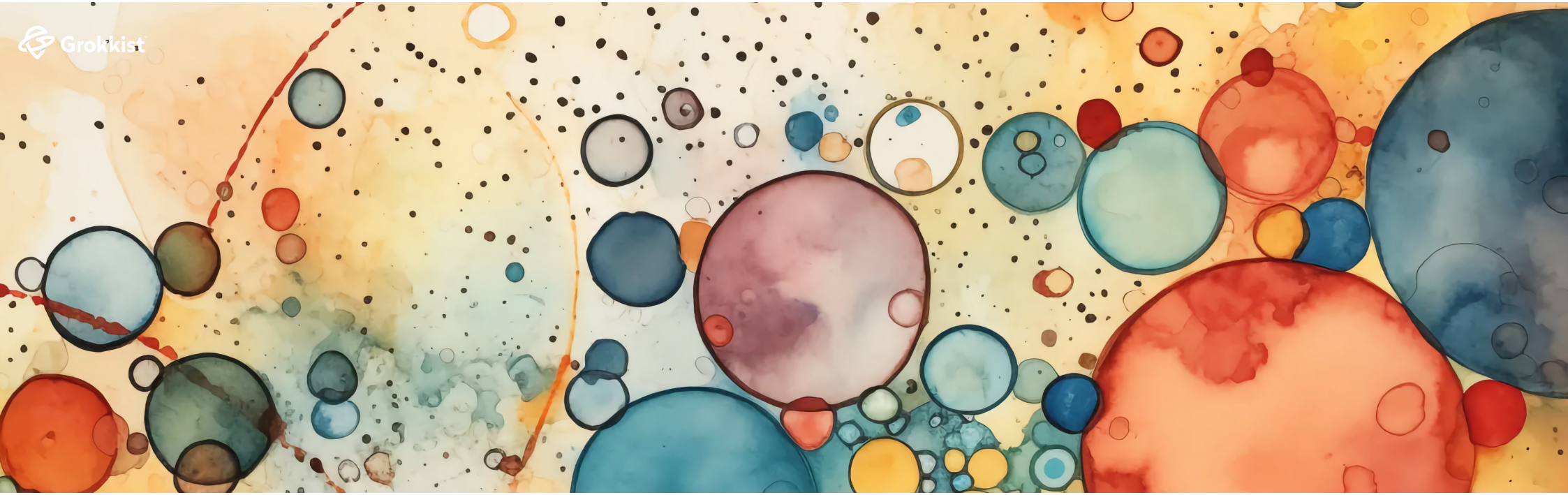


FROM GENERALIST TO GROKKIST

LEARNING TO ADDRESS THE WORLD AS A CHAMPION OF CURIOSITY AND CARE

Association of Sustainability Practitioners | **Sep 2024**

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PART 1
WHY THE WORLD NEEDS
GROKKISTS



"Yes, the planet got destroyed, but for a beautiful moment in time we created a lot of value for shareholders."

If you want a description of our age, here is one.

A civilisation of **means without ends**;

Rich in means beyond any other epoch,
and almost beyond human needs;

Squandering and misusing them
because it has no overruling ideal.

An ample body with a meagre soul.

- Richard Livingstone (1945)


Unless someone like you
care a whole awful lot,
Nothing is going
to get better
It's not.
DR SEUSS, THE LORAX

“

Always the beautiful answer
who asks a more beautiful question.

- E. E. Cummings

WHAT IS A BEAUTIFUL QUESTION?



WHEN A THIRST FOR UNDERSTANDING INVITES A LOVING ENCOUNTER WITH THE UNFAMILIAR

KNOWLEDGE + ETHICS

CURIOSITY + CARE

WHY WE NEED BEAUTIFUL QUESTIONS

	Curiosity ❌	Curiosity ✅
Care ❌	Ghouls and grey people **Dead zones of the imagination and the banality of evil**	Pulling the wings off insects **“I’m just asking questions”**
Care ✅	Cancel culture **“I don’t need to ask questions”**	Beautiful answers expanding possibility space for self and society **Grokkists**

grok (v.)

