

Circle Session 4: How Much is Enough?

Readings from *Less is More*:

- p.101-106: **The Lagom Solution** by Alan AtKisson
- p.133-141: **Nearing Enough** by Linnea Johnson

Other:

- **Personal Economics in a Time of Climate Change** (pdf of Introduction to Allen Edward's new book – available on the SFUU website)
- **How Many Towels Do You Need?**, a 2018 TEDx talk by Rose Lounsbury:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIA7qgySO0I>

Materials:

- **Circle Session 3 Action Commitments** (from last session)
- **Reflection** form (small ¼ page with the reflection prompt and room to jot down notes)
- **Pens** to jot down notes for the reflection
- **Concept Map Instruction Sheet for each group**
- **Concept Word Cards** cut into individual words and clip together or place in envelopes (one set of word cards per group of 3 to 4)
- **Large sheets of paper** for constructing a concept map (one per group of 3 to 4)
- **pens or pencils** (if you have a couple different colors for each group, that might be useful, but not necessary)
- **glue stick or tape** (one for each group)
- **Circle Session 4 Action Commitments** (for this session)

To be completed BEFORE session 4:

Do the reading and watch the 10-minute Tedx talk! A close reading of Allen Edwards's work (*Personal Economics in a Time of Climate Change*) will be especially helpful for the main activity of session 4.

Start of Session 4:

Action Commitment Check In

Pull out last session's Action Commitments in case people need to be reminded. Remind group of the dialogue protocols and encourage sharing with minimal cross-talk to allow everyone a chance to complete their thoughts (if they want to):

- Were you able to follow through on your action commitments? (no judgments, it is okay if it didn't happen, people can share or not)

Reflection Session Starter

Hand out the ¼ page reflection form to each person. Ask them to take a few minutes to think **individually** about the reflection question by jotting a few notes down – about 3 minutes. It is okay if they don't have everything written down, as long as they have thought about the questions. Please **keep track of the time** - you will need about an hour to do the next activity (concept mapping) properly. So, this reflection starter is just a teaser to get the ball rolling for the main event.

Once everyone has finished jotting a few thoughts down, then pair up to **share one-on-one with another circle member** (if you have an odd number in your group, threesomes are fine).

Bring everyone back together and ask each pair that is willing, to **briefly share ONE observation** related to their pairs discussion (or you could have them share one thing that the OTHER person in their pair said).

Living in a Time of Climate Change Card Concept Mapping

This is the main activity for this session. Card concept mapping is a strategy to promote discussion. The optimal size group for doing a concept map is 3 people – this ensures that everyone participates in discussing the concepts. If you have a large group, divide the group into teams of 2 to 4 people (do not exceed 4 people in any one team).

Each team will be given a large blank sheet of paper and a set of cards with concepts written on them. On the whole, the cards are general concepts that the team can interpret based on their understanding of the readings that they did for this session (especially Allen's work, but the others apply as well). The object is to lay out the cards on the paper, move them around, and finally arrange them as a connected web of knowledge. An example of a card concept map is on the next page (this example involved words related to the concept of *How do my friends and family impact my self-concept?*). Notice that arrows connect the cards and that words are added to explain how the cards are related.

Reflection

On p.140 of the *Nearing Enough* essay, Linnea Johnson wrote about how the Nearings devote 4 hours to **bread labor** (for us, I interpret this as earning a living, cleaning, cooking, yardwork), 4 hours to **professional activity** (related to your skills, loves, special abilities), and 4 hours to service activities (helping others, civic engagement).

