tell a funny story about the groom that also reveals something about his character. That adds insight to a social experience.

What we'll explore ahead are the larger moments of insight, the ones that deliver a jolt. Sometimes the emotions are dark: *I'm no good at this.* Or, *I don't believe in what I'm doing anymore*. Other moments of insight can also be wildly positive: *This is the person I'm going to spend the rest of my life with!* Or the "eureka!" moment of creative discovery.

Many moments of insight are serendipitous. Lightning strikes, and there's no explaining why. You can't schedule epiphanies.

But these experiences are not wholly out of our control. We'll explore two strategies for *creating* moments of insight. We can cause others to "trip over the truth" (Chapter 5). And when we need to understand ourselves better, we can "stretch for insight" (Chapter 6).

In the pages ahead are stories of sharp emotion—disgust, enlightenment, heartbreak, and exhilaration. But we begin with the story of a shocking realization you won't soon forget.

The Power of Moments
by Chip + Dan Heath

5

Trip Over the Truth

1.

In 2007, the *British Medical Journal* asked its readers to vote on the most important medical milestone that had occurred since 1840, when the *BMJ* was first published. Third place went to anesthesia, second place to antibiotics. The winner was one you might not have expected: the "sanitary revolution," encompassing sewage disposal and methods for securing clean water.

Much of the world, though, is still waiting for that revolution to come.

In 2016, there were about a billion people worldwide who lacked access to clean water, and also a billion (likely many of the same people) who, lacking toilets, defecated outdoors—often in areas used by multiple people. This practice of open defecation has dire health consequences, just as it did in 1840.

It leads to the mass spread of diseases, among them cholera, hookworm, roundworm, and schistosomiasis, that cause people to suffer or die.

How could you end the practice of open defecation? The answer may seem obvious: provide latrines. And for years, that was the strategy of many development organizations. In a typical example, WaterAid funded the construction of latrines in 1999 in some villages in northern Bangladesh. To ensure that the project had been executed successfully, they invited an outside expert named Dr. Kamal Kar to conduct an evaluation of the work. He traveled to the site in Bangladesh, and that's where our story begins.

Warning to readers: The story ahead is full of disgusting images, and it also makes frequent use of the "s-word" for feces. We do not use this term gratuitously; indeed, it's the very heart of the story. But if you prefer to avoid the word, we recommend that you skip ahead to the next section, labeled "2."

In Bangladesh, Kar found that the project had gone exactly as planned. The latrines were well built and many people used them. But he also found something else: "I would walk behind the villages and go into the fields, and in every village we went in, I stepped on shit," he said. Open defecation was still rampant. And he knew that, as soon as rainy season came, the shit would disperse all around the village.*

* Kar believes that it's a mistake to soft-pedal the word using medical terms such as *feces*, or more kid-friendly terms such as *poop* or *doodoo*. When he works in new countries, he makes sure to ask for the crude slang term for shit. He wants the word to shock.

It wasn't enough, in other words, for *some* people to use the latrines or even half. To solve the village's health problems, it had to become the norm.

It was an eye-opening moment for him. The world's development organizations had been thinking about open defecation as a hardware problem: If we just distribute enough latrines, we will solve the problem. But it wasn't that simple. For some villagers, the latrines seemed like a solution to a problem that they hadn't asked to be solved. Sometimes the latrines would be disassembled, with their parts used for other purposes. In one project in Malawi, no one used their fancy latrines at all. Umelu Chiluzi, a development worker, said, "If you ask them, why are you not using that latrine? They would tell you, 'Are you sure I should put shit in that structure . . . that is even better than my house?' "

Kar realized that open defecation was not a hardware problem, it was a behavioral problem. Until the people in a given area *wanted* to change, the hardware was meaningless.

Acting on this insight, he developed a methodology called Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), which has since been used in more than 60 countries around the world. But don't let the boring acronym fool you: This is a *shocking* process. Here's a stylized description of a typical intervention:

A CLTS facilitator arrives in a village and introduces himself. "I'm studying the sanitation profiles of different villages in the area," he says. "Mind if I look around and ask some questions?" Once he has hung around long enough to attract a small crowd, he conducts a "transect walk," leading the crowd from one side of the village to the other.

"Where do people shit?" he asks, and the villagers direct

him to the common areas of defecation. They are embarrassed, eager to move on, but he lingers. He points: "Whose shit is this?" He asks them, "Did anyone shit here today?" A few hands go up.

The stench is overpowering. People are covering their noses with their clothes. The facilitator keeps asking disgusting questions: "Why is this shit yellow? Why is this one brown?"

