

# Teaching Climate Change Affectively: A Facilitator's Guide

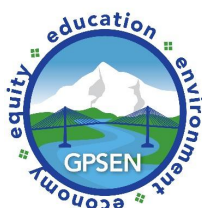


**Created by**

**Rebecca Lexa, MA, WFR, Kathy Stanley, MA, and Kim Smith, PhD,  
with the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN)  
Adapted for the UH System Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum,  
with Krista Hiser, Ph.D.**

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SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION NETWORK**  
A Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development



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# Teaching Climate Change Affectively:

## A Train-the-Trainer Workshop

**Summary:** In these times of daunting challenges, where we are bombarded with negative news and scales of problems that can overwhelm our psyches, it is important to develop tools that we can use to empower ourselves and help others engage in solutions.

**Teaching Climate Change Affectively** identifies the psychological barriers that inhibit our sense of efficacy, such as fear, scales of issues and time, and self-limiting frames of actions and outcomes, and offers tools to overcome adversity, develop communication skills, and build our resiliency. This workshop will use lessons from eco-psychology and eco-philosophy to help you tap into your emotions and build reserves of personal resilience so that you can face climate change with clear eyes, not sink into despair, and learn practices that will be psychologically supportive and empowering, including suggestions for how you can teach these challenging topics in your classes and take action in your own communities. Through these lenses, climate change becomes our ally to help us to move forward.

**Goals:** As a Train-the-Trainer model, this handbook provides the structure and processes for a variety of activities that will allow you to offer classes and workshops to others in the future. Note the recommended times and resources needed, plus guidelines on how to complete the activities with different sizes of groups. We hope that this training will be worthwhile for you and that this handbook will offer you everything you need to help scale up our collective efforts and offer hope and tools to others.

### Structure:

The training will consist of a combination of mini lectures, personal reflections, small group discussions, and group activities. All of the topics and activities below are options and suggestions as to what could be covered in similar workshops, whether as a complete experience or through individual modules. All of the activities are designed to be used in classes from any academic discipline, to engage with aspects of climate change, climate disruption, or ecological or social crises.

**Recommended Resources:** See the reference section below for additional background.

Curriculum development funding provided by Portland Community College's Green Initiative Fund.

Workshop supported by the UH System Office of the Vice President for Planning & Policy.



# Teaching Climate Change Affectively Workshop

Friday, January 10, 2020

10:00 - 2:45

UH West O'ahu - Rm C-225

## Program

10:00 – 10:30	Welcome and Introductions
10:30 – 11:00	Coming from Gratitude
11:00 – 11:45	Giving Voice to our Concerns for the World
11:45 – 12:05	Outdoor Sensory Experience
12:05 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 1:30	Seeing with Fresh Eyes
1:30 – 2:00	The Great Turning - Climate Council
2:00 – 2:30	Going Forth
2:30 – 2:45	Closing Circle

*This project is generously supported by Portland Community College's Green Initiative Fund, the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN), UH System Office of the Vice President for Planning & Policy, and UH System Office of Sustainability.*



To learn more, visit:

UH System Office of Sustainability: <https://www.hawaii.edu/sustainability>

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GPSEN's website: <http://gpsen.org>

Or email: Kim Smith: [kdsmith@pcc.edu](mailto:kdsmith@pcc.edu) or Krista Hiser: [hiser@hawaii.edu](mailto:hiser@hawaii.edu)

**Educate ~ Empower ~ Engage**

# Workshop Overview and Introductions

## Welcome (15 minutes)

Allow time for a welcome from the workshop hosts and provide introductory slides, with core goals, logos of hosts and sponsors, and contact information.

*Introduce speaker(s).*

## Offer an overview of the workshop:

The topic of climate change can be overwhelming to the psyche due to daunting news. Even people who stay informed and do their part to create a sustainable future find that the subject can become too much to absorb. It is understandable then that some people tune it out, go numb, do not talk about it, or choose to deny its existence, and others find themselves feeling depressed if they focus on it. For these reasons, it is helpful to have a structured framework in which to examine climate change, where people can share their feelings, build personal resilience, and feel empowered to act in ways that are supportive.

One such framework is “The Work That Reconnects,” developed by eco-philosopher Joanna Macy. This workshop format has proven effective in thousands of workshop settings around the world (See Recommended Readings: *Active Hope* and *Coming Back to Life*). “The Work That Reconnects” provides a safe and supportive structure for doing group work on challenging subjects such as climate change. The structure allows us to address psychological barriers to climate change and climate silence, provides support for people’s feelings and concerns, and encourages and enlivens our positive responses and engagement.

