

# Pyramid Lite<sup>▲</sup>



▲ **A Simplified Version of the *Pyramid*  
Workshop Process — PYRAMID 2012 Special Edition**

**Using the ISIS process to explore sustainability  
and create sustainable development ideas & initiatives**

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# Welcome to Pyramid! ▲

▲ Pyramid = A workshop process for exploring sustainability and for creating new ideas for action

**Pyramid** is a tool you can use with groups of any kind to learn more about sustainability — locally, or globally. You can also use it to create a sustainable development ideas and projects. The process is fun, fast-paced, and productive.

This short manual, **Pyramid Lite**, presents a simplified version of the more sophisticated Pyramid workshop tool that has been used around the world, with companies, government agencies, UN training programs, cities and towns, schools and universities.

You don't need any training to use Pyramid Lite. Just gather some people together, follow the workshop guide ... and watch what happens! We hope that you will find the process so engaging that you will want to go farther with Pyramid, and explore sustainability in more detail. To learn more, please visit the website of ISIS Academy: [www.ISISAcademy.com](http://www.ISISAcademy.com).



## The Global Sustainability Challenge

"Sustainability" means "able to continue." "Sustainability" is rising on the world's agenda, because sustainability problems are increasingly demanding the world's attention. The ongoing economic crisis, global warming and climate change, loss of species, limits to resources like water and fossil fuels, the gap between rich and poor ... these are things that cannot and should not continue. Problems like this require us to make changes. They are "unsustainable."

Many of these challenges are linked together. For example, the more fossil fuel we burn, the more carbon dioxide builds up in the atmosphere, and this warms up the planet. As the planet heats up, our ability to provide food and water to everyone is likely to get more difficult. That could, in turn, increase poverty, or at least make it much harder to reduce poverty. Everything appears to be linked to everything else!

We call this the Global Sustainability Challenge. Everyone is affected by this Challenge ... and everyone can be part of the solution. Work teams, associations, school classes, government agencies, clubs ... we need everyone on the job, helping to make change and turn our common boat onto a more sustainable course.



## Imagine 10,000 Initiatives ...

Pyramid has been used by hundreds of groups around the world, for learning about sustainability, creating projects, or even for creating national and international strategies. Our goal in creating Pyramid Lite, a simplified version, is to make it easier for more groups to do this process themselves. We imagined the possibility of 10,000 different groups around the world using this process, to help accelerate the transition to a more sustainable world ... and created Pyramid Lite to help move that dream a little closer to reality.

We updated the manual in connection with Pyramid 2012, a global “happening” that we have initiated for February 17, 18, and 19, 2012. During that weekend, Alan AtKisson (who invented the Pyramid workshop and the underlying ISIS Method) will be keynoting the Global Issues Conference in Manila, Philippines. Hundreds of high school students will be doing 20 simultaneous Pyramid workshops. So we thought, why not globalize this? We’re inviting groups of all kinds — from schools, universities, community organizations, companies, even just groups of friends and neighbors — to “do a Pyramid” during 17-19 February, and to post the results at the Pyramid 2012 website. Visit [www.pyramid2012.net](http://www.pyramid2012.net) for more information.

Whether you’re participating in Pyramid 2012, or just want to try out Pyramid in a “Lite” way, This manual will guide you. Step by step, you’ll take your group through the process of gathering information about a sustainability challenge, learning about why that problem is happening, brainstorming ideas about what can be done, and thinking through a strategy for making those ideas real.

Since the first Pyramid was run in 2002 over two hundred workshops have been held around the world, involving several thousand people, from education, government, business, and community groups. Help us create hundreds of new Pyramids — resulting in thousands of new ideas, initiatives, and inspired people, working for sustainable development worldwide! The search for global sustainability is one of the greatest transformations the world has ever known. Be part of it! Build a Pyramid!

*- The AtKisson Group*

# Part I: Building the Pyramid

"Building the Pyramid" is a fun, engaging group activity that results in new ideas for sustainable development — and the possibility that those ideas will turn into sustainability projects, initiatives, strategies, policies, and plans.

