

THE ELEVATION PAPERS

*A Framework for Leading,
Belonging, and Becoming at
Elev8 Villages*

These papers are the cultural backbone of our community.

Each paper outlines a key principle that guides how we live, lead, and grow together inside the village—and beyond.

Whether you're a resident, mentor, team member, or supporter, this series invites you into the heart of Elev8.



Created by Elev8 Villages

Why We're Called Elev8 Villages

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What's in the name "Elev8 Villages?"

At Elev8 Villages, every part of our name is intentional—rooted in purpose, vision, and calling. The name reflects not just what we do, but why we do it, and how we do it—with love, integrity, and a bold belief in what's possible.

Elevating Youth: Why Our Focus Begins Here

We elevate youth because they are the future. But not just any youth—our focus is on those who have been overlooked, passed around, and undervalued. These are the ones society often forgets, but we believe they are the very ones who can lead us into a better future.

They know what a world that doesn't work for everyone looks like. They've lived it. And because of that, they're uniquely qualified to design a world that does work for everyone. They come with vision, fire, and an innate resilience that only hardship can refine.

Scripture reminds us in Proverbs 31:8-9 to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves... defend the rights of the poor and needy." And in Psalm 82:3, we are commanded to "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed."

We elevate these young people because they deserve to be lifted—and because when they rise, we all do.

Why Elev8?

The number **8** in our name is not a gimmick—it's a sacred symbol full of meaning and power.

In Biblical numerology, the number 8 signifies new beginnings. The number is often associated with a brighter future and divine renewal—perfect for a community that offers a new beginning to those stepping into adulthood from hardship.

In Pythagorean numerology, 8 represents victory, abundance, and overcoming. It is the number of strength, ambition, truth, and prosperity.

The number 8 also visually mirrors the infinity symbol (∞), reminding us that we are creating a cycle of care, wisdom, and growth that is ever-flowing—not just for those in the village today, but for generations to come.

Even in practical application, small groups of 8 have been shown to be deeply effective for decision-making, intimacy, and personal growth. Eight is large enough to offer diversity of perspective, yet small enough to ensure every voice is heard—a reflection of the intentional communities we aim to build.

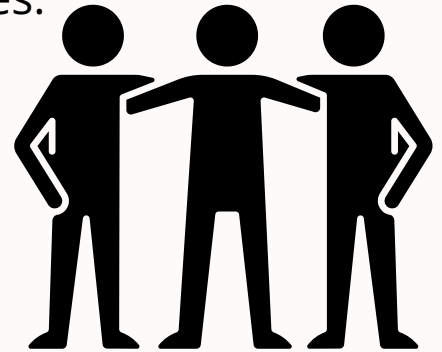
(Learn more about our “circles” in the Sociocracy paper later in this series.)

Why Villages, Not Just Homes?

We don't just offer homes—we build villages.

A home is a shelter.

A village is a system of belonging.



Throughout history, villages have been the heartbeat of humanity. They are spaces of shared responsibility, multigenerational wisdom, safety, and community wealth.

In a village, your wellbeing isn't just your own concern—it's everyone's concern. And that's the model we seek to revive.

In today's fragmented world, Elev8 Villages are reintroducing what many have lost: neighbors who know your name, mentors who guide your path, spaces where your contribution matters.

Our villages aren't just places to live. They are places to belong.

A Vision of What is Possible

Imagine this:

A young adult, newly aged out of foster care, walks into a tiny home in an Elev8 Village.

For the first time, they have their own key.

They walk past their neighbor, a mentor who waves and offers a ride to their job interview. That afternoon, they cook dinner with others from the food committee. That night, they laugh with friends around a fire pit, a soft glow of belonging all around them.

That is Elev8 Villages.

We are not just housing youth. We are igniting destiny, building legacy, and creating something sustainable, sacred, and soul-healing—for them and for us.



Embracing the Octopus: A Symbol of Elev8 Villages

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At Elev8 Villages, the octopus is more than a mascot—it is a mirror of our mission. We don't identify with the octopus only because of its eight limbs that reflect our name. We're drawn to it because of its quiet brilliance, its adaptive power, and its deeply layered complexity—much like the youth we serve.