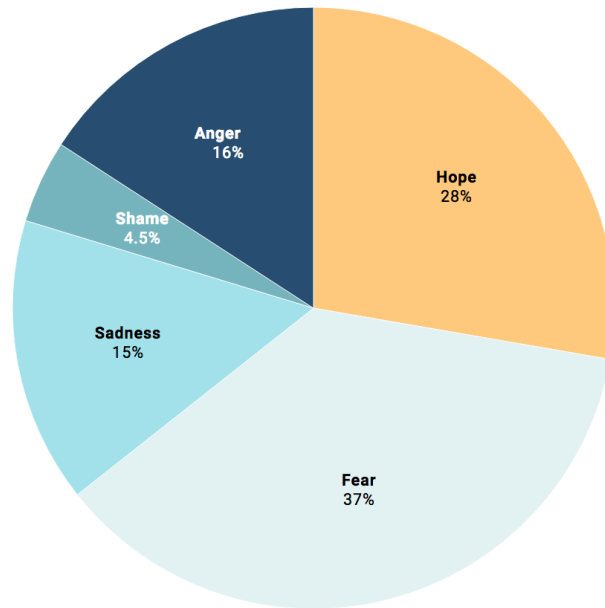
This format divides the workshop into four stages:

- 1) Coming from gratitude
- 2) Giving voice to our concerns for the world
- 3) Seeing with fresh eyes
- 4) Going forth

“The Work That Reconnects” is effective for several reasons and it can be used as a model for engaging in any type of personal or collective work on difficult subjects. It starts off by grounding us in our wholeness by having us identify the good things that we can be grateful for in our lives. Once we are grounded in our wholeness (which is a first step in building resilience), we then move on to expressing our concern for the world with honesty. This part of the workshop is a necessary step in being able to face fears and allow feelings, however conflicting, to be heard. With our feelings heard, a space is opened up and we can then move on to seeing with fresh eyes. This includes seeing what else is possible in the situation, visioning new perspectives, and expanding our sense of our own power and interconnectedness with the web of life. The final part of the workshop, going forth, invites us into our next steps so that we leave with new ideas, hope, and inspiration for what we can do in our own lives to be effective and affective agents of positive change for our communities.

**Background: UH System Office of Sustainability Research: “Worry & Hope”**

## What students feel about sustainability and climate issues



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<b>Fear</b>	<b>Anger</b>	<b>Sadness</b>	<b>Shame</b>	<b>Hope</b>
<p>in denial powerless speechless helpless detached dumb worried unsure mystified skeptical nervous stressed concerned alarmed pressured shocked overwhelmed scared</p>	<p>it sucks irritated cheated distrustful frustrated angry</p>	<p>heavy disappointed pessimistic sad terrible depressed resigned discouraged dampened heartbroken devastated hopeless</p>	<p>ashamed embarrassed guilty cringing gross visceral reaction</p>	<p>humble grateful empathetic interested opinionated knowledgeable enlightened concerned motivated inspired reassured responsible determined hopeful</p>

Share video: [Youth Takes: Climate Change and Climate Anxiety](#)

**Participant Introductions** (15 minutes):

To build community, have people introduce themselves and briefly share what brings each person to this workshop. [Time will vary depending on the number of people in the workshop, so facilitate this section accordingly.]

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## Group Activities

### Coming from Gratitude (30 minutes):

#### Context:

Climate change tends to wear us down on a variety of levels, not the least of which is emotional. One of the simplest ways to give yourself an emotional boost is through gratitude practice. This exercise focuses on consciously taking note of things for which you are grateful. Some people like to spend a few minutes each day thinking and practicing gratitude, perhaps by making a list in a journal or being present in the moment. Others practice it by saying a quiet thank you over food, clothing, or even opening the door on a sunny day. Still others practice their gratitude with others, both to stay in the habit, and also so everyone can share their joy together.

The practice of gratitude reminds us that not everything in the world is terrible. We often take good things for granted, especially the good things that are generally everyday occurrences like being able to breathe clean air or having access to food. In gratitude practice, suddenly even the smallest thing becomes worthy of celebration. And, then, life just seems so much better!

#### Exercise: Gratitude Practice (15 minutes)

Start by breaking into dyads (two-person groups). Choose a partner and sit, facing each other.

