

# ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

## Teacher's Guide



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### Buyosphere: The Consumer Awareness Revolution with Dara O'Rourke and Daniel Goleman

#### Discussion Topics:

1. What is the value or lack of value of transparency in consumer products, for the consumer, and for the companies making the products?
2. O'Rourke mentions that consumer thinking about the ingredients/chemicals in products is largely driven by scandals. What does it mean that we're generally uninterested until disaster strikes?
3. GoodGuide and other rating systems rely on trust in their dispassionate authority, and in the quality of their data. What are the issues with credibility of this system? What are the benefits?
4. What elements are considered in Life Cycle Assessment? Describe how GoodGuide develops its ratings.
5. GoodGuide lists the political contributions of the different companies it ranks. What are the tacit assumptions in this?
6. How can product managers leverage systems like GoodGuide?  
What does it mean to product managers that this information is now available to consumers by scanning a bar code?
7. O'Rourke says that most product managers would be surprised to find out what chemicals are in their own products. If not the ingredients, what decisions drive products? What are product managers paying attention to?
8. Goleman mentions that business logic (driven by price and availability) is different from consumer logic (driven by emotions). Does GoodGuide provide a way to fuse these two logics?

**Project: Have students choose a product (probably personal care) that they use every day, and research its rating on GoodGuide. Discover what factors go into the rating, and where that data comes from. Also research the company that makes the product. Do they agree with the ranking, why or why not? Did they discover anything that surprised them? Did it change their purchasing habits?**

**Check the GoodGuide ratings against the database at [cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://cosmeticsdatabase.com).**

## Radical Transparency: How Business Can Leverage consumer Climate Change With Gregory Norris with Daniel Goleman

### Discussion Topics:

1. What's the difference between upstream and downstream impacts?
2. Describe LCA methodology - what does it access?
3. What is a unit process? Describe the life-cycle of a T-shirt, and identify the unit-processes.
4. LCA always deals with quantitative figures - 'how much' of something. According to Norris every product's life-cycle has hundreds of toxic chemicals, pollutants, etc., in it. What does this mean for claims of 'green' or 'sustainable' products? What would be the goal of a truly 'green' product?
5. Describe the concept of 'embodied energy'.  
What are the inputs that go into a bottle of Coke? How much energy is embodied there?
6. Describe how economic and environmental goals align on the idea of efficiency.
7. According to Norris, economic development can have a greater benefit than pollution's negative impact depending on the social context of that point in the supply chain. How can poverty go up even if income goes up? What is required to make poverty go down while incomes go up?
8. What is the 80/80 rule? What are the ramifications of 80% of environmental impacts being upstream in supply chains for 80% of sectors?

**Project: Have students do a mock LCA on the same product they researched through GoodGuide. What are the ingredients? Where do they come from, how are they produced, and what goes into their production? Draw a schematic that maps out the embodied unit processes in the product.**

## Environmental Health, Human Healing With Michael Lerner and Daniel Goleman

### Discussion Topics:

1. Most of the 10,000 industrial chemicals in use have not been tested for human health impacts. The 10% or so that have been tested were tested at high levels and measured in adult men. What are the potential problems with using untested chemicals? What are the benefits?
2. Explain and describe epigenetics. Genes are designed to turn on and off according to what molecules they meet in the environment. How does this understanding differ from the traditional understanding of genes?
3. Explain the concept of social epigenetics. If the emotional milieu impacts gene expression and disease, and the environmental milieu does the same - is there any way we are not 'products of our environment'?
5. Compare the Ornish diet with the story of spontaneous remission in the man who ate and did what he wanted. What does 'health' mean in this context?
4. Do you believe there is a relationship between personal healing and planetary healing? Can the planet be healed?

# Leading the Necessary Revolution

## With Peter Senge with Daniel Goleman

### Discussion Topics:

1. Senge mentions that taking the moral high ground when advocating for sustainability within an organization usually gets nowhere. Explain why this is, and what approaches advocates are better off taking.
2. Describe the stages of sustainability according to Senge:
  - Non-compliance
  - Compliance
  - Beyond compliance (proactive within existing mindset: “being less bad”)
  - Thinking about innovation
  - Thinking holistically about the system
3. How does holistic thinking about the system relate with the traditional business case of value propositions?
4. Describe what Senge considers effective advocacy.
5. To advocate effectively, you need to know the language of the system, and how sustainability connects to the cultural DNA of a company. Can you think of different scenarios where different language would be needed?
6. What did you learn from the anecdotes Senge provided? What stuck with you, why?
7. Getting beyond limiting assumptions can give a sense of your worldview – talk with someone who has a totally different assumptions than you do about an issue. See if you can be genuinely interested in why they feel that way, and understand their motivation.
8. The second step of sustainability is how you make it visible to the consumer. Can you think of ways that companies can achieve this beyond advertising? How could you engage the customer in the process?
9. Why do you think integrating sustainability in business is important? If it’s not, why not?

**Project: Have students think of an issue or opinion they feel very strongly about. Have them write down their argument in a short paragraph. Ask them to spend a few hours (or less) reading arguments from the other side of this issue or opinion. Have them create a similar paragraph to theirs from the other perspective. Compare the two and see if students can understand the motivation and reasoning of the other side.**