

Ground and Grow

Change from within

What is it?

Ground and Grow is a process of transformation that invites us to first connect with what already exists, and from there open up to change.

Rather than focusing on the new and different, we ground in our own lives and context, building our inner confidence and awareness to integrate change in a way that's meaningful and sustainable.

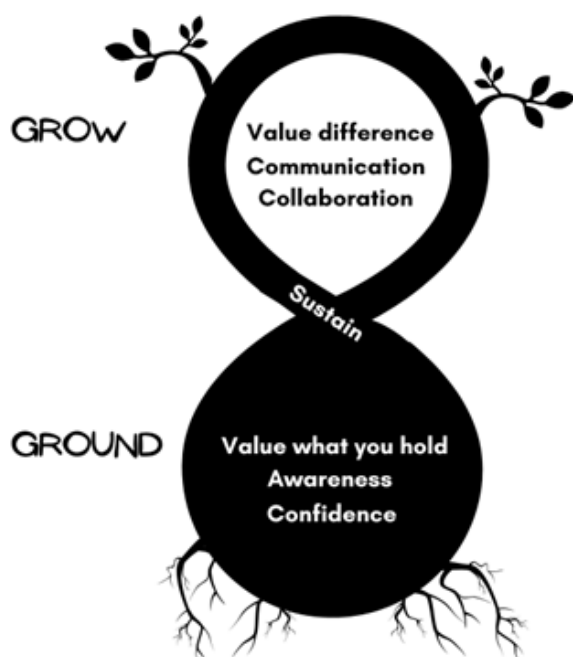
Why now?

We live in an uncertain and rapidly changing world. The new and different is ever-present and often overwhelming. Moving into the future valuing what we hold, whilst responding to opportunities to evolve, is key to ensure that change happens with us and not just to us.

Maintaining cultural difference and fostering diverse perspectives are essential for learning and adaptation. At the same time, grounding in shared values, local knowledge, and established practices supports efficiency, depth of connection and a sense of belonging. Together, they strengthen our resilience and ability to thrive.

Currently, the unequal concentration of power and wealth has led to the imposition of best practice and outsider models in many different fields of work and life. This has undermined our local practices and reduced the diversity of approaches. Ground and Grow offers a powerful alternative.

How does it work?



Ground and Grow can be applied as a ***mindset*** for enabling sustainable change which is accessible and simple to grasp.

It is also a ***process***, accompanied by specific learning outcomes and an ever-evolving set of tools and stories, which builds on extensive theory and practice.

The diagram details some of the key outcomes that are often associated with Ground and Grow. A third component, **Sustain**, represents the ongoing and interconnected nature of the process understanding / sensing when to lean more towards one or the other.

Where can it be applied?

Ground and Grow has been applied in many different settings. Based on established practice and theory¹, it is most impactful in complex environments where imposing top-down ‘best practice’ solutions is ineffective. In our experience, Ground and Grow can be vital for:

- Facilitating cultural shifts rooted in local knowledge
- Supporting cultural relations and the development of soft skills
- Introducing new ideas and concepts in a respectful, context-aware way
- Enabling community-led innovation
- Building resilient, collaborative networks

Below are three examples of how and where Ground and Grow has been applied.

Climate Skills

How can we equip the next generation to both mitigate and adapt to climate change—while also leading the way in a just transition? Partners around the world are using the Ground and Grow methodology to co-create impactful, locally grounded responses. These partners include farmers and extractive communities in Brazil, universities in Vietnam and Maharashtra, and alternative energy providers in Indonesia. Together, they are shaping climate solutions that are deeply rooted in their cultural and regional contexts.

Taqaddam: Life Skills Education

How do we serve the needs of the present, whilst also preparing young people for an uncertain future? This is a challenge for all educators; it can also be a source of tension. We embedded the Ground and Grow approach in an existing life skills programme for school and college students in the MENA region and the UK. Beginning with co-development of national strategies with education leaders and teachers this enabled a programmatic shift away from outsider-led workshops to local schools owning, adapting and integrating life-skills outcomes for students.

Youth Connect: Middle East and North Africa

Building the skills, resilience, and well-being of young people in regions affected by conflict and unrest demands deep political and cultural sensitivity. In response, partners have reimagined the Ground and Grow methodology^[1] as both a learning journey for youth and a framework for fostering local ownership of action strategies. This inclusive approach brings together a wide range of stakeholders to co-create solutions grounded in local realities.

See the Create Adapt website www.createadapt.org for more information and tools.

¹ A brief overview of the theoretical foundations of the model are outlined in the bibliography.