#### Discussion:

*First, tell each other about things you are grateful for today. It can be anything at all, from getting out of bed without pain, to really enjoying your breakfast, to having the opportunity to be here with us in this workshop. Let the first person share for a minute or so and then switch and let the other person express their gratitude. (2-3 minutes)*

*Next, extend gratitude out into our community. Express gratitude for members of your family, friends, or co-workers, even people who have offered you assistance in your community, such as in a store or at a restaurant. Each person shares for two minutes. (4-5 minutes)*

*Now, open up your gratitude to the entire planet! That can include even more people, plus other animals, plants, fungi and other living beings, individual ecosystems and other places, and, of course, Earth itself. Perhaps even extend beyond into our galaxy, the sun, and more. Start close in, and work your way out, and see how far your gratitude can reach. (5-6 minutes)*

*So, now that you have spent time expressing all this gratitude, how do you feel?*

There's really no wrong way to do gratitude practice. Here are a few ideas to take home with you.

- Keep a daily gratitude journal, either for yourself or to share with someone else.
- Make a daily gratitude post on Facebook or other social media that you share with people you like and trust.
- Write letters of gratitude to specific people, perhaps one a week. You do not actually have to send them if you do not want to, but just the act of writing them can be encouraging.

- Get together for a “gratitude lunch” where you and a few other people meet up once a month or so to share things for which you are thankful (make sure to hold space for people to be honest in their emotions, but keep the focus on gratitude rather than complaints).
- Be mindful of your language on a daily basis. If you find yourself complaining about something and you cannot really do anything about it right now, see if you can reframe the situation in a more positive way. Or shift your attention to some of the better things in your life right now.
- Practice gratitude at odd moments, even for the seemingly smallest things. If you take a big, deep breath, be grateful in that moment that your lungs are able to draw in air and that the air is clean enough to breathe. When you get into bed at night, feel gratitude for the relaxation that settles over you and the opportunity to let yourself rest.
- Finally, do not forget gratitude to our Earth and all its intricate systems! Yes, we have knocked quite a few of them off kilter, but we are still here, with the opportunity to reverse the damage our species has done. Thank Earth for the food you eat and the water you drink, the ground beneath your feet, and the atmosphere that protects us from UV rays and gives us the variety of weather we get throughout the year.

*Do any of you do any of these already? Do you have any other practices you would like to suggest?*

[Allow for some final discussion for 2-3 minutes]

When we express our gratitude for someone or something, we feel more strongly for it. We stop taking for granted all of these interrelationships, and we become more consciously aware of just how fragile the planetary ecosystems are. This awareness cultivates concern and responsibility and helps us to come to our desire to reverse climate change not through fear and desperation, but through love, resolve, and connection.

## **Giving Voice to our Concerns for the World: (45 minutes)**

### **Context:**

While 97% of scientists agree that climate change is real and human-caused, we struggle to address climate change as a social problem. With 7.8 billion humans on this planet, each with their own thoughts, perspectives, and emotions, it is impossible to get us all to agree on how to proceed. As we know, these challenges can cause us personal distress and create cultural divides that undermine relationships and communities. With climate change, disagreements unfortunately eat up precious time that we need to work toward reversing or addressing its effects, so it is valuable for us to look at the different ways that people respond to climate change, whether through activism, avoidance, defensiveness, or denial.

Exploring the psychological barriers that we commonly create is important to facing climate change as a difficult reality. These can become particularly poignant in educational settings. For example, Student Focus group research at the University of Hawaii revealed some archetypes of student identity related to sustainability and climate change:



We may rationalize away evidence, struggle with cognitive dissonance over our own actions, repress our emotions, become demoralized, or distract ourselves with video games, sports, alcohol, or other forms of entertainment. Others may minimize the authority of those who are presenting evidence of climate change, or dismiss public policies. And some may even numb themselves further any time they hear messages that are contrary to their beliefs or lifestyles or are too painful or scary to face.

All these and more are psychological defenses that are normal parts of the human psyche, helping us deal with harsh or threatening realities. Note that psychological defenses are not signs of weakness. We all have psychological defenses and it helps to talk about them. From despair to denial, it is valuable to acknowledge the full spectrum of emotions.

Plus, be aware that if we hold too tightly to our defenses we can become inflexible. Or we become like the proverbial ostrich with its head stuck in the sand. It is a case of “all things in moderation” and an opportunity for empathy for ourselves and others, knowing that our emotions can shift across the spectrum at various times and in various ways.