- to understand profoundly and intuitively

- to drink

grokkist (n.)

- someone who thirsts for profound understanding as a way of being

- a champion of curiosity and care

grok

/grɒk/

verb **INFORMAL • US**

verb: **grok**; 3rd person present: **groks**; past tense: **grokked**; past participle: **grokked**; gerund or present participle: **grokking**

understand (something) intuitively or by empathy.
"corporate leaders seemed to grok this concept fairly quickly"

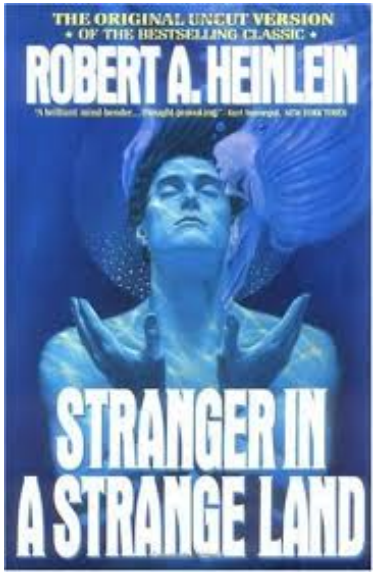
- establish a rapport.
  "nestling earth couple would like to find water brothers to **grok with** in peace"

Origin

1960s: a word invented by Robert Heinlein (1907–88), American author.

Use over time for: grok

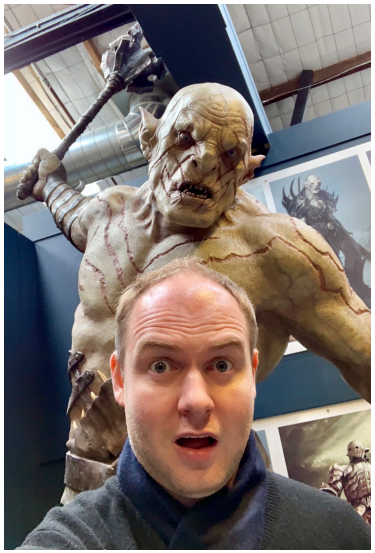




DANU'S JOURNEY – THE ORIGINS OF GROKKIST



- Born at a very early age, I was thrown into the world in the outer suburbs of **Brisbane, Australia**
- **Dropped out of high school** – twice
- Always interested in the intersection of **technology, education, and society**
- Deeply **angry at the evils of everyday thoughtlessness** in the world
- Started a design and technology teaching business – went **bankrupt at 24yo**
- Degrees in **social science, public policy, business admin**
- **Squiggly career** – retail, teaching, research, govt, tech support, publishing, policy, software rep, systems, project mgmt, academic leadership, research impact
- Lots of experience in dehumanising systems and **walking away from things that weren't working for me**, whether through burn-out, boot-out, or bore-out
- Looking for a way out of the two-year job cycle of **intense interest and destructive boredom**
- **Multi-dimensional misfit** – can go anywhere, belong nowhere
- My red thread is all about **re-humanising systems** and **facilitating others towards flourishing**



If I'm too interested in **public good** to be
a professional **politician**...

If I'm too **truthful** to be
a professional **journalist**...

If I'm too **curious** to be
a professional **academic**...



If what has gone missing from the public
professions is precisely the public part...

...Maybe I can best
pursue public good in private.

“

You never change things by
fighting the existing reality.
To change something, build a new model
that makes the existing model obsolete.

- Buckminster Fuller

Why do all my favourite people **somehow still have their curiosity intact**...

...when for most people it gets ground down, beaten out, or burned away by the cares of the world...

...and what else might 'still curious' people have in common?




coddiwomple (v.)
- to travel purposefully towards a vague destination.