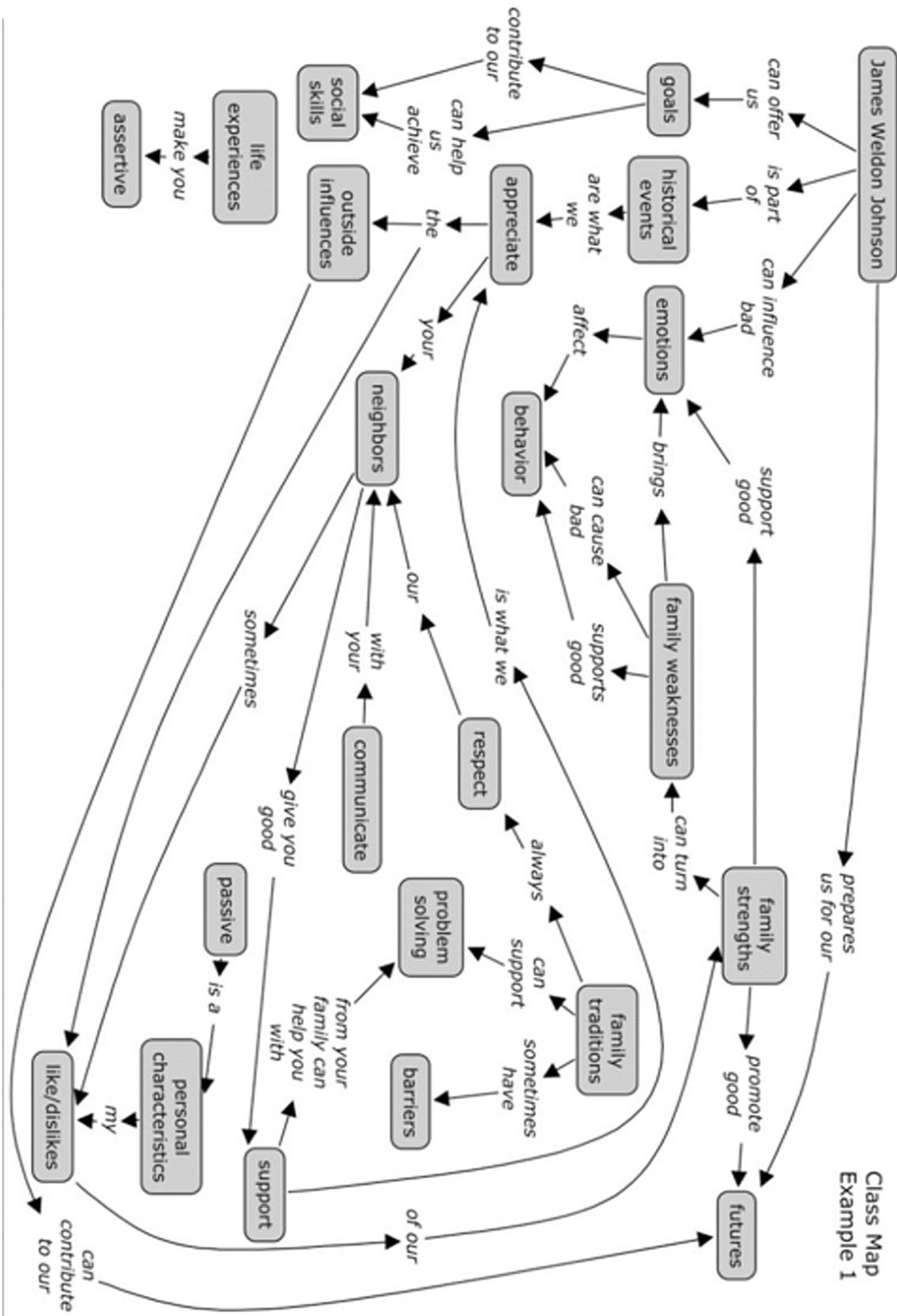
- Do you have a similar balance in your life?
- What sorts of skills, loves, etc do you wish that you had more time to pursue? (art? music? writing? wood-working?) AND how can you make room for that in your daily life?
- What unpaid service or civic engagement activities do you find most satisfying, and why? Do you wish you could do more, or are you doing too much?

You do not have to answer every question! Jot some notes down, be prepared to share as you feel comfortable.

Example of a Card Concept Map

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Friends-and-Family-class-concept-maps-generated-using-the-Conceptual-Card-Game_fig2_267960834

How do my friends and family impact my self-concept?



Hand out the words, and instruction sheet to each group; ask them to select a ‘director’ (someone willing to read the instructions out loud to the group). Ideally, each group will move to a place to work that is separate from the other groups and with a table or other flat surface available to lay out their paper and word cards. You also may want to provide tape or glue stick to each group so that when they are done, they can permanently affix their word cards to their paper. If you don’t have glue stick or tape, they can just write the words down on the paper (and then remove the card).

