

Becoming WOKE – Book Review



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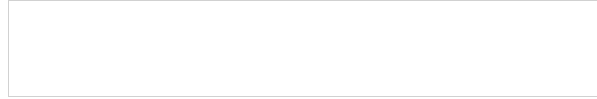
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Becoming WOKE: Wise, Open, Kind, Empowered by Alex Bennett presents WOKE as a framework for spiritual and civic awakening grounded in democratic values. By cultivating wisdom, openness, kindness, and empowerment, individuals and organizations can enhance judgment, foster inclusive dialogue, decentralize responsibility, and drive ethical, socially responsible action.





The book *Becoming WOKE: Wise, Open, Kind, Empowered* was written by Alex Bennett as part of her journey in recent years to document ideas and thoughts that will make us better people and a better society (and yes- knowledge is one of the components in all these ideas, Maybe due to Alex Bennets routes as a knowledge manager in the U.S. Navy).

Bennett creates a wordplay with the acronym of these four attributes that together form WOKE, both in its literal translation- to wake up (referring to our need not to remain complacent in the status quo, but to awaken)- and also as the adjective "woke," which originated in African American English and has been used since the 1930s to refer to awareness of prejudice and racial discrimination.

Main Topics:

1. Introduction

- Awakening and Being Woke
- Foundation- Democratic Principles

2. Attributes that will advance us toward WOKE (spiritual awakening)

- Wisdom
- Openness
- Kindness
- Empowerment

3. Integrating

The figures that Bennett presents to demonstrate the various attributes include some that are beloved and universally accepted, and others that are controversial, not because of these attributes, but because sometimes people can cross the line, and in the name of contributing to humanity, move into political discourse and take positions where they no longer have any advantage regarding justice.

Still, I highly recommend reading the book. It's possible, as I did, to disregard some of the examples and still learn how to become better people, for ourselves, but no less importantly, for the benefit of humanity.

1. Introduction

1.1 Awakening

When we think about awakening, we can consider waking from sleep or spiritual awakening. Spiritual awakening refers to viewing integrated philosophical, psychological, and personal development aspects with a renewed perspective. This awakening enables us to experience heightened awareness, inner peace, background authenticity, connectivity, examination of beliefs, renewed meaning, intuitive insights, and detachment from the ego.

Awakening attributes:

- Change and growth
- Self-discovery
- Deeper awareness and understanding
- Dealing with challenges
- Positive impact on our relationships with others and on society as a whole

The term WOKE, which refers to awareness of prejudice, racism, and the discrimination that follows, is highly appropriate to our context. The central themes it addresses —social justice, gender diversity, activism, advocacy, empathy, solidarity, critical thinking, cultural and historical sensitivity, as well as accountability and desire for change —present a worldview that aligns with the concept of awakening and its associated central themes.

As we engage with awakening, which is the bottom line we aspire to through the attributes that will be mentioned later, we must pay attention to the legitimate criticism of WOKE. This criticism relates to oversimplification, interpretations that have almost disconnected from the original movement, and more. We need to listen to the criticism and be careful, but above all, we need to take upon ourselves the responsibility to act toward awakening.

1.2 Baseline- Democratic Foundations

The foundations of democracy are based on ideas that will form the cradle for developing the attributes presented later. These include:

- **Diversity**- Recognition and respect for every ethnic group, gender, or other identity marker of individuals and groups
- **Equality**- Equality of rights, duties, responsibilities, and opportunities for different people as they are
- **Inclusion**- Of the other
- **Equity**- In dealing with everyone in society. A foundation for fostering justice, social harmony, and progress
- **Balanced discourse**- While dealing with the pendulum effect swinging between extremes of discourse and agenda

Notes:

- Tools for promoting balanced discourse include, among others: active listening; preference for empathetic discourse; recognition of complexity; seeking common ground; positive acceptance of feedback; preference for data-driven and evidence-based solutions; continuous learning and education; and more.
- Equality does not mean uniformity in resources. Instead, it involves recognizing that to create opportunities for equal output, it is sometimes necessary to implement positive discrimination regarding resources for certain population groups. This approach helps overcome the different living conditions and circumstances of individuals and groups.

2. WOKE- Attributes promoting spiritual awakening

The four attributes that together will create and advance awakening include:

- W - Wisdom
- O - Openness
- K - Kindness
- E - Empowerment

Below is a detailed description of these attributes and their components.

2.1 W - Wisdom

Definition: Wisdom is the ability to integrate knowledge, experience, and values to make informed and meaningful decisions in life.

This is the highest stage of mental thinking; it stems from values, learning, and experience, while simultaneously arousing a passion to continue learning, experiencing, and deepening understanding.