PART 2
WHAT GROKKISTS NEED
IN THE WORLD

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A GROKKIST?





THE "SO WHAT DO YOU DO?" PROBLEM

- 5 simple words that have caused fear and heart-pounding panic for every grokkist
- We end up with squiggly careers from chasing 'too many' interests
- We accumulate experiences, making connections and synthesising understanding wherever we go
- Our deepest wisdom and highest value is often not visible or legible to others (or ourselves)
- If we don't choose a box, people will assign us one

- The problem of **recognising**, **naming**, and **communicating** our expertise and value to others and to ourselves

generalist
multi-potentialite
multi-hyphenate
multi-passionate
multi-dimensional misfit
polymath
Renaissance person
T-shaped expert
cross-pollinating hummingbird
deep generalist
canny outlaw
principled rebel
professional nuisance
neurodivergent

grokkist.

“

I love having a word for the way I am.

- Emily McGill





THE ‘CATEGORY OF ONE’ PROBLEM

- Our uncategorisable uniqueness is a source of both pride and pain
- Wild confidence when we’re in our zone. Wistful wonder when we see others who have figured out their path. Wild self-doubt, blame, and not-enough-ness when we feel stuck, unsettled and unseen
- It’s hard to know who our peer group is. Because we lack benchmarks or points of reference to tell us how well we are doing, we can swing wildly between fear and figure-it-out-ivness
- We often struggle to connect with people who supposedly share our interests, or to find occasions and containers for meaningful connection
- Instead, we seek out people we believe have ‘figured it out’ to indirectly learn from and model them. We usually don’t ask for help/mentorship/direction directly because we feel shame in not figuring it out ourselves
- Eventually, the thirst for learning and growth will surpass our fears, but it can take a long time and hurt a lot.

- The problem of **locating** ourselves within and **connecting** ourselves **meaningfully** into broader conversations and living traditions of practice

“

We’re all here to be mirrors
for each other so we can become
more accurate reflections of ourselves.



- The Ungoogleable Michaelangelo



THE ‘RED THREAD’ PROBLEM

- We don’t always know how to make sense of or celebrate our squiggly stories
- Most of us haven’t had many opportunities to consciously integrate our experiences in a way that helps us to ‘unforget’ what we have learned
- Until we can synthesise our understanding and claim our holistic expertise, we default to being mere generalists – a disconnected collection of curious parts
- Without a story that honours our experiences, we become stuck and diminished when we can’t figure out ‘what comes next’