You probably don’t have to do much explaining, just show them the concept map example, tell them that there is no one way that the map should be done – that, in fact, the point of the activity is to have a healthy conversation about the concepts as you generate the map. Then give them the materials, have them select a director, and hopefully by reading the instructions in their own group, everything will work out! An example of one map done by a group in the 2019 SFUU circles is provided at the end of this document so that you can see one of the many possibilities for this activity. Here are the instructions that they will be getting:

Instruction Sheet

Living in a Time of Climate Change Card Concept Mapping

During this activity your group will come to a consensus about how to arrange a set of words to reflect the relationships between them – the final product will be a “concept map” of *Living in a Time of Climate Change*. **There is no single correct way to map the words** – this activity is simply a vehicle to get you to think and talk about your understanding of this topic based on your own personal knowledge, and what you have gained from the readings for today’s session.

Procedure:

1. Remove the words from the envelope and spread them out on the paper
2. Shift the words around and group them as you see fit, keeping in mind the relationships that may or may not exist between them.

This phase should generate conversation about what the words mean in the context of *Living in the Time of Climate Change*. Some of the words are general and as a group you can come to a consensus about what they mean to you.

3. Once you have them shifted to the group’s liking, then draw lines between the words (or groups of words) to indicate the relationships between them.

Note that the line you draw may be a:

- **single arrow** (relationship goes in one direction only: from one word to the other)
- **double-headed arrow** (bidirectional: relationship goes in both directions)
- **simple line** (words are connected by not in a directional, or causal, sense)

4. Add more explanation to your concept map – there may be information that you want to add to the map to clarify your use of a word or to give further details about your understanding of the relationships between particular words. **Also**, it is useful to put action words or each arrow to further explain the relationship between those words.
5. Once you are satisfied with your map, then glue or tape your words to the paper so that you can lift it up to show everyone else.

6. Be prepared to share the highlights of your map, or of the conversation that you had, with the rest of the circle. Remember that everyone is working with the same words but will likely have a different-looking map than yours!

Here are the words that are in each envelope:

Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Rising Global Temperature		Climate Footprint	
The Grand Adventure	Courage	Earth	Simplicity	
Fossil Fuels	Money	Needs	Time	Effects
Government	Community		More	Solutions
Consumption	Individuals		Action	Enough

As the groups work on their maps, be sure to give periodic time warnings so that there is time to have a discussion afterward! It is okay if their concept map is not perfect – again, it is the conversation they have in constructing the map that is the important, not the actual map.

Once each group has finished, reconvene the circle. Have each group share out their concept map – remind them that everyone is using the same set of words, so they don’t have to go over every detail, but give the overall structure of their concept map or some highlights from the discussion that they had as they constructed the map.

I am assuming that just presenting each concept map will generate good group discussion. If not, then here are some potential guiding questions to get the group talking, or to use for follow-up and closure. As you ask questions, allow the group to think silently first BEFORE soliciting responses – this helps those who take longer to formulate their thinking. In this way, everyone is more likely to contribute to the conversation, rather than the people who think out loud more quickly. The guiding questions are not in any particular order, use whatever you want, or create your own.

- Can you see yourself living as the Nearings did?
- Is a culture of ‘lagom’ possible for you? Can you envision living smaller (minimalism)?
- Do you think that the “Grand Adventure” is possible?
- Thinking practically, what can you cut back on?
- What are you most attached to? Nice house? Nice clothes? Status? Financial Security? Independence? Privacy? Comfort? Has this attachment brought you any satisfaction or discontent into your life?
- What are some practical questions we can ask ourselves before making a purchase?

Commit to Action

Hopefully the readings and today’s session gave you some ideas about what you might want to commit to trying before our next simplicity circle meeting. When all are ready, ask each member to say what they would like to commit to doing, and have them record it in one of the circles on the **Session 4 Action Commitments** form.

Let everyone know that the one aim of the circles is to provide support and encouragement as we try to simplify, so if you don't get your action done, that is okay – in other words don't skip the next session if you don't get your action done – everyone is welcome and everyone is valued no matter what state of simplicity they find themselves in.

Concept Map created by a 3-person group from one of the SFUU Simplicity Circles during session 4:

