

We often know an untruth when we hear it. Many are deliberate and are understood by both speakers and listeners. Such untruths are meant to manipulate, lull, or entice us, or to postpone action, justify a self-serving action, to gain or preserve power, or even to deny an uncomfortable reality. We are told that one of the most important tenets of systems theory is that information should not be distorted, delayed, or withheld. Lies corrupt and distort information systems.

Be aware of verbal traps and popular untruths. You can deny the idea that owning more material goods makes one a better person. You can question the notion that more for the rich will help the poor. And please remember that a warning about the future is not a prediction of doom, it is a recommendation to follow a different path.

The truth enables us to take informed actions. There is much work to be done to create a sustainable world. New farming methods have to be developed, new businesses have to be started and old ones redesigned to reduce their footprint. Land has to be restored, parks protected, energy system transformed, and international agreements reached. Each individual will find his own best role on this journey.

Learning means the willingness to go slowly, to try things, and to collect information about the effects of actions including the crucial information that an action is not working. Whatever you do, be humble. No one can be free to learn, not even the world's leaders, without patience and forgiveness.

*“Finding the right balance between the apparent opposites of urgency and patience, accountability and forgiveness is a task that requires compassion, humility, clearheadedness, honesty, and - that hardest of words, that seemingly scarcest of all resources – love”*

(Meadows *et al.*, 2004, p.281).

The deepest difference between optimists and pessimists is their position in the debate about whether human beings are able to operate collectively on a basis of love. Donella Meadows, a compelling futurist, believed that individualism and shortsightedness were the greatest problems of our current social system and the deepest cause of unsustainability. A far better alternative, she said, is love and compassion institutionalized in collective solutions. The sustainability revolution will have to be a collective transformation that permits the best of human nature to be expressed and nurtured. For many of us, sustainability is the social acceptance of stewardship.