"Sustainability" means the environmental, economic, and social health of our communities, our organizations, and our whole world. A *sustainable* world is a world that's *built to last* — just as the original pyramids of ancient times were built to last.

The "Pyramid" workshop process has been used around the world by cities, communities, government agencies, companies, schools, military bases, NGO activists ... and even just groups of friends. The step-by-step guide below simplifies the process and makes it accessible to anyone who wants to contribute to building a better world.

## Pyramid Around the World

The Pyramid process has been used by groups around the world to learn about sustainability, and to create new plans and projects. From Sydney to Singapore to Stockholm, from Poland to Portugal to Pittsburgh, thousands of people have participated in learning and planning, resulting in hundreds of new initiatives.



## First, Choose a Central Challenge

The Pyramid process starts with the choice of a **Central Challenge** — a significant problem, question, or issue that your group would like to focus attention on. Then it guides your group through discussion exercises, moving from information sharing, to reflection and idea brainstorming, to consensus building, and finally to basic planning for success.

By the end of it, your group will have reached a solid agreement to take action, and committed itself to a tangible Action Plan. Implementing that action will make a real and lasting contribution to addressing the Central Challenge.

Along the way, the group also *builds a pyramid* — either physically, or virtually.

Each step in the process is a "Level" in the pyramid. The final Level is the very top of the Pyramid, the "Capstone." Just as the top of a pyramid is where all four sides come together to make a point, the end of the Pyramid process brings your group together to make a "Capstone Agreement" — an agreement to take action!

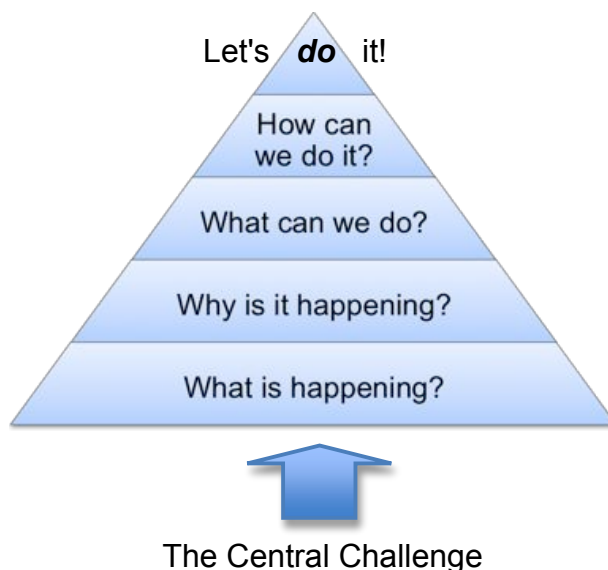
Now you're ready to start building your own Pyramid. Have fun!

## The Central Challenge

What interests you and your group most? Climate change? Energy costs? Air and water quality? Or are you more interested in a general exploration of the "big picture"?

Use the Central Challenge to frame your starting point and focus your group's discussion.

It can be local or global ... or anything in between.



## The Process in Brief

Starting with your Central Challenge, you will: (1) share information about *what* is happening, (2) think about *why* it's happening, (3) brainstorm ideas about *what you can do* to address it, and (4) make a plan about *how* to implement your ideas. To cap it off ... make a commitment to *do* it!

## Getting Started

### First, plan your event:

#### Find a good location!

When planning your event, be sure to pick a good *place* where people will feel comfortable, and where you will have the right atmosphere and enough space for doing an inspirational group exercise.

Pick a place, and a date – set aside at least half a day or an evening, or if possible a full day!

Invite people! A Pyramid Group can be any kind of group, from a school class to a corporate work team. Anywhere from 12-30 people is a good size.

Decide whether you are going to build a physical pyramid. It is not a requirement, but it is great fun and it stimulates creativity! If you do want to build a physical pyramid model as part of your workshop, consult the Pyramid Construction Guide (Section III) to find out what you need to prepare.

In any case you will need paper and pens to document your work. Maybe some refreshments? Choose drinks and snacks that are appropriate to your situation.

You might consider timing it so that you can have a party or celebration after you finish your pyramid.

