

THE IMAGINATION MATRIX

How to Access the
Greatest Power You Have for
Creativity, Connection, and Purpose

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Introduction

Remembering the Source Code of Imagination

“We must let go of the life we have planned,
so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.”

Joseph Campbell

If ever there was a time and a place to reconnect with imagination, that place is here and that time is now. Humanity stands at a crossroads, one direction leading to worse destruction, the other to the endless possible. Your contribution could help tip the balance to propel humanity forward to its better future. A pathway exists for you to make this contribution. The methods I offer in this book have helped thousands of people around the world—people just like you—tap into and activate the Imagination Matrix to innovate new outcomes, evolve real-world solutions, and nurture their well-being. In the following chapters, I describe how to gain access to this source code of imagination within each of us.

We are born with a living blueprint, the essential design to evolve our imagination. Each of us enters the world with the capacity to make creative leaps of consciousness and quantum leaps in learning.

Our discerning brains and our sensate bodies are built for imaginative exploration. The first sparks or hints of this biological instinct emerge soon after birth. Studies have shown that when babies play, they are engaged in creative exploration, which is the basis of imagination. As babies experiment with new sights, sounds, and activities and solve simple problems, their imaginations develop.¹ Throughout your lifetime, imaginative play is foundational to emotional and social development.

Traditionally, *imagination* refers to the ability to form a picture in your mind of something not previously seen or experienced. Every one of us has access to this inner aptitude. If you are feeling out of touch with your imagination, that's okay. This book offers a framework for you to access the generative power within that is waiting to be known. Your imagination holds the ideas and images that you can use to impact the world of today and that of tomorrow.

Most of the time, your thoughts are governed by your rational mind, separated from this creative force. And for good reason. Humanity has used the discipline of deductive reasoning to make tremendous advances in science, technology, medicine, architecture, and government. These disciplines, in many ways, have contributed greatly to well-being. Modern education supports task-oriented thinking with content-based learning, which emphasizes finding solutions to problems in the most efficient ways possible.

However, the Imagination Matrix offers another pathway to generative solutions. Many sectors of contemporary culture are placing new value on the role of an expansive imagination. This shift in consciousness is impacting individuals, communities, and even how we care for the planet. From the imagination-based curriculum that Harvard Business School instituted in 2011 to creativity incubators embedded in many corporations, from image-centered psychological-treatment programs to the application of Imaginal thinking in urban planning, the infusion of imagination is revitalizing the ways we conduct business and interact with one another. The trailblazers are people like you:

the seekers, the creatives, the workers, the dreamers, the doers. You who are willing and ready to tap into a collective purpose that is vital, vibrant, and resonant in the world of today.

I see and feel the force of imagination pushing forward every day when I teach, lead workshops, consult with corporations, or confer with policymakers at the United Nations. In the classroom, teaching platforms as well as content-delivery systems are changing at an accelerating pace. Learning is no longer limited to memorization and rote regurgitation of facts. Students are challenged to utilize their Imaginal capacities to make conceptual extrapolations and innovative advancements. Technology offers access to an unprecedented array of field studies, visual demonstrations, and historical backgrounds from which to develop their concepts.

In my environmental work at the United Nations, I see the same dynamics at work. Traditional modes of perception and conventional problem-solving tools are not applicable to a rapidly changing ecosystem. The Earth Charter International, the design of which I took part in, is an example of this kind of imagination-centered undertaking. In order to move toward a more just, supportable, and peaceful world with world leaders and experts in environmental-policy formation, we put together a plan inspired by imagination for legislating sustainability that adheres to sixteen agreed-upon principles. The charter has been formally endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)³ and integrated into pioneering international educational initiatives. As part of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals,⁴ millions of youth organizations, civic groups, municipalities, and nations have committed to it.⁵