For an ecotherapist’s perspective on the defenses that some people may use, we highly recommend Craig Chalquist’s video, “[Shifting the Psychology of Climate Change Denial](#)” (see references below). It is too long for us to play today, but we recommend watching it on your own time. In it he details the following three topics:

1. Understanding Psychological Defense
2. 12 Defenses Against Climate Change Awareness
3. Shifting From Denial and Helplessness to Action

Why is it so important for us to understand why someone would build up defenses about climate change? Partially, it is a process of self-awareness. It also is embedded in our relationships, including our ability to communicate with others. This is especially the case if we are trying to convince someone of our perspective. We all speak through filters created by our psychological defenses. People on all sides of the discussion have strong feelings about climate change. When we see each other as fellow human beings who, like us, use psychological defenses to deal with uncomfortable realities, we can see ourselves as standing next to each other instead of across from each other.

Recognizing these defenses, Chalquist makes a very good point on his website about how we can give space to our concerns (see reference list):

*In all defense, the primary goal is to hold the mind together against an onslaught of overwhelming, destabilizing emotions until the defender has a safe place and opportunity to work through overwhelm and move from helplessness into action.*

By holding safe spaces for people to process feelings about climate change—like the one we have today, in this workshop—we create arenas to help get past psychological defenses and work through their root causes. Each person



must do so at their own speed, no more, no less. Those of us who are already distressed by climate change's seriousness need to hold space for those just coming to the realization of its severity. Others need to have compassion for those who are feeling completely overwhelmed by the problem. We need to make our efforts to address climate change open and welcoming to all, so no one feels that they aren't the right "type" of person to fight climate change. By doing so, we cultivate a sense of community, recognizing that "we're all in this together!"

One of the main goals of teaching climate change is to help people feel less overwhelmed by its immensity. It is all too easy to become so disheartened by all of the bad news that we become paralyzed—another psychological defense. Why should we even bother when so many people are still contributing to the climate change problem? If our efforts might not even have an effect in our lifetimes, or our children's lifetimes, or beyond, how can we stay motivated?

It is a challenge, to be sure. And it is easy to shut down and drop out of the conversation. But climate silence is deadly. Not only does it make it seem as though fewer people are concerned about climate change, but it also discourages us from sharing our fears and feelings with each other. And right now, more than ever, we need the support of each other in these trying times.

Now, let's move to some exercises that will allow us to dig into our own emotions around climate change.

### **Exercise: Breaking Through Our Defenses** (15 minutes)

Break into small groups of 3 people. Face each other and discuss the following questions.

#### **Discussion:**

*Name a few defenses that you commonly use when facing climate change. How can these serve as barriers to action? Can you think of any instances where psychological defenses can be healthy? [Allow each person to share for 3-4 minutes]*

### **Exercise: Holding Space for Emotions** (15 minutes)

[Materials: whiteboard and markers or Post-It pads and pens]

Start by getting all participants in a circle, with everyone facing each other, if possible. Take a moment to look around the circle and recognize that we are one united whole.

Now, have each person think of three emotions that climate change makes them feel, for example "scared, sad, and angry." Quickly go around the circle and let people share their emotions in just a couple of words. Write the list of emotions on the board or on a pad of paper.

Thank the group for sharing!

#### **Discussion:**

*Do you see any common themes? How might these emotions be different for different people, e.g., scientists, teachers, students, leaders, the elderly, etc.?*

Note which emotions came up a lot (four or five you heard most often). These show that you are not alone in feeling this way—a lot of us do, and so do a lot of people outside of this room.

*Does it feel better knowing there are other people who feel the things you do about climate change?*

This is an example of holding space. Right here, in this moment, we are holding space for each other. There is no judgement, and no wrong way to feel. We are united in a circle, but that circle is made of individual people, each with our own path and story.

*What are some other ways you can think of that we could use to help create space for people to process their feelings on climate change?*

## **Outdoor Sensory Experience (20 mins)**

Now, let us shift our energy, step outside, breathe, and move, and then take a break to care for our bodies and enjoy some food.

[Head outside, wearing appropriate weather gear as needed. Allow a few minutes to transition and gather, together. Materials: Have blindfolds available, if desired.]

### **Exercise: A Moment of Meditation (2 minutes)**

First, find a spot where you are comfortable and can hear my voice. Stand in one spot, and close your eyes. For one minute, we will be completely present in our own bodies.

Focus for a moment on being completely still, not moving your head or your fingers or even your tongue. Now focus for a moment on your breathing. Feel the air flow in through your nose, down your throat and into your lungs, where it carries life-giving oxygen to your tissues, and then back out again.

Now, feel the ground beneath your feet. Feel yourself solidly rooted to the ground. Imagine the heat of your body, created by the metabolism of your cells, extending down through your shoes, through whatever you are standing on, deep into the soil beneath us. Imagine that it touches the heat of the magma of the Earth, fire to fire. Feel yourself deeply connected to the Earth through that heat.

