, sensing, silence, and responsiveness begin attuning to the resonance of the we-space of the we-field. Presence shifts from being experienced primarily as an individual orientation toward becoming a collectively shared atmosphere of participation. This movement aligns with Wight's (2011) articulation of inter-being and inter-becoming, where identity and relational participation unfold reciprocally through shared experience. In the Relational Field, participants are gradually shaped through inhabiting the field together.

Field-Stage 3 also marks the emergence of a more collective mode of sensing participation through which the conversational field begins functioning as a shared sensing body. Attention widens beyond individual perception into a more distributed relational sensitivity where silence, emotional movement, pacing, timing, energetic shifts, and relational openings become increasingly shared across the field. Merleau-Ponty's (1968) later phenomenology offers an important resonance for understanding this participatory movement. Perception unfolds through intertwining participation within a shared field of embodied relationality rather than through detached individual observation. Similarly, in the Relational Field, participants increasingly engage sensemaking through participation with the field, becoming more collectively embodied through shared presencing.

The we-space gradually functions as a collective organ of attentiveness through which participants encounter one another relationally. Listening deepens from the field. Silence acquires greater communicative density. Emergence often becomes perceptible within the atmosphere of the field prior to verbal articulation. The conversation increasingly unfolds through the intelligence of shared sensing participation.

In the Relational Field, sovereignty remains essential. Participants remain grounded in their own embodied presence while participating in the emerging relational field. Shared presencing unfolds through individuals sourcing their deeper presencing nature, allowing the field to deepen through the integration of embodied presence and relational attunement. The quality of the

relational field therefore depends upon participants' capacity to sustain sovereign presence and collective attunement together.

One of the distinguishing capacities of the Relational Field involves its growing ability to sustain multiplicity without the usual sense of fragmentation that accompanies group life. The field gradually develops sufficient stability to hold emotional difference, divergent perspectives, ambiguity, uncertainty, tension, and differentiated participation while preserving continuity of participation. This movement reflects Matusov's (2021) view of dialogic intersubjectivity, where relational depth develops through the coordinated inhabitation of difference rather than through consensus or conceptual convergence. In Field-Stage 3, divergence often deepens the field rather than destabilizing it.

As the Relational Field stabilizes, speech gradually changes in character. Language becomes increasingly emergent, field-sensitive, and participatory, while listening deepens and silence acquires greater communicative significance. Timing, pacing, and verbal responsiveness become increasingly coordinated through the atmosphere of the field. Speech begins functioning as a co-creative movement within a larger ecology of collective presencing participation, supporting more fluid and creative forms of relating through atmospheres of openness and receptive participation. As the Relational Field matures, the conversational atmosphere often acquires a liminal quality: conceptual structure softens, silence deepens, and the field begins carrying subtle anticipatory movement toward generativity. Participants remain grounded within embodied sovereignty while becoming more transparent to the unfolding unknown and the collective presencing movement of the field.

Overall, Field-Stage 3 establishes the relational ground of collective presencing participation. The we-space gradually coheres as a shared atmosphere carrying its own sensing body, temporal rhythm, relational permeability, and developmental movement. Participants begin experiencing themselves less as separate individuals exchanging perspectives and increasingly as co-participants inhabiting a shared atmosphere of relational becoming. The Relational Field therefore represents the ontological birth of the we-field and the emergence of co-presence as a shared mode of participation. Through sustained co-presence, embodied sovereignty, relational attunement, field-awareness, and reciprocal participation, the field develops the generative capacity necessary for the transition into co-presencing in Field-Stage 4. Through sustained co-presence, embodied sovereignty, relational attunement, field-awareness, and reciprocal participation, the field develops the generative capacity necessary for the emergence of Field-Stage 4: the Generative Field.

V. Field-Stage 4: *The Generative Field*

Field-Stage 4 marks the transition from co-presence into co-presencing. The shared we-space cultivated through Field-Stage 3 now deepens into a living atmosphere of emergence in which participants increasingly engage the unfolding movement of the Presencing Field itself. What was previously experienced as a shared field of presence becomes a shared field of presencing. New possibilities, orientations, meanings, and movements begin arising through each participant's engagement with the field from their Presencing Conduit. The conversation takes on a different quality of aliveness. Something begins moving through the field that exceeds individual contribution while remaining grounded in the shared experience of communion. Generativity unfolds through the interbeing alignment between participants while intrabeing sovereignty and individual agency remain present, differentiated, and active within each participant and across the group.

Field-Stage 4 marks the threshold where the conversational field begins opening into the generative zone of emergence. At this stage, sufficient relational depth and participatory stability have developed for emergence to unfold more actively through the presencing field itself. The generative zone reflects a field-based condition where collective participation increasingly reorganizes around the movement of emergence itself. Participation acquires a heightened sense of aliveness, immediacy, responsiveness, and developmental movement as the field becomes more actively engaged in shaping the unfolding direction and generativity of the conversation. New possibilities, relational openings, creative movement, and transformational participation increasingly arise through engagement with the unfolding presencing field.

In Field-Stage 4, co-generative presencing appears through relational resonance, collective attunement, and field-sensitive responsiveness. Meaning gradually reveals itself within this generative mode of participation as the field's atmosphere becomes more alive, responsive, and creatively charged. Participants frequently sense that presencing leadership has begun participating through the field itself, becoming increasingly responsive to the emergent movement unfolding within the atmosphere of collective participation. Entry into the generative zone of emergence arises through the integrity and alignment of presencing participation.

Field-Stage 4 also marks the emergence of what may be understood as a generative enclosure: a subtle and increasingly coherent field-condition through which emergence can unfold with greater continuity, depth, and transformational intensity. The conversational environment develops sufficient ontological resonance and participatory stability for emergence to gather in the

field as a living movement of collective becoming. The generative enclosure functions as a living membrane that supports, protects, and intensifies presencing participation.

This generative enclosure functions first as a holding ecology for subtle emergence. Early movements of transformation, creativity, relational opening, and generative insight frequently carry fragility and incompleteness during their initial appearance in the field. Winnicott's (1960) articulation of holding environments offers an important enrichment here. Development unfolds most fully in relational ecologies capable of sustaining openness, vulnerability, experimentation, and emergent becoming without premature interruption or collapse. Similarly, in Field-Stage 4, the conversational field becomes increasingly capable of holding the subtle unfolding of emergence through the generative enclosure.

Beyond holding fragile emergence, the generative enclosure also functions as a resonance chamber that amplifies emerging possibilities. Field-Stage 4 intensifies subtle movements of becoming through atmospheres of attentiveness, silence, and relational attunement. Emerging possibilities begin echoing, deepening, and stabilizing through the field as participants collectively attune to the unfolding movement of emergence. Sawyer's (2007) work on collaborative emergence and group creativity offers a useful enrichment for this participatory dynamic. Collective emergence develops through distributed relational responsiveness as new possibilities arise through the field. Emergence increasingly becomes a field-based phenomenon unfolding through the resonance and participatory intelligence of participants.

As the generative zone opens, presencing leadership increasingly shifts toward tracking emergence in the field. Participation becomes more emergence-sensitive. The leader remains grounded in embodied sovereignty, established in Field-Stage 1, while attuning to the unfolding movement of the field. The field communicates where emergence is gathering, opening, intensifying, fragmenting, stabilizing, deepening, or reorganizing through the atmosphere of collective participation.

Whereas Field-Stage 3 establishes the relational conditions through which fourth-person presencing first becomes experientially tangible, Field-Stage 4 marks the stage where fourth-person knowing increasingly stabilizes into a lived and inhabitable collective condition (Gunnlaugson, 2025b). The conversational field becomes experienced as a co-arising participatory ecology where collective presencing unfolds as a shared way of being. The field develops the stability and depth necessary for collective intelligence to emerge organically through participation. Meaning,

emergence, and transformational movement increasingly arise through direct participation in the field.

At this stage, fourth-person knowing becomes increasingly integrated as a way of being in and from the field (Gunnlaugson, 2025b). Individual perspectives remain present while becoming reorganized within a larger participatory movement unfolding across the field as a whole. Participants often experience themselves simultaneously as sovereign individuals and as active participants within a larger movement carrying its own emergent intelligence, developmental directionality, and generative momentum. The field becomes increasingly experienced as inhabitable from within rather than sensed externally or accessed intermittently.

Field-Stage 4 also introduces increasing nonlinear complexity into the conversational field. Emergence unfolds rhythmically, recursively, and paradoxically through the living movement of participation. The Möbius strip offers an important symbolic image for understanding this generative movement. Participation unfolds through continuous relational turning, where inner and outer, sensing and expression, silence and articulation, emergence and embodiment fold into one another through the field. This Möbius-like movement reflects the increasingly inseparable relationship between sensing emergence and enacting emergence, as emergence folds inward and outward through the living movement of collective participation.

As the generative zone deepens, somatic and energetic attention shifts toward sensing the subtle phenomenology of emergence unfolding through the field. Gendlin's (1996, 1997) work on felt-experiencing provides an important enrichment for understanding this dimension of participatory tracking in Dynamic Presencing through one's Inner Presencing Body where emergence unfolds through embodied felt-shifts and implicit felt movements. Similarly, in Field-Stage 4, the field becomes increasingly capable of tracking emergence through distributed participatory sensing. Participants become more responsive to the subtle pulse of emergence moving through the embodied atmosphere of the field, often before it becomes available as explicit meaning, language, or direction.

Presencing leadership during this stage becomes increasingly field-sensitive. Facilitation shifts toward supporting the evolving generativity of the field. As the Generative Field matures, the field becomes more inhabitable as a collective ontological environment through which sensing, relating, listening, responding, discerning, and emerging unfold together. Presence is increasingly experienced as a shared participatory medium through which collective presencing stabilizes across the field.

Field-Stage 4 establishes the generative ground for collective presencing by cultivating the capacity to hold, amplify, track, and enact emergence as a living movement of the field. As this stabilization deepens, the transition into Field-Stage 5 becomes increasingly possible. The field coheres further into a more seamless flow condition through which sensing, participation, emergence, creativity, and responsiveness unfold with greater immediacy, continuity, and collective presence.

VI. Field-Stage 5: *The Flow Field*

Field-Stage 5 marks the maturation of the conversational field into a more fluid and continuous ecology of collective presencing participation. The generative responsiveness cultivated in Field-Stage 4 now settles into a shared flow condition throughout the field. The conversation develops a natural continuity through which participation moves with less friction, greater responsiveness, and a more unified relational rhythm. Presence circulates through the field with increasing fluidity, allowing the conversation to remain dynamically adaptive to what is unfolding moment by moment.

Field-Stage 5 also marks the stabilization and sustained inhabitation of the flow zone of emergence across the field. What begins opening in the Generative Field gradually matures into a more continuous ecology of collective flow participation through which shared presencing becomes increasingly integrated across the field. The flow zone no longer appears primarily as intermittent openings for emergence. The conversation becomes increasingly capable of sustaining generative participation with continuity, immediacy, relational fluidity, and self-organizing intelligence.

In arriving in the final presencing field-stage, the relational and generative stages of the we-space become more fully embodied as an inhabitable collective condition of participation. The field increasingly functions as a living participatory ecology where conversational life unfolds collectively from within its own processes. In *Dynamic Presencing Leadership*, fourth-person knowing from the field emerges as an integrative way of being, stabilizing as a more continuous, embodied, and collectively sustained mode of participation. Participants increasingly experience themselves as co-inhabiting a shared embodied ecology of collective presencing that carries its own continuity, intelligence, rhythm, and developmental movement.

Field-Stage 5 further marks the stabilization of the generative enclosure as an inhabitable field-condition. The enclosure becomes capable of sustaining emergence as an ongoing ecology of

collective participation. As the Flow Field stabilizes, participants often experience the conversation as carrying forward through the intelligence and continuity of the field. Relational responsiveness becomes increasingly immediate and unforced. Dialogue unfolds with a quality of natural timing and attunement that feels coordinated through the movement of participation. The field supports emergence, relational depth, complexity, and responsiveness simultaneously while maintaining continuity. Fourth-person knowing increasingly stabilizes as an embodied participatory condition through which sensing, listening, discerning, responding, and emerging unfold together in the field.

Bohm's (1996) understanding of dialogue as a flowing movement of shared meaning offers an important enrichment for understanding this field-stage, where meaning flows, reorganizes, deepens, and transforms through the participatory movement of the field. Sawyer's (2007) articulation of group flow is also especially relevant here, as collective creativity emerges through shared attentiveness, improvisational coordination, relational synchrony, and distributed participation across the group. In the Flow Field, emergence becomes increasingly distributed and integrated within each participant and the field as a whole. Participants' engagement with the field becomes capable of sustaining ongoing collective flow through relational responsiveness and participatory continuity.

The field develops increasing capacity for sustained collective emergence. As the generative enclosure of the we-field stabilizes more fully in Field-Stage 5, Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, 1996) work on flow, creativity, and emergence offers an additional enrichment for understanding this maturation process. Flow involves heightened responsiveness, deepened attentional integration, fluid participation beyond the ordinary experience of self, and an absorptive focus within the unfolding process. In *Dynamic Presencing Leadership*, this movement expands beyond individual or shared experiences of flow in earlier field-stages into a collectively sustained ecology of conversational emergence.

The Flow Field also transforms the experience of participation. Attention becomes less preoccupied with managing process, interpreting movement, or directing outcomes. Participants gradually acclimate to inhabiting the unfolding conversational field more directly, as sensing, listening, speaking, responding, and participating begin operating together as dimensions of a unified flow of relational participation. Participants increasingly inhabit presencing emergence directly through the field as their inner presencing bodies and presencing nature align with the presencing field as a singular unfolding movement.

At this stage, participants remain collectively grounded in their embodied sovereignty, which amplifies the uniqueness of each person's experience while supporting their participation within a deeply shared atmosphere of collective presencing. Engagement in the larger whole of the field becomes increasingly fluid, while each participant's differentiated presence becomes more fully engaged within the whole. Sovereignty and collective flow begin to generate a 1+1=3 movement in the unfolding conversational field, where individual presence and shared emergence amplify one another.

Intrabeing and interbeing increasingly function as mutually informing movements within the field. Building from Thich Nhat Hanh's notion of interbeing as the interdependent and mutually arising nature of reality (Nhat Hanh, 1998), I am coining the term *intrabeing* here to name the inner, embodied, and presencing dimension through which participants inhabit this interdependence from within their own embodied sovereignty. In Field-Stage 5, participants remain grounded in their embodied sovereignty while participating fluidly within the evolving movement of collective emergence. The field sustains creativity as an ongoing ecology of shared presencing, where each participant's inner presencing body and presencing nature remain dynamically engaged with the larger movement of the field. Presence and presencing therefore become increasingly integrated through the continuity of the field.

The Flow Field matures into a living meaning ecology where dialogue develops greater continuity, immediacy, and self-organizing responsiveness through the collective intelligence of the field. Conversational participation becomes increasingly adaptive, fluid, and improvisational as emergence unfolds through the ongoing movement of collective presencing participation.