It is auspicious that just when we have the need, a massive shift in our Imaginal capacities is occurring. You can see new models for cocreating environmental change and for doing business arising in urban planning, for example. Smart cities like Oslo, Norway, use new technologies to counter climate change by generating renewable energy through smart grids and electric vehicles. The architecture of

the city is grounded in the principles of sustainability—the sympathetic relationship between the human made and the nature made. And you can see it in the ways in which companies such as Chapul Farms are increasing biodiversity in agriculture in order to cultivate a more sustainable, resilient, and secure food system for the planet. At their “innovation center” in McMinnville, Oregon, Chapul Farms imagined how to use insects and the microbial ecosystems they nurture to restore soil health, eliminate organic waste, and produce a nutrient-rich and healthy food system. Another example is the visionary work of Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe) as the founder of the White Earth Land Recovery Project, which exemplifies the possibilities of regenerative community development and agriculture twined with language and cultural resurgence.

I believe this global emphasis on growing our Imaginal capacities will pull human evolution into the abundant future on a collective and individual level. This is because the imagination moving through you has a potent life of its own. However, to unlock its power, you need to unplug from the overdrive of contemporary life and create the time and space to listen within. Slowing down, separating from the to-do list, and quieting the busy mind provide space for something other to express itself. In this state of quiet, the *Curious Mind*, spontaneous imagination has the room to present on its own behalf. Taking just twenty minutes each day and quieting down invites the imagination—which is always moving through you, just below the surface of your awareness—to make an appearance. The material contained in these pages guides you into another way of listening.

How to Use This Book

The Imagination Matrix is designed to help you access the deepest capacities of your imagination. The book offers a pathway to the Imagination Matrix and the generative realms waiting to be known. Each chapter is grounded with research, case studies, and illustrative stories.

The imagination loves to be met in the way of stories. Each chapter also includes interactive exercises to help you bring the power of the Imagination Matrix into your life. These activities are designed to draw you into personal reflection and playful consideration, and they can and should be adapted to support individual circumstances and abilities. In my years of teaching and lecturing, I have found this toggling between the conceptual and the experiential to be the most profound way of engaging the great mysteries of the human experience.

This book invites your interaction with it. You can read it in the order in which it is laid out. But also feel free to skip ahead or go back, dipping into the stories and exercises as needed for inspiration. While moving through these concepts, feel free to mark up the pages. Add notes to the margins. Make it your own. I also recommend keeping a separate journal, your own special place for recording your insights, dreams, drawings, and imaginings. As your imagination opens, stories will begin flowing through your direct experiences. When you describe what you are seeing or feeling in words or by drawing, you are giving the imagination actuality.

The book unfolds in eleven short chapters. Each builds upon the previous one. I use a new language, a new way of writing, to guide you back to the imaginative mind and invite you to think differently. You will discover many new terms while reading; you can refer to the glossary in the back for any clarification that may be helpful. The book is constructed in two parts, beginning with internal work and then moving to external and real-world applications.

Part 1: The Internal Discovery

The book starts by leading you into a shift in consciousness that is the basic tool necessary to begin the journey within. The Western world is familiar with the practice of meditation as a tool to enhance self-discovery sourced from living wisdom traditions in Egypt, China, India, and elsewhere.⁶ Where meditation might focus on a particular

word or sound or the notion of the empty mind, our work begins with opening the Curious Mind. This form of active awareness engages with realms seen and unseen. We then deepen this engagement with the process I call *the Dig*, in which we excavate down into the realms of the Imagination Matrix. In this inward journey, we will encounter elemental and Imaginal figures who offer support and guidance. I call these figures *Soul Companions*, as they become internal compasses whose strengths and characteristics accompany us as we step through the portal into the Imagination Matrix. In this stage of the journey, we encounter the forces found in the Four Quadrants: *Earth*, *Mind*, *Machine*, and *Universe*. It is here you will be given the tools to discover and enhance your Imaginal intelligence and your Innate Genius.

These terms, along with others, might be new to you. We will take the time to unpack the subtleties and complexities of new concepts as we move forward.

