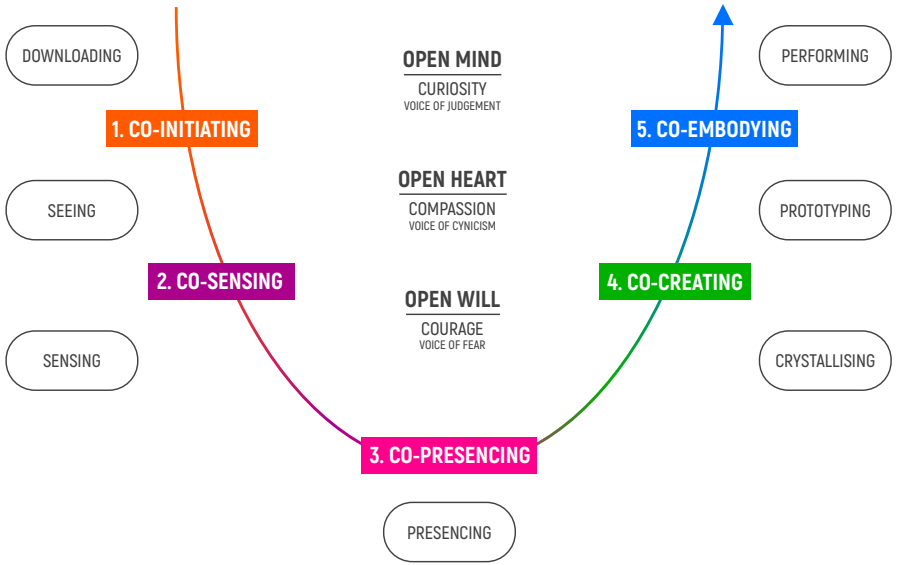
TOOL

THEORY U



Adapted from Scharmer, 2007

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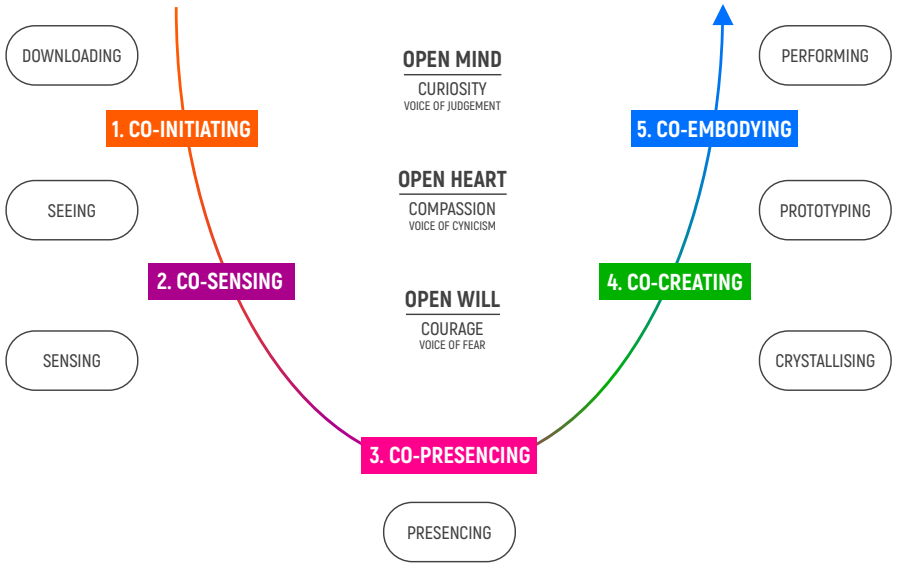

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What is it?

Theory U is a process framework to support innovation and breakthroughs in complex and rapidly changing situations, with diverse perspectives and possibilities about what the right course of action might be. It slows down the human habit of jumping too quickly from problem identification to problem solving, and instead takes more time to fully understand the problem at hand, work systemically to understand its dimensions, and then experiment with possible solutions before moving into implementation and scaling. The idea is that slowing down early in the process gets to much more resilient, well-supported, and holistic solutions that can then more quickly be rolled out.

How is it used?

Theory U is a social innovation process archetype that provides a structure to help move forward in the face of complex, adaptive, and emergent challenges. It provides a container within which many other theories and tools can be used as well, and helps to create a process North star to help groups of people find a path even when they are in an iterative and messy process. It is being used by people all over the world to tackle challenges related to ecological, social, and economic issues.

More info:

WEBSITE: The Presencing Institute
BOOK: Theory U, Scharmer
COURSE: ULab 1.0, MIT EdX (free)

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