The facilitator draws attention to the flies flitting between piles. "Are there often flies here?" Nods all around. He sees a chicken pecking at the shit. "Do you eat this kind of chicken?" More reluctant nods. All his questions are studiously neutral. The facilitator has been trained only to ask questions, not to offer advice or opinions.

The group completes the transect walk and stops in a large public space. The crowd has grown larger, curious about what's happening. The facilitator asks them to draw a rough map of the village in the dirt. Quickly, the villagers map out the boundaries of the village, along with important landmarks—a school, a church, a stream. Then the facilitator asks them to use stones or leaves to mark where their individual homes are.

Once the map has been filled in, he points to a bag of yellow chalk he has brought and asks them to sprinkle some on the places where people shit. He says, "Where there's more shit, use more chalk." There is nervous laughter. The kids enjoy sprinkling the chalk on the open defecation areas.

Now the facilitator asks, "Where do you shit in an emergency—say if there's a rainstorm, or if you have diarrhea?" More laughter as new heaps of yellow chalk are scattered

around. Often it circles people's homes—in those emergency situations, people can't make it to the common areas.

It is hard to miss, at this point, that the entire village is covered in yellow.

There is a turbulent energy in the crowd: anxious, disgusted, angry, and embarrassed. They aren't sure what it all means.

The facilitator asks for a glass of water.

Someone provides the water, and he asks a woman if she would feel comfortable drinking it, and she says yes. He asks others and they agree.

He pulls a hair from his head. "What's in my hand?" *A hair.* "Can you see it clearly?" *No, not really.* He walks over to a pile of shit near the meeting area and dips his hair into it. Then he plunges the dirty hair into the glass of water and swirls it around.

He hands the glass to a villager and asks him to take a drink. The man refuses. He passes it along, but they all refuse. "Why do you refuse?" *Because it has shit in it!*

The facilitator looks puzzled. He asks, "How many legs does a fly have?" *Six.* "Right, and they're all serrated. Do you think flies pick up more or less shit than my hair?" *More.*

"Do you ever see flies on your food?" *Yes.* "Then do you throw out the food?" *No.* "Then what are you eating?"

The tension is unbearable now. This is what Kamal Kar calls the "ignition moment." The truth is inescapable: They have been eating each other's shit. For years.

Often at this point, the discussion spirals out of the facilitator's control. People are agitated. They start challenging each other: *We can't continue this! This is madness! How can we stop this?*

They often ask the facilitator what they should do. But he declines to answer. "You know your village better than I do. You're free to choose anything you want, including continuing to defecate in public." But the villagers are determined now. It feels intolerable to live with the status quo another day.

Kar, the inventor of CLTS, knows it is an emotionally wrenching process. "Disgust is the number one trigger," he said. "And shame. 'What the hell are we doing? Are we human beings? Eating each other's shit!'"

CLTS is brutal, and it is effective. Thousands of communities worldwide have declared themselves open-defecation-free (ODF) as a result of the intervention, and in Bangladesh, where CLTS became a cornerstone of national sanitation work, the rate of open defecation has declined from 34% to 1%.

What's odd is that CLTS is not really introducing any "news." In the example above, for instance, people in the village defecated in public every day. They saw their neighbors doing the same. They smelled shit. They stepped over it. They saw the flies, the chickens. Why did the villagers need CLTS to realize something that was right in front of them?

Kar said that villagers will often tell him, "This a truth which nobody wanted to discuss. We're always pushing it under the carpet—and then it was brought out in public and into the daylight. . . . Now there's no way out. The naked truth is out."

They didn't really "see" the truth until they were made to trip over it.

2.

Tripping over the truth is an insight that packs an emotional wallop. When you have a sudden realization, one that you didn't see coming, and one that you know viscerally is right, you've tripped over the truth. It's a defining moment that in an instant can change the way you see the world.

The psychologist Roy Baumeister has studied these kinds of sudden realizations: people who joined and then left a cult, alcoholics who became sober, intellectuals who embraced communism and then recanted. Baumeister said that such situations were often characterized by a "crystallization of discontent," a dramatic moment when an array of isolated misgivings and complaints became linked in a global pattern. Imagine a husband who has a ferocious outburst of temper, and in that moment, his wife realizes that his outbursts aren't just "bad days," as she's always written them off, but a defining character trait. And a trait that she can no longer abide. That's the crystallization of discontent.

Ex-cult members tend to recall a specific moment when their bubble burst, when they could no longer sustain an elevated view of their cult's leader. Baumeister said that their stories reveal that "they had indeed suspected the truth all along but had held their doubts in check, until a focal incident made them see the broad pattern."

The crystallization moments studied by Baumeister are serendipitous. There's no predicting when (or if) if they will happen. Notice, though, that the realization sparked by CLTS is very similar in character. Because of the facilitators' questions, people in the villages are made to "see" what had been in front