Wisdom includes analytical, emotional, social, creative, and practical aspects of intelligence (see book review: [Whole Thought >>](#)).

Core Attributes: Experience, enlightenment, knowledge, morality, relationships, truth, values.

Example: In a conflict between two departments with different visions regarding how to position a new product, applying the attribute of wisdom to create a series of workshops in which the partners can express their perspectives and shift the discourse from conflict to a collaborative project.

Developing the Attribute: A model for developing wisdom includes two parallel tracks that integrate:

- **Action Track:** Information >> Knowledge >> Action >> Learning >> Higher thinking patterns >> Wisdom
- **Relationship Track:** Separation >> Sympathy >> Empathy >> Compassion >> Focus on the greater good >> Wisdom

Wisdom integrates these two tracks and enables intelligent activity for inclusive global advancement.

2.2 O - Openness

Definition: The willingness to consider new ideas, experience new things, welcome changes, and listen to diverse opinions.

Openness is expressed in the willingness to exchange knowledge, experience unfamiliar environments, accept feedback, demonstrate flexibility, and engage in interpersonal collaborations.

In essence, openness is the ability to allow ourselves to be influenced by external factors- and to absorb even what we did not anticipate in advance.

Core Attributes: Humility, adaptability, creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, transparency, tolerance, trust.

Example: A thought leader presenting a topic at a conference about which they have a firm opinion stops to examine other perspectives, learn from others, and thereby discovers hidden biases in their own understanding of the topic. The presented topic is, ultimately, richer and more accurate.

Developing the Attribute: Developing the attribute of openness includes strengthening skills of:

- Self-awareness and the ability to reflect
- Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- Emotional intelligence (empathy, for example, strengthens our ability to understand the other, and therefore to be open toward them)
- Cultural awareness
- Resilience (as resilience makes it easier for us to navigate uncertainty)

2.3 K - Kindness

Definition: A conscious choice to act in a way that helps others and takes them into account, out of empathy, compassion, and genuine concern for their well-being.

Although kindness is an action done for others, it also positively affects our brain, our mood, and our mental health as givers.

Core Attributes: Accessibility, compassion, empathy, generosity, mindfulness, patience, positivity, appreciation and respect, absence of ego, sincerity, support, gentleness.

Example: In a team experiencing tensions among employees, holding a "kindness week" where everyone tries to show support, friendliness, and kindness toward one another can help build a shared identity and sense of belonging in the team.

Developing the Attribute: It is appropriate to focus on developing kindness, first toward ourselves, and then toward others and society in general. Various religions and cultures sanctify kindness as one of the central values.

Self-development begins with awareness and the ability to reflect, prioritizing self-care (in the broad, non-egotistical sense —M.L.), reducing negative self-talk, cultivating resilience, and promoting mental health and well-being.

Development toward others continues with awareness, setting boundaries, empathy, gestures, and creating an environment where it is safe to express oneself and act.

Developing social kindness operates through leadership, cultivating social connections, empowerment and resilience programs, education, and creating support networks for individuals and groups in society that encourage a culture of kindness.

2.4 E - Empowerment

Definition: Business empowerment refers to decentralizing authority and decision-making from management to employees, granting them freedom of action, authorization for initiative, and encouragement to take responsibility.

Personal empowerment refers to an individual's ability to take responsibility for their personal and professional development.

The concept of empowerment is central in many fields- including psychology, sociology, feminism, gender studies, and more.

Core Attributes: Integrity, beliefs, self-confidence, courage, independence, knowledge, leadership, resource availability, self-awareness, persistence.

Example: The growth of a person from the margins of society through a social program, and as a result, their development of an enterprise to advance disadvantaged populations.

Developing the Attribute: Developing personal empowerment is a process of accumulating confidence, control, and agency regarding our lives. It includes not only the recognition of our strengths and abilities but also the initiative to lead changes, as the self-empowerment we have already developed is a significant driving factor in change (these two concepts, empowerment and change, are intertwined).

Developing personal empowerment involves self-discovery, confronting limiting beliefs, self-awareness, reflection, and a deeper understanding, while also dealing with our fears and concerns. Continuous learning is a tool that helps us continue to empower ourselves further and further.