Next, stretch your arms up and feel the heat given off by the palms of your hands and the top of your head extending up into the sky. Let it stretch until it reaches the sun, even through the clouds and millions of miles of space. Let your body's heat touch the heat of the sun's combustion, fire to fire. Feel yourself deeply connected to the Sun through that heat.

Draw the heat of the Earth up into yourself, and draw the heat of the Sun down into yourself, and let them meet in your very center, a fire in your belly. Let that heat extend throughout your entire body, and let it energize every cell. Let this heat invigorate and strengthen you.

Open your eyes and come back to the waking world, and feel how much stronger you are. As we head into the next part of our day, move forward with that strength guiding you and your actions.

### **Exercise: Sensory Walk (15 minutes)**

[Materials: Blindfolds or bandanas, if desired; collected artifacts, if offering an indoor alternative]

Next, find a partner. In pairs, one person is blindfolded or keeps their eyes closed. The other person holds their hand or shoulder and guides their partner to touch, smell, hear, and feel aspects of nature using other senses than their eyes. They do not need to "guess" what it is; in fact, nothing needs to be said. Then, switch partners and blindfolds and repeat the exercise. (5 minutes each). Share with your partner what this was like for you regarding sensory and trust issues.

Indoor alternative: The group can stay inside and do the same activity with blindfold/closed eyes and collected artifacts (flowers, leaves, etc).

## **LUNCH**

### **Seeing with Fresh Eyes (30 minutes)**

**Context:**

In this stage of *The Work That Reconnects*, we are invited to expand into what we call the “ecological self” - where we can experience our interconnectedness with each other, with non-human nature, and with the earth itself and where we can tap into a reserve of strength and hope that can support us on multiple levels. We find that we do not have to face climate change all by ourselves. We can draw on reserves of strength we never knew we had by cultivating our ecological self. All activities that nurture our connectedness and sense of belonging will support this. So join in with groups in your community that share your vision and your values.

We are going to do two exercises that will help us to identify some of our strengths and ways that we extend ourselves to assist others - all aspects of cultivating the ecological self.

**Exercise: The Milling** (15 minutes)

A “Milling” is a silent encounter designed by Joanna Macy to “help people see each other more fully in their shared humanity.” According to Macy, “The present global realities strike us with greater impact when we relate to our face-to-face experience of another person. To confront their possible suffering and death can jolt our minds and hearts more than imagining our own.” It is important never to be coercive with this activity (do not tell people what to think or feel) and to keep suggested prompts aligned with current realities. This activity is from “Coming Back to Life” (2014: 111-113).

Move chairs and make a large open space in the room. Then, invite people to mill -- to circulate around the room at a fairly energetic pace without talking. Stress that they are to remain silent throughout the whole activity. Say: “Let your eyes go out of focus; you won’t bump. Use the whole space. Soft vision and you won’t collide.”

First, people are moving as on busy city streets. Hurry! This is the Industrial Growth Society. Time is money. Keep moving; time is accelerating. You are an important person with important things to do. Feel in your body the tension of having to make your way through all these moving obstacles.

Next, slow down a bit. See the faces around you. Notice you are not alone here.

Now, as we meet, you don’t need to lock eyes. You can simply relax your gaze and open your awareness (or your palms, held in front of you) to the people around you.

As the facilitator, guide the group in the following brief encounters. Speak the guidelines, while participants remain silent during their interactions.

*Encounter 1: Presence*

When you find yourself in front of someone, stop and face each other. If you feel comfortable, take their right hand in yours. Silently acknowledge that this person is alive on planet Earth at the same time as you, born into the same period of crisis, danger, and speed. And, they have chosen to be here today. There are plenty of other things they could be doing today, catching up on work, hanging out with family or friends. But, they have chosen to be here, to look together at what is happening to our world. Notice how you feel that they made that choice. Now take your leave of this person in any way you want (Again, no speaking).

*Encounter 2: Strengths and Power*

Begin slowly milling again until you find yourself in front of another person. Take their hand in yours. Behold this brother/sister being, who spoke today of their emotions and things they love. Open your awareness to the strengths and gifts this person can bring to these times, such as their patience, love of adventure, problem solving, or kindness.

### *Encounter 3: Knowledge*

Move again and stand in front of another person.... You are looking into the face of someone who has a good clue about what is going on in our world. [The facilitator can share two or more examples of things that are happening in the world, such as forests being clear cut or fires burning in Australia]. This person knows this is happening, yet they have not closed their eyes and have not turned away. Honor their courage and move along.