#### Time Note

The convening stage will take anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the size of the group, and how much of an opening presentation you think is required to get them started!

### When you convene your group ...

Do a round of welcomes and introductions. Give each person a chance to say who they are.

Talk a little bit about why you are doing this workshop. Briefly introduce the Pyramid concept, and the idea of using Pyramid to create sustainability initiatives worldwide.

If your group is not yet familiar with the concept of "sustainability," give them a short introduction (See Section II below, also see the sidebar).

Pick a Critical Challenge. If you need help, use the list of global sustainability challenges in Section III below. Otherwise you can focus on any sustainability challenge that that your group wants to focus on, from local to global.

Talk your group through the Pyramid Building Process (Levels 1–5 below).

**Options:** To support your group process, you can build a *physical* pyramid that reflects your discussions. See the Pyramid Construction Guide (Section III).

Also, if you have a large group (more than 10 people), you might want to divide them up into smaller discussion teams. One way to do that is to use the "Compass of Sustainability" format: four teams, each representing a direction on a compass. The familiar Compass directions (North, South, East, and West) are renamed *Nature*, *Economy*, *Society*, and *Wellbeing*.

#### Getting your group "up to speed" on sustainability

"Sustainability" is a new idea to many people. That's why we've included a "Quick Intro" in Section II.

You may also want to introduce the idea with a brief video or even a movie to help your group on the way. Here are a few suggestions:

- Web video: The Story of Stuff (14 minutes)  
[www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com)
- Movie: The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour (95 minutes)  
[www.11thhouraction.com](http://www.11thhouraction.com)

- The **NATURE** team mostly focuses on the *environmental* aspects of the Critical Challenge: how it affects the land, air, water, plants and animals.
- The **ECONOMY** team mostly focuses on jobs, technology, money matters, transportation ... all the things that make up a working economy.
- The **SOCIETY** team mostly focuses on government, schools, working conditions for people, arts and culture, ethics ... everything that people do *collectively* to create a functioning human society.
- The **WELLBEING** team mostly focuses on health, safety, relationships, learning, quality of life, happiness ... everything that makes us feel good about our lives on the *individual* level.

... but all the small groups are also free to discuss any other aspect of the Central Challenge during the course of Building the Pyramid.

## Building The Pyramid: The 5 Levels

### Pyramid Level 1: What is Happening?

With your whole group, or in small groups, discuss what you know about the Central Challenge. (Ask the group to practice good listening, and be sure that everyone has a chance to speak!) Here is a set of questions to guide you:

- What are some of the things that are happening, that we know about, in connection with that Central Challenge?
- How do we know that they are happening? What are our sources of information? How reliable are they?
- What are the likely trends? What is likely to happen in the future — especially if no action is taken to make things better?

**Optional:** Have group members create images that represent the trends. For beginner groups or younger people, these can be illustrative pictures and drawings. For more advanced groups, these can be simple graphs showing the expected trends, and a description of whether things are getting better or worse (and how quickly).

If you have been working in small groups, pull the whole group together for a quick sharing of what each small group discussed.

### Pyramid Level 2: Why is it happening?

Now consider the Central Challenge again. Have a discussion (either as a whole group, or in your small Compass Point groups) focused on this question: *Why is this happening?*

Look at the trends you identified during the Level 1 discussion. Why are *they* happening? Write down — on small slips of paper — some of the most important reasons why.

Now look at the reasons, or causes for the Central Challenge, that you have listed. Ask again: and why are *they* happening?

Do this *at least* three times. Keep asking, "And why is *that* happening?" Keep writing your answers on small slips of paper.

Now, see if you see any connections or patterns. Are there some reasons or causes that seem more primary than others? Are there some reasons or causes that seem to be working together, in some way, to drive trends (in good or bad ways)?

After you have explored the reasons and causes, have a closing discussion focused on completing this sentence: "The most important things we have learned about why this Central Challenge is happening are ..."

If you are working in small groups, have each group summarize its results briefly for the others. Then have a discussion to see if there are *linkages* among the results identified by each group.