Field-Stage 5 brings the developmental movement of the Five Field-Stages into an increasingly seamless ecology of collective presencing. When fully stabilized, the Flow Field becomes a sustained ecology of collective becoming through which emergence unfolds with increasing continuity, fluidity, and relational depth. Participants increasingly experience themselves inhabiting a shared atmosphere of emergence carrying its own movement, rhythm, intelligence, and developmental continuity. The generative enclosure remains present in the field as the subtle architecture through which collective emergence continues unfolding with depth.

VII. Toward a Conversational Ontology of Participation

The Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing point toward a fundamental reorientation in how conversational life is understood and inhabited. Conversation gradually reveals itself as more than communicative exchange, interpersonal process, or collaborative interaction. Through sustained presencing participation, conversation becomes a living presencing self-field ecology through which human beings participate in shared movements of relational becoming, collective emergence, and field-sensitive responsiveness.

What initially appears in the Leader's Field as the embodied stabilization of sovereign presence gradually unfolds into increasingly shared forms of collective inhabitation. As participants deepen into embodied attunement, the conversational field begins acquiring experiential tangibility. Participants increasingly encounter one another through a shared atmosphere of participation that subtly shapes attentiveness, embodiment, responsiveness, perception, timing, emotional openness, and collective movement. The emergence of the we-space as a relationally created, generatively oriented enclosure that eventually opens into collective flow reflects an ontological transformation in how conversational life becomes inhabited.

This development also reframes the nature of individual and collective intelligence. Meaning, insight, directionality, and emergence unfold relationally through distributed attentiveness and shared participation in the field. As presencing becomes a conversational ecology, it supports forms of collective responsiveness that exceed isolated acts of cognition while remaining grounded in embodied sovereign participation.

The later field-stages further illuminate how emergence becomes progressively inhabitable in conversational life, revealing emergence as a function of the quality and depth of presence rather than as a byproduct of the creative process. As coherence deepens, the field develops increasing capacity to hold ambiguity, incompleteness, vulnerability, multiplicity, silence, and developmental openness. Emergence unfolds through atmospheres of attentiveness, spaciousness, relational permeability, and generative containment carried in the field, allowing the conversational environment to sustain transformational participation as an ongoing ecology of collective becoming. This movement also reshapes how temporality is experienced in conversational participation, as sensing and responding become increasingly integrated in the nonlinear movement of the conversational ecology.

The Five Field-Stages engage a transformed relationship between sovereignty and relationality. Embodied sovereignty deepens relational participation, as participants remain grounded in their own embodied center while entering more shared dimensions of collective attunement and presencing. This is significant because group and collective forms of conversation often emphasize shared meaning, relational cohesion, collective intelligence, or group emergence in ways that can subtly or overtly de-emphasize each individual's sovereign voice. In Dynamic Presencing Leadership, the individual is transcended and included, not absorbed into the collective field. Each participant's embodied sovereignty becomes a necessary condition for deeper relational participation, allowing the field to become more generative through the distinctness, rootedness, and presencing capacity of those participating within it.

As fourth-person knowing stabilizes across the later field-stages, conversational participation increasingly becomes lived as a shared ontology of collective presencing. In Dynamic Presencing Leadership, fourth-person knowing becomes integrated as a way of being, rather than remaining primarily a way of knowing from the field. Participants progressively inhabit the field as a living ecology of relational intelligence, emergence, responsiveness, and becoming through the embodied coherence of their own presence, sovereignty, and presencing nature. The ontological dimension matters here because the field is no longer approached as an external or autonomous source of collective intelligence. It becomes an inhabitable dimension of presence that co-arises through the embodied participation of those within it. Presence and emergence therefore function together in the continuity of collective participation, as participants shape and are simultaneously shaped by the unfolding movement of the field. Conversational life becomes increasingly experienced as a co-arising ecology of presencing, where first-person immediacy, second-person attunement, third-person discernment, and fourth-person field-awareness are integrated into a shared dynamic way of being.

The broader significance of the Five Field-Stages therefore extends beyond leadership process, dialogue methodology, or facilitation design. The framework points toward conversational participation as an ontological mode of inhabiting collective life. Presencing increasingly reveals itself as a way of participating in the living depth, coherence, intelligence, and generative vitality of the conversational field.

VIII. Closing Thoughts

The Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing articulate a developmental field architecture through which conversation progressively becomes more inhabitable, relationally coherent, generative, and collectively responsive. Across the unfolding movement of the field-stages, conversational life becomes experienced as a participatory ecology through which presence, emergence, meaning, responsiveness, and collective becoming unfold together within the field.

A central contribution of the article lies in articulating a developmental phenomenology and ontology of the presencing field itself. Much of the existing literature on collective leadership and presencing references "the field" in relatively undifferentiated ways. The Five Field-Stages contribute a more granular developmental account of how individual and conversational fields progressively gather, stabilize, deepen, and reorganize through distinguishable stages of sovereign participation, relational coherence, generative emergence, and participatory flow. In doing so, the framework offers a developmental understanding of how collective presencing becomes established, sustained, and deepened within shared contexts.

The article also reframes the field of conversation. Rather than treating the field as metaphor, emergent property, facilitation atmosphere, or transcendent source of knowing alone, the framework develops the field as an increasingly inhabitable participatory medium carrying its own developmental movement and generative capacity. In this sense, the article extends the discourse on presencing beyond epistemology toward a more participatory ontology of collective life.

The later field-stages deepen this contribution through the development of fourth-person presencing as a lived mode of collective inhabitation. Participants progressively learn to inhabit the field as a shared ecology of sensing, listening, responsiveness, emergence, and collective becoming. This developmental movement advances the understanding of collective leadership beyond coordination or collaboration alone toward increasingly field-attuned forms of collective participation.

The framework also contributes a phenomenology of collective presencing participation by illuminating how conversational life gradually reorganizes perception, attentiveness, embodiment, relationality, temporality, responsiveness, and emergence through the evolving field. Emergence becomes understood as a participatory movement fostered through the field, giving the framework particular relevance for leadership, organizational, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and community contexts.

Taken together, the Five Field-Stages offer a developmental response to the central question guiding this article: How does the presencing field develop within shared contexts of leadership, coaching, facilitation, dialogue, and collective engagement? The framework suggests that presencing does not emerge as a fully formed collective phenomenon. Rather, it develops through successive field conditions that begin with each individual participant, and progressively gather, stabilize, deepen, and organize participation across individual and conversational fields. From the Leader's Field and Participant's Field, through the Relational, Generative, and Flow Fields, the presencing field becomes increasingly capable of supporting shared sensing, collective emergence, generative participation, and field-responsive leadership.

Ultimately, the Five Field-Stages reveal how collective leadership develops through the maturation of the presencing field itself. Leadership becomes less a function of individual influence and increasingly a capacity to steward the key conditions through which collective presencing can gather, deepen, and flourish. In this sense, the Five Field-Stages of Dynamic Presencing offer both a developmental map and a process field method for understanding how presencing leadership unfolds within the living ecology of conversational life.

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¹ All conceptual models, figure structures, and theoretical language in the figures were developed by the author as part of the Dynamic Presencing framework. Visual renderings of selected figures were generated with the assistance of OpenAI's ChatGPT image-generation tool and subsequently revised, selected, and finalized by the author.

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THE INNER, INTERSUBJECTIVE, AND TRANSPERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF PRESENCING:

Emerging Collective Leadership for Transforming Higher Education

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Abstract: This article explores a collective journey of presencing as an emergent pathway for cultivating collective leadership within higher education. Grounded in a shared inquiry among participants committed to reimagining higher education through more holistic, relational, and presence-based pedagogies, the study examines how presencing functioned as both an ontological and intersubjective process of transformation. Participants engaged in practices aimed at deepening their own capacities for presence across the domains of being, relating, and acting, thereby creating conditions for new forms of collective awareness, relational coherence, and shared vision to emerge. Building upon Theory U while extending beyond its predominantly epistemological orientation, this article draws on dynamic presencing perspectives to investigate the embodied, relational, and transpersonal dimensions of transformative learning and leadership. Particular attention is given to the way deeper attunement to the lived body, heightened intersubjective resonance, and moments of connection to a larger transpersonal source contributed to the emergence of collective leadership capacities. These capacities included expanded self-awareness, a strengthened sense of shared purpose, heart-centred relational engagement, and the co-emergence of actionable vision for transforming pedagogical and leadership practices within higher education. The article suggests that presencing, when engaged as a lived relational and ontological process, offers a powerful developmental pathway for cultivating forms of leadership capable of responding to the complexity, fragmentation, and transitional challenges facing contemporary educational institutions.

Key words: presencing, intersubjective, collective leadership, holistic, ontological, relational, transpersonal, source

I. Introduction

This article examines presencing in the context of Theory U, highlighting the importance of a shift from cognitive, individual centered, transactional approaches to whole-person, collective, transformative approaches in learning and leadership development. This shift facilitates expanded awareness, deeper connection, and collective leadership. While we situate our analysis within the

presencing methodology present in Theory U, we are also expanding the potential of presencing in two theoretical directions outlined by Gunnlaugson (2023) as emerging presencing approaches: its ontological potential to strengthen a dynamic being presence (p. 109), and the depth of the intersubjective experience that connects a group to the source, facilitating the gesture of letting come as co-creation through collective leadership. This paper examines the role of presencing as a process of Open Mind, Open Heart and Open Will (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013), an expansion of awareness of Being, deep connection, and emerging action rooted in a spiritual source. We frame presencing as a process that defies the inner-outer dualism, cultivating mastery *within* and *between* participants in order to access the transpersonal domain (Bockler, 2024, p. 9). This paper focuses in particular on the embodied and intersubjective potential of presencing to contribute to inner-outer dynamics of integration and connection for co-emergent knowing and collective leadership.

We explore the collective journey of a group of nine educators, graduate students, and coaches to co-create whole-person, relational approaches for transformative academic education through a presencing process. The journey began in January 2021 as the project Activating the Heart in Higher Education in collaboration with The Presencing Institute's u.lab-2X Accelerator for Systems Transformation and continues at present with the Education for Flourishing collaborative action research that creates transformative communities of practice for students, professors and leaders at our university. The group members each had varying degrees of knowledge and experience of Theory U and they gathered to explore the generative, relational and holistic potential of higher education to contribute to leadership development. They were all involved with teaching, learning or coaching based on the framework of transformative leadership. The purpose of the group was to challenge "the privilege of intellectual/rational knowing" (Rendón, 2014, p. 26), the transactional model of education (Riddell, 2024) and the focus on individual learning and achievement (Gunnlaugson et al., 2014). We intended to explore whole-person transformative methods that involved emotions, the body and spirituality, that cultivated relational connection and an ethic of care through a self-reflexive collective process of presencing that involved our own transformation as educators.

II. Collective Leadership and Intersubjectivity

The framework of collective leadership shows that leadership is not simply the heroic action of individuals in socially recognized positions of power, but a relational, emergent practice guided by

shared meaning (Guenther, 2023). Collective leadership is the emergent relational process of group engagement (Hiller et al., 2006). It is seen as an alternative to the person-centered, hierarchy based traditional leadership models that contributes to more positive work environments, more inclusion, and more effectiveness in complex situations (De Brun & McAuliffe, 2023). This framework shifts attention from leaders as individuals with authority, to leadership as a collective practice that emerges from shared meaning and it manifests through social interactions (Foldy & Ospina, 2021).

While the more general definition of collective leadership is about individual members of a team assuming and sharing leadership roles, one important and less explored dimension is the emergence of collective intelligence that is more than the sum of individual leaders' intelligence. This is the intersubjective dimension of leadership, an ontological "mutual co-arising and engagement of interdependent subjects" (Guenther, 2023, p. 9) that contributes to collective leadership. This includes not only first and second person perspective, but also the third perspective that emerges in the "intersubjective field" through the quality of interactions (Gunnlaugson, 2014, p. 306). Leadership as an intersubjective phenomenon pays attention to the interdependence between the development of leaders' consciousness and the quality of connections that build collective leadership (Guenther, 2023). It recognizes the interdependent dynamic between the individuating and participatory modes of being, the need for personal agency and collaboration with others (Heron, 1992). In other words, this perspective transcends the duality between theories of individual and collective leadership, focusing on the relational process of leadership as a co-emergent phenomenon of meaning and action based on "human social constructions that emanate from the rich connections and interdependencies of organizations and their members" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 655).

The Western focus on the individual as the locus of both learning and leadership (Guenther, 2023), combined with academic learning based on cognitive processing of information (Kass 2017; Rendón, 2009, Briciu, 2024), have diminished the capacity for intersubjective experience, and made difficult the emergence of collective intelligence. At an individual level, the educational emphasis on cognitive capacities and technical skills to the detriment of somatic, emotional, spiritual and other forms of intelligence have created a damaging dualism between the mind and the heart, reducing the complexity of consciousness to the intellect (Hocking et al., 2001; Gardner, 1993; Ferrer et al., 2005; Rendón, 2009). At a collective level, the focus on leaders as separate individuals with particular character traits and the transactional, hierarchy-based work culture have overlooked the importance of collective creativity and intelligence (Guenther, 2023; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013). These two paradigms have contributed to limited self and systems awareness and a dualistic perspective that

separates the mind from the body and the self from the system (Scharmer, 2018). Leadership development needs to transcend this dualism in order to support the quality of the intersubjective experience conducive to collective creativity. This implies a paradigm shift not only in definitions of leadership, but also in learning and development methods that would enhance a shared experience of awareness of the self through others, a sense that “I am who I am because of my relations and experiences with other people” (Guenther, 2023, p. 10). Some scholars talk about the importance of making space for practical wisdom and accessing forms of knowledge that have been excluded (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2021), while others argue for pedagogies that nurture complex, generative, collective learning (Gunnlaugson, 2011).

Presencing is a practice that defies the inner-outer, mind, body and heart separation, contributing to deeper connection to self, others, and world that enhances meaning, creativity and shared leadership. In her analysis of presencing as being in care, Southern (2014) refers to its potential for what she calls shared leadership, rather than collective leadership, as a form of leadership where power comes from reciprocal processes of “holding and granting authority while Being in Care” (p. 71). Presencing offers both an epistemological and ontological frame (Gunnlaugson, 2024) for collective leadership development as an innovative approach to the traditional focus on individual leadership development. A well-known presencing methodology that fosters personal and collective transformation through deepening of awareness, cultivation of the intersubjective experience and learning from the future that wants to emerge, is Otto Scharmer’s (2018) Theory U.

Participants in this study engaged collectively in the Theory U presencing process that contributed to their personal transformation and the emergence of collective leadership. Gunnlaugson (2024) expands the epistemological focus of Scharmer’s concept of presencing to an exploration of its ontological dimensions, while Bockler (2024) highlights its relational potential. Our analysis includes both perspectives, exploring in detail the dynamic interdependence between the quality of deep, intersubjective connections and the shifts in identity that opened the self of participants to new embodied possibilities of being and doing. This positive dynamic facilitated a few experiences of accessing the source as a form of spiritual connection to a transpersonal field that nurtured collective leadership.

