

Active Hope and the Work That Reconnects Fact Sheet

What is Active Hope?

The word hope has two different meanings. The first involves hopefulness, believing our preferred outcome is reasonably likely to happen. If we require this kind of hope before we commit ourselves to an action, our response gets blocked in areas where we don't rate our chances too high.

The second meaning is about desire. It is this kind of hope that starts our journey — knowing what we hope for and what we'd like, or love, to take place. It is what we do with this hope that really makes the difference. Passive hope is about waiting for external agencies to bring about what we desire. Active Hope is about becoming active participants in bringing about what we hope for.

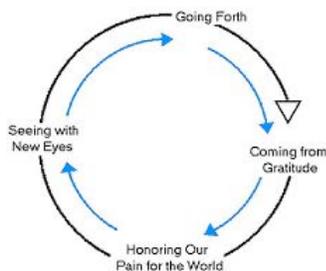
Active Hope is a practice. Like tai chi or gardening, it is something we do rather than have. It is a process we can apply to any situation, and it involves three key steps. First, we take in a clear view of reality; second, we identify what we hope for in terms of the direction we'd like things to move in or the values we'd like to see expressed; and third, we take steps to move ourselves or our situation in that direction.

Since Active Hope doesn't require our optimism, we can apply it even in areas where we feel hopeless. The guiding impetus is intention; we choose what we aim to bring about, act for, or express. Rather than weighing our chances and proceeding only when we feel hopeful, we focus on our intention and let it be our guide.

*From Active Hope- How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy
by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy*

The Work That Reconnects

Spiral of the Work that Reconnects



The Work That Reconnects is a pioneering form of group work that began in the 1970s. It demonstrates our interconnectedness in the web of life and our authority to take action on its behalf. It has helped many thousands around the globe find insight, solidarity, and courage to act, despite rapidly worsening conditions. Based on systems theory, spiritual teachings, and deep ecology, its methods are described in *Coming Back To Life*, by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown.

The central purpose of the Work that Reconnects is to help people uncover and experience their innate connections with each other and with the systemic, self-healing powers in the web of life, so that they may be enlivened and motivated to play their part in creating a sustainable civilization. In order to do this, we pursue these contributing goals:

- to provide people the opportunity to experience and share with others their innermost responses to the present condition of our world

- to reframe their pain for the world as evidence of their interconnectedness in the web of life, and hence of their power to take part in its healing
- to provide people with concepts--from systems science, deep ecology, or spiritual traditions--which illumine this power, along with exercises which reveal its play in their own lives
- to provide methods by which people can experience their interdependence with, their responsibility to, and the inspiration they can draw from past and future generations, and other life-forms
- to enable people to embrace the Great Turning as a challenge which they are fully capable of meeting in a variety of ways, and as a privilege in which they can take joy
- to bring people into mutual support and collaboration in working for the world

Preparing Ourselves as Worthy Ancestors

As part of the Women's Congress process in 2012, practices derived from the Work That Reconnects were used in our gatherings to ground us in skills necessary for strengthening our connections to both the Ancestors and Future Ones to come. These skills, or stances of the heart, aid us in staying present to both the beauty and pain of our world, and empower us to take action on behalf of all beings, and particularly future generations. Some of these skills include:

1. **Gratitude**- the capacity to ground ourselves in a radical gratitude, available to us at any time, which reminds us of the beauty and grace of the world, and deepens our sense of belonging and love for the world.
2. **Witness/honoring our pain for the world**- A necessary part of our work in this time of destruction and injustice is the act of open-hearted witness- a capacity and willingness to sustain the gaze to the reality of what's happening without shutting down. This is the highest act of compassion.
3. **Seeing with new eyes**- our interconnectedness with the larger world and the cosmos, and to the lineage of ancestors and future generations. This again, is a more-than-intellectual process, a lived-into, embodied experience of our belonging to the world.
4. **Going Forth/Sharing our gifts**- Knowing with our whole being our connections across time, space, and beyond, we thus know more clearly our calling and power to bring our gifts to the world, an offering in service to the All.

Resources

Books Active Hope-How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy, by Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy

Coming Back to Life- by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown (presently in revision, available in 2014)

Websites www.workthatreconnects.org
www.activehope.info
www.joannamacy.net
www.gaiaworkshops.net