



Rockin' to the Fourth Turning Blues

Stephen Palmer

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About The Center for Social Leadership

The Center for Social Leadership (CSL) is a think tank and action organization dedicated to building [social leaders](#) for the 21st Century.

Humanity is experiencing dramatic changes. Traditional leadership is broken. Conventional human organization based on hierarchies and formal authority is outdated. Human consciousness is evolving. Technology has transformed the way we interact and enhanced our ability to have impact—for good or ill. The Center for Social Leadership was formed to steer these changes to improve the health of society, preserve freedom, and ensure peace and prosperity for humanity. A new vision of leadership is needed. Not the old, hierarchical, positional, authoritative, privileged-elite leadership, but a new democratic, action-determined, service-oriented leadership. Through this social leadership mankind can achieve unprecedented happiness and fulfillment.

Learn more and engage with CSL by [reading our e-book](#) and joining our mailing list at www.TheSocialLeader.com.

“It’s not about someone doing everything. It’s about everyone doing something.”



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Change & Choice

“The next Fourth Turning could literally destroy us as a nation and people, leaving us cursed in the histories of those who endure and remember. Alternatively, it could ennoble our lives, elevate us as a community, and inspire acts of consummate heroism...”

-William Strauss & Neil Howe in [The Fourth Turning](#)

In times of crisis and uncertainty, the natural tendency is to “hunker down” and wait for the storms to pass. But in a [Fourth Turning](#), hunkering down is the *modus operandi* of sleepwalkers. If you’re waiting for everything to settle down and get back to “normal,” you’re dreaming—and you’d better wake up fast.

“Normal” is being ripped apart, turned on its head, chewed up and spit out by a dizzyingly complex array of factors. The tornado of change is tearing through every aspect of society, leaving in its wake chaos, catastrophe, conflict, confusion—and *tremendous opportunity*.

We're experiencing much more than a cyclical recession—we're in the midst of a [radical and fundamental societal transformation](#).

Here's your choice: You can either wait, head down, in a breadline (whether real or metaphorical). Or you can [cowboy up](#), square your shoulders, stare the beast of change in the eye, wrestle him to the ground and take him to the bank. You can choose to be either a victim, or an [agent of change](#). You can either suffer by waiting, or [thrive by creating](#). But escaping change isn't an option.

Read on to discover the formula for mastering your fate in a [Fourth Turning](#) of epic proportions. While others are shuffling to the old blues, you can be rocking to the beat of new possibilities.

What is a Fourth Turning?

In 1997, William Strauss and Neil Howe published [The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy](#). As the book explains:

“Anglo-American society has entered a new era—a new turning—every two decades or so...Turnings come in cycles of four...Together, the four turnings...comprise history's seasonal rhythm of growth, maturation, entropy, and destruction:

- ***The First Turning is a High***, an upbeat era of strengthening institutions and weakening individualism, when a new civic order implants and the old values regime decays.
- ***The Second Turning is an Awakening***, a passionate era of spiritual upheaval, when the civic order comes under attack from a new values regime.
- ***The Third Turning is an Unraveling***, a downcast era of strengthening individuals and weakening institutions, when the old civic order decays and the new values regime implants.
- ***The Fourth Turning is a Crisis***, a decisive era of secular upheaval, when the values regime propels the replacement of the old civic order with a new one.”

After detailing the cycles through centuries of history, the authors continue to predict ominously (remember this was published almost thirteen years ago):

“Around the year 2005, a sudden spark will catalyze a Crisis mood. Remnants of the old social order will disintegrate. Political and economic trust will implode. Real hardship will beset the land, with severe distress that could involve questions of class, race, nation, and empires. Yet this time of trouble will bring seeds of social rebirth. Americans will share a regret about recent mistakes—and a resolute new consensus about what to do. The very survival of the nation will feel at stake. **Sometime before the year 2025, Americans will pass through a great gate in history, commensurate with the American Revolution, Civil War, and twin emergencies of the Great Depression and World War II.**” [emphasis added]

Visit their [website](#) and [read their book](#) to learn more.

We're painfully aware of the symptoms of our current Fourth Turning: [9/11](#), the [housing bubble](#), [government bailouts](#), [culture clashes](#), [unemployment](#), [vanishing retirement accounts](#), [betrayals of trust](#), [political feuds](#), [low confidence in government](#), the pervasive feeling that we're just [off track](#).