III. Presencing and Spirituality: The Intersubjective Experience

Scharmer's (2000) concept of presencing makes Theory U a unique transformative process that uses contemplative, arts-based, and embodied participatory methods. Presencing combines deep presence and sensing the emerging future, a holistic, contemplative and intuitive mode of knowing. It relies on a process of group receptivity and intersubjective engagement that envisions and actualizes future possibilities (Scharmer, 2000). There are two radically different aspects in this approach. The first one is the learning from the future, rather than the traditional learning from the past. As Gunnlaugson (2007) suggested, "presencing involves learning from attention to what is emerging—knowledge that is sensed but not yet embodied in our experience" (p. 141). The second aspect is the invitation for individuals to tap into their intersubjective experience and to expand their consciousness by accessing their Higher Self. The individual 'self' (using lowercase s) represents who we are due to our history (i.e. our childhood, education, social and cultural community). The second 'Self' (using capital S) concerns our highest future possibility (Scharmer, 2018). Scharmer (2013) argues that the histories of violence inherent in our social systems keep these two aspects of the self separated, leaving many people disconnected from the deep source of their humanity and creating a spiritual gap (p. 110).

An individualistic ethos sees the small self as separate from others, anchored in personal experience and an individually situated worldview. Presencing enhances participants' connection with themselves and others through the intersubjective experience, creating awareness of self as interconnected with others and the world. It is a process that reconnects the small self with the Higher Self (intrasubjective), self with others (intersubjective), and with the source (transpersonal) (Bockler, 2024, p.9). Scharmer (2013) articulates presencing as a method for transformation and leadership development, while more recent theories of dynamic presencing nuance and deepen its contribution to ontological and relational shifts through an increasing mastery of embodying presence and a presenced way of relating (Gunnlaugson, 2024, p. 177). Embodying presence involves a deeper connection to the self in an expanded awareness of one's inner world as an open, shared field of consciousness. "From that place (of presencing), you are not looking out at the interconnected whole around you. You are seeing it from the inside as you experience it. In other words, you become the social field" (Wilson, Scharmer interview, 2019, p. 190).

In order to engage in the act of presencing, learners need radical openness: "Receptivity to the emerging future requires an open mind, open heart and open will, as the individual's perception opens to the social field" (Scharmer, 2018, p. 31). Scharmer (2000) refers to the process of presencing as an opening of the self through stillness and receptivity, in order to enter a generative

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relationship with others and with the social field. The ontological dimension of presencing leads to the experience of an embodied, interconnected self with an identity that is not reduced to one's personal history. Gunnlaugson (2024) refers to this as “the subtle, interior-mediated forms of embodiment that await contact from deeper levels of one's presencing practice” (p. 177). This is an essential aspect of being presence through moments of stillness, contemplation, awareness of one's embodied sensing, extending the gesture of “letting be” that Gunnlaugson (2024, p. 218) articulates as an important stage between letting go and letting come. This ontological dimension of presencing deepens awareness of one's immediate, embodied experience, a stage that tends to be downplayed in epistemological orientations of presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2025a). The relational aspect of presencing creates “an intersubjective space” through the invitation to empathic dialogue, increased receptivity to the collective field, expanding awareness from the self to others and enhancing the quality of co-presencing (Gunnlaugson & Walker, 2014, p. 130-1).

An increased mastery of the ontological and relational dimensions of presencing through regular personal mindfulness practice and collective engagement in contemplation, reflection, dialogue and arts-based approaches leads to deeper levels of presence and generative experience of collective access to the transpersonal domain of the source. The opening of perception to the social field or the source is predicated on opening the mind, the heart, and the will to a transpersonal experience. This transformation of perception parallels the process of spiritual development defined as an unfolding process of differentiation and integration of different stages of consciousness, moving towards expansion of perspective and unitive complexity (Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Cook-Greuter, 2005; Wilber, 2000; Kass, 2017; Irwin, 2002; Beck & Cowan, 2005). Kass (2017) sees spiritual development as “an expansion of self-awareness beyond the restrictions and limiting isolation of ego consciousness” (p. 111). The process of transcendence starts with opening the mind to the presence of being, continues to deepen with the open-hearted engagement with others, and reaches the depth of access to the source of the social field.

If we rely on Koss & Holder's (2015, p. 207) definition of spirituality as “a feeling of Connectedness to something greater experienced by cultivating a relationship with oneself, one's community, one's environment, and one's perception of the transcendent,” we can argue that the sensing of a future that wants to emerge is a spiritual perception of a greater field that fosters collective leadership. This marks presencing as a method for spiritual development through deeper connection to one's embodied experience, intersubjectivity, and access to the transcendent. Spiritual development is the result of inner integration as connection between the individual and the Higher

Self (ontological), with more receptivity and presence to others (relational) and entry into a deeper intersubjective and interconnected reality (transpersonal) (Wilber, 2000).

While spiritual development is represented as a spiral of ascendent growth, Theory U represents the transformation through presencing as a descent to the bottom of the source through the gestures of letting go, letting be and letting come. Both spiritual development and the connection to the source expand consciousness to a more holistic, systemic and inclusive awareness, but they do it from two different perspectives. While the ascending movement of developmental theories is rooted in an epistemological perspective, the descent into the ground of presence is an ontological experience of “embodied re-subjectification,” a “mesa-turn” Gunnlaugson (2025b, p. 106) examines in detail in his theory of dynamic presencing. This theory shows the importance of a deeper sensing of the body as the ground of being to sustain and bring to life the meta-awareness of presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2025b). It highlights the possibilities of a more integrated, immanent spirituality (Wilber, 2000) that includes the body through a journey to its depth (mesa-turn) rather than attempting to transcend it. This connects the self not only to its future version of possibility, but to the depth and the richness of direct embodied experience, as another form of inner integration and coherence (Gunnlaugson, 2025c.). While individual practices of contemplation and reflection are essential for the embodiment of presence, experiences of intersubjectivity as deep communion with others keep expanding its possibilities.

Intersubjectivity is possible when the self is open enough to enter the world of others through attunement, empathic dialogue, and group coherence that facilitates collective access to the transpersonal domain of the source. Intersubjectivity is the sharing of a collective meaning (Cipolletta et al., 2022) accessed through experiences of connection, resonance and co-regulation that lead to transformation. It is the aliveness between us. Rosa (2019) defined resonance as a mutually balancing act of interaction with others and the world, in which the subject is touched or “affected” by others, responding with interest, emotion, and a sense of self-efficacy. Resonance presupposes a fluid, vibrating and mutually transformative relationship that balances receptivity and action, but it is a way of relating to the world made increasingly difficult by modernity (Rosa, 2019, p. 167). Resonance is an intersubjective experience that cannot be controlled, forced, or used for instrumental means, opening us up to exploration of the mystery and complexity of life (Rosa, 2019).

Two conditions make possible the spiritual aspects of connection to the source in the process of presencing. The first condition is self-awareness, attention re-directed to the source of

our experience, “bending the beam of observation back into its source” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 114). This means awareness not only of thoughts but also sensing of the body, emotions, values, beliefs and unconscious impulses. Whole-person development that integrates cognitive, emotional, spiritual, embodied intelligence contributes to the capacity for self-awareness and embodiment of presence as an awakening to the already intersubjective nature of personhood.

The second condition is creating a collective holding space for experiences of deeper connection to others that help the individual let go of pre-formed worldviews, step into the unknown and engage in the world of others (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 115-116). The letting go process leads to the opening of the self to a larger meaning that may contradict or challenge a pre-established self-concept. It is a process that implies a gradual movement to higher complexity and flexibility, where awareness is not individually centered but intersubjective and even transpersonal. The letting go process is a more difficult process of transformation that requires a high level of integration, trust in others and spiritual openness. Between the small self and the Higher Self there is a threshold, a liminal space that must be crossed, a leaning into the unknown that can be terrifying as it implies losing temporarily one’s sense of meaningful orientation in the world (Briciu, 2024). The process of letting go of the ego-based perspective and entering the intersubjective experience can be threatening since it requires a de-centering of individuality and a high level of vulnerability (Guenther, 2023). A collective holding space based on mutual trust, vulnerability and empathic dialogue is an essential aspect of the intersubjective experience. The quality of listening and participants’ previous engagement in contemplative practice influences their level of openness to the presencing process (Gunnlaugson, 2023, p. 310).

Presencing involves a process of conscientization by reducing and overcoming the rigid split between the conscious and the unconscious (head and heart), which also reduces the rigid boundaries between the individual self and others (Ladkin et al., 2018). Accessing a deeper source of one’s humanity and learning to witness the deeper source of others expands perception to future possibilities that are activated by the intersubjective experience. Presencing relies on whole person, relational approaches that use mindfulness, dialogue, reflection and meta-reflection to facilitate personal and collective transformation. As Scharmer (2004) points out, “the outcomes of this process include a heightened level of individual energy and commitment; a heightened field quality of collective presence and energy, and profound long-term changes” (p. 13).

These two forms of ontological and relational mastery facilitate access to the transpersonal experience of a larger field of creativity.

Building a safe container in the Theory U process through the quality of intention, attention, and empathic listening is crucial for supporting participants to let go of the resistance created by fear and lack of trust (Carillo, 2023). The purpose of presencing is connection with the source as a property of the social field, a place of meaning and emergence of new possibilities. The connection to the source contributes to the emergence of collective meaning and nourishes collective creativity. Access to the source depends on deep levels of embodied self-awareness, open consciousness, and mastery of the intersubjective experience. The source is the originator of leadership action, the deep inner place as the originator of will and action (Scharmer, 2018). Accessing the source through presencing means accessing the deepest part of one's will that connects to transpersonal wisdom. When individuals experience their ego-based self, their will may be guided by needs for power, control, social standing, etc., but in their access of the source they become guided by higher order values and principles, such as altruism, care, serving the common good, etc. (Karp & Laegreid, 2014, p. 24).

The source mediates between sensing of the emerging future and leading, it is an activator of an interconnected Will, a space where intention turns into action not as an expression of individual desire but as a mysterious emergence of the Will of the social field. Gunnlaugson (2025a) takes further this process of emergence in contact with the source from a passive-receptive orientation in Theory U to an active-receptive orientation where momentary glimpses of emergence turn into actionable expression and new ways of being and relating (p. 223). The inner attunement to the body as the ground of Being creates more presence from within and capacity for generative emergence in alignment with a transpersonal field as access to “subtle layers of reality often obscured in ordinary awareness (Gunnlaugson, 2025c, p. 201).

The following section will analyze the experiences of presencing in our collective learning journey and the emergence of collective leadership from our intersubjective engagement and access to the source. We will examine both the *how*, the process of emergence through our group experience of presencing, and the *what*, the actionable expression of a transformative vision of higher education. Our analysis will focus on the ontological, intersubjective (relational) and transpersonal dimensions of the process of presencing that supported the emergence of collective leadership. What emerged in our presencing process was the vision of a whole-person (integral), relational, spirituality centric transformative higher education meant to contribute to the

development of transformative leadership. We experienced this vision ourselves in our presencing learning journey through a dynamic process of embodied sensing, heart-based intersubjective connection, and moments of access to the source.

IV. Insights from the Collective Presencing Journey: Ontological, Intersubjective and Spiritual Shifts

IV.1 The Seeds of Collective Leadership

The group included four professors, three students, one administrator and one coach. All of the participants had both personal and professional experiences in reflective practice, spirituality, mindfulness and psychospiritual development. In terms of their engagement with Theory U, three of the professors had participated in the Basic Presencing Training individually prior to the group engagement, while students had learned about it in their courses. All participants were familiar with the principles of Theory U and presencing. What brought them together was a discontent with the reductive, instrumental, individual-based education (Rendón, 2014), and a passion for transformative, whole person participatory approaches in education and leadership development. The purpose of the group was not only to explore these approaches but also to experience them at an ontological and relational level, reconnecting in an embodied way to their meaning and vocation as educators and coaches. We called the group *Activating the Heart in Higher Education* and we engaged in 2021 in the U. Lab 2X Accelerator for Systems Transformation program offered by the Presencing Institute. We met for 2 hours every two weeks for the six months duration of the program, and once a month or every two months after the end of the program for more than three years. This collective experience of presencing contributed to personal and relational transformation that nurtured collective leadership as new initiatives that continue to evolve at present.

In the seeding phase, we shared images that reflected what we perceived as the current state of the higher education system. The images shared were plants in need of watering, big heads, pyramid shapes, disconnection between mind and heart, rows of learners, authority figures, and Plato's cave (See Fig. 1). These images suggested metaphorically the cognitive bias in higher education, its hierarchical structures based on authority and conformity, fragmentation and disconnection, lack of vitality, the separation between theory and practice (Briciu, 2024). While these were more general perspectives on higher education, they also showed the limitations of traditional

leadership development approaches. As we were involved in teaching transformative leadership as an embodied, relational practice, we wanted to find ways to develop transformative leaders through diverse approaches that defied the separation between epistemology and ontology, the self and others, knowledge and spirituality.

Participants in our group reflected together on their shared longing for an integral, transformative vision of education and leadership formation: integration of intellect with emotion, spirituality and embodiment, the classroom as an experience of a learning community, the contribution of education to life, well-being and flourishing, the circle structure, re-igniting the passion for learning and teaching, the inclusion of nature and the cultivation of meaning, joy and creativity (Briciu, 2024).

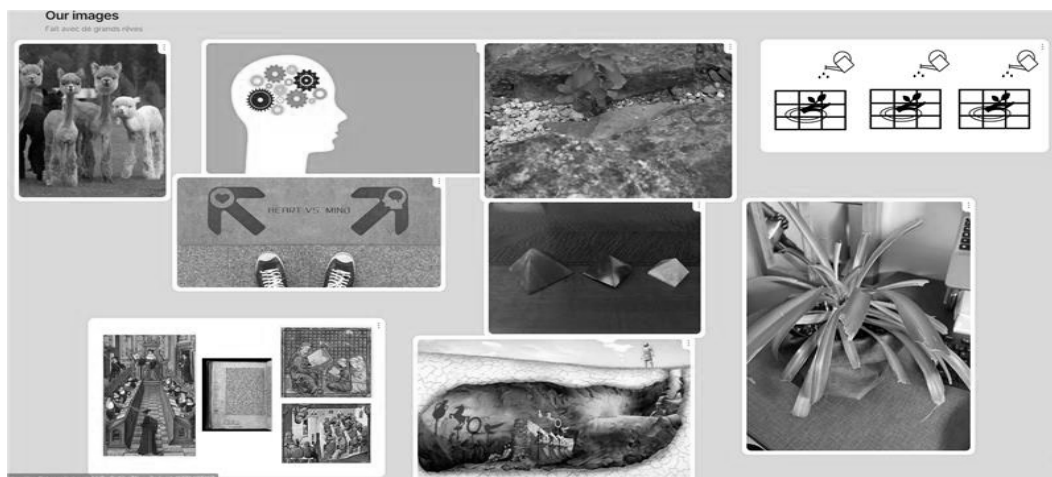


Fig. 1 Images of the Perceived Current Education System

We also explored with the Miro platform a comparison between what we saw as the current state and the ideal of higher education (See Fig. 2). The current state showed fragmentation and boundaries, the financial focus, learning as cognitive processing of information, the exclusion of health, art and nature, represented in the symbol of the broken-heart as the absence of deep connection. What we envisioned as a desired emerging future of higher education was integration, intersubjectivity, inclusion of nature, art and emotions (Briciu, 2024).