Bibliography

Below is an overview of some of the relevant theory which underpins the Ground and Grow methodology. For further information please contact Create Adapt.

Ground outcomes emphasise noticing, valuing and deepening existing patterns of behaviour and relationships – those we are already holding and those that hold us. This builds on research which indicates how valuing existing patterns, routines and existing practice supports:

- Improved sense of self (identity)[1]
- Improved sense of belonging[2]
- Improved health[3]
- Improved ability to make sense[4]
- Improved sense of control[5]
- Improved sense of ownership[6]
- Improved efficiency in working together in a stable and predictable context[7]

Grow outcomes emphasise valuing difference, bridging and linking to other people and contexts, leading new opportunities outside of your immediate social sphere. This builds on research which indicates the importance of how being connected to and valuing diversity supports:

- Improved ability to learn and adapt in response to change[8]
- Improved ability to listen and communicate with others
- Improved creativity
- Improved ability to find solutions to intransigent problems
- Peaceful coexistence[9]

The outcomes are complimentary. For example, valuing difference should be accompanied by complimentary learning outcomes: valuing and being exposed to a variety of variety of perspectives in itself is not sufficient to make good choices, you also require the ability to ‘make sense’ of the new information you are exposed to.[10]

² The approach is also reframed and expressed in different languages in different ways. For example Grounding is referred to as ‘We are here’. In another version the language of Holding Opportunity is applied (Holding refers to Grounding and Opportunity to Growing).

- [1] Agency, Identity and the emergence of ritual experience:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2378023117710881>
- [2] <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210914-how-rituals-help-us-to-deal-with-uncertainty-and-stress> and Behaviour, Belonging and Belief: A Theory of Ritual Practice
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3108616>
- [3] Profiles of family routines during adolescence associated with profiles of health behaviours in young adulthood. *Journal of Health Psychology*. doi: 10.1177/1359105317726149 and Denham, S.A. (2003). Relationships between family rituals, family routines, and health. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 9(3), 305-330. doi: 10.1177/1074840703255447.
- [4] *Research in cognitive psychology shows that whilst our brains are incredibly adaptable they are biased towards seeking simplicity. And this is important and necessary, because the world around us is filled with vast amounts of 'meaningless' information. To 'make meaning' the brain seeks out patterns. The patterns we're most likely to see reflect our collective as well as our personal histories. In short we tend to only see those things which have enabled us to survive and thrive in the past. By automatically reducing the complexity of the information available we optimise our chance of survival.*
- [5] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6378489/> and flexible habits:
<https://news.mit.edu/2012/understanding-how-brains-control-our-habits-1029>
- [6] Add some stuff here from all the development literature around ownership and sustainability emerging from building on existing cultural practice..
- [7] Harrist, A.W., Henry, C.S., Liu, C., & Morris, A.S. (2019). Family resilience: The power of rituals and routines in family adaptive systems. In B.H. Fiese, M. Celano, K. Deater-Deckard, E.N. Jouriles & M.A. Whisman (Eds) *Abar, C.C., Koban, K., Farnett, S., Mendola, K., & Clark, G. (2017)*
- [8] *"Loose structures of interdependence are more adaptable to local conditions and ultimately resilient, however they lack the ability to disseminate innovation and information. Whereas tightly coupled systems are able to disseminate information but rarely innovate and are vulnerable to shock."* (Kauffmann, 1993); (Marion, 1999).
- [9] *"Multi-dimensionality as opposed to polarisation. Valuing diverse perspectives and acknowledging complexity can mitigate the emergence of polarised perspectives (and the formation of ingroups and outgroups) which occurs when conflict escalates. In addition it can help in shifting problem identification locally from being perceived as one-dimensional to that of a multitude of smaller issue-specific conflicts which are dependent on multiple perspectives, needs and interests."*(Complexity Theory and Conflict Transformation, Hendrick Diane, 2009, University of Bradford.) Coleman refers to the reduction in multidimensionality as conflict escalates. These dynamics have been studied in work on the creation of enemy images (Northrup, 1989), the increase in stereotyping that accompanies polarisation within a conflict (Fisher, 1990), the rich and diverse images we have of own group members in contrast to the paucity of characteristics attributed to members of another group or that group as a whole (Hewstone, 1986); (Kelman, 2001). In addition to this, *"bridging social capital creating the conditions for peace in complex social structures – societally communities that have more complex social structures where groups play together, organise together and communicate across ethnic lines, you see less inter-ethnic violence"*.
- [10] Alongside exposure to different ideas people require *"the cultivation of an ability to make connections between the problem aspects made visible by differing approaches"*.