But the reality is that our current transformations are even deeper and more fundamental than these symptoms. Events and issues only reflect the change occurring at the level of *form*. By form I mean the organizational, governing structures of every aspect of society. Abortion and gay rights are issues; how their legal status is determined is a question of form.

[Family, community, business, education, media, religion and government](#) forms are evolving much faster than our current collective capability to adapt. What's more, technology is advancing and impacting these forms on an unprecedented scale.

"The acceleration of change in our time is, itself, an elemental force...unless man quickly learns to control the rate of change in his personal affairs as well as in society at large, we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown."

-Alvin Toffler in [Future Shock](#)

So how can you personally cope and thrive in the midst of these changes?

The Formula for Thriving in a 4th Turning

Although more specific rules apply to particular components of the shift, the following six points comprise the universal formula that runs through them all:

1. Turn Inward
2. Find Your Core
3. Leadership Education
4. Build Community
5. Earn, Innovate & Save
6. Lead

Turn Inward

"A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson in [*Self-Reliance*](#)

Know this: To whom you turn for support and guidance during this crisis will largely determine your success throughout it and beyond.

In the past we've relied primarily on experts, rulers, caretakers and institutions for answers and support. Now we must dig deep into our souls and discover our unconquerable power as creative beings. And we must [connect with the Source](#) of that power. Among other disciplines, practically this should include prayer and meditation.

"We carry within us the wonders we seek without us." -Sir Thomas Browne

Turning inward goes beyond personal responsibility and willpower, though these are also essential. This is about raising consciousness. This is an unleashing of dormant energy and inspiration that previously have been stifled by inner fear and complacency and flawed external forms. It is learning to trust our intuition, follow our creativity and choose confidence.

In the post-modern era facilitated by the current Fourth Turning, imagination and intuition trump logic and tradition.

In this new model experts and institutions still have a place, but as auxiliary, rather than primary, supports. This is not a reactive approach based on democratic antipathy toward [aristocratic expertise](#). Rather, this new model means that *everyone* becomes an expert on his or her mission through education and dedication.

Essential Reading:

- [Self-Reliance](#) by Ralph Waldo Emerson
- [Free the Beagle: A Journey to Destinae](#) by Roy H. Williams
- [A Million Miles in a Thousand Years](#) by Donald Miller
- [Social Leadership: A Fresh Vision for Old Problems](#) by the Center for Social Leadership
- [The Prosperity Paradigm](#) by Steve D'Annunzio

Find Your Core

“As you live your values, your sense of identity, integrity, control, and inner-directedness will infuse you with both exhilaration and peace. You will define yourself from within, rather than by people’s opinions or by comparisons to others. ‘Wrong’ and ‘right’ will have little to do with being found out.”

-Stephen R. Covey in [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#)

When turmoil abounds in your external world, it is imperative to identify and adhere steadfastly to an unchanging internal core. This core, comprised of the anchor of principles, the rudder of values, and the compass of [Soul Purpose](#), provides both strength and direction.

What do you stand for and believe in? For what are you willing to pledge your “life, fortune, and sacred honor”? What things are worth never compromising? What are the most important things in your life? What are you passionate about? What were you born to do?

Identify those things and make them permeate all you are, say and do. Be unyielding in their pursuit. Never give up on them, regardless of the possible benefits for doing so. For example, this may mean turning down a lucrative job, even though you’re unemployed and struggling, because it would force you to compromise your values.

“This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

-William Shakespeare in [Hamlet](#)

Essential Reading:

- [*The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*](#) by Stephen R. Covey
- [*Magnificent Obsession*](#) by Lloyd C. Douglass
- [*The Kinship of Self-Control*](#) by William George Jordan
- [*Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*](#) by Parker J. Palmer
- The Scriptural Texts of Your Choice

Leadership Education

“...liberal education consists in reminding oneself of human excellence, of human greatness.” -[Leo Strauss](#)

There are three main systems of education: conveyor belt for the masses, specialized training for professionals, and leadership, or liberal (meaning “mind-expanding”), education for leaders and entrepreneurs. The first teaches *what* to think, the second *when* to think, and the third *how* to think.