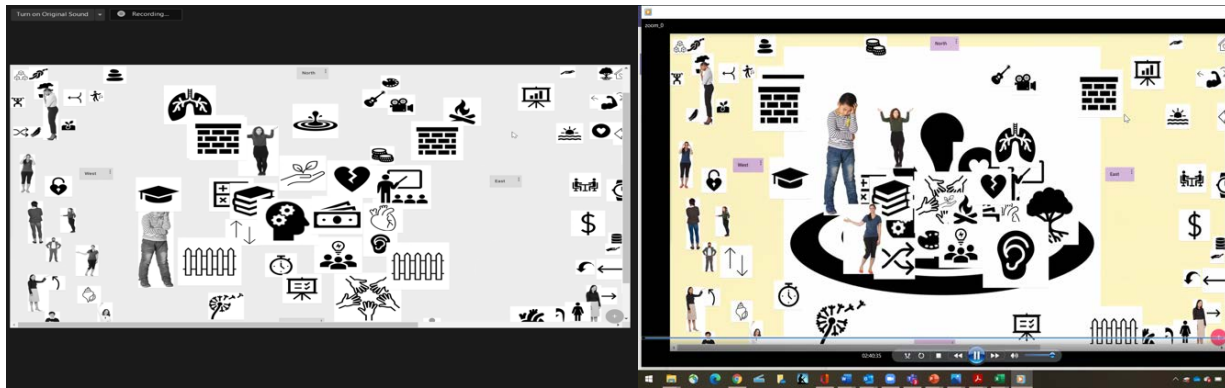


Fig. 2 Current and Emerging Higher Education System

This co-initiating experience of the presencing process through images that represented symbolically the critical and the desired vision of education engaged each person in the group at an ontological, emotional level, reminding us that these were not merely ideas but expressions of our deeper Being, our sense of meaning and purpose.

One method we experienced in the presencing process that led to deep and lasting insights by connecting the ontological, intersubjective, and transpersonal dimensions was the Social Presencing Theater (SPT). We interviewed other colleagues, students and staff in higher education about their experiences, and we used our bodies to represent the deeper meaning of what we heard. Developed by Arawana Hayashi and Otto Scharmer at the Presencing Institute, SPT engages participants in becoming aware of the invisible dynamics between individuals and the systems they inhabit. Through embodied practices, SPT fosters mindfulness, deepens awareness of intention, and supports the experience of oneself as part of an interconnected social field. This process surfaces patterns of resistance, fragmentation, and disconnection, while enabling access to deeper sources of insight (Hayashi, 2021). In doing so, SPT supports participants in recognizing leadership as a relational, intersubjective practice that links the present to the future.

The practice relies on the inherent wisdom of the body and its relational sensitivity to activate deeper meaning, gentleness, and attunement to other people (Hayashi, 2021). Each one of us represented a certain body shape that would express how those we interviewed experienced higher education. In other words, we embodied other people’s perspectives, connecting deeply to our Being presence to others, while also entering through empathy an intersubjective field where their stories were transposed in our bodies. This led to “inter-bodily resonance” (Bockler, 2024, p. 18) as a way to express hidden patterns of the higher education system. As we witnessed our

embodied shapes we all had a moment of realization of the deeper, transpersonal dimension of the social field. We realized that all our body shapes represented some form of suffering, stress, pressure, and disconnection (Briciu, 2024). We felt the collective pain of an alienating system in and through our bodies. We also felt the longing of our embodied shapes to shift away from suffering into expansion, freedom and connection. This realization strengthened our commitment to a transformative vision of higher education that was life-giving, meaningful and hopeful. This was a moment of presence to our individual and collective pain and longing, realizing that both were collectively shared in the social field. We felt that we were part of something bigger than our individual concerns and desires. This was the moment of planting the seeds of our collective leadership.

IV.2 The Soil: The Open-Hearted Quality of Intersubjective Experience

One important phase in our presencing process was the creation of a cohesive group container of safety, inclusion, open-heartedness and connection around a shared purpose. While the reflection on higher education was more outward focused, the participatory, reflexive, contemplative and dialogical processes contributed to a quality of intersubjective experience that nourished the soil of collective leadership.

First, the contemplative exercises and the translation of knowledge into images, body shapes, sculptures and other forms of representation engaged all our senses. We made our emotions themselves objects of inquiry, seeing them as sources of a “feminine” intelligence, intentionally aiming for more integration between mind, heart and body (Briciu, 2024). The witnessing and caring presence of others created more openness to vulnerability and deeper sharing, while also nurturing an intersubjective field of presence. As Bockler (2024) suggests, the balance of masculine and feminine principles through presencing mastery contributes to more integration, while intersubjective experiences of Being in Care (Southern, 2014) enhance safety and regulation of the nervous system that facilitates a more open and connected engagement with the world. In that sense, the intersubjective presence enhanced our individual Being presence through more self-awareness, confidence and connection, defying the inner-outer separation inherent in Western education and leadership development. There were multiple moments in our meetings when participants felt that one of the speakers was expressing their own thoughts. This was an experience both of relational presence and collective access to the source that was transformative, energizing and hopeful, like a river that was carrying us effortlessly to a common destination. We also sensed

the emergence of a deeper meaning and perspective through our dialogue that was speaking through us but was also the manifestation of a transpersonal wisdom. Our ideas were flowing from a generative source, that of a future wanting to be born, expressing what Bohm (1996) named the deeper levels of shared meaning.

The deep and vulnerable sharing of our inner lives, our Being, including personal struggles and dreams, created a strong sense of connection, an attunement and resonance with each other that enhanced openness and flow as traits of presencing, creating what Bockler (2024) refers to as “integrative we-spaces” (p. 11) The conversations took place in a circle structure, using the principles of generative listening and dialogue, involving moments of mindfulness and contemplation of images. Scharmer (2018) defines generative dialogue as a co-creative exploration of new meaning that transcends habitual ways of engaging in dialogue: conventional (talking nice), debate (talking tough) and empathetic (reflective inquiry). We engaged in reflective, participatory inquiry into the deeper meaning of our work using images, storytelling, questions and metaphors. Empathic dialogue was the starting ground of dialogue in our meetings, and we created moments of reflection on the quality of our intersubjective experience itself, using the heart as a central metaphor. Open-heartedness is a pre-requisite to the intersubjective experience, a way to “transcend our relational boundaries” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 172) through deepening of connection, empathy, and authentic expression.

The metaphor of the open heart is central in Scharmer’s (2013, 2018) work as a pre-requisite to engage in transformation as access to our relational self, a decentered ego that can also “look at a situation through the eyes of somebody else” (Scharmer, 2018, p. 25). Open heartedness is a state of vulnerability, authenticity and empathy for other people’s experiences that creates an intersubjective way of being. The depth and extent of this openness leads to the spiritual experience of accessing the source, a feeling of interconnectedness that enhances the ability to inhabit the perspective of others and of the transpersonal field. There were a few experiences throughout our presencing journey when we moved from the intersubjective experience of open-hearted engagement and empathic dialogue to the fourth level of generative dialogue, although that was a rarer occurrence. In the process of presencing, generative dialogue involves access to collective creativity, a sense of stillness and witnessing (Scharmer, 2007) that emerged in our group in privileged moments of grace. We experienced that through the Social Presencing Theatre, the storytelling with symbols and metaphors, the contemplation of images, the deep reflection on our meaning and vocation, the dialogue about our collective leadership. We felt through these experiences the emergence of a

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higher wisdom, a transpersonal presence that created a deep sense of meaning, purpose, and clarity about what we needed to do. It also felt like a resource of well-being and hope fueled by a sense that we were part of something larger than us. The deep connection among the members of the group was created by five important aspects: authenticity, a shared purpose, a safe space of open, trusting and caring attitude for each other and for the group as a whole, a centering of the heart as a guiding principle. The intersubjective experience of presencing served as an important source of self-awareness, well-being, meaning and connection during the pandemic period and continues to evolve through new articulations of the group and its collective leadership.

IV.3 The Growing Tree: The Emergence of Collective Leadership

If the seeds of our presencing were the embodied sense of the suffering in the system and a collective sense of shared longing, the quality of the intersubjective experience was the soil for growing interconnected roots that nurtured both our well-being and our collective leadership. This section will outline two examples of the emergence of our group agency and the transfer of ideas and longings into concrete actions as branches of a growing tree. One such experience of emergence was the collective decision to offer a series of transformative workshops at our university that would invite students, academic staff, and community members. The decision emerged collectively and was voiced joyfully by multiple participants with the full agreement of everyone. Each person was to take leadership of offering and facilitating a half day workshop. We saw our group as an organic process of collective emergence for the purpose of transforming higher education, the growth of a tree that would support life. As one group participant commented, “We came together to experiment, we then invited other people. My heart is still activated. We are visible at the university. It is integrated into my courses. We have created a space...”

Another such moment showed up when we realized collectively the important contribution of whole-person, relational approaches such as presencing to mental health, well-being and flourishing. That generative connection to the source fed the inspiration to apply collectively for a research grant that aimed to create communities of practice for students, professors and leaders, with the purpose of building an academic ecosystem of flourishing. These actions show an activation of our collective will from the source, the larger social field through the alignment of Open Mind, Open Heart, Open Will.

Gunnlaugson (2011) highlights the importance of creating conditions where ideas can emerge “in the conversational field of dialogue and presencing” (p. 4). While he speaks about these

conditions as necessary for the classroom, we first created them in our own presencing experience as educators. This led to collective reflection about how to create these conditions for presencing in our own classrooms and how to advocate for their importance in the academia. One participant shared the impact of the presencing process and the desire to engage in action: “I see echoes of this in everything that I do. I want to hold on to this project and not let it fizzle out. There is something here that we want to share with others. We need something concrete that we move towards.” Another participant expressed more clearly the emergence of collective leadership “ I think it was a good thing we had this project funded. This has also become an accountability. It took the project out to the public, we talked about it during Faculty Council. It’s good to be back together to rekindle a flame.”

The presencing process created special experiences of intersubjectivity that contributed to self-awareness, authenticity, open-hearted connection, shared purpose and well-being. Through generative dialogue and the emergence of a higher wisdom of the social field we began to see glimpses of possibility, the emerging future of a higher education centered on transformation, relationality, holistic development, inclusion and integration. We were presencing the emerging future of an integral, spirituality-centric and relational higher education. The presencing learning journey engaged us in embodying collectively the very conditions we aspired to generate for our students: integration, access to the intersubjective/spiritual dimension of learning, and collective creativity grounded in the source.

In their exploration of the source of leadership, Karp & Laegreid (2014) address the inner conditions that lead to the act of taking leadership, assuming one’s willpower. The presencing process supports a collective assuming of leadership, assuming a willpower that is not based on one individual’s agency but the desire of a future that wants to emerge. This collective willpower is an energy that arises in the intersubjective experience like a breath of life that inspires individuals to take leadership together. It is a different form of power as an engine of action based on the mobilization of a group of people to achieve a shared purpose as expression of a transpersonal field. “Leadership is hence a process that includes energy transfer between people, and one such transfer is the willpower exhibited by those assuming leadership in situations where they are tested...” (Karp & Laegreid, 2014, p. 24). For our group, these special moments of connection to the source reflect what Bockler (2024) names “participation in the deepest taproots of being” (p. 14) that strengthened both our agency and our coherence as a group. The emerging collective vision of a different higher education crystalized in a specific set of actions, such as a series of eight transformative workshops,

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the co-creation of an action research project called Education for Human Flourishing, that builds communities of practice for students, professors and leaders with the purpose of flourishing; mentoring students to lead connection circles for mental health, and finally, an ongoing reflection and dialogue in various committees regarding presencing approaches that contribute to inner development, relational care, and ecosystem flourishing. Three of our members joined the well-being committee at our university. We are currently partnering with colleagues in other universities with the intention to build a network of small scale Canadian universities centered on transformative principles of ecosystems flourishing.

While we were all energized and moved by this shared vision in our presencing journey, our collective leadership required a shared level of commitment and engagement from all members of a group that was difficult to sustain over time as we got busy with life and work. Even though our group was successful in creating a sense of safety, equal participation without power relationships, intersubjective experience and collective creativity, it did encounter issues in the quality of involvement over time, action coordination, and the fact that one member was acting as a steward of the group thus taking more of a leading role than other participants. Two of the participants took their retirement after 2 years of involvement, one started a family, one experienced health issues and one moved out of the group based on an institutional disagreement. A new professor joined the group in 2022. In that sense, the coaching process analyzed by Gunnlaugson (2025a) is better suited for sustaining dynamic presence over time than the more contained Theory U process. The growing tree of our collective presencing had moments of stagnation, breaking apart, and changing shape. This shows the fragility of emerging collective leadership in alignment with the source. It requires integration of the self as more attunement to one's body, emotions and spirituality (holistic development) and relational experiences of open-hearted connection in groups that need to be sustained over time as iterative, resourcing processes of generative dialogue. While these two aspects represent the basic conditions for emergence of collective leadership, the collective actions need coherence, coordination, and structural enabling conditions, such as a research project, a new course, or an academic initiative in our case. Our greatest difficulty was to maintain the engagement of the group over time and to add new members with similar presencing mastery.

V. Conclusion

The presencing learning journey created opportunities to shift from our individual small self into the intersubjective experience, creating positive inner-outer dynamics that opened portals to the source as a way to bring to life the future that wanted to emerge. The ontological quality of embodiment, of being presence, and the intersubjective experience of generative dialogue fostered spiritual experiences of connection to the source, as a field that unified self, others, and the transpersonal, leading to collective creativity and leadership. This meant on one hand the emergence of certain actions that supported a vision of higher education based on integration, transformation, spiritual development and connectedness. On the other hand, it also meant the transformation of our own engagement: feeling more whole, self-aware and open to others, more attuned to the alignment of our intuitions with a larger social field, more compassionate and empowered to build “power with” others through collective leadership based on shared meaning (Berger, 2005). The presencing journey created the conditions for the group to integrate deeper and more diverse ways of knowing, access intersubjectivity as a resource for collective creativity, and connect to the source. This led to the emergence of collective leadership as shared meaning, open-hearted connection, and alignment with a transpersonal field.

This paper examined the contribution of presencing to ontological, relational and transpersonal shifts in the way we embody and live our vocation as educators and facilitators of leadership development. It fostered more integration of our Being, a deeper experience of connectedness to each other and the world, and a clearer alignment with a greater purpose. One participant expressed this as “the need to claim our full humanity, to free the whole person to realize their own potential: both individual and collective.” The contemplative, arts-based, embodied and relational methods of the Theory U journey created the conditions for accessing the source, conditions that were also made possible by the group participants’ preexisting experience with spiritual practice and generative dialogue. This article described the inner and intersubjective experiences of presencing as a deeper connection to the self and others, creating access to the source, as a transpersonal field supporting collective leadership. Our process of presencing was not only epistemological, but also ontological and relational, creating shifts at the level of our inner world, the quality of relationships, and our actions. This analysis highlights the importance of presencing to foster collective leadership as more than the sum of individual actions, a leadership that connects individuals with the ground of their Being, with each other, and with a transpersonal

wisdom that fosters creativity, hope, and the common good. It holds potential as a holistic, relational and transformative method for academic education and collective leadership development to bring to life a more hopeful and interconnected future.