### *Encounter 4: Touch*

And, again, we find ourselves in front of another person and take their hand in ours. This time close your eyes and simply feel the life in the hand you are holding. Release your partner's hand and continue on.

### *Encounter 5: Seeing Strength & Fragility*

We come to our last encounter. Facing each other, put your hands together palm to palm at shoulder height. Before you stands someone living in a beautiful, fragile, poisoned planet. In their body, as in yours, are toxins that can bring cancer and immune disease. This person like you can die in a nuclear accident or attack, or a plague triggered by climate change. We can face this together. We must not let our common danger separate us. Let it bind us together. Keep breathing.

Now, there is one more thing to see in this face. Allow your awareness to open to the possibility that this person will play a pivotal role in the Great Turning to a life-sustaining civilization. They have the gifts, the strengths, the motivation. Allow this possibility to enter your mind. Now let that person know how you feel about what they can and are contributing. Share a few affirming thoughts.

You may wish to have participants debrief this activity in pairs, with their last partner.

### **Exercise: Learning to See Each Other** (15 minutes)

[Materials: whiteboard and markers or Post-It pads and pens]

Form into pairs of dyads.

With your last partner, please find a seat. Decide who is Partner 1 and who is Partner 2. Just for a few minutes, share with your partner one thing that you did that made a difference in the life of someone or that caused some positive change. Switch partners.

Once both have shared, see if you can pick out one word to describe what you heard from your partner. Was your partner courageous, giving, compassionate, etc? [Take 5 minutes for this.]

Share out: Once the dyads have shared with each other, we will all share in a group some of what we heard.

*In just a few words, what actions or efforts did your partner take or make that particularly moved you?*

Write on the board the words that the listeners identified. The collection of words represents just a small fraction of the power and personal inner resources present in the room! Acknowledge all of the participants for their individual and collective impact.

This exercise may help us to see with fresh eyes that we do in fact have personal power and inner resources that can support us in affecting positive change in the world. We do have the ability to assist in difficult situations and may even not realize that we have these reserves of strength that other people notice.

### **The Great Turning** (30 minutes)

**Context:**

On the larger issue of climate change, one possible way to look at it with fresh eyes is to see that climate change is the driving force that is moving us into becoming an ecologically sustainable society. Climate change is usually perceived as being a negative force and we are not minimizing its devastating impacts. But could climate change also be our ally? Is the Earth spurring us on to return to balance within her biosphere? What if we perceived it as a force that is driving us towards a better, more harmonious way of living on the earth? “The Great Turning” is a term that is being used to describe this time of transition that we are living in. Climate change is the accelerator for the Great Turning with evidence all around us of ways that society is transitioning towards sustainable living.

For more on this perspective see the article “Climate Change as Ally” in the appendix.

**Exercise: Climate Council**

Participants sit in a circle.

We begin with a reading of “Evolutionary Remembering” [see handout in Appendix] (5 minutes). Pass the handout around and have each person read one paragraph.

Discussion parameters are set: a) use a talking stick, b) use of story c) speak leanly. Following the “Way of Council” all members are equal and have equal knowledge, input, and relevance to our shared situation. A guiding question is asked, and participants take the talking piece as they are moved to contribute. At one point, the facilitator may indicate a “going round” where the talking piece is handed to each person, who can speak or pass.

**Discussion:**

*Let’s identify some of the positive changes that are taking place here in X (ie: the place where your training is being held or at a local, state, or regional level). Some examples might include the rise of solar and wind power, community supported agriculture, etc. What actions are being taken that give you hope?*

For many innovative climate change solutions that are coming on stream in the Great Turning, share the website and book *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan to Reverse Global Warming* by Paul Hawken, listed in the Recommended Reading and Web Resources.

**Advanced Exercise (Optional): Council of All Beings (90 minutes)**

[Have animal cards or images of animals cut from magazines, plus art supplies]

The “Council of All Beings” is a group ritual designed by Joanna Macy and John Seed. It was created as a response to Arne Naess’s call for ‘community therapy’ to break out of humanity’s anthropocentrism and to build capacity for people to engage with the ‘ecological self.’ The Council of All Beings allows for participants to consider the voices of non-humans and hear within themselves the voice of the earth. Since its beginnings as a two-day long workshop, the Council of All Beings has been adapted worldwide in eco-spirituality workshops, school settings, church groups, community gatherings and in eco-villages. It is offered at this training for its inspiring ability to allow people to feel a sense of belonging, connection and empathy with non-human nature- the greater community of beings and life-forms, plants or features of nature such as rivers, mountains or deserts with whom we share this planet.

