

Simple, Complicated, Complex

There is a lot of talk about the chaos and unpredictability of our world, but in the midst of this chaos is the suggestion that we meet it with intention. In *Getting to Maybe*, authors Westley, Zimmerman and Patton set out their proposition that, if we start with intention, even recognizing that things are in constant flux, we have greater success. The question posed is, "To what extent and in what ways can we be deliberate and intentional about those things that seem to emerge without our control?" How can we bring intention together with the unpredictability of our situations? Some points to ponder:

- We must understand that there are three types of challenges:
 - Simple—like baking a cake where the recipe is essential, and if you follow it, you can replicate it. It can be divided into parts with a specific order for combining.
 - Complicated—like sending a rocket to the moon. Key elements of each rocket must be identical to succeed, and it requires exact relationship of parts. With this, there is a high degree of certainty of the outcome.
 - Complex—like raising a child (or working together on a team?). Every child is unique; even if you do things exactly the same way every time, the outcome is still uncertain.
- To deal with the complex, we start by understanding the situation that is the source of our discontent. Understanding brings us face to face with the powers keeping the system in place, which can help us discover and reframe critical resources. For instance, in working together on a team, what is it that holds the team together? In what direction(s) is our energy pointing?
- "Questions are key"—in situations where there are no final answers, questions can help us see the issues.
- "Tensions and ambiguities are revealed through questioning"—social change can reveal and create tensions. If we understand them, we can engage with them.
- "Relationships are key to understanding and engaging with the complex dynamics of social innovation"—for social change to work, everyone involved must play a role. What happens between people, organizations, and communities matters.
- "A certain mindset is crucial"—tolerating ambiguity, being open to inquiry, and embracing many perspectives.

The authors describe social innovators who make a difference because they see something that needs doing, and they feel called to do it. Whether that is making a difference in gang violence in Boston or making a spiritual difference in the lives of people in your larger community, these ideas can help to bring out creative solutions in a world of uncertainty.