Knowing how to think is critical in Fourth Turnings. Since everything is engulfed in change and normal is being redefined, the thrivers create norms and [tread paths](#) for others to follow. By understanding history and human nature, one’s ability to predict and understand trends is enhanced. By learning from a broad range of fields, diverse connections can be made that others don’t see.

Leadership education fosters innovation, ingenuity, adaptability, confidence, resilience and courage—the necessary attributes and skills needed in times of overwhelming change. This isn’t about degrees, diplomas or status—it’s about genuine *learning*.

“The technology of tomorrow requires not millions of lightly lettered men, ready to work in unison at endlessly repetitive jobs, it requires not men who take orders in unblinking fashion, aware that the price of bread is

mechanical submission to authority, but men who can make critical judgments, who can weave their way through novel environments, who are quick to spot new relationships in the rapidly changing reality.”

-Alvin Toffler in [Future Shock](#)

Essential Reading:

- [A Thomas Jefferson Education: Teaching a Generation of Leaders for the 21st Century](#) by Oliver DeMille
- [What is Liberal Education?](#) by Leo Strauss
- [Future Shock](#) by Alvin Toffler
- [Five Minds for the Future](#) by Howard Gardner
- [A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future](#) by Daniel Pink

Build Community

“Human beings can’t help it: we need to belong. One of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a tribe, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people.”

-Seth Godin in [Tribes](#)

As traditional safety nets collapse and sources of opportunity dry up, you must create your own. As you drown in impersonal forces, you need warm human interaction to buoy you up. As traditional community lines are blurred, you must define yours, expand your comfort zone, and stress commonalities over differences.

Fourth Turnings, when societies are literally fighting for survival, are no time to accentuate the relatively petty differences that separate us.

On the surface this may appear to conflict with the first two components of the formula, which focus on your individuality. In fact, these components are synergistic. Getting in touch with yourself and finding your core gives you the internal security you need to connect with a broader circle of people than you ever have before. They unlock your desire and ability to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. Teamwork is a primary Fourth Turning survival mechanism, and you must become a strong link in the chain.

When possible, build and strengthen relationships from the most basic levels outward. In other words, focus first on your immediate family, then extended family, then close community, followed by religious and civic affiliations, work associations, and so on. Turn off the TV and make family, not media, the lifeblood of culture.

Though it may not be essential, depending on your lifestyle, economics and goals, [social networking](#) should most likely play a role in this process. While technology-facilitated connections are generally more superficial than intimate friendships, the [expanded reach can pay significant dividends](#) over time.

Essential Reading:

- [*Bonds that Make us Free: Healing Our Relationships, Coming to Ourselves*](#) by C. Terry Warner
- [*Our Home*](#) by C.E. Sargent
- [*Hub Mentality: Shifting from Business Transactions to Community Interactions*](#) by Carl Woolston & Stephen Palmer (followed by [this recorded webinar](#))
- [*Masters of Networking: Building Relationships for Your Pocketbook & Soul*](#) by Ivan Misner
- [*Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation, & Earn Trust*](#) by Chris Brogan
- [*Connected: The Surprising Power of Social Networks & How They Shape Our Lives*](#) by Nicholas Christakis & James Fowler

Earn, Innovate & Save

“Within the next two years, 72 percent of people working today will be in different jobs in the same or different companies and have different responsibilities requiring different talents and skills to achieve different results. And those people who fail to respond to the challenges of change will be most affected by it.”

-[Brian Tracy](#)

Fourth Turnings are indifferent to your starry-eyed visions and dazzling ideas. They're hostile toward high-flying speculators. They're heartless about [making jobs and industries vanish](#). They laugh in the face of those who feel entitled to everything working out just right.

With home economics, Fourth Turnings require hard-nosed pragmatism; rapid, fluid and continuous adaptation; wise risk management; and tough skin. This doesn't mean acting from fear; it means becoming shrewd and discerning. It means [staying on the cutting edge of trends, technology, economics and politics](#).

Whatever it takes, you must find a way to earn stable income. It's imperative to focus on what actually works, not on what you *want* to work or *think* should work. This will assuredly require creativity and flexibility. It may mean completely reinventing yourself, or applying your skills and knowledge in fundamentally different areas and positions. If your corporate position is cut, perhaps freelance work and/or consulting is your new path. Or if you're struggling alone, a strategic partnership may be needed.

It also means, according to Strauss and Howe, that "generalists with survival know-how will have the edge over specialists whose skills are useful only in an undamaged environment."