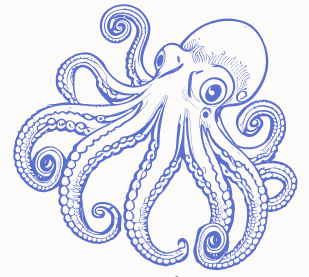
Wisdom Beneath the Surface

Octopuses are known for extraordinary intelligence, yet this brilliance is not loud or obvious. It's embedded in their design—subtle, mysterious, and often misunderstood. That same kind of quiet genius lives in our youth.

The young adults who arrive at Elev8 Villages have already survived what most people never could. Their resourcefulness is not hypothetical—it's lived. They've navigated the trauma of instability, betrayal, and neglect, yet they've emerged with intuition, grit, and often, untapped brilliance.

We are not here to rescue them—we are here to recognize them.

Like the octopus, our residents carry intelligence that isn't always visible to the untrained eye. But at Elev8 Villages, we see it. We honor it. And we create space for it to thrive.



Many Minds, One Body

The octopus has a central brain and eight mini-brains—one in each limb.

Each arm can move independently, solve problems, even taste and touch without direction from the central brain.

Yet all of it works in harmony. This beautifully decentralized system speaks to how we build community.

Adaptability as Power

Octopuses change shape, color, and texture to adapt to their surroundings. They don't panic under pressure—they morph, respond, innovate.

This is the same spirit we see in our youth.

They've survived not because they were rescued, but because they learned to read the room. They adapted. They became problem-solvers out of necessity, creatives out of survival.

At Elev8 Villages, we don't see these skills as coping mechanisms—we see them as leadership traits.

We create space where adaptability is no longer about surviving chaos but about steering opportunity.



Regeneration Without Shame

One of the most profound qualities of the octopus is its ability to regenerate limbs. It doesn't retreat in shame after a loss. It heals and grows stronger.

This resonates deeply with the heart of Elev8 Villages.

Our youth have lost a lot—relationships, stability, dignity. But Elev8 isn't a place to dwell in brokenness. It's a place to regenerate. Not to fix what's wrong, but to reawaken what's right. To amplify the strengths that helped them survive and provide tools to shape what comes next.

We focus on regeneration and the continuous pursuit of wholeness.

Healing happens, but not because someone else imposes it. It happens because the space, safety, and belief exist for it to unfold—organically, bravely, and on their terms.

Mystery, Depth, and Possibility

Octopuses dwell in the deep—unknown, often misunderstood. But the mystery is part of the magic.

We don't pretend to know every story that walks into our villages. We enter into that mystery with reverence. We listen. We create space.

We believe that even when someone's full potential isn't obvious, it's there—waiting, humming beneath the surface.

We believe the same about our mission: it will grow, shift, and evolve as we go deeper into what it means to elevate a generation with dignity, not charity.

Conclusion: Why the Octopus?

Because like the octopus, our youth are intelligent, adaptable, self-leading, regenerative, and powerful beyond what most can see.

Because, like the octopus, they don't need fixing—they need space to flourish.

Because Elev8 Villages is not just about stability—it's about becoming.

Together, we are building a new model for what community can look like—one where strength is decentralized, healing is sacred, and the mystery of human potential is never underestimated.

The Power of Words

Practicing Nonviolent

Communication



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Practicing Nonviolent Communication at Elev8 Villages

At Elev8 Villages, we believe that the way we speak to each other—especially in moments of stress, conflict, or disappointment—can either build a bridge or a wall.

That's why one of our foundational practices is **Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**, a powerful approach to conflict resolution, community-building, and personal empowerment developed by psychologist **Marshall Rosenberg**.

Nonviolent Communication is more than just a method—it's a mindset. A daily practice. A commitment to empathy and truth.

It's how we stay connected to our values in the middle of hard moments.

It's how we honor the humanity in one another, even when there's tension.

It's how we heal and grow, together.

Our Words Shape Our World

Many of our youth have grown up in environments where words were used to shame, control, threaten, or manipulate. They've been shouted at, misunderstood, dismissed, or silenced.



At Elev8 Villages, we choose a different path.

We teach and model a language that builds, heals, invites, and empowers.