Part 2: In the World

Part 2 reveals how to apply the skills and insights that you have acquired in part 1. It offers practical ways you can utilize the Imagination Matrix System at work, at home, and in building an Imagination-Centered Life.

This part begins by introducing the Imagination Matrix System, a problem-solving engine, and explaining how to use it. You uncover how it can assist in practices of Imaginal Healing and well-being, both psychologically and physiologically. In doing so, questions are raised about how to keep your humanity in an increasingly technological world. It is here that your journey comes full circle. As the Imagination Matrix is sparked by the multiplicity of stories, the *Story-Web* that underpins everything is revealed. It is in this Story-Web, connecting past to present, that you will feel the pull of the future, your purpose, and your destiny waiting to be discovered.

What Is the Imagination Matrix?

The Imagination Matrix is the creative force moving through all forms of being. It is ever present and exists below, betwixt, and between the surfaces of everyday experience. It seems that we in the modern age have forgotten how to access this transformational internal technology. The noise and frenzy of our busy lives block this natural attunement with the universal and with ourselves. When you experience the Illumination that is generated from the Imagination Matrix, you are able to see the shimmering of what exists between people or the luminosity between creatures and landscapes. You glimpse the radiance of imagination that surrounds and permeates all that is around us. This occurs not when you push, but when you let go of the need to know, the drive to succeed, and the will to control. You, and each of us, must relearn to kindle our sense of wonder—that joyous feeling of being alive, here, now. You can't be depressed or controlling when you are in wonder.⁷

Wonder is something that exists just behind the veil of the familiar. As a child you spent many hours in imaginative play, which I call *Imaginal Play*, crafting drawings and stories. It was as natural as breathing. Children are far more in tune with these conversations inherent to all creatures and things.

But as we grow, most people lose their connection to the Imagination Matrix. Parents and teachers train us to put away *Imaginal Play*, to get on with the concerns and necessities of life. Yet, between the cracks of the everyday, the source code lives. You may not be paying direct attention, but faint whispers of it arise in your life. A daydream visits as you gaze toward the horizon. A night dream interrupts your sleep as you lie in bed. An out-of-the-box idea pushes through just when you find yourself caught in an unworkable situation. And you take the time to listen.

Your Curious Mind

Engaging wonder in the Imagination Matrix is not as much about *what* you see and hear as it is about *how* you perceive and listen. *Seeing* with an aesthetic eye toward what is fascinating opens perception into the deeper mysteries. *Listening* with a receptive ear for what is captivating opens hearing into the inner rhythms. *Opening* to a Curious Mind accesses the epic stories within and without all creation. These moments of enlightened curiosity companion you. Linear space and time yield to something more. You might wonder, *Am I hearing the through lines of the source code itself?*

This experience of the Imagination Matrix might sound esoteric, even fanciful. Actually, it is more embodied than whimsical. In more than forty years of working closely with colleagues and mentors such as Joseph Campbell, Jean Houston, Marion Woodman, James Hillman, and many others in the academy, I have had the privilege to confer with some of the greatest minds of the previous generation. Meeting, sharing stories, and collaborating with international dreamers has also nourished this work, including with Chinese Jungian analyst and scholar Professor Heyong Shen. Briefly yet meaningfully, I interacted with Aboriginal dreamers Bill Neijdie and Bill Harvey. In Hawai'i, I talked story with Lulu, a kahuna of the dreaming. This work takes further inspiration from experiences with sustainability and seed-saving activist Dr. Vandana Shiva and community organizers Dolores Huerta and the late Cesar Chavez. The work of these foundational thinkers sets the stage for and opens the doors to our consideration of a matrix of imagination. I draw upon and build on their works, along with those of Carl Jung. I now offer my concepts to the canon based upon contemporary research and the evolving circumstances of our times.