Note: If you have enough time, you can expand this exercise by also looking at the *effects and impacts* of that Central Challenge. What does it *cause* to happen? If you are using the Compass, explore what the impacts are in each Compass Point.

#### Time Note: Level 1

Allow 30 to 60 minutes. Times will vary depending on the group, and whether you are creating images and building a physical pyramid.

#### If you are building a physical pyramid...

You can use small slips of paper (for example, index cards or Post-it Notes) for people to write on, draw on, or put their graphs on. These slips of paper go on the first level of the pyramid.

If you are working in four small groups, each group can have its own side of the pyramid, representing each side of the Compass of Sustainability (Nature, Economy, Society, Wellbeing). See Section III.

#### Time Note: Level 2

Allow 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the group, and depending on whether you are building a physical pyramid.

Also, now would be a good time to take a break in the process!

#### If you have extra time ...

Use the "reasons why" to make a "Connection Map" on chart paper, showing how they all link up (sometimes in a chain) to the Central Challenge. The group might find new connections, too. You can also add the "impacts" of the Central Challenge.

#### If you are building a physical pyramid...

Attach the slips with the most important insights about the "reasons why" to the second level of the pyramid.

**Time Note: Level 3**

Allow 30-60 minutes, depending on the size of the group, and on whether you are building a physical pyramid.

**What kinds of "ideas"?**

You can decide whether you are only going to think about ideas for things (projects, initiatives, etc.) that *your group* could do, as a group ... or things that *individuals* can do ... or things that *somebody, somewhere* ought to do (such as political or business leaders). That's up to you!

**If you are building a physical pyramid...**

Put all the slips with the ideas on the third level of the pyramid. If you have too many ideas to fit on the pyramid, wait until after the voting, and then put the most popular ideas on the pyramid.

**Time Note: Level 4**

Allow 30-60 minutes, depending on complexity of your project idea, and on whether you are building a physical pyramid.

**If you are building a physical pyramid...**

Write down the key steps in the process of creating your project – and who will do them – on small slips of paper. Put the slips of paper on the fourth level of the pyramid. At this point, it does not matter so much which side of the pyramid you use. Just try to fill in the whole fourth level, all they way around.

**Pyramid Level 3: What can we do?**

Now comes the fun part: thinking up fun, exciting, powerful, creative ideas for projects and initiatives! First, take some time (5 or 10 minutes) to reflect on what you learned at Level 2. What seem to be the most important "reasons why" that are causing the Central Challenge? That will help you figure out *where* we can make change most effectively.

Now comes brainstorming! You can do this individually, or in groups, or both. Encourage everyone to think about the key insights from the previous Level. Now that we understand something about *why* this Central Challenge is happening, what can we do to change it? What can we do to turn bad trends into good trends – and to create new, better trends?

Remind the group that brainstorming is a time for innovative, "out-of-the-box" ideas, as well as ideas that seem practical and familiar. All ideas are welcome!

Summarize the ideas on slips of paper. Give them descriptive titles that will be easy for other people to understand.

Have each person share their best or their favorite project idea with the group — with the small group, if you are working in Compass teams, or otherwise with the whole group.

Put the pieces of paper with the project ideas up somewhere, where people can see them. (If you are building a physical pyramid, put them on Level 3!)

Give each person three votes. Each person can vote for any project idea — except their own! And they can split their votes up, or concentrate them on one or two project ideas.

If one project idea is a clear "winner," that idea moves to Level 4. Otherwise, if there are several project ideas that are popular, have a second vote, or have a discussion to see if you can come to consensus on one idea, or one group of ideas. (Sometimes ideas can be combined into one "package".)

**Pyramid Level 4: How can we do it?**

Now, the group makes a plan to put the winning idea into action!

First, list out *what would be needed* to implement this idea, in terms of a doing it as a project or initiative. What financial or physical resources? What planning or coordination is required? How many people, with what skills? How much time?

Now make a strategy! If this is an idea that your group intends to actually do (as opposed to a suggestion you plan to give to someone else), how will you get what you need? Do you already have it in the room? How will you manage the implementation? What obstacles do you foresee, and how do you plan to overcome them?