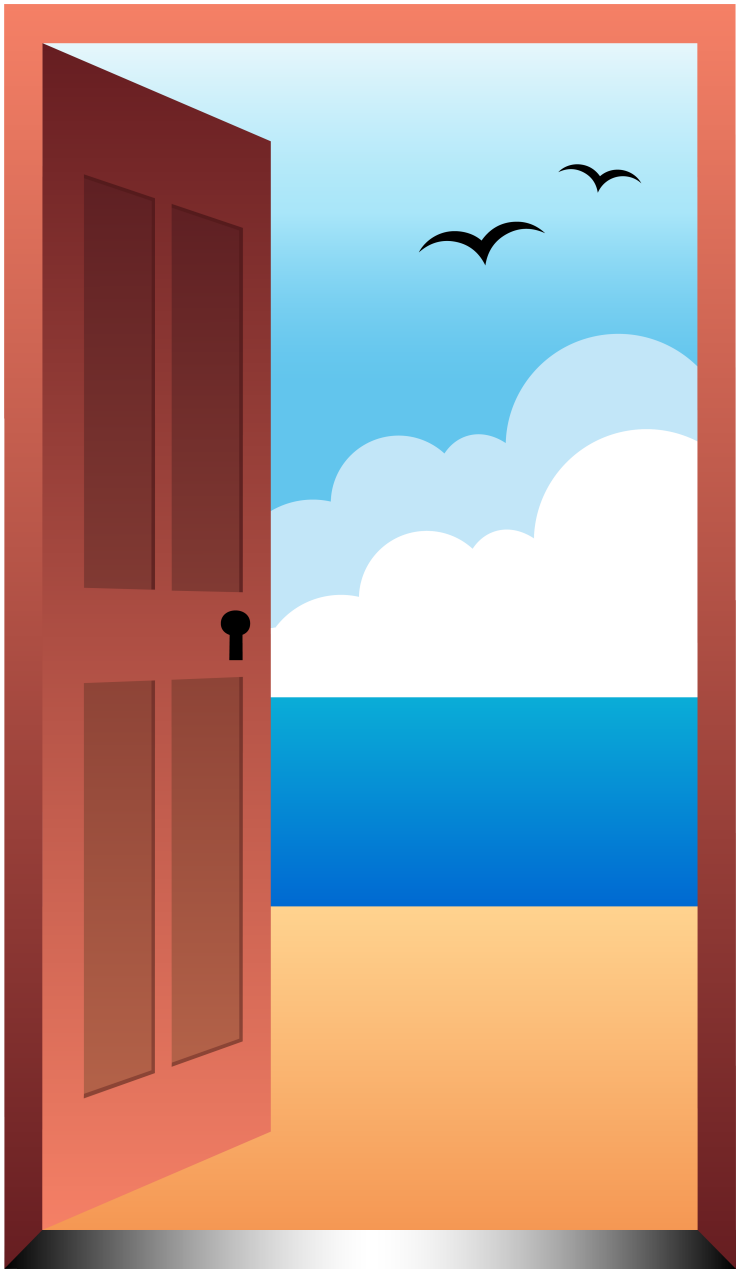
- The problem of **integrating** and **narrating** ourselves so we can address the world and flourish as our unrepeatable selves

“

Embracing your inner outlier means taking those parts of self we've been encouraged to abandon and reclaiming them in a way that is valuable and shows people what they were missing.



- Brittany Cole Houston



WHAT GROKKISTS NEED

- **Deep, Authentic Engagement:** spaces that allow for authentic, long-form discourse, enabling meaningful conversations that resonate on a deeper level.
- **Safe Exploration:** a nurturing and exciting environment to safely and lovingly explore new, unfamiliar ideas and experiences.
- **Supportive Containers:** occasions and structures that not only allow individuals to express their whole multi-dimensional selves but also honour and amplify their unique contributions and wisdom.
- **Creative Facilitation:** a guide or "creative midwife" who helps bring forth the innate wisdom and creativity within each person, shaping it into something tangible and joyful.
- **Meaningful Accountability:** cultivate relationships where "accountabilibuddies" support each person's journey through transformation, offering genuine connection and understanding.
- **Reflective Encounters:** mutual interactions throughout the community that act as human mirrors, helping each grokkist to see and become the truest version of themselves.


PART 3
HOW WE HELP
GROKKISTS TO FLOURISH

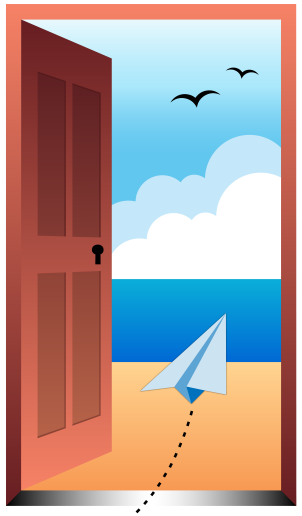


Welcome to Grokkist.

A home for all those who insist on relating to the world with **curiosity** and **care**.

We help every grokkist to

unlock your grok



unlock your grok



If you're restless and want to be deeply recognised and cherished for your 'category-of-one-ness' ...

... while receiving hands-on help from someone who can show you the way to step into your very own fearless future...

... this is for you.

We are an

interdisciplinary
intergenerational
international

grokking community of practice.