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The Process of Play Production as an Instrument for Developing Collective Leadership Through Presencing.

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Abstract: This article examines play production in drama education as a relational presencing field in which collective leadership emerges as a function of shifting ontological conditions. Drawing on Theory U, social presencing theater, and the ontological scholarship associated with the International Journal of Presencing and Leadership in Complexity, the study reframes leadership as an emergent field phenomenon arising from ontological changes in the underlying ground of perception, attention, and relational awareness of participants. Within this framing, presencing is understood less as a technique or developmental skill located in individuals, more as a transformation in the source condition from which experience, meaning, and action arise. As participants engage in rehearsal and performance processes, habitual ego-based orientations are temporarily suspended, enabling a shift toward ontologically-attuned perception through the field in which agency becomes distributed across the ensemble. Observations from play production illustrate how leadership emerges momentarily through individual as well as relational coherence within the field. However, this coherence is shown to be inherently fragile, repeatedly disrupted by institutional pressures, ego reactivation, and temporal constraints, leading to oscillations between field coherence. The article argues that drama education serves as a kind of learning laboratory of ontological instability, where collective leadership continuously enacts, dissolves, and reconstitutes itself. In doing so, it deepens an ontological view of the social field by demonstrating how presencing operates as a generative condition for leadership emergence within embodied, time-bound creative human systems.

Key words: presencing, collective leadership, theory u, drama education, leadership development, theatre production

I. Introduction

Contemporary leadership discourse is increasingly confronted by conditions of complexity in which coordinated action cannot be adequately explained through linear causality, hierarchical control, or individual agency. Within such contexts, leadership is better understood as an emergent phenomenon arising from relational configurations of perception, attention, and meaning-making rather than as a property located in individuals or roles (Mary Uhl-Bien & Michael Arena, 2018;

Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2020). Complexity leadership theory, for example, reframes leadership as an adaptive dynamic emerging from interactions within complex systems rather than as a function of authority or positional power (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). This shift reflects a broader movement in leadership studies away from entity-based models toward relational and processual understandings of organizing (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019).

From an ontological presencing perspective, leadership emerges through the ongoing constitution of relational fields in which participants increasingly co-perceive, co-sense, and co-enact meaning through shared modes of attending and responding (Gunnlaugson, 2021, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2025a, 2025b). Within this framing, collective leadership is the emergence of a coherent presencing field through which perception, intentionality, and coordinated action become increasingly participatory and relationally organized. Leadership, therefore, is approached less as an attribute possessed by individuals and more as a field phenomenon arising through conditions of relational attunement, embodied responsiveness, and participatory ontological attunement (Gunnlaugson, 2021, 2024b, 2025b). Ontologically, what appears as collective leadership can be understood as embodying an evolving field of presencing in which intrapersonal and relational dynamics reorganize how participants perceive, interpret, and act together (Gunnlaugson, 2024b, 2025b).

Play production in drama education provides a particularly generative site for examining these dynamics, as rehearsal environments are constituted through continuous negotiation of attention, embodied responsiveness, and emergent coordination under conditions of uncertainty, temporal pressure, and interpretive openness (Nicholson, 2011; Heddon & Milling, 2018). Rather than functioning as a metaphor for organizational collaboration, theater-making is understood here as an enacted field ecology in which perception, affect, and action co-determine one another. The rehearsal space operates as a living system in which participants continuously adjust to shifting relational cues, enabling coordinated action without reliance on fixed scripts or hierarchical control structures (Sawyer, 2019). Within prevailing leadership scholarship, collective leadership is often described in terms of distributed influence, shared decision-making, and relational coordination (De Brún & McAuliffe, 2023). While these accounts extend beyond individual-centered models, they frequently remain anchored in epistemological descriptions of interaction patterns, thereby leaving under-theorized the ontological conditions through which such patterns become possible. As Edwards and Bolden (2023) argue, leadership research continues to privilege observable practices and structural configurations while neglecting the generative conditions that give rise to those

practices. Consequently, collective leadership risks being reduced to a set of behavioral arrangements rather than being understood as an emergent property of deeper shifts in awareness and relational being.

This article addresses this limitation by re-situating collective leadership within an ontological presencing framework in which leadership emerges through shifts in the underlying field conditions that organize perception, relationality, embodiment, and coordinated action. Within this framing, presencing refers to a transformation in the generative ground through which experience, meaning, and participation become constituted (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2025b). While Scharmer's Theory U approaches presencing as a movement from habitual downloading toward deeper states of sensing and co-creation (Scharmer, 2009; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013), Gunnlaugson's ontological scholarship deepens this understanding by approaching presencing as a field-based mode of being in which perception, action, and relational intelligibility emerge through participatory engagement within the unfolding dynamics of the presencing field itself (Gunnlaugson, 2021, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2025a, 2025b). As participants deepen into this field condition, the boundaries between self, other, and collective become increasingly permeable, enabling a shift from ego-centered perception toward participatory modes of ontological attunement embedded within the relational whole. Leadership, accordingly, emerges through temporary configurations of field coherence in which coordinated action, embodied responsiveness, and collective sense-making arise organically through the field itself rather than through centralized authority or individual control.

From this perspective, play production becomes a living ontology of emergence. Rehearsal processes provide empirical access to how shifts in awareness re-organize relational structures in real time. For instance, moments of synchronized timing, shared silence, or collective improvisation can be understood as manifestations of a deeper ontological basis of field coherence, where participants respond to the unfolding situation with heightened attunement and responsiveness (Kimmel, Hristova & Kussmaul, 2018; Novembre & Keller, 2021). These moments illustrate how leadership arises through the alignment of embodied perception and intention within the group.

Moreover, the instability and fluidity of rehearsal environments make visible the conditions under which presencing either stabilizes or collapses. Under pressure, participants may revert to habitual patterns of control and ego-based positioning, disrupting the relational field and reintroducing hierarchical dynamics (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Conversely, practices such as deep listening, silence, and embodied awareness can restore field coherence, enabling the re-emergence of collective leadership (Nakajima & Leong, 2020; Scharmer, 2009). These dynamics highlight that

collective leadership arises from shifts ontologically within the relational field of awareness through which perception, intention, and action are constituted. By examining play production as an embodied presencing field, this project contributes to IJPLC's ongoing work of articulating leadership as a phenomenon grounded in being, awareness, and embodied relational emergence.

II. Presencing as a Developmental Capacity

Within the Theory U framework, presencing is often articulated as the capacity to connect present awareness with emergent future possibility (Scharmer, 2009). Gunnlaugson's ontological interpretation re-situates presencing at a more foundational level, where the emphasis shifts from anticipatory awareness toward a transformation in the underlying ontological ground from which perception, cognition, relationality, and action emerge (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2025b). From this perspective, presencing refers to a reorganization in the very conditions of being through which agency becomes possible and intelligible. Agency no longer arises principally through the intentional assertions of the separate self, but through an increasing participation in the unfolding dynamics of the presencing field itself (Scharmer, 2009; Joseph Raelin, 2020).

This distinction is significant. Presencing emerges through a condition of ontological openness in which participants become progressively transparent to the unfolding dynamics of the presencing field itself. Action increasingly arises through participatory attunement within the relational whole rather than through identity maintenance, role preservation, or cognitive control. Within ensemble rehearsal contexts, this ontological shift becomes phenomenologically observable through changes in how perception, responsiveness, embodiment, and attentional participation become organized. Awareness gradually shifts from role-bound identification toward participatory engagement within the evolving movement of the ensemble itself. Participants increasingly orient from the unfolding intelligibility of the presencing field rather than from the standpoint of the separate performer.

From this vantage point, coordination is no longer adequately understood as the alignment of independent actors operating in parallel. It is more accurately approached as the stabilization of a presencing field through which perception, responsiveness, embodiment, and coordinated action become relationally organized (Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2020; Fiore et al., 2021). Within such moments, the ensemble participates within an unfolding field of presencing that reorganizes how meaning, interpretation, and collective movement emerge through the relational whole itself.

In ontological-oriented scholarship, this condition is increasingly understood as a presencing

field in which cognition, affect, embodiment, perception, and action arise as interwoven dimensions of a unified relational emergence (Gunnlaugson, 2024a, 2025b). Presencing, from this perspective, refers to a transformation in the ontological ground through which experience, relationality, and action become organized and enacted. As individuals deepen into the field of presencing, the locus of awareness gradually shifts from the separate self toward a participatory mode of being embedded within the unfolding movement of the relational whole. Meaning, responsiveness, and action increasingly arise through the field itself as a living generative process rather than through individual assertion, role performance, or cognitive control alone.

Leadership, therefore, is approached less as something possessed or exercised by individuals and more as an emergent expression of the presencing field itself as participants enter into shared modes of attending, sensing, and responding. This reframing aligns with relational and processual leadership perspectives that locate leadership in unfolding patterns of interaction rather than in discrete actors (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019; Joseph Raelin, 2020). Yet an ontological reading of presencing extends this view further by suggesting that the relational dynamics themselves become reorganized through shifts in the underlying field conditions from which perception, meaning, and action emerge.

This repositioning displaces the assumption that leadership originates primarily through intentional control or individual decision-making. Instead, leadership emerges through the generative intelligibility of the presencing field as participants co-enact conditions of openness, attunement, and responsive presence that allow coordinated action to arise organically without centralized authority (Mary Uhl-Bien & Michael Arena, 2018). From this perspective, the field is viewed in part as an ontological medium through which collective sensing, participation, and emergence become possible.

II.1. Presencing as the Foundation of Collective Leadership

Collective leadership, from an ontological presencing perspective, cannot be reduced to distributed authority, shared decision-making, or collaborative coordination. Such formulations remain secondary expressions of a more foundational shift in the underlying field conditions through which relating, perception, and action become organized (Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2020; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019). Leadership, from this view emerges through the increasing coherence of a presencing field in which participants become attuned to the unfolding dynamics of the relational whole itself.

Presencing functions here as a generative ontological condition rather than as a psychological capacity or interpersonal technique. As participants loosen identification with habitual interpretive structures, role-bound orientations, and ego-centered positioning, the field of interaction undergoes a qualitative reorganization. This shift alters the very conditions through which relationality is experienced and enacted. Perception, intentionality, and action increasingly arise through a shared field of participatory awareness rather than from isolated subjectivities operating in parallel. Within such moments, coordinated action tends to emerge organically through the generative intelligibility of the presencing field itself.

Within rehearsal environments, this transformation becomes observable as a shift from role-bound participation toward field-responsive enactment. Timing, gesture, silence, and attentional responsiveness are continuously reorganized through participatory attunement within the evolving dynamics of the ensemble itself (Sawyer, 2019; Fiore et al., 2021). In such moments, agency increasingly emerges through the relational intelligibility of the presencing field rather than through isolated individual intentionality. Importantly, this implies their reconstitution as emergent properties of field dynamics rather than fixed organizational forms. Hierarchy, in this sense, becomes fluid and situational, arising in response to the needs of the moment rather than being imposed in advance. Authority is transformed, becoming temporal, relational, and contingent upon the coherence of the field (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Raelin, 2020). Leadership shifts from directive control toward the facilitation of conditions that sustain relational attunement and collective responsiveness.

From an ontological perspective, collective leadership arises when relational awareness becomes sufficiently integrated to support coordinated emergence without reliance on centralized control mechanisms. In this framing, leadership is neither distributed nor shared in a structural sense; rather, it is enacted through the ongoing co-constitution of a relational field in which perception, action, and meaning emerge together.

II.2. The Mechanism of Presencing in Collective Leadership Development

The transition into collective leadership can be analytically described as a sequence of ontological reconfigurations. This distinction is critical, as it shifts the analysis from observable actions to the generative conditions through which perception, meaning, and coordination become possible (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019).

First, suspension refers to a loosening of identification with pre-structured interpretive frames through which perception is filtered. In contrast to conventional understandings of

reflection, suspension interrupts the automatic reproduction of meaning derived from past experience, thereby opening a space in which perception is no longer governed by habitual judgement (Scharmer, 2009). This creates conditions in which action is no longer determined by established interpretive structures but can arise in response to emergent relational dynamics.

Second, de-centering denotes a shift in the locus of awareness away from ego-anchored identity structures toward participatory modes of relational sensing embedded within the presencing field itself. This movement involves an ontological displacement in the organizing ground of experience through which perception, responsiveness, and meaning become constituted relationally rather than through isolated subjectivity. Awareness becomes less associated with individual subjectivity and more aligned with the relational field itself, enabling participants to perceive and respond from within a shared horizon of meaning (Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2020).

Third, field reconfiguration occurs as individual perceptual boundaries become increasingly permeable, allowing the relational dynamics of the ensemble to reorganize into emergent patterns of ontological coherence. At this stage, perception increasingly arises through a participatory field of presencing in which relational intelligibility becomes collectively enacted through ongoing interaction. Cognition, affect, embodiment, perception, and action emerge as interwoven expressions of a unified presencing movement unfolding through the field itself (Gunnaugson, 2021, 2024b, 2025b; Fiore et al., 2021). From this perspective, the field is approached as an ontologically participatory dimension of experience through which responsiveness, meaning, and coordinated action become relationally constituted and enacted.

Finally, emergent enactment refers to the spontaneous coordination of action arising from field coherence. Such action unfolds through the relational intelligibility of the moment itself. Participants act in ways that are responsive to the evolving dynamics of the field, suggesting that agency is distributed across the relational configuration (Raelin, 2020; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). What appears as intentional coordination is, in this sense, the expression of a temporarily stabilized field of shared awareness.

Within drama production, these ontological transitions are materially enacted through embodied interaction, temporal constraint, and improvisational responsiveness. Rehearsal environments provide conditions in which shifts in awareness become visible through changes in timing, gesture, attention, and relational alignment (Sawyer, 2019; Heddon & Milling, 2018). As participants engage in improvisation and collective sense-making, the emergence and dissolution of field coherence can be directly observed, making theater a uniquely generative site for examining

presencing as lived experience. From this perspective, collective leadership is a manifestation of field coherence under conditions of shared ontologically embodied awareness. Leadership arises through the ongoing reconfiguration of relational dynamics that enable coordinated action to emerge without reliance on centralized control (Denis et al., 2020).

III. Drama and Play Production as a Presencing Field

Play production in drama education from an ontological perspective, it is more precisely apprehended as a relational field in which perception, embodiment, and meaning arise through continuous co-constitution (Gunnlaugson, 2023, 2024b, 2025b; Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2019). In this framing, theater process functions as a dynamic field ecology in which participants are mutually implicated in the ongoing generation of experiential reality. What is commonly described as rehearsal or performance is a continuous modulation of relational intensity, attentional distribution, and embodied responsiveness (Nicholson, 2011; Sawyer, 2019). Perception, affect, and action become interdependent dimensions of an evolving relational configuration.