From the masterwork of Jung comes his extraordinary contribution to the field of Western psychology: the concept of the collective unconscious. For Jung and those who followed in the depth psychological tradition, the psyche consists of more than person-centered consciousness

and development. Archetypal images found in cross-cultural myths and stories are present in personal psychological experience and appear in dreams and fantasy. With an autonomy of their own, these Imaginal figures and motifs shape behavior and offer insight into universal teachings. From Jung comes the idea of “the one and the many”: that the mind is more than ego, more than a singular, rational operating system. The consciousness of mind consists of the many selves.

James Hillman extended the work of Jung. For Hillman, images are phenomenal, soul bodies with Imaginal presence and pulse. Hillman offered ways of seeing the imagination in its dynamic presentation. The nature-made as well as the human-made are ensouled with inner qualities of their own. Machines also have an Imaginal presence. When we open our perception, all creation presents itself to the imagination. We can cultivate the capacity to befriend, even learn from, these images that visit psychic life. Marion Woodman’s work introduced the elemental teaching that body and psyche are inseparable. The way to healing lies in finding a connection between body and soul, earth and spirit.

My work synthesizes the contributions of these seminal thinkers, along with findings in the fields of philosophy, new physics, and more, into a new vision for understanding yourself and others. It is also informed by Indigenous cultures who have explored the universe of consciousness consisting of an Illuminated cosmos above (the movements of planets and stars) and an animated world below (the interrelated networks of animals and landscapes). The Imagination Matrix System brings together these multidimensional states of awareness (Earth, Mind, Machine, and Universe). When these states of awareness are integrated with information systems, communication networks, human curiosity, and wonder, a sort of magic occurs.

In my work, I have developed particularized curricula and implemented specialized training regimens proven to access the meta-intelligence of the Imagination Matrix so that you can live a more attuned and awakened life. You are on a journey into the unknown, taking up the torch along with existing and past generations.

To begin a journey, you need to have a destination in mind. When you travel in the physical world, you might choose to go to a place that has meaning to you. When you journey inward, you connect to an Imaginal destination (such as a memory or a dream) or an emotional experience. This book will guide and support you in your Imaginal adventure.

The success of any journey depends, in large part, on how you prepare. I have found that the getting-ready phase of journeying is not only vital but, indeed, part of the journey itself. Rituals of preparation—the praxis of incubation—precede most rites of passage, from the familiar (known) to the vastly expansive unfamiliar (unknown). Traveling requires a well-intentioned mindset, a shift in psychospiritual orientation, and the need to put your house in order. Incubation involves writing down your packing list (the tools and provisions you will need): supplies include restorative breathing techniques, self-nurturing writing methods, and creative arts processes. Similar to astronauts preparing for travel to outer space, you need to assemble all the resources to sustain your journey. Then, you must shift out of the rational mind, which is focused on doing, and open your Curious Mind to the Imaginal process. This change of perception readies you for the adventure to what Joseph Campbell called “the outer reaches of inner space.”⁸

The Imagination Matrix is alive in each of us. We experience the matrix as a kind of inheritance, a bequest from the beginning. With the excitement of an anticipated destination now sparking through mind and body, it is time to get started. Let’s set our intentions for our journey together into the mystery and the magic of the Imagination Matrix and the powerful energies found there.

Ritual of Intention

Find a quiet place that helps you center.

— *Locate yourself in a safe space in your home or in the natural landscape.*

Light a candle, actually or Imaginally. Repeat to yourself three times, “What is being asked of me?”

— *Let each time deepen the resonance of the ask.*

Listen without judgment. Open your curiosity.

— *Allow yourself to be present to the voice or the image that comes through.*

Notice what is awakening.

— *Be open to the unexpected.*

Write this down and place the paper in the back pages of this book as a touchstone.

— *You may come back to this at different points in your journey.*

The teachings and journeyings I share with you in this book have changed lives. My hope is that they will change yours for the better.

Are you ready? Let’s begin.