➤ Create **spaces and opportunities for grokkists to connect and collaborate** as our 'shoes-off' selves.



➤ Our answer to the question: "what would it look like to create a radically accessible and inclusive educational curriculum focused on **practical wisdom that ignites the soul's passion, rather than just passing tests**?"



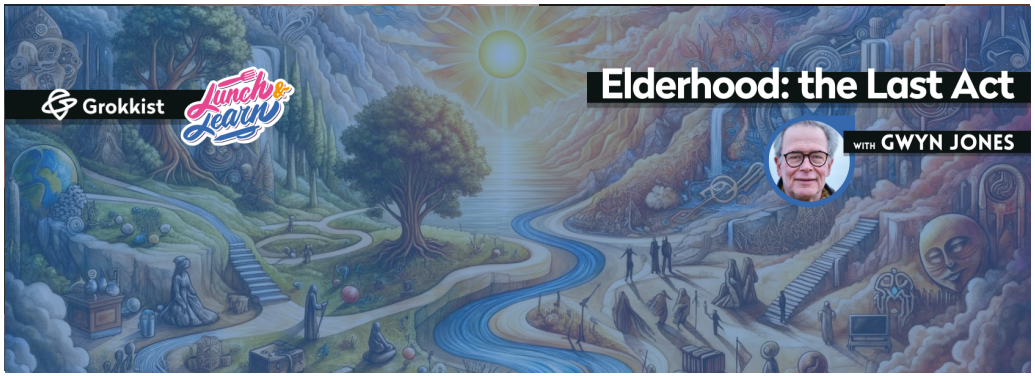
➤ For grokkists to publish high-quality articles, videos, podcasts and other **creations that we care about too much to cast into the void for a handful of likes**.

Member-Led Events

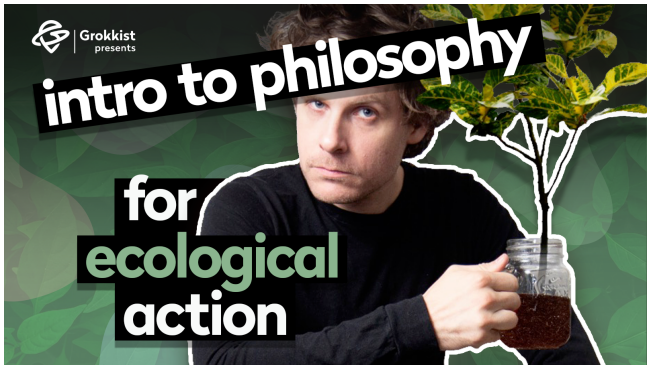








Grokkable Courses



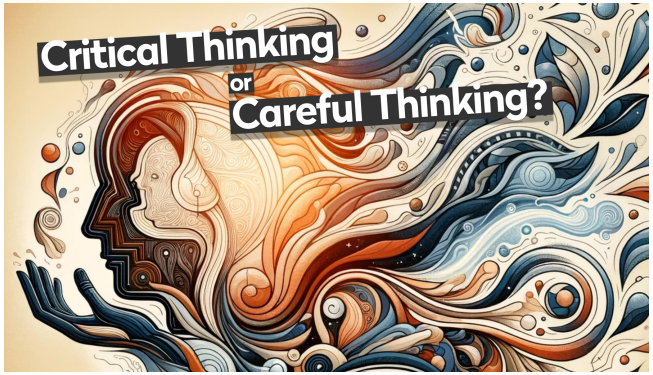






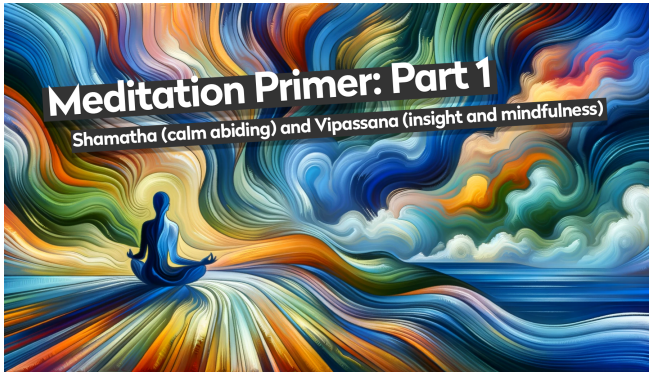


Press Publications by Members











We are a **regenerative business**.



