

Erica Peng  
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Erica Peng's teaching and consulting focus on the intersection of neuroscience, human behavior, and leadership. Her approach helps leaders and teams unleash untapped potential by teaching them "how to see" and engage with hidden root causes and unconscious factors that support or sabotage influence, collaboration, and results. She has guided over 1500 business leaders and social entrepreneurs through her innovative neuroscience-based leadership development methodology, Designed For Connection.

Having lived, worked, and traveled extensively in Asia, Latin America, and Europe, Erica brings keen awareness of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group dynamics, to support leaders and organizations as they navigate challenges involving language, culture, social identity, socio-political context, and other dimensions of diversity and difference.

Erica began innovating as an educator in 2000 as the Director of the Eco-literacy Program in the Berkeley Unified School District. Her program design was based on a belief that to make progress on sustainability, young people need to be taught how to see, reflect, and strategize with bigger picture systems awareness. (She still believes this is true). The cornerstone of the program was hands-on experiential learning through organic gardening and cooking. In her role, she helped draft and pass the country's first food policies for the school district and the City of Berkeley.

## **Education**

M.A., Organization Development, Sonoma State University, 2008

B.A., Urban Studies, Stanford University, 1996

- Phi Beta Kappa honors

## **Current Applications**

Most recently, Erica is applying her research and methodology to wildfire mitigation, helping fire service personnel engage more effectively with community members experiencing defensiveness, resistance, and/or paralysis due to fight-flight-freeze reactivity from on-going wildfire threat.

## **Presentations**

Stanford University Wildfire Seminar Series (April 2025). What's missing in wildfire mitigation: How our fight-flight-freeze neurobiology prevents us from protecting ourselves from fire.

Sustainable Enterprise Conference (March 2025). The inner terrain of sustainability amidst on-going crisis and wildfire threat.

West Contra Costa Fire Safe Council (January and February 2024). How fight-flight-freeze neurobiology gets in the way of protecting our homes from fire and what we can do about it

## **Teaching/Coaching Experience**

Erica has over fifteen years of experience coaching leaders and teams and designing/delivering high-impact leadership development courses and workshops.

2016-present. Lecturer, Interpersonal Skills and Embodied Systems Leadership course, UC Berkeley Haas School of Business.

2010-present. Founder, Erica Peng Connects. Executive coaching and behavior-based culture change.

2015-2023 Career Coach. UC Berkeley Haas School of Business, Career Management Group.

2016. Design and facilitation leader. Stanford Graduate School of Business, DEI workshop for Freshman cohorts of 400 students.

2014-2016. Leadership Coach, Stanford Graduate School of Business, Women in Management Alumni Program.

2013-2017. Leadership Coach, Stanford Executive Education, Asian Leadership Program.

2008-2017. Senior Facilitator, Stanford Graduate School of Business, Interpersonal Dynamics course.

2011-2013. Adjunct Faculty, University of San Francisco School of Law, Negotiation and Interpersonal Communication course.

## **Research and Teaching Interests**

- Dignity and worthiness: antidotes to imposter syndrome in leaders
- Emotions and vulnerability in effective leadership
- Neurobiology of motivating and de-motivating feedback and conditions for behavior change
- How stereotype threat impairs performance, physical and mental health
- Interplay of social identity, social context, power dynamics on teams
- Behavior-based culture change
- Systems leadership
- Systems theory in sustainability efforts
- Fight-flight-freeze neurobiology applied to fire mitigation strategies