

## ***Different Way of Seeing & Leading- Asset Building in Complex Systems***

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### **“Stretch and Fold”**

The natural process in systems where a restful, slower pace follows a period of high activity and work.

#### **Observe Stretch and Fold in Action:**

- A group meets with increasing frequency as a major event approaches, and then slows down or takes a break after the event occurs.
- You go to a conference and are learning many new concepts in a short period of time, and then feel yourself “hitting a wall” where you can’t absorb any new information. After a lunch break or a more physical activity, you find yourself refreshed and ready to dive in again.

#### **Decide if the Time is Right to Use Stretching and Folding:**

- When you are trying to balance activities directed inside your setting with activities outside in the larger community.
- When you are trying to maintain energy.
- When you see unpredictable swings between engaged, creative work and periods of isolation and stillness.

#### **Act:**

- Recognize this is a natural process and allow those who are ‘folding’ to do so, and stay connected with them.
- Help others understand what is going on to keep them from worrying about periods of lesser productivity.
- When holding a high-energy event, allow for some ‘down-time’ or vary the types of activities you offer to meet people’s needs to stretch and fold.

#### **Examples from Asset-Building Settings:**

Community initiatives often speed up with greater levels of activity around the start of school, and slow down or meet less frequently over the summer months.

A Minnesota initiative that had been running for a number of years, with monthly meetings and regular activities, took a break and spent a summer working in small groups using “Taking Asset Building Personally” as a study guide, in order to stretch their understanding of the assets. At the end of the summer, members who originally had felt they really “knew” the assets, remarked that they had stretched in some new ways and felt more grounded in the work after the change of pace and the deep dive into the assets.

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