We believe:

- Everyone deserves to be heard without fear.
- Conflict is not a failure—it's a doorway to deeper understanding.
- Feelings are not flaws—they're information.
- Needs are not weaknesses—they are universal.

What is Nonviolent Communication?

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a four-part framework:

1. **Observation** – What actually happened, without judgment or interpretation?
2. **Feelings** – What am I feeling in response to what happened?
3. **Needs** – What core need is behind that feeling?
4. **Requests** – What specific, doable action would help meet that need?

This may sound simple—but in the heat of the moment, it's revolutionary.

NVC teaches us to pause...



To breathe.



To listen with our hearts, not our defense mechanisms.



To speak with purpose, not punishment.

And as we practice, we begin to change not only our communication—but the entire culture around us.



A New Way of Responding to Conflict

At Elev8 Villages, we *expect* conflict. It's part of life in any close-knit community.

But unlike the systems our youth may have come from—where conflict was met with harsh discipline, disconnection, or shame—we respond differently.

When something goes wrong, our first question is not, “*Who’s to blame?*”

It’s: **“What need is not being met?”**

We don’t label someone “bad” because they’re angry or withdrawn.

We ask: **“What are you protecting?”**

We explore: **“What are you longing for?”**

This approach doesn’t ignore accountability—it deepens it.

Because when people feel safe enough to be honest, they become *responsible* for their impact.

We move from punishment to *repair*. From judgment to *curiosity*. From isolation to *reconnection*.



Lifelong Tools, Woven Into Daily Life

Every resident, staff member, mentor, and volunteer at Elev8 Villages will be introduced to the principles and practices of Nonviolent Communication.

We will:

- Offer NVC training during orientation and throughout the year
- Incorporate NVC language into meetings, workshops, and everyday interactions
- Model NVC in leadership and conflict resolution
- Create spaces where honesty and empathy can coexist

This isn't just for the village—it's preparation for life.

As our youth step into leadership, family life, and careers, they will carry with them tools for emotional resilience, peaceful conflict resolution, and authentic connection.

They will walk into the wider world not just knowing how to survive it—but how to *heal* it.



Conclusion: We Speak Life

Nonviolent Communication is a sacred thread that runs through every part of Elev8 Villages.

We don't just build tiny homes—we build trust.

We don't just teach skills—we teach language for belonging.

We don't just aim for peace—we practice it, every day, in how we speak to one another.

Because in the end, our words are not just words.

They are tools for healing.

They are instruments of dignity.

They are how we elevate one another—one conversation at a time.

“Learning NVC changed the way I speak to myself. I used to beat myself up when I made a mistake. Now, I ask: What do I need? What am I feeling?

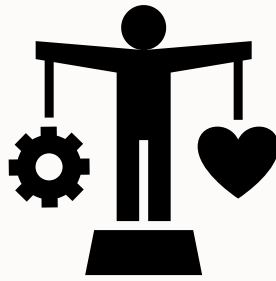
It's changed everything.”

— Melissa, Founder

“Before Elev8, I thought when people were mad at me, it meant I was broken. Here, I learned how to talk about what's really going on—and now I'm not afraid of hard conversations.”

— Future Resident

A Quiet Revolution: Power and Care in Harmony



The Elevation Papers

The World We're Building at Elev8 Villages

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POWER AND CARE |04

They don't remember the first time they were taken from home.

They were small—too young to make sense of what was happening, but old enough to understand the ache of goodbye. Their parents were unwilling, or unable, to provide safety. No grandparents stepped in. No aunts showed up. No neighbor opened their door.

So the state did.

They entered foster care at age four.

Nineteen placements followed in the next fourteen years: group homes, temporary beds, emergency shelters.

A handful of adults who tried. Many more who didn't.

Every time they started to settle in—to recognize the smell of the kitchen or memorize the path to school—they were moved again. No explanation. No choice. Just a knock on the door and a trash bag of belongings.

They learned to stop asking why.

They learned not to get too close.

They learned that belonging was a luxury, not a right.

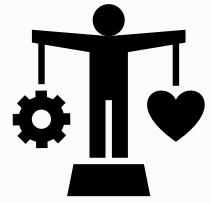
Until now.