Imagine that you have succeeded. What does success look like? How did you get there? List out the steps in the process of bringing your idea into reality — and decide who will do each step! Make a rough timeline.

**Important Note:** If no one commits to doing the key steps in the process, this is a signal that maybe your idea is not something the group is really willing to do. Perhaps you need to choose something less ambitious or time-demanding? Don't give up: just find something else to do that people can actually commit to!

**Also Note:** If it turns out that you have created an initiative or project that requires more extensive planning, then make a "plan to plan." Identify who is

going to do the more detailed planning, when, and what they will need (help, information, approvals) to create a finished plan.

**And Finally:** If you are creating a suggestion for something that you think someone else should do — such as certain political leaders or decision-makers — then use this step to (1) think through how they would actually implement your idea, (2) how you plan to get the idea communicated to them. Or both!

## Pyramid Level 5: The “Capstone Agreement”!

The top of any pyramid is called the “capstone,” and now is the time to bring all these threads together, and conclude your workshop. Summarize the conclusions of your group. Have you come to agreement on an idea for a project or initiative? Have you come to consensus on a suggestion that you want to communicate to others? Put this "Capstone Agreement" in the form of a short written statement: "We commit to \_\_\_\_\_", or "We propose that \_\_\_\_\_".

This Capstone Agreement is the main result of your Pyramid workshop. It's also a sign of your group's engagement in making change towards a more sustainable world. Have everyone who is willing to commit to the statement sign their name to it.

**Celebrate your success!** You have completed your Pyramid ... and helped to accelerate change toward a more sustainable world!

## Following Up

### Document Your Pyramid Workshop!

Be sure to take pictures or short videos of your workshop! Take pictures of the group, and if you build a physical pyramid, be sure to photograph that, too! See the Pyramid2012.net website for examples of how Pyramid groups do their closing photographs. These days, it is very easy to create your own free website to document your work, using a service like Wordpress, Blogspot, or Posterous. Put your conclusions there, as well as your photographs. Then you will always have that site to refer to in the future, as a record of your work.

Share the highlights with us at Pyramid2012.net! Submit a photo, a write-up, a short video, a link to your own website ... we want to know what you did!

### Document Your Project or Initiative!

If you later go on to actually implement a project or initiative, write up a description ... and take pictures! Add those to your website as well.

**Please, send us information** about what you are doing, so we can sum up all the results and activities into one big splashy report to the world. Write to us! The address is: [info@pyramid2012.net](mailto:info@pyramid2012.net)

#### Time Note: Level 5

Allow 15-30 minutes, depending on the size of your group, and on whether you building a physical pyramid. **And allow some time for a party or celebration!**

#### If you are building a physical pyramid...

Write a short headline that summarizes your Capstone Agreement, on a small piece of paper, and put the piece of paper on the top or "Capstone" of the pyramid. Have everyone gather round the pyramid, and jointly place the capstone on top.

**This is a historic moment for your group ... so take a photograph!**



### Learning More about Sustainability ...

There are numerous books and other resources about the concept of sustainability. For starters, enter the word "sustainability" at Wikipedia.org (the free online encyclopedia). There you'll also find a good basic list for further reading.

We also recommend Alan AtKisson's books, *Believing Cassandra: How to be an Optimist in a Pessimist's World* and *The Sustainability Transformation*. Both are available from Earthscan publishers, which also many other excellent sustainability books.

<http://www.earthscan.co.uk>

## Section II: A Quick Intro to Sustainability

It seems like everyone uses the word these days. But what is "sustainability"?

This "quick intro" is intended to bring you and your group up to speed on sustainability, and on why it's so important. Share this with your group, and use it as your frame of reference for your Pyramid workshop.

### 1970s and 1980s: Defining the Sustainability Challenge

In the 1970s, scientists began to sound the alarm that humanity was on a collision course with the limits of our tiny, living planet. Some resources would eventually run out. Pollution was increasing rapidly. A growing population was filling up the available space. Trends like these were physically *unsustainable*. Eventually, many things would have to change, if we were to avoid a real crash.