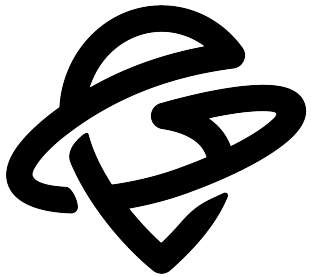




First in-person meetup in NYC

October 2023

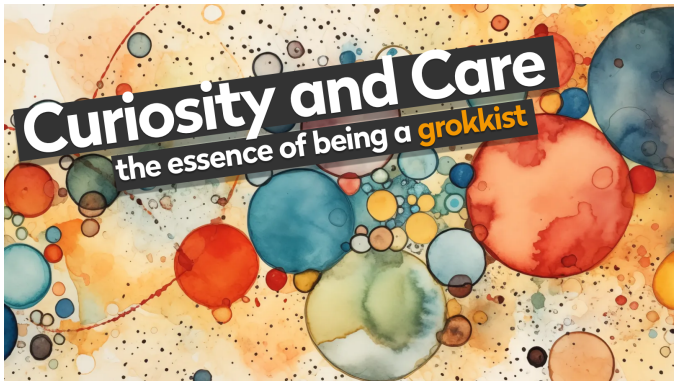




Grokkist™

grokk.ist | network.grokk.ist

Thirsty for more grokkist lore?










FINAL THOUGHTS

Never in my wildest imagination did I expect to get into community-building

I'm a massive introvert who loves people but doesn't always like them...

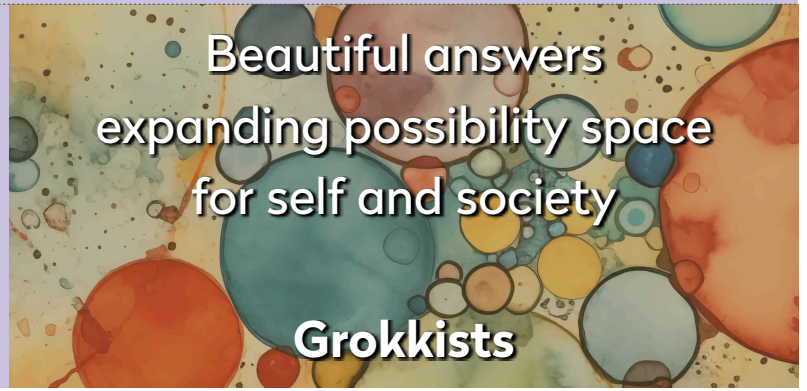
I'm creating a community of people who resist categories, don't like joining things, and are always busy doing something else...

I'm still learning to address the world while claiming all my multi-dimensional selves

My coddiwompling journey has been many things so far... **but never boring**!



WHY WE NEED BEAUTIFUL QUESTIONS

	Care ❌	Care ✅
Curiosity ❌	Ghouls and grey people **Dead zones of the imagination and the banality of evil**	Cancel culture **“I don’t need to ask questions”**
Curiosity ✅	Pulling the wings off insects **“I’m just asking questions”**	

As unrepeatable categories of one,
we have a lot in common.

I believe we already have what we need within us to create the most beautiful possibilities to live into.

We just need to be lovingly reminded to unforget what we already know.

Choosing to be a ‘grokkist’ is little more (and nothing less) than a way of reminding ourselves and each other that...

...the beautiful answer is most often the one that **insists** on both curiosity and care.



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

ANY QUESTIONS