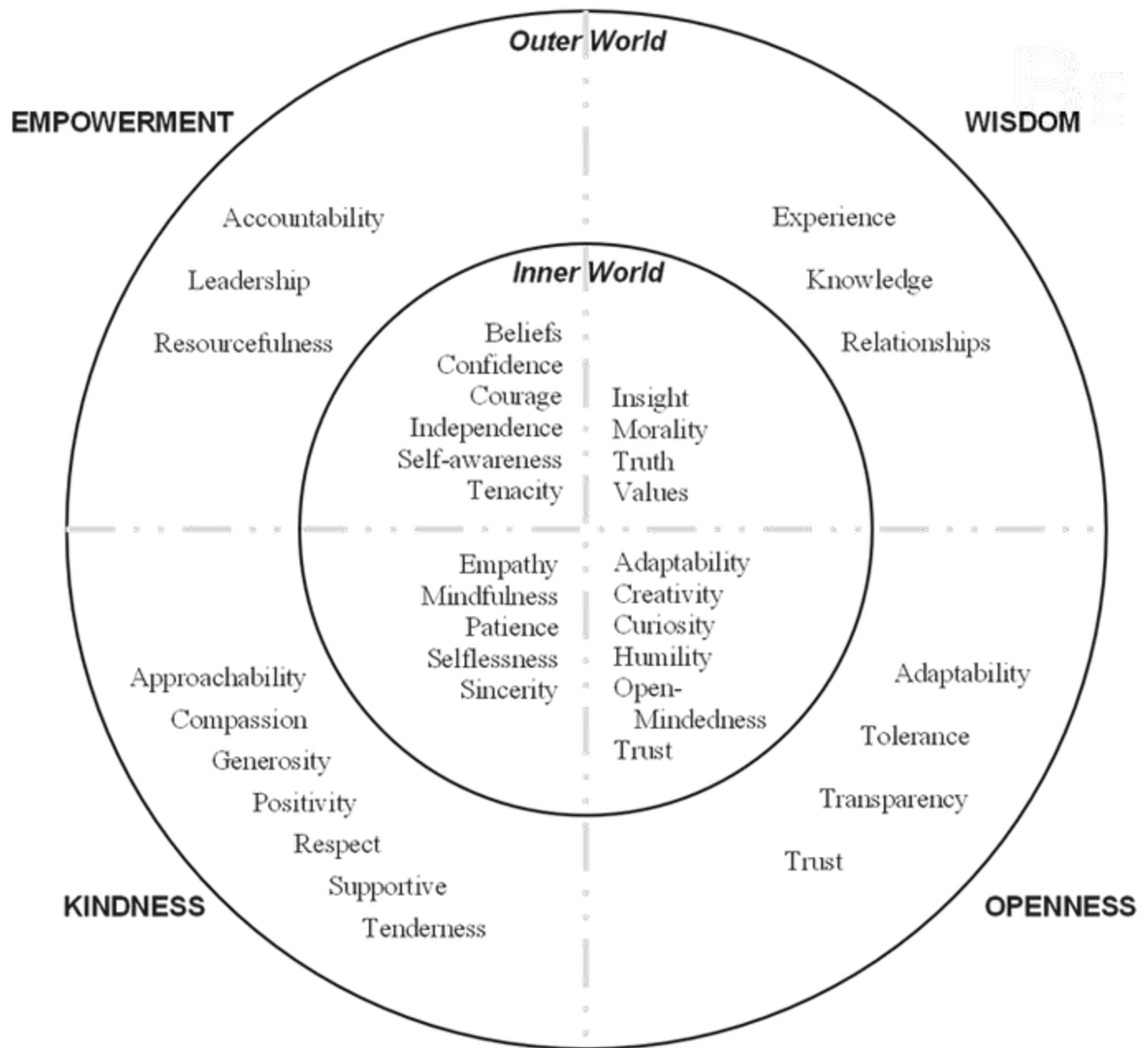
At the societal level, collective empowerment develops through building supportive communities, knowledge networks, collaborations, and collaborative projects. Society can also empower the individual through advocacy, activism, and programs to strengthen resilience.

3. Integrating

The attributes listed above —wisdom, openness, kindness, and empowerment — are each important in their own right. But the integration is no less significant: First, each attribute influences and impacts the other qualities. Second, the combination of the attributes creates a holistic whole. This whole is synergistic and affects spiritual awakening, which will enable us, as mentioned, to become better people —each person for their own advancement, but no less significantly, to transform us into greater contributors to society in general.

Some of the core attributes mentioned above are common to all four attributes and receive slightly different expression in each one (for example, morality); some are more relevant to specific attributes but are not foreign to others. The attributes are different- yet they are built from shared and similar components.

Each of the attributes, and indeed their combination together, affects us in all four aspects of well-being: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. And if we want to summarize the connection and uniqueness of each of the attributes, the model below optimally presents them:



And if we truly succeed in cultivating wisdom, openness, kindness, and empowerment, not as four separate virtues, but as an integrated way of being, we will have indeed been blessed.