Within such a field, hierarchy, institutional expectation, and role differentiation operate as latent structural tendencies that become either intensified or attenuated depending on the coherence of the field (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). These tendencies are themselves expressions of field configuration at different levels of stability. Hierarchy, in this sense, is dynamically enacted through patterns of attention, authority, and responsiveness. When field coherence is low, interaction collapses into fragmentation. Perception becomes individuated, attention narrows, and relational responsiveness is replaced by isolated intentionality. In rehearsal, this may be observed in increased interruption, rigid adherence to individual interpretations. Under such conditions, we have a reversion to ego-centered perceptual organization, in which action is generated from self-contained interpretive frames rather than shared field awareness (Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2020; Edwards & Bolden, 2023).

Conversely, when field coherence increases, perception becomes distributed and relational boundaries between participants become more permeable. Actors begin to adjust timing, gesture, and vocal modulation in response to subtle cues within the ensemble, often without explicit verbal coordination. In such moments, what is experienced as “ensemble coherence” is the emergent intelligibility of a shared perceptual field in which action arises prior to deliberation (Sawyer, 2019; Fiore et al., 2021). These moments illustrate how coordination can emerge as a property of relational attunement rather than intentional control.

From this standpoint, leadership isn't located in roles such as director, actor, or stage manager. Leadership appears only when the field temporarily stabilizes into coherent patterns of responsiveness that enable coordinated movement without reliance on centralized control. Agency, in this sense, is distributed across the relational configuration rather than possessed by individuals. Therefore, what is conventionally interpreted as directing, acting, or responding is more accurately understood as differential participation in a shared field of awareness whose dynamics shape the possibilities of action at any given moment. Participants here are enacting the field through their ontological patterns of attention, responsiveness, and embodied engagement.

Presencing, within this ontology, names a transformation in the mode of participation itself in which perception, embodiment, and attentional responsiveness become increasingly organized through the unfolding dynamics of the presencing field. As participants deepen into this field condition, they enter into a participatory mode of presencing in which meaning, responsiveness, and coordinated action arise relationally through the evolving movement of the ensemble itself. Action emerges through the intelligibility of the field rather than through isolated intentional control. This gives rise to forms of field-responsive enactment in which gesture, timing, silence, and expression emerge as relational properties of the unfolding field configuration. Improvisational responsiveness, shared stillness, and synchronized movement exemplify such moments of field coherence within the ensemble (Heddon & Milling, 2018; Nakajima & Leong, 2020).

Theatre production, therefore reveals the conditional instability of relational fields in which collective coordination is continuously formed and dissolved. What is experienced as coherence is always provisional, requiring ongoing relational attunement rather than procedural maintenance. Breakdowns in coordination, often triggered by time pressure, ego attachment, or institutional demands, demonstrate the fragility of field coherence and the ease with which interaction can revert to fragmented modes of organization (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

From an ontological perspective, play production is thus best understood as an embodied living laboratory of field dynamics, in which the emergence, stabilization, and dissolution of collective coherence can be directly observed. Leadership, in this context arises only when relational conditions permit coherent emergence. Accordingly, the significance of theater lies in its capacity to make visible the ontological processes through which collective reality is continuously constituted. In doing so, it offers a uniquely embodied and experiential site for examining how presencing operates as the generative ground of collective leadership.

III.1 Constituting the Presencing Field in Rehearsal

A shared presencing field in rehearsal emerges through processes of relational attunement, embodied perception, and sustained attention. Within such a field, performers move toward a more distributed and collective mode of engagement. Central to this shift is a form of sustained listening that extends beyond auditory perception to include sensitivity to movement, intention, and affective expression. Research in improvisational performance and embodied cognition suggests that such attunement enables performers to register both their own and others' intentions, supporting the co-creation of meaning in real time rather than reliance on pre-scripted structures (Sawyer, 2017; Shaun Gallagher, 2020).

Openness to uncertainty constitutes a further condition of the presencing field. In rehearsal contexts oriented toward improvisation, participants suspend habitual interpretive frameworks and engage responsively with emergent situations. This aligns with enactive and phenomenological approaches to cognition, which understand knowledge as arising through situated action and interaction rather than internal representation (Di Paolo, Cuffari and De Jaegher, 2018). Improvisation thus functions as a practice of presence, situating performers within a continuously evolving relational field. Studies of applied improvisation demonstrate that such conditions enhance adaptability, responsiveness, and collective problem-solving capacities (Vera and Crossan, 2005; Balachandra et al., 2019).

Perception within the presencing field undergoes a corresponding transformation from individualized attentional organization toward participatory attunement within the evolving dynamics of the ensemble itself. Performers increasingly orient from the unfolding relational movement of the field rather than from self-contained interpretive positioning. Through this shift, participants become sensitized to subtle variations in rhythm, gesture, vocal modulation, silence, and spatial responsiveness that collectively shape the emergence of coordinated action (Kimmel, Hristova and Kussmaul, 2018; Novembre and Keller, 2021).

Silence plays a critical and often underexamined role in the constitution of this field. Rather than representing an absence, silence functions as an active reorganisation of attention, enabling heightened perceptual sensitivity and relational awareness. Periods of shared stillness can interrupt reactive patterns and allow participants to attune more fully to subtle environmental and interpersonal cues. Research in embodied listening and contemplative performance practices suggests that such moments deepen awareness and enhance the quality of interaction (Schwarz, 2019; Nakajima and Leong, 2020). In this sense, silence contributes to the ongoing modulation of

the presencing field.

IV. Developmental shifts in participation: A phenomenology of presencing in practice

Across rehearsal processes, presencing becomes observable as a transformation in how participants participate within the relational field itself through shifts in attention, embodiment, responsiveness, and coordinated action. The primary phenomenological movement involves a loosening of self-referential perceptual organization and an increasing attunement to the unfolding intelligibility of the ensemble as a living relational whole.

This shift becomes most visible in improvisational rehearsal structures where scripts are partially suspended. Here, actors reorient from line-delivery toward interactional calibration. For example, changes in pause length, interruption frequency, and turn-taking smoothness function as observable indicators of altered attentional organization. These micro-adjustments signal a transition from individually planned action to co-regulated emergence, consistent with enactive and distributed cognition perspectives (Fiore et al., 2021; DeChurch & Mesmer-Magnus, 2019).

Within this field condition, leadership is redistributed as situational initiation. Rather than being anchored in formal role identity, initiation appears at points where an actor's responsiveness aligns most closely with emerging group conditions, for instance, when a participant introduces a gesture, pause that reorganizes subsequent ensemble behavior. These moments are evidence of transient increases in relational attunement that reorganize collective direction (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019; Raelin, 2020).

In the absence of presencing conditions, rehearsal dynamics typically revert to observable patterns such as increased interruption rates, directive speech acts from authority figures, reduced improvisational uptake, and narrowed attentional focus on role execution rather than ensemble coherence. Such regressions reflect a return to ego-stabilized identity positions, where agency is expressed as control over interpretation rather than responsiveness to relational emergence (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Edwards & Bolden, 2023). Presencing is therefore operationally necessary because it sustains a specific interactional ecology in which coordination remains emergent rather than imposed. Without this condition, ensemble behavior collapses into predictable coordination structures governed by hierarchy, time pressure, and role compliance.

V. From ego-orientation to observable relational reconfiguration

At the beginning of rehearsal cycles, ego-orientation is observable. These include: increased

self-justifying speech (“I thought the character should...”), reduced uptake of peer suggestions, and positional anchoring (actors maintaining fixed spatial or interpretive positions despite group shifts). These behaviors indicate stabilized identity-positioning within the interactional field (Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2019).

As presencing conditions emerge, a measurable shift occurs in turn-taking structure and attentional distribution. Actors begin to delay response initiation, allowing silence to extend interactional space, and increase gaze-following behavior toward others’ movement cues. These shifts indicate a redistribution of attentional ownership from individual planning to relational tracking (Fiore et al., 2021; De Jaegher, 2013). Relational awareness is therefore evidenced in altered coordination patterns: fewer interruptions, more overlapping alignment of movement and speech timing, and increased acceptance of emergent direction changes without negotiation. These micro-changes collectively indicate reduced ego stabilization and increased field sensitivity.

The presencing gesture “letting go” offers a measurable reduction in control-oriented coordination strategies. In rehearsal practice, this is observable when actors abandon pre-planned line delivery in favor of adaptive timing adjustments based on others’ actions. For instance, an actor may extend or shorten a pause in response to an unplanned shift in another performer’s tone or movement, rather than maintaining scripted rhythm. This shift corresponds to a move from representational control (pre-planned execution) toward enactive coordination (meaning generated through interaction) (Di Paolo, Cuffari & De Jaegher, 2018; Gallagher, 2020).

Silence functions here as a structural coordination device rather than absence. It can be observed when groups collectively extend nonverbal intervals, during which micro-adjustments in posture, gaze, and breathing synchronize. These pauses reorganize attention distribution and allow realignment without verbal instruction (Nakajima & Leong, 2020; Schwarz, 2019).

VI Closing Remarks

This article has argued that collective leadership, when approached through an ontological presencing perspective, emerges through shifts in the relational field conditions that shape how perception, attention, embodiment, and coordinated action become organized. Across the analysis of play production, presencing was shown to operate as a generative field condition through which participants enter into increasingly shared modes of sensing, responding, and enacting meaning together. Leadership, from this perspective, arises through moments of relational coherence in which the ensemble becomes collectively attuned to the unfolding dynamics of the field itself.

Within such moments, coordinated action emerges through participatory responsiveness, embodied attentiveness, and relational intelligibility unfolding through the dynamics of the ensemble itself.

The analysis further demonstrates that play production functions as a uniquely intensified environment for observing the emergence and reorganization of presencing dynamics in practice. Rehearsal processes continuously expose the ensemble to conditions of uncertainty, temporal pressure, vulnerability, improvisation, and interpretive openness, making visible the ongoing fluctuations between coherence and fragmentation within the relational field. These fluctuations reveal the deeply processual nature of collective leadership as an emergent phenomenon that must be continuously enacted and renewed through embodied participation. Field coherence arises through sustained relational attunement and gradually dissolves when participants become reabsorbed into defensive patterns of role preservation, interpretive control, or ego-centered orientation.

From an ontological standpoint, these movements are integral features of field-based systems. Presencing unfolds as a dynamic and continually evolving condition of relational participation through which collective awareness reorganizes itself in response to emerging situations. Leadership therefore appears as a temporally emergent event within the field rather than as a stable possession of individuals, roles, or organizational structures. What persists across these fluctuations is the ongoing potential for the relational field to reorganize itself into renewed patterns of coherence, responsiveness, and participatory awareness.

This article also contributes to the growing scholarship on presencing and relational ontology by offering a situated examination of how field dynamics become embodied and enacted within creative ensemble practice. The study demonstrates that presencing extends beyond a psychological, interpersonal, or developmental framing and can instead be understood as a transformation in the ontological ground through which collective experience becomes organized and lived. Within moments of field coherence, participants begin to perceive, interpret, and respond through a shared mode of embodied relational awareness that reorganizes how action and meaning emerge within the group.

In this sense, collective leadership is best understood as a field phenomenon arising through the temporary alignment and coherence within an evolving presencing field. Theatre production makes these dynamics uniquely visible because the ensemble continuously participates in the formation, dissolution, and renewal of collective coherence through embodied relational participation. Ultimately, this study reinforces a central ontological proposition within presencing

scholarship: that leadership emerges through the ongoing co-constitution of relational fields in which perception, meaning, embodiment, and coordinated action are continually enacted and reconfigured through participatory modes of ontological presencing and relational being.

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CULTIVATING PRESENCING AS AN EMERGENT FIELD OF LEARNING AND ACTION

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Abstract: This article is grounded in ongoing work within a graduate-level educational context focused on vertical development through the co-creation of collective spaces where participants feel free to be themselves. Over three years of engaging the U process with students, faculty, administrative staff, and industry professionals, our inquiry required staying with uncertainty for emergence to come forth. Guided by the insight that “the way to do is to be,” we approach presencing as the underlying phenomenon shaping this work—encountered as practice, shared space, moment of emergence, developing capacity, and lived outcome. Drawing on reflexive autobiographical narratives and facilitator journals, we observed participants suspending habitual reactions and orienting toward shared meaning, revealing multiple pathways into presencing and the need for sustained inner work. In dialogue with Theory U, Eastern wisdom traditions (including the Bhagavad Gita and Integral Yoga), and Bohmian–Krishnamurti dialogue, three themes emerged: the nature of the field across intra-personal, intersubjective, and outer environments; the evolution of consciousness as presencing becomes palpable within a collective social field; and the development of knowing–being–doing capacities supporting transformation. Two simultaneous movements were observed: the formation of a conscious ego (personal growth) and the transcendence of ego through surrender and letting go (inner growth). Through these movements, the bottom of the U came to be understood as an ever-present wellspring or Source, giving rise to a presencing knowing in the present through which boundaries soften and emergent possibilities arise.

Key words: Presencing, Collective Leadership, Dialogue, Theory U, Integral learning, Capacity building, Vertical literacy, Transformation, Systems thinking.

I. Introduction

The void sings everything into Being. You are the singing void. Then sing. — Monica Gagliano

What began as an inquiry into the nature of a “safe space” for learning and development gradually evolved into a deeper exploration of the field and ways of knowing involved in transformative experience and growth. For us as researchers, practitioners, and explorers, this articulation of the void closely resembles our experience of being at the bottom of the “U.” Scharmer (2018) describes the bottom of the U as a space of presencing—a silent interval of reflection between observation and action.

The term presencing combines the notions of presence and sensing. At the bottom of the U, “letting go” and “letting come” occupy a shared space. These are not opposites but complementary movements held in dynamic tension. Both must coexist for something new to emerge. Entering this state of consciousness depends upon one's capacity to deepen awareness of these movements and the relationship between them. Scharmer (2018) refers to this depth as Source and suggests that access to it requires an open mind, an open heart, and an open will.

The challenge of articulating Source is not unique to Theory U. Similar questions have occupied contemplative traditions for centuries. One of the most evocative descriptions appears in the Kena Upanishad, which points toward a reality that precedes and exceeds the ordinary operations of mind, perception, and language:

That which is unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed,
know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.

That which thinks not by the mind, that by which the mind is thought, know That to be
the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.

— *The Upanishads II*

Like the proverbial finger pointing to the moon, such teachings do not define Source so much as orient us toward it. They suggest that beneath habitual thought and action lies a deeper wellspring of knowing and creativity. In moments of presence, one experiences a greater openness of mind, heart, and will through which new possibilities can emerge. To be like water and move in accordance with one's inner nature (dharma). To thine own self be true.

Presencing, in this sense, is the capacity to sense what is wanting to come forth and to act from a deeper source of knowing. In our work cultivating collective social fields, we came to view presencing as a foundation for capacity building. Traditionally, capacity building is understood as the process of developing skills, abilities, and competencies within individuals and organizations. Our experience of holding space and cultivating fields for transformation led us to a complementary view: that many capacities already exist in latent form and require the conditions of presence to become accessible.

Our intent, therefore, was to cultivate a practice field that supports the growth and development of the capacities needed to engage an emerging future. As Scharmer (2018) notes, many of our institutions struggle not only to provide the right answers, but even to ask the right questions. One question that guided our inquiry was: How can we collectively shift from “What is in it for me?” to “What can I contribute?”—moving from I to We, and from a separate sense of self toward self in relation to the larger whole?

In attempting to facilitate the co-creation of these transformative social fields, we began to observe recurring patterns across different cohorts. At certain moments within a session, a palpable shift could be sensed in the conversation. Indicators of these shifts included a dissolving of boundaries, changes in the atmosphere of the group, moments of creative emergence, and a shared sense of meaning or purpose. These openings often appeared when one or more participants risked bringing their authentic or vulnerable selves into the collective space. As participant-facilitators interested in understanding the conditions that gave rise to such moments, we found ourselves increasingly drawn to the phenomenon of presencing itself. What we observed were patterns that seemed, to varying degrees, reproducible through cultivating the conditions of the field and holding space with intentional awareness.

II. Methodological Orientation

Our preference for qualitative inquiry led us to experiment with phenomenological approaches that drew on first-, second-, and third-person perspectives into the lived experiences of participants and participant-facilitators. This orientation reflects our interest in understanding transformation as it unfolds within individuals, between participants, and across the collective space itself.

Having more than one facilitator in every session afforded us the opportunity to inhabit multiple roles simultaneously: observer, participant, and researcher. This enabled us to remain close to lived experience while also engaging in reflective sensemaking. Each of us kept journal notes of our observations and felt experiences during and following the sessions, which formed the basis of our use of reflexive autobiographical narratives. Rather than treating subjectivity as a source of bias, we approached reflexivity as a way of remaining attentive to inner movements, shifts in awareness, and emergent forms of knowing as they arose in practice.

Over several months, the five authors remained in dialogue with one another through a series of face-to-face and virtual semi-structured meetings. These dialogues functioned as inquiry spaces in their own right, where we shared and mapped our intentions, interests, and experiences. Following each session, we revisited, framed, and reframed our guiding questions in

relation to the process being used, while remaining responsive to what was unfolding within the collective field.

Our ongoing meta-dialogue concerning content, flow, and facilitation, grounded in participant experience, offered insight into whether conditions were supporting or constraining emergence within the transformational learning process. In this inquiry, coherence, resonance, and the felt sense of emergence within the collective field served as primary indicators of validity, rather than external verification or replication. In this way, the inquiry remained iterative, relational, and responsive, shaped by the very phenomena it sought to understand.

III. Beginnings of our journey

Our individual journeys brought us into the collective space of ULab 1x in 2020 and later into ULab 2x, where we developed the Leadership Lab prototype for master's-level students at ITM Business School. The intent of Leadership Lab was to provide an integrated approach to educating future stewards of the earth by helping students see themselves more fully and recognize their place within the larger whole. Beyond the boundaries of traditional curricula, it offered a space for exploring their humanity. While developing this prototype, we received recurring feedback from students who described it as the only class where they felt valued, where they could be themselves without fear of judgment, and where the experience carried a therapeutic quality. It was at this point that we began asking ourselves how such an experience might be made available to a broader group of students.

The effects of creating holding spaces are often encountered as a felt experience that reverberates into both personal and professional life. Our response to this calling was to create the Facilitators module and open this pathway to anyone interested in cultivating such spaces for students, including faculty members, administrative staff, and former Leadership Lab participants. The intention was to reach those who resonated with this work beyond conventional qualifications or selection criteria. In retrospect, we came to recognize that what participants were describing as “holding space” was also an entry into presencing as we understand it in this article: a lived phenomenon encountered as a practice, a shared space, a moment of emergence, a capacity that develops over time, and an outcome that extends beyond the session itself.

III.1 Building the Facilitators Module

“The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor.”

— Bill O’Brien

While co-creating the Facilitators module, we incorporated concepts from systems thinking (Eisler & Fry, 2019; Kantor, 2012; Macy, 2021; Senge, 1990), dialogue (Bohm, 1980, 1996; Isaacs, 1999), mindfulness (Kornfield, 1993; Siegel, 2018), somatic awareness, levels of listening (Krishnamurti, 1991; Scharmer, 2018), humble inquiry (Schein, 2013), shadow work, the power of vulnerability, nonviolent communication (King, 1963/2010), journaling, power and love (Kahane, 2010; Wink, 1998), and presencing emergence (Gunnlaugson, 2005, 2015, 2021, 2023; Jaworski, 2012). Additionally, pearls from various Eastern and Western wisdom traditions were consulted. We worked from the assumption that a holding space is an interactive and dynamically co-created space, enriched by everyone’s presence, and can never be a one-way monologue.

One of the requirements of the Leadership Lab was that each session be facilitated by a pair rather than a single individual. The intention was to model a dynamic exchange between facilitators and the larger group, demonstrating that learning unfolds through interaction. Much like a dance, the process invited participants to build on one another’s contributions in the moment, appreciate diverse perspectives, and remain curious about one another’s experiences and insights.

III.2 What we began to notice in the cohorts

Within the Facilitator cohorts, we were often struck by the contrast between the limited amount of reading participants were willing to undertake and the profound moments that emerged when participants—including facilitators, whom we view as active participants rather than static holders of a space—gave themselves permission to open their hearts. In turn, this often created opportunities for others to experience empathy, compassion, and kindness within the group. Many participants had worked together in the same organization for years and appeared to be experiencing this softening of their external armour together for the first time. At the same time, sustaining these experiences required ongoing work beyond the sessions themselves, both at the individual and organizational levels.

We also heard comments from cohort members noting that a particular individual had

attended multiple cohorts and yet appeared largely unchanged outside the sessions. Such observations often made us smile, as they reflected a common tendency to focus on the growth and development of others while overlooking our own ongoing work. They also revealed an assumption that transformation should be immediately visible. Our experience suggested otherwise. Meaningful change often unfolds gradually and requires a sustained commitment to inner work. Recognizing this can be one of the more challenging lessons on the developmental journey.

Another theme that emerged concerned the way the space changed when individuals in positions of authority attended the sessions. A greater degree of restraint could often be sensed within the group. There were also moments when individuals in such roles chose to lower their guard and speak openly about their struggles, particularly the pressure of continually appearing strong or in control. These conversations invited reflection on power, power distance, and the ways in which we can inadvertently strip positions of authority of their humanity. Paradoxically, many participants in leadership roles seemed to long for precisely this recognition—to be seen as human beyond their titles and responsibilities. At the same time, participants in less senior organizational positions often felt sufficiently safe and valued to express themselves openly in the presence of authority.

As some facilitators began leading additional Leadership Lab sessions, a range of experiences emerged. Some found freedom in releasing the expectations they placed upon themselves as educators, while others navigated an awkward yet meaningful dance with their co-facilitator. After four consecutive cohorts, with several participants choosing to attend more than once, we initiated a six-week deeper-dive program for those who had completed the Facilitators cohort. The purpose of this exploration was to use dialogue processes to uncover blind spots and bring inner chatter into greater awareness so that we might become more effective instruments for this work. Much like life itself, our efforts to cultivate social spaces that support the development of inner capacities have remained both messy and beautiful. The constant has been a willingness to show up and continue from where we are.

For us as facilitators, this work also served as a continual reminder to release expectations and allow emergence to unfold. We learned to engage our own vulnerabilities and assumptions with greater openness, at times laughing at ourselves within the session itself. Such moments occasionally surprised participants, as this degree of openness and self-reflection did not always align with conventional images of a teacher. We also struggled to encourage participants to address one another by first names rather than titles, with admittedly mixed success. Along the way, we questioned whether we were overlooking something, what new

material might be introduced, and how best to invite meaningful conversation. Yet despite these concerns, we repeatedly discovered that engaging fully with the present moment and uncovering the learning already contained within it offered the most generative path forward. In this way, the “bottom of the U” became less a conceptual reference and more an ever-present wellspring of Source to which we could continually return, giving rise to a presencing knowing in the present.

It is also important to note that the Facilitator cohorts began during the pandemic, a period marked by significant inner and outer upheaval. ITM as an institution was likewise at a critical threshold, facing the need to transform in order to survive and thrive. These conditions created fertile ground for something new to emerge from possibilities already present within the organizational fabric. The ULab process and the Facilitators program provided a renewed sense of centering from which further creative action could arise.

IV. Creating the Conditions: Practices and Principles that Support Presencing

As we reflected on these experiences, we increasingly came to understand them through the lens of presencing as a lived phenomenon. What follows explores several of the conditions and practices that appeared to support its emergence within the collective field.

IV.1 The Field or Space

We use the terms field and space to refer to a dimension of experience that was repeatedly encountered yet difficult to define conceptually. It was experienced both individually and collectively as a shared atmosphere of awareness, connection, and possibility. While elusive in nature, its presence often became palpable through shifts in attention, relational openness, and the emergence of new insights. From our observations, both intention and emergence appeared to play important roles in shaping this space. Intention provided orientation and coherence, while emergence allowed the unexpected to unfold. Together, these movements created conditions through which participants could encounter presencing more directly.

Although the facilitators determined the overall structure and content of the program, the process itself was intentionally left open to emergence so that participants could feel heard and respond from their own experience. Rather than treating learning as the transmission of predetermined knowledge, we increasingly came to view it as a participatory process of discovery. In retrospect, we came to recognize that we were implicitly following several learning principles articulated by Sri Aurobindo. The first, *that nothing can be taught*, invited a stance of humility toward learning and development. The second, *that the mind must be consulted in its own*

growth, encouraged us to honour the pace and needs of participants as they unfolded. When a particular pedagogy did not resonate, we experimented with alternatives and willingly set aside predetermined agendas in order to remain responsive to what was emerging.

The third principle, *from near to far*, suggests that learning begins from where individuals are and gradually unfolds toward what they may become. This orientation created space for different levels of consciousness and development. For some participants, the emphasis was on personal growth and individuation. For others, it involved inner growth through letting go of ego and cultivating a deeper connection with Source. The essence of this movement is perhaps best captured in the Buddhist teaching: “we begin where we are.”

These principles shaped our facilitation as well as our broader approach to learning and development. Experiential learning formed the foundation of our approach, allowing participants to embody insights within their personal, professional, and social lives. The modules were designed with an awareness of the complex and rapidly changing business, ecological, and societal realities participants were navigating, while remaining responsive to what emerged within the field itself.

IV.2 Beginning with Mindfulness and Prayer

We began each session with ten minutes of guided mindfulness followed by a prayer of intention. Participants then engaged in a check-in process related to the learning materials and themes being explored. These opening practices created an opportunity for individuals to transition from the demands of work, commuting, and daily life into the collective space. Over time, participants consistently reported that these practices helped them become more grounded, present, and receptive to the learning process.

IV.3 Suspension of outer layers of self and letting go/come into the present moment

Through our experiences both within and beyond the sessions, we came to recognize the importance of sustained inner work for facilitators and participants alike. Such work took many forms, including meditation, mindfulness, communion with nature, reflection, and acts of service. As Jaworski (2012) observes, “the conscious development of facilitators is paramount” (p. 43). Our experience suggests that transformative learning depends upon this ongoing inner work and cannot be delegated solely to facilitators or participants. Rather, it calls for a shared commitment to self-awareness, reflection, and growth.

As individuals engaged in these practices, we often observed a gradual softening of

habitual identities, assumptions, and defences. This created greater openness to the present moment and increased receptivity to what was emerging within both the individual and the collective field. In this sense, the movement of letting go and letting come was not experienced as a technique, but as an ongoing process of becoming available to the deeper possibilities present within oneself and the larger whole.

IV.4 What Emerged in the Field

Overall, the practices described above appeared to create conditions in which certain phenomena became more likely to arise. Across multiple cohorts, we began noticing recurring patterns that participants and facilitators alike experienced as indicators of a deeper shift within the collective field. These phenomena were often difficult to predict and could not be intentionally manufactured. Yet when they occurred, they carried distinctive qualities of coherence, connection, and heightened awareness that appeared to reorganize how individuals related to themselves, one another, and the larger whole. What follows are several of the most consistent patterns we observed as presencing became increasingly palpable within the field.

IV.4.1 Sudden Insight and Illumination

These moments were unpredictable. Even in cohorts where individuating aspects of being appeared more prominent, there were occasions when defences softened and a sudden shift occurred in the nature and depth of conversation. Wilber's (2000) observation that the witness-self is available to everyone, regardless of their stage of consciousness, surfaced repeatedly in the sessions. The container appeared capable of holding participants from diverse stages of consciousness while supporting a movement from more individuated expressions of being toward more participatory ways of relating. At such moments, insights often emerged with a quality of illumination, accompanied by a felt sense that something larger than the individual perspective had entered the conversation.

IV.4.2 Dissolving of Boundaries

Examples of boundaries that appeared to dissolve, albeit momentarily, through these sessions included those based on geographical distance (participants joined from India, the United States, and multiple cities across India), time zones, societal and organizational roles, gender, age (ranging from 21 to over 60 years), language (not everyone spoke English, or spoke it fluently), educational attainment, and other external markers of success that often create separation and division.

The key to this experience was often the opening of the heart space when someone chose to share a personal story, struggle, or vulnerability. In doing so, others seemed to melt into a larger collective heart space, feeling for another as they would for themselves. Through the depth of this shared feeling, something appeared to shift and transform—not only for the individual who had spoken, but also for those who had remained silent. In such moments, differences that ordinarily seemed important receded into the background, giving way to a deeper sense of connection, shared humanity, and belonging.

IV.4.3 Experiences of Synchronicity

“When we take right action at the proper moment in time, those with similar intention and purpose are drawn to us, creating the phenomenon of “hidden doors” and “doors opening” (Jaworski, 2012). Experiences of synchronicity emerged as a recurring theme across many of the sessions. Participants frequently spoke of meaningful coincidences, unexpected connections, and timely insights that seemed to arrive precisely when they were needed. As participants became more attentive to these experiences, many began noticing synchronicities not only within the sessions themselves but also in their lives beyond them. Such moments often reinforced trust in the process and contributed to a growing sense that something larger was participating in the unfolding journey.

IV.5 From Presencing to Right Action

As awareness becomes increasingly centred in presence, aspects of ourselves that are ordinarily experienced as fragmented or separate begin to find greater coherence and integration. In such moments, what many traditions describe as the higher self or soul is able to participate more fully in our lives. Action no longer arises solely from habit, reaction, or personal preference, but begins to emerge from a deeper source of knowing. It is this movement that we associate with right action.

Throughout our inquiry, we observed that moments of presencing were often accompanied by subtle yet noticeable shifts in how participants responded to themselves, to others, and to the situations they faced. Rather than reacting automatically, participants appeared more capable of pausing, listening, discerning, and responding from a broader awareness of the whole. Action seemed to arise from a deeper coherence between intention, attention, and awareness. In this sense, right action emerged less as a technique to be learned and more as a consequence of presence itself.

The Bhagavad Gita (Ravindra, 2017) offers a useful lens for understanding this

movement through the relationship between the field (kshetra) and the knower of the field (kshetragna). From this perspective, growth involves becoming increasingly aware of the forces, habits, emotions, and assumptions that shape our experience. Such awareness creates the possibility of responding rather than reacting. The journey begins with silence and self-observation, yet also calls for aspiration, discernment, and a willingness to surrender what no longer serves.

Viewed in this way, right action is not simply about making better decisions. It arises from an ongoing relationship with the field of our own experience and from an increasing capacity to remain present to what is emerging. As participants deepened their ability to attend to themselves, others, and the collective field, new possibilities for action often became visible. Presencing in turn appeared as a pathway through which more coherent, responsive, and life-giving action could emerge.

V. Presencing Across Difference: Age, Roles, and Developmental Readiness

Younger students were, in general, more receptive to many of the practices and concepts introduced in the sessions than some faculty members and organizational leaders. While this observation may not be surprising, it felt worth noting given that the Facilitators program brought together students, faculty, administrative staff, and senior leaders within the same collective space. We observed that practices such as deep listening, coaching circles, presencing, systems thinking, and orienting from the whole were often more readily embraced by students. Perhaps they carried fewer assumptions about how learning ought to occur, or less armour that needed to be set aside before entering the experience.

Several students brought a lightness of presence that quietly anchored the space. Their openness, curiosity, and willingness to participate often invited others into the conversation. At the same time, when they spoke, it was evident that many had grasped the deeper significance of the work and the importance of creating holding spaces within a rapidly changing world. One of the gifts of these sessions was that students who might otherwise remain silent in more traditional classroom environments often felt free to speak from the heart. In doing so, they contributed to the depth and vitality of the collective field.

VI. Evolution and Growth of Consciousness

As we reflected on these differences in receptivity and engagement, the evolution and growth of consciousness emerged as a central theme in our inquiry. Drawing on the work of Sri Aurobindo and his long-time disciple A. S. Dalal, we found it helpful to distinguish between

personal growth and inner growth, two dimensions that frequently unfolded simultaneously within the cohorts.

VI.1 Personal Growth

Dr. A. S. Dalal emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between personal growth and inner growth. He notes that, until an individuality has been formed, the human being remains an amorphous entity, more or less fused with the unconscious totality of existence. It is through the development of a conscious ego—an “individualization of being in becoming”—that a person gradually becomes an individual.

Through the ego, a particular formation of physical, vital, and mental experience is distinguished from the rest of the being and comes to be regarded as the self. In this sense, the ego serves an important developmental function, enabling emergence from unconsciousness through a progressively greater awareness of the physical, vital, and mental dimensions of one’s being. Contemporary approaches that focus on the development of ego and individuality, ranging from psychotherapeutic work to the human potential movement, can therefore be understood as supporting personal growth (Dalal, 1992). This development of consciousness depends upon the aspiration and effort of the individual. As Sri Aurobindo writes, “A psychic fire must be lit...” (Sri Aurobindo, 2000, p. 155).

Across all of our cohorts, personal growth often manifested as participants becoming more willing to suspend judgment, slow their pace, and engage with greater openness. We observed increasing capacities for reflection, empathy, and more expansive ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing oneself. Those who attended consistently and continued seeking opportunities for further engagement were often the individuals who felt called to work more consciously on both their outer and inner development.

VI.2 Inner Growth

We also learned that the evolution of consciousness can unfold through a different movement that involves the transcendence of the ego, liberation from exclusive identification with one’s surface nature, and the discovery of a deeper Self. As Dalal (1992) notes, this movement becomes possible only after the separative ego has been sufficiently developed.

Inner growth involves “a transformation of the normal state of consciousness, a progressive awakening of inner and higher states of being, culminating in a total reversal of consciousness, a new birth” (Dalal, 1992). Reflections from participants did not suggest a transcendence of ego in this fuller sense. However, many spoke of a heightened awareness and

an increased ability to step outside themselves and observe their thoughts, emotions, defences, habits, and motivations.

This growing awareness, together with the capacity to let go, appeared to create a greater inner spaciousness. At times, this was experienced as an illumination. At other times, it appeared as a new idea-force or insight arising intuitively rather than through deliberate mental effort. While such experiences varied across participants, they often pointed toward the possibility of a deeper movement of consciousness beginning to awaken within the individual.

VII. Presencing as Practice: Attending, Embodying, Becoming

This brings us back to the practice dimension, where the first and foremost requirement is consciousness itself. In our experience, the only way to move through a crisis is to attend to it, and presencing appears to be one of the most practical and powerful ways of doing so.

We refer to presencing as a practice rather than a tool. A tool often carries the connotation of a quick solution or something that can be applied to resolve a problem. Presencing, as a practice, points instead to a way of being that requires conscious embodiment, sustained attention, and ongoing cultivation over time.

Conventional theories often describe “fight or flight” as primary responses to challenge, suggesting that one either retreats from difficulty or confronts it directly. Presencing appears to offer a different possibility: to remain with and attend to what is unfolding, allowing understanding and action to emerge from a deeper engagement with the situation itself. This may involve surrendering to, or fully accepting, what is present, thereby allowing the situation to reveal its own movement toward resolution. Such attending can give rise to heightened awareness and, at times, a significant shift in how individuals, relationships, and even collectives think, act, and become.

In moments of presencing, a more holistic awareness of past, present, and future can emerge simultaneously. In such moments of clarity, both the nature of the challenge and a possible course of action may reveal themselves. While the mind can support this process, it is often limited by its tendency to fragment experience into separate and competing parts. Presencing therefore frequently requires letting go of mental projections in order to meet more directly what is unfolding in the present moment. As Gunnlaugson (2015, p. 22) observes, “Engaging our experience as essence and source requires a deeper letting go of our resistance to meeting what is taking place in the present moment and more fully implicating us in the emergence”

Ultimately, presencing is best understood through experience. The term itself points

toward a movement from knowing, to doing, to becoming—a shift in which understanding becomes embodied and a natural flow begins to emerge through the simultaneous engagement of head, heart, and hand. This raises a recurring question in our work: How do we cultivate conditions in which students and facilitators can experience presencing directly, such that it becomes part of their tacit knowing and can be accessed naturally in moments of uncertainty, challenge, and crisis?

VIII. Development of the Knowing–Being–Doing Capacities

Throughout our inquiry, we repeatedly encountered the relationship between knowing, being, and doing as a central developmental challenge. Participants often demonstrated considerable knowledge and understanding of the concepts being explored, yet translating this knowing into embodied ways of being and acting proved to be a more gradual process. Presencing appeared to support this movement by creating conditions in which knowing could become embodied, and being could increasingly inform action. The following reflections explore several dimensions of this developmental journey.

VIII.1 Knowing and Developmental Learning

“The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts.” — John Locke

Age, in our experience, is not the determining factor in understanding this insight. Our work in holding space for students has shown that theoretical knowing does not automatically translate into being, and that for knowing to become embodied, practices of inner work are often required.

As Madame de Salzmann observed, “There is an intimate spiral of knowing, doing and being—three threads woven together. One of these cannot make sense apart from the other two.” Paraphrasing her reflections in *Heart Without Measure*, she describes three forces—body, mind, and feeling—that must be developed and harmonized in order to establish a steady connection with a deeper source of knowing. This involves cultivating the capacity for self-observation: discovering a sensitive place within oneself from which impressions can be received and things allowed to be as they are. Over time, the act of seeing itself begins to take on a sacred quality, becoming as important as what is seen. Many wisdom traditions equate this quality of seeing with knowing (Ravindra, 2017).

Often, individuals know what needs to be done yet struggle to act upon it. This is where embodiment becomes central. By embodying the practices and principles of presencing,

transformation can occur—not through the accumulation of additional information, but through a movement from knowing toward being.

Drawing on Sri Aurobindo's work, we found it useful to distinguish between objective forms of knowing and deeper forms of experiential and identity-based knowing (Cornelissen, 2011). Much of contemporary education emphasizes knowledge acquired through indirect contact with the external world. While valuable, such knowledge alone rarely produces transformation. Our observations suggested that transformative learning often emerged when participants moved beyond conceptual understanding into direct experience, self-observation, and embodied engagement. In this sense, being appeared to function as a bridge between knowing and doing.

Here, Bill O'Brien's oft-quoted insight resonates strongly: “The success of any intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor.” Lasting behavioural change requires a shift in the inner field, one supported by deeper forms of knowing. This may involve creating experiential learning opportunities, encouraging reflection, and cultivating intuition and self-awareness as integral dimensions of learning and leadership.

Across both the Facilitators and student cohorts, we repeatedly observed that intellectual understanding often preceded embodied understanding. Participants frequently grasped concepts long before they became integrated into their actions and relationships. Lasting change appeared to occur when insight moved beyond conceptual knowing and became embodied as a way of being.

Viewed through the lens of Theory U, knowing, doing, and being can be associated with the head, the hand, and the heart, respectively. At the level of being, there appears to be a deeper integration of knowing and doing, reducing the distance between intention and action. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

VIII.2 Presencing in Lived Practice

To offer readers a glimpse into how presencing unfolds in lived contexts, we share a few experiences from our sessions. These narratives are not presented as best practices or replicable designs, but rather as illustrations of how learning and transformation can emerge when conditions supportive of presencing are present.

One such experience occurred during a Personal Effectiveness session—an ungraded make-up class scheduled on Friday, December 23rd 2022, when many students had already shifted into holiday mode. Of a class of approximately sixty-five students, only nine attended.

The original plan for the session quickly became irrelevant.

We began with light conversation, waiting to see whether others would join, and then chose to sit in a circle and create space for genuine sharing. The session began with a difficult situation I had encountered with students in another class, and I invited their perspectives. As students offered reflections and advice, different facets of themselves began to emerge. Slowly, differing perspectives became as welcome as similar ones. Emergence was already underway.

After a short break, further uncertainty arose. A group of students scheduled to present during the second half of the session requested cancellation due to the low attendance. Another plan fell away. As I wondered how to proceed, students from a previous semester dropped by to say hello. They shared that their own Personal Effectiveness sessions, though often challenging, had been deeply meaningful: “Everyone shares, we smile together, we cry together.” This was precisely the kind of human experience I hoped to create.

When the break ended, we returned to the circle—now sixteen people. Many were students who rarely attended sessions, were generally reserved, or with whom I had had little interaction. We posed a simple question: “What is one thing we can share?” Someone suggested, “Something I have overcome.” What followed was one of the most heart-warming sessions I have ever witnessed.

What began with lighter responses gradually deepened. Students spoke of feeling like an option in the lives of others, struggling with depression in the shadow of academically gifted siblings, longing to heal strained relationships with parents, and learning to navigate conflict and disrespect. Tears were shared, silences were held, and a collective heart space opened.

The session was scheduled to end at 5:00 p.m. When the last student finished sharing, it was already 5:30. When another student asked to speak again, the decision was left to the group. Everyone chose to stay. She shared her experience of being bullied, how it had shaped her care for others, and her commitment to ensuring that no one feels alone. We finally ended at 6:15 p.m., with students requesting photographs to remember the moment. Later, one student shared that although he lived far away, he had felt compelled to attend that day and only understood why after experiencing the session.

The session enveloped everyone in a circle of shared human experience. New facets of individuals emerged, misunderstandings softened, and shared tears appeared to lighten burdens. Noticeable shifts occurred at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. Experiences such as these reinforced our sense that presencing cannot be generated through planning alone. They arise through a combination of openness, participation, and a willingness to remain with what is emerging. Even when only a few participants are able to access presencing, it often creates a

ripple effect that gradually draws the wider group into a more transformative flow.

We observed similar dynamics in other sessions. In one class where students appeared distracted and disengaged, they spoke candidly about stress, deadlines, internships, personal challenges, and exhaustion. A brief mindfulness exercise was introduced. Although some students resisted initially, the atmosphere gradually shifted. Laughter gave way to stillness, attention deepened, and students became noticeably more engaged, curious, and connected. Once again, the shift did not feel facilitator-driven. Rather, it emerged through a collective readiness and intention that appeared to be present beneath the surface all along.

VIII.3 Enablers of Presencing

While acknowledging that presencing cannot be engineered, we are nevertheless able to observe certain conditions that appear to support its emergence. What we share here arises primarily from lived experience rather than from prescribed models, techniques, or formulas.

At the level of consciousness, we observed three interrelated enablers of presencing: intention, attention, and action. When these three are aligned, they appear to support the integration of knowing, doing, and being, allowing action to arise with greater coherence and ease.

Intention, as we experienced it, is more than willingness. It resembles a deeper aspiration that provides direction and meaning, both individually and collectively. As intention becomes clearer, attention is naturally drawn toward what matters most. In contrast, when intention is diffuse or absent, attention often becomes scattered and action loses coherence. We also observed a paradox: while an intention toward presencing often appeared to support the emergence of presencing, experiences of presencing themselves frequently deepened and clarified intention.

Attention refers to what we are aware of and what we choose to attend to in the moment. As the familiar saying suggests, “Where attention goes, energy flows.” Self-awareness requires sustained attention to where attention itself is placed. In this sense, attention becomes one of the primary instruments of growth. Many of the practices used throughout the program, including mindfulness and reflection, helped participants become more aware of their patterns of attention and gently return to direct experience in the present moment.

Action completes the movement. As intention becomes clearer and attention more focused, action often arises with less effort and greater alignment. Rather than being driven primarily by habit or reaction, action begins to emerge from a deeper coherence between knowing, being, and doing. In this way, intention, attention, and action appeared to function as

reinforcing conditions that support presencing within both individuals and the collective field.

IX. Concluding Remarks

This inquiry has explored what becomes possible when leadership, learning, and facilitation are approached through the lens of presencing, understood as an underlying phenomenon that can be cultivated through practice, relational space, inner work, and sustained attention. Across student, faculty, administrative, and leadership cohorts, we observed that when conditions support presencing, learning begins to shift from transmission toward transformation, and action increasingly arises from a deeper coherence between knowing, being, and doing.

The time and space we collectively inhabit today can be understood as profoundly liminal. Amid ecological, social, and organizational disruption, approaches rooted in awareness-based systems change, generative dialogue, and presencing-oriented leadership point toward forms of action that emerge from a deeper sense of connection, meaning, and belonging. What we have referred to as right action appears less as a technique and more as a quality of response shaped by alignment rather than fear, fragmentation, or egoic striving.

Throughout this article, we have drawn upon Sri Aurobindo's integral vision to illuminate a developmental movement that holds both ascent and descent: the development of a conscious and individuated self alongside the gradual loosening of egoic identification in service of a more expansive awareness. This movement is reflected in the knowing–being–doing triad, where embodied presence functions as the bridge through which insight becomes action. In this sense, presencing may be understood as the lived integration of knowledge, work, and love—an integration that allows action to arise with greater integrity, care, and responsiveness.

Our experience working with presencing-oriented social fields suggests that individual development and collective transformation are deeply interconnected. By cultivating spaces that invite reflective dialogue, inner work, and embodied awareness, individuals begin to experience themselves as participants in a larger unfolding. This shift in awareness often brings a deeper appreciation of interdependence, shared humanity, and responsibility for the whole. In our experience, such capacities are increasingly essential for leadership in a complex and rapidly changing world.

What is asked of us, individually and collectively, is a willingness to remain present: a willingness to attend to what is emerging and to respond from a place grounded in care, responsibility, and deeper awareness. Through such participation, presencing becomes more than an individual capacity; it becomes a collective field through which new possibilities for harmony, responsibility, and creative action can take root.

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