Now, they live in an Elev8 Village.

For the first time, they have a key to their own front door.

A voice in how their community is run.

And a chance, not just to heal, **but to reimagine the world itself.**



A Different Way to Lead and Live

At Elev8 Villages, we do not replicate the structures that failed our youth. We do not rebuild systems of silence and control.

Instead, we ask a bold question:

What does it look like when power and care walk hand in hand?

For most of our residents, power has always been held by someone else. By caseworkers. By courts. By strangers behind desks making decisions without their voice.

We believe in changing that.

Not just by speaking kindly—but by structuring our community in a way that makes care and agency inseparable.

Belonging That Comes With a Voice

Here, no one is “just a resident.”

Everyone belongs, and that belonging comes with voice.

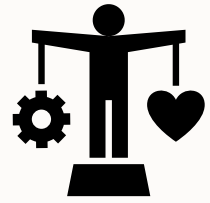
Our youth don’t simply receive services—they contribute to the rhythms of the village.

They join circles, lead initiatives, share feedback, co-create.

Because belonging without voice isn’t real belonging.

And safety without agency isn’t real healing.

We don’t hand down decisions—we build them together.



Why We Center Care

Many of our youth have never seen care modeled as strength. They've experienced care as a transaction—or worse, a performance.

At Elev8, care is not an afterthought. It's the heartbeat of the village. It shows up:

- In how we speak during conflict
- In how we plan events, share meals, ask questions
- In how we show up when someone is struggling—not to fix them, but to walk beside them

Care is not weakness.

Care is what makes us strong enough to stay, to rebuild, to hope again.

A New Kind of Leadership

Leadership here doesn't mean being in charge.

It means being in relationship.

It means being the kind of person others can trust with hard things.

It means listening deeply. Asking better questions. Holding space for discomfort.

It means saying, “I don't know, but I'm willing to learn.”

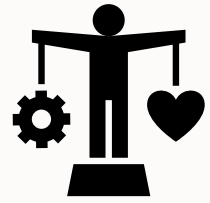
And, “I see you, even in your messiest moment.”

And sometimes, just quietly showing up.

We lead with care, not charisma.

We lead with presence, not power plays.

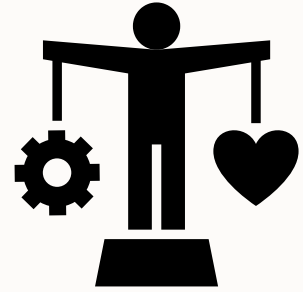
We lead with one another, not above one another.



What This Looks Like in Daily Life

- A youth who has never been heard before leads a village circle and watches others nod in agreement.
- A neighbor offers childcare so a single parent can attend a class or take a nap.
- An elder teaches a teenager how to plant and tend a garden—not just for food, but for rhythm and resilience.
- A disagreement isn't avoided—it's met with structure, patience, and deep listening.
- A mentor doesn't just “give back”—they receive, grow, and heal too.

**This is what it looks like when care is a practice
and power is shared.**



Conclusion: The Quiet Revolution

The world told them they were a burden.
That they were lucky to get what they got.
That they should be grateful for survival.
But in Elev8 Villages, they learn a different story:
That they are leaders.
That their voice carries weight.
That they were never too much or too late.
The revolution we're building isn't loud.
It's not flashy.
It doesn't announce itself with slogans.
It grows slowly, in conversations and community dinners, in
restored dignity and reimagined decisions.
It grows when someone who was once voiceless raises their hand
and says, "I have an idea."

This is how we build a better world.

Not by force. Not by shame.
But by **care that's consistent**
and **power that's shared**
and a **community that believes the future can feel like home.**

The Citizens of Elev8 Villages



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*An Invitation to Belong, to Contribute,
and to Build a New Way Forward*

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Elev8 Villages are not just places to live. They are living systems of belonging.

They are places where people come together to practice a new way of being—one rooted in care, shared power, and the courage to believe the world can be better than what we've inherited.

So who lives in these villages?

Not the perfect.

Not the privileged.

But the willing.

The willing to grow. To contribute. To heal. To reimagine.
People who want to be part of something real, relational, and radically restorative.