Not many heard this message ... but some people did, and began to take action. This was the start of the modern sustainability movement.

Then in 1987, a United Nations initiative called the World Commission on Environment and Development (more commonly known as "The Brundtland Commission") created what became the most widely used definition of "sustainable development," which it described as changes in our global way of life that "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The wellbeing of nature *and* people, and their health in the long term, were strongly linked together. Working to ensure a better future for *both* people and nature became the essence of the Global Sustainability Challenge.

### 1990s and 2000s: Sustainability Awareness Keeps Growing

In 1992, the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro hosted what was then the world's largest-ever gathering of Presidents, Prime Ministers, and other heads of state. The "Earth Summit" resulted in a set of voluntary global agreements to make sustainable development a reality. Actual progress was still slow ... but more and more cities, companies, schools and other groups, all around the world, began to take on real projects and initiatives to save energy, conserve nature, improve the wellbeing of the poor, and other projects.

Then in the year 2000, the United Nations adopted a set of concrete goals, the "Millennium Development Goals." These combined with other global agreements as well global reports — on topics like global warming, ecosystem health, and the world's progress on human wellbeing — to fuel a real surge in the sustainability movement, at every level, from nations to large corporations to small communities, and everything in between.

During this period, the awarding of Nobel Peace Prizes to people like Wangari Maathai for her work to empower women and plant trees in Africa, and to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for their efforts to raise the alarm on global warming, were just the most visible evidence that the world's awareness about the Global Sustainability Challenge was growing rapidly.

But there was a lot of work to do, to turn large-scale awareness into large-scale action.

### 2010s and Beyond: The Sustainability Transformation

These days, change is in the air, all over the world. The financial crisis that began in 2008 has, paradoxically, underscored for many that the risks of not doing enough on sustainability are real: If economic systems can collapse, so can other systems. And if economic systems can be reinvented, so can energy systems,

transport systems, and many other aspects of our way of life that are inherently unsustainable.

The decade of the 2010s marks, we believe, a real opportunity to create a turning point. There is already a lot of momentum on sustainability. So let's turn that momentum into great wave of change, to stop the destruction of our natural heritage, and increase the chances that our children and grandchildren — and all children, all over the world — will be able to live comfortable and satisfying lives.

What we buy and consume, how we choose to get around, even what kinds of change we demand from our governments ... there is so much we can do, as individuals and in groups, to make change happen. A sustainable future is within site. We just have to set our course, and go there.

## The Compass: A Symbol of Sustainability

Sustainability is about the whole of our world, and it requires the engagement of people from every walk of life — and from every point on the map. It means planning our course to the future we desire, and setting a new direction. That's why we have chosen the *Compass* as a symbol of sustainability.

We take the familiar directions of the Compass — North, South, East, and West — and rename them in a way that helps us understand sustainability. Here is a description of the "Compass of Sustainability":

- **N is for Nature:** Healthy air and water quality, sustainable resource use, sufficient habitat (especially for endangered species), the preservation of scenic beauty,
- **E is for Economy:** Vital businesses, good infrastructure, the sufficient production of goods and services, a solid financial sector, and good jobs for people at good wages
- **S is for Society:** The health of our communities, institutions, schools, cultural traditions, and the arts, and the organizational structures and legal frameworks that protect equality and opportunity for all
- **W is for Well-Being:** Our individual health, happiness, education, satisfaction, and fulfillment, as well as the health of our families and primary relationships, and the quality of our living and working environments

The Compass is also a convenient way to organize groups who are doing a "Building the Pyramid" workshop exercise. Working with the Compass ensures that we keep the entire "big picture" of sustainability in mind, that we respect and appreciate the diversity that we need to reach sustainability, and that we nurture the connections among the people that are the key to making sustainable development a reality.

## Sustainability: The Critical Global Challenges

If the world were on a good course, we would not need a global sustainability movement. But unfortunately, the world is *not* on a sustainable course. Here is a short, starter list of the critical global challenges we face, as a world, on our voyage to a more a sustainable future. These global issues can help you choose a local project, to contribute to making that future a reality.