For the purposes of this training, we will enact a short version of the Council of All Beings.

*[Note to Facilitators: There are several options on how to conduct this ritual:*

1. *Participants can go for a nature walk with the intention of having an animal, plant, river, mountain, or other being choose them. Suggest that they go with the first natural being that strikes their attention.*
2. *You can use animal cards or pre-selected photos from magazines that you have clipped for this purpose. Have each person pick one randomly so there is a sense of being chosen to be the voice for that species. Have simple art supplies for participants to be able to create images of their chosen beings.*
3. *If you have more time, you may want to have everyone create their own mask to represent their beings. For further workshop variations, do a Google search on Guide for Council of All Beings.]*

We begin with a reading of “Evolutionary Remembering” [see handout in Appendix] (5 minutes).

Invite participants to close their eyes and get comfortable so they can relax and receive the reading from a quiet place.

This reading tells the story of the development of life from the very beginning of the Big Bang highlighting noteworthy markers on the evolutionary journey such as the emergence of the first cells, the emergence of the first mammals, dinosaurs, the emergence of Homo sapiens up to present day. The evolutionary journey is an important antecedent to the Council of All Beings as it gives us insight into ‘deep time’ which helps us to recognize our inherent shared ancestry and interconnectedness with all life on the planet.

After the reading, for this training, we will be “chosen” by another species by choosing an animal card. Using art supplies provided, create an image or some type of representation of your natural being. Engaging with its energy by creating some art around it helps us to open up more to being able to receive its message.

Once you have created the image, do some writing to capture that message. Consider these writing prompts: What is it like to be this being? What nourishes them? Does your being have a message for humanity? What would they like humans to know about their situation? Speak/write as the being, not as yourself.

[Allow about 15-20 minutes for people to create their image and write their message.]

Once the art work and listening/writing stage is complete, gather in a circle. Welcome all beings to this Council.

Invite someone to begin and deliver the message of their animal by saying: “I am \_\_\_\_\_. My message is \_\_\_\_\_.” Once that animal has spoken, others in the Council welcome and acknowledge the animal and its message. The Council continues in a circle until the last animal’s message has been received.

We invite you to share your experience of the Council from the perspective of being the voice of the natural being and from being a human watching and listening.

### **Going Forth (30 minutes)**

[Materials: Provide notepads and pens for personal letters and have a board/paper and pens to help capture some of the shared actions and goals.]

As we work towards concluding our time together today, consider these questions from *Active Hope* (2012: 199):

[Take about 10 minutes and have people write their answers individually, in the format of a letter to themselves]

1. If you knew you would not fail, what would you most want to do for the healing of our world?
2. What specific goal or project could you realistically aim to achieve in the next twelve months that would contribute to this?

3. What resources do you have, inner and outer, that will help you do this?
4. What resources, inner and external, will you need to acquire?
5. How might you stop yourself? What obstacles or defenses might you throw in the way?
6. How will you overcome these obstacles or defenses?
7. What steps can you take in the next week, no matter how small - making a phone call, sending an email, or scheduling in some reflection time - that will move you towards this goal?

Let us share some of what you came up with. [List on the board/paper some of the shared actions and goals.]

These letters can be collected and mailed to the participants in a few months as a reminder of the power of their reflections and the possibilities for creating change now and in the future.

### **Closing (15 minutes)**

To close, gather in a circle. Standing close and holding hands, if comfortable, invite each person to share one thing that they are taking away from the day's activities.

Make a public commitment for how we can integrate this work into our lives, classrooms, and/or communities.

Take a final moment to look around the circle and express gratitude for the time we have spent together.

Offer appreciation for each person giving voice to their concerns for the world, engaging their senses with nature, seeing the world with fresh eyes, being a powerful force in The Great Turning, and going forth, knowing that each of us matters and we are not alone.

We are all in this together! Beyond "business as usual" or fatalism, consider how you can have a vision for a sustainable future, with a world that offers you "active hope" and pathways to engage in meaningful ways that make a difference.

Thank you for your time and blessings to all!

## Evolutionary Remembering

(Adapted for the Council of All Beings from [www.thegreatstory.org](http://www.thegreatstory.org))

Let us go back, way back before the birth of our planet Earth, back to the mystery of the universe coming into being. We go back 15 billion years ago to a time of primordial silence . . . From this state of immense potential, an unimaginably powerful explosion takes place.... a BIG BANG! This was the beginning of the Universe.