Our Foundational Citizens: Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

Our villages begin with—and are built around—the young adults who have aged out of the foster system.

They are not here because they are broken.

They are here because they are powerful.

These youth have endured trauma that would cripple many. They've survived instability, betrayal, and abandonment—and they've developed **resilience, resourcefulness, and deep wisdom** because of it.

They are the heart of Elev8.



They are the first leaders.

They are the first co-creators of this new world.

Their lived experiences make them uniquely equipped to imagine and build a system that works for everyone—because they’ve lived inside the ones that didn’t.

At Elev8, they are not being saved.

They are being seen.

And the world they help build here will ripple outward—for themselves, for future villages, and for the society beyond our gates.

Other Citizens of Elev8 Villages

Though our founding mission centers around youth who have aged out of care, our villages are open to a diverse and intergenerational population—*because we need each other.*

Here are some of the others who may call Elev8 Villages home:

Young Adults & College Students

People in their 20s or 30s seeking more than a career—they’re seeking community. They want to contribute to something meaningful while living affordably, sustainably, and purposefully.

Young Couples and New Families

Those who want to raise children in a value-driven environment. They want their kids to grow up surrounded by kindness, diversity, and people who know their names.



Single Parents

Mothers or fathers seeking support, connection, and safe, stable ground to raise their children—surrounded by a village that helps, not judges.

Elders and Retirees

Those with wisdom to share, and time to offer. They may be widowed, aging, or simply ready to live in a way that feels nourishing and connected. In Elev8, they're not forgotten. They're honored.

They may:

- Mentor youth
- Babysit for young families
- Receive care when needed
- Teach skills
- Share stories from a lifetime of experience

Researchers and Innovators

Social scientists, futurists, environmental thinkers, or urban planners who want to live inside the future they write about. They choose Elev8 not just to observe—but to participate.

Care-Weary Professionals

People who've spent their careers in healthcare, education, activism, or ministry—and are longing for a place where care is mutual. Where burnout can heal. Where purpose lives alongside rest.



We're not just building homes.

We're building a *living prototype* of a new world.

A world that prioritizes healing over punishment.

Community over isolation.

Contribution over consumption.

If you're reading this and your heart is whispering, "What if I could be part of that?" Then you are already one of us.

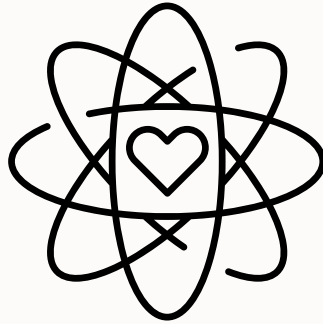
We are looking for:

- Builders of bridges between generations
- Listeners who ask beautiful questions
- Helpers who see needs before they're named
- Dreamers who are ready to do the work
- People who believe we rise together

You don't have to have it all figured out.

But if you have love to give, hands to share, wisdom to offer, or simply a longing for something more honest and human—there's room for you here.

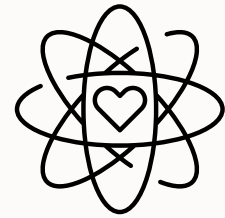
Our Shared Values



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Our Values shape how we lead, speak, care, grow, and make decisions every day.

These are the rhythms of our culture:

Belonging

We make people feel seen.

Everyone is welcomed, valued, and invited to bring their full self to the village.

Community

We show up for each other.

We lean into connection, support one another, and build something greater than ourselves.

Responsibility

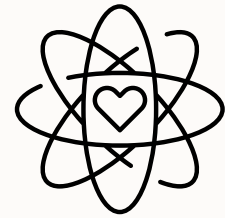
We own our impact.

We hold ourselves accountable for our actions and contribute to the well-being of the whole.

Compassion

We lead with empathy.

We respond to needs with curiosity, not judgment—and speak truth with care.



Courage

We keep going.

We face hard things with grit and grace, knowing growth takes boldness.

Voice

We speak up and listen deeply.

Every person's perspective matters. Decisions are made with—not for—each other.

Equity

We rise together.

We honor every background, dismantle power imbalances, and create space for shared leadership.

Regeneration

We believe in new beginnings.

We give space to heal, to try again, and to keep becoming—individually and as a community.