For entrepreneurs it means scaling back long-term ventures and focusing on real-time market feedback. If you think you have a good product idea, make a few test versions and see if you can sell them. You can't afford to make mistakes or take years bringing products to market. If it sells immediately, pursue it; if it takes too much investment and effort to get it

off the ground, scrap it for now. In business, speed now trumps size, quality is more important than quantity, and [long-term customer interaction](#) is far more valuable than immediate transactions.

“...you must make something work in the small before you bet the farm and market it to the masses. If you can't sell to 1 in 1000, why market to a million?” -[Seth Godin](#)

Get back to the basics with personal finance. Slash spending on luxury items. Never borrow to consume. Shred your credit cards. Religiously save 10 percent of your income. Strive to [reduce risk](#), [outpace inflation](#), and [limit taxation](#) in your investments. Avoid leveraged investments. Assume that all public safety nets are non-existent. Focus on emergency preparedness, especially food storage.

Measure success by personal meaning and fulfillment, rather than money, fame or status.

Essential Reading:

- [Killing Sacred Cows: Overcoming the Financial Myths that are Destroying Your Prosperity](#) by Garrett Gunderson
 - [The Coming Aristocracy: Education & the Future of Freedom](#) by Oliver DeMille
 - [The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual](#) by Levine, Locke, Searls, & Weinberger
 - [Survival is Not Enough: Why Smart Companies Abandon Worry & Embrace Change](#) by Seth Godin
 - [Revolutionary Wealth](#) by Alvin & Heidi Toffler
 - [The Soul of Money: Reclaiming the Wealth of Our Inner Resources](#) by Lynne Twist
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- [Free Agent Nation: The Future of Working for Yourself](#) by Daniel Pink

Lead

“...the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who choose to follow this principle...will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants.”

-Robert Greenleaf in [Servant Leadership](#)

Fourth Turning leadership is knowing your mission (see the first two steps of the formula), then applying it to serve others with faith, courage and perseverance. It doesn’t necessarily mean that you have followers—in fact, you probably won’t, at least not initially. Like the [submerged bottom of an iceberg](#), your influence during the Fourth Turning will be largely unseen and will go unrecognized, but it will pay off when it matters most.

Foundations of trust and respect are built during Fourth Turning crises; followers flock to legitimate Fourth Turning leaders in the First Turning rebuilding.

Focus your efforts on quiet, humble service, as opposed to emphatic evangelism. Measure your leadership by how many people you serve and how well you serve them, rather than your number of followers. Build platforms to share your voice and engage people, such as [blogs](#), book groups, newsletters, etc. Forget about institutional authority and formal position—just do your thing, do it for the right reasons and in the right way, and do it well.

“You don’t lead by pointing a finger and telling people some place to go. You lead by going to that place and making a case.”

-Ken Kesey

The fact is that if you execute the first five steps of the formula, leadership will come naturally and you won’t need much advice on how to do it.

Essential Reading:

- [Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us](#) by Seth Godin
- [Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness](#) by Robert Greenleaf
- [Love Leadership: The New Way to Lead in a Fear-Based World](#) by John Hope Bryant
- [Three Cups of Tea](#) by Greg Mortenson
- [Launching a Leadership Revolution](#) by Chris Brady & Orrin Woodward

Conclusion: Time to Rock

“Thus might the next Fourth Turning end in apocalypse—or glory. The nation could be ruined, its democracy destroyed, and millions of people scattered or killed. Or America could enter a new golden age, triumphantly applying shared values to improve the human condition.”

[-William Strauss & Neil Howe](#)

The first step of the well-known 12-step recovery program for addicts is recognizing and admitting the problem. Similarly, it’s time for Americans to wake up and recognize we’re in a potentially cataclysmic Fourth Turning—not merely a standard market downturn.

With recognition comes the ability to prepare. For those who choose to ignore history, the coming decades will be harsh and miserable. For the conscious and prepared, the challenge will be exhilarating.

So wake up and smell the Fourth Turning brew. Venture deep inside yourself, connect with your Creator, mine your untapped potential. Get crystal clear on your values, principles, and mission. Be diligent in your self-education. Strengthen your family and expand your community. Be realistic, innovative and wise with your home economics and personal finance. Then, be a servant, beacon and pillar to the world.

Because ready or not, here it comes...