10 billion years later or 4.6 billion years ago, our Grandmother Star becomes a supernova. She gives up her life in an explosion that gives rise to our Star, what we call the Sun and all the planets in our Solar System. Now the story of our Earth begins.

The ground then was rock and crystal beneath which burned tremendous fires. Volcanic activity brought up a rich supply of minerals, and lifted up chains of mountains. Eventually the temperature fell and it began to rain. Hot rain slowly dissolved the rocks upon which it fell and the seas became a thin salty soup containing the basic ingredients necessary for life.

Finally, a bolt of lightning fertilized this molecular soup and an adventure into biology began. Earth awakened into life. The first cell was born. You were there. I was there. For every cell in our bodies is descended in an unbroken chain from that event.

Through this cell, our common ancestor, we are related to every plant and animal on the earth.

Remember that cell awakening. BE that cell awakening (as indeed you are).

Now, some hundreds of millions of years have passed. First we were algae, then the first simple animals... For 2 ½ billion years, simple forms of life washed back and forth in the ocean currents... coral, snails, squid, worms.... Feel your existence at this time for it remains within each of your cells, the memories of this period in your evolutionary childhood...

Finally, about 450 million years ago, the first plants emerged from the water and began to turn the rock into soil, preparing the ground for animals to follow. The first animals to emerge from the seas were the amphibians...

For the next three hundred million years, we develop into mammals, reptiles, dinosaurs. With the emergence of birds, Earth broke into melody and song...

Flowers evolve and the Earth adorns herself magnificently and invites the sky creatures into a new dance....

65 million years ago, an asteroid, 6 miles in diameter, hits the Yucatan peninsula leading, in time, to a severe drop in temperature. This marks the end of the age of dinosaurs and the beginning of the age of mammals, the Cenozoic era.

Over the course of the next 60 million years Earth greets rodents, whales, horses, cats and dogs, grazing animals, primates, elephants, bears, pigs, and the first humans.

4 million years ago, we are Hominids and leave the forest for the open savannah. We stand up, and walk on two legs.

40,000 years ago, we emerge as modern Homo Sapiens occupying Australia and Africa. We live in families, discover language, catch fire, and make art, music, tools...

20,000 years ago, reflecting on our experience of a fertile, abundant, and regenerative Earth, we began to imagine and shape female deities and form matrilineal societies.

2,500 years ago, a flowering of ethical and spiritual consciousness exploded throughout China and India through the teachings of Confucius and Buddha.

260 years ago, we initiated intense revolutions, intellectual, social, scientific, industrial.... all of which have shaped our present age.

51 years ago, Earth is seen as Whole from space. On a journey to colonize the Moon, humans turned around to face the Earth as a whole for the first time. The Earth becomes complex enough to witness her own integral beauty.

Today, The Story of the Universe is being told as our sacred Story.



## Recommended Readings and Resources

### Books/Articles

- Corn, David. (2019). "It's the End of the World As They Know It." *Mother Jones*. Retrieved Dec. 18, 2019. <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2019/07/weight-of-the-world-climate-change-scientist-grief/>
- Hawken, Paul. Ed. (2017). *Drawdown: The most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Jones, E., R. Haenfler, and B. Johnson. (2007). *The Better World Handbook*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers
- Louv, Richard. (2011). *The nature principle: Reconnecting with life in a virtual age*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.
- Macy, J. & Brown, M. (2014). *Coming back to life: The updated guide to the work that reconnects*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers
- Macy, J. & Johnstone, C. (2012). *Active hope: How to face the mess we're in without going crazy*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

### Web Resources

- Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN), <http://gpsen.org/>
- Beyond Doom and Gloom: Include Solutions to Climate Change, <http://www.aashe.org/climatesolutions>
- Climate Solutions: Civic Engagement and Energy Video (Youtube), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b3KnxMimbU>
- Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming, <http://www.drawdown.org/solutions>
- How Scientists Feel about Climate Change, <https://www.isthishowyoufeel.com/this-is-how-scientists-feel.html>
- It's the End of the World as We Know It, <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2019/07/weight-of-the-world-climate-change-scientist-grief/>
- Mind the Climate Literacy Gap, <https://medium.com/@8mm8008/mind-the-climate-literacy-gap-3315984da8c2>
- National Geographic Explorer: Bill Nye's Global Meltdown: The Five Stages of Climate Change Grief, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtW2rrLHs08>
- The Psychology of Climate Change Communication by Columbia University's Center for Research on Environmental Decisions, <http://guide.cred.columbia.edu/index.html>
- Shifting the Psychology of Climate Change Denial by Dr. Craig Chalquist, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ17pkldCus>
- Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/>