**Global warming and climate change:** The world's burning of fossil fuels, clearing of forests, and other activities are resulting in a thicker blanket of "greenhouse gases" in our atmosphere. And these, in turn, are warming up our world. Stopping the process of global warming is essential to our world's long-term wellbeing. That means changing a great deal about our way of using energy and managing the land.

**Nature conservation:** We depend for our food, health, and general happiness on the integrity of the world's natural ecosystems. Clean water, healthy soil, and a

### The Origin of the Compass of Sustainability

The Compass format grew out of an international dialogue of sustainability researchers. It is based on sustainability theory, but it makes the idea simple and intuitive. The Compass is used all over the world, by schools, cities, and companies, to help them orient toward sustainability and to teach others. For more about the Compass, read the book *The Sustainability Transformation* by Alan AtKisson (Earthscan); and see [www.AtKisson.com](http://www.AtKisson.com) for more information.



great diversity of species are all essential to the fabric of life — including the fabric of *our* life. Preserving nature just as it is — including its capacity to renew and sustain itself — is central to the sustainability of our human civilization as well.

**Population, wealth, and poverty:** Growing numbers of people, using growing amounts of resources, are now a powerful force reshaping the face of our world. In the rich parts of our world, people consume too much and too carelessly, making it hard for the Earth to sustain our way of life. In the poor parts, lack of access to basics like water and food can lead to violent conflict, and the destruction of nature in pursuit of basic needs. We need to find a healthy balance between the numbers of people on planet earth, and how we all live, so that everyone has enough for a good life, and so that enough is also left over for nature's needs as well.

**Human wellbeing:** Finding that balance requires also ensuring that everyone — men and women, children and the elderly, regardless of religious belief or other kinds of difference — has the opportunity to reach their full potential, and live a fulfilling life. Working for human rights is work to create a better *humanity*, and increase the chances that all of us will be able to work together to solve the great challenges of our world.

There are many other challenges, and of course there are "challenges within the challenges" described above. For a great summary of the global "to-do list" to create a sustainable civilization, read *The Earth Charter*, a document created by a ten-year process of consultations with citizens, experts, and leaders all over the world (see [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)).

### **Choosing Your Own Central Challenge for Sustainability**

The purpose of lists like these is not just to awaken concern, but to move us to action. Use this as a jumping off point to frame your own "Central Challenge" — the specific problem or issue, globally or locally, that you'd like to address as you "Build the Pyramid" and create a dynamic and exciting project for change.

## Section III: Pyramid Construction Guide

"Building the Pyramid" does not *require* building an actual, physical pyramid. You can simply use the process as a group discussion guide. "Building the Pyramid" is a *metaphor* for building up from basic understanding about what is happening, and why, to creative ideas and action plans for change. Just as the four sides of a pyramid unite at the top to make a point, the process of "Building the Pyramid" unites participants in an agreement to take action.

But the process of building a physical pyramid is fun, and it usually enhances a group's experience of this workshop process. Here is a short guide about how to do it.

### How to Build a Pyramid

First rule: *You are free to build your pyramid any way you like.* There is no "right" or "wrong" way to do it. Your pyramid can be large or small, very artistic or very straightforward, and made of any material you like. You could even decorate an already existing pyramid, such as a bush cut into a pyramid shape! (See picture)

Here are some examples ...



A "standard" pyramid, constructed of flat craft sticks and pipecleaners



A highly decorative and artistic "standard pyramid"



A pyramid-shaped bush, ready to be used in a "Building the Pyramid" workshop



A pyramid-shaped cake, to celebrate the successful conclusion of a workshop

### Many kinds of pyramids!

When it comes to building a physical pyramid, we encourage you to be creative! The method described here is a "standard" way: it is how most pyramids are built during Pyramid workshops. Use it if you like! Or ... create a different kind of pyramid! The choice is up to you ...

### Materials List for Building a Pyramid from Scratch

300 flat, wooden, popsicle-sticks or "tongue-depressor"-style wooden sticks, preassembled into 100 equilateral triangle shapes

White glue

Small Post-it Notes (one color per compass point looks nice!)

Pipe cleaners (one color per compass point looks nice!)

Tape (always useful for making sure paper sticks to the Pyramid)

Anything else you want to decorate with!

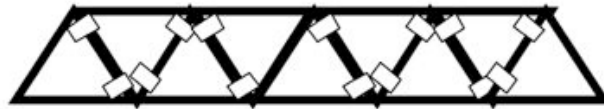
Generally, pyramids are four-sided, with each side representing one "Direction" of the Compass of Sustainability (see previous Section). But they can also be three-sided, and the sides can also have different meanings — in fact, they do not have to have a meaning at all. You can choose to only work with the Levels described in the workshop process, and to fill in each level with the results from that part of the exercise, all around the pyramid structure.

If you decide to build a physical pyramid as part of your workshop, follow these three steps:

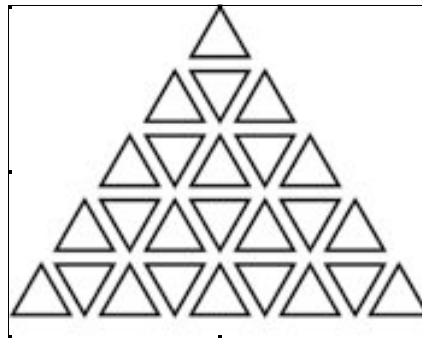
#### Step 1: Decide what kind of pyramid to build

Do you want your pyramid to be large or small? Permanent, or temporary? Figuring out these basic questions will determine the rest of the process.

A standard, 4-sided, 10kP pyramid is built up from individual triangles (usually made of flat wooden sticks, but any material will do), fastened together like this:



Level 1, shown above, consists of 9 triangles. Level 2 has 7 triangles, and so on. A complete pyramid requires 100 triangles, 25 per side, like this:



If you are building your triangles from scratch, you can usually acquire flat craft sticks (they look like large popsicle sticks, or medical tongue depressors) from a hobby store, and glue them together to make the triangles. Other materials that people have used include pencils, plastic tubes, wires, even chopsticks!

#### Step 2: Assemble your materials

If you are *not* using the standard "Building the Pyramid" kit, take some time to plan and assemble the right materials. For example, if you are building a very large pyramid, you will need someone in your group with some good design and construction skills!

#### Step 3: Demonstrate the building process

As part of your workshop, be sure to demonstrate the basics of pyramid assembly to your group!

## Section IV: Pyramid Results

What does building Pyramids do to advance the world's progress towards sustainability?

In our experience, Pyramids do a lot. Each pyramid represents a group of people:

- coming together to learn about the challenges facing our world
- developing a project or initiative to address those challenges, and then
- making a commitment to act.

**Pyramids help create action!** That's the primary purpose of the workshop — helping groups of all kinds move from understanding to action for sustainability. Here are some examples of the kinds of projects Pyramid processes have already helped to create:

- A very successful bike-commuter program in Adelaide, South Australia (thanks to "Active Adelaide," bike commuting rose from 2% to over 30% in less than a year among local and state government employees)
- The development of the "Lighthouse Project" concept for the Baltic Sea Region — now, there are a dozen such projects helping to promote sustainability around Europe's northern sea
- The creation of a center for sustainable design in the city of Townsville, Australia (this helped the city win its bid to host the World Ecotourism Summit)
- "Green office", "eco-school", and village development projects in many parts of Southeast Asia
- The training of hundreds of "sustainability change agents" who are working in companies, cities, schools, development projects and the media, around the world

Between two and three hundred Pyramids have been built so far, in over 20 countries, from Vietnam to Mexico (we've lost exact count!). We look forward to seeing hundreds and thousands more ... let us know what you do with Pyramid Lite! Write to: [info@pyramid2012.net](mailto:info@pyramid2012.net)





*Pyramid Lite is a product of the AtKisson Group*

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*For information on the professional edition of Pyramid, and the whole*

*ISIS Accelerator Toolkit, please visit*

*[www.AtKisson.com](http://www.AtKisson.com)*