

Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy

by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone

Brief Summary of the Four-Step Process (rather than a book review)

ACTIVE HOPE is based in GRATITUDE, where we are grounded in the wonder of this beautiful planet.

But... this brings an even keener awareness of the despoliation and unravelling... so the next step is to HONOUR THE PAIN: to allow ourselves to truly feel the grief, anger and anguish. We must respectfully welcome, not stifle these uncomfortable emotions...

because this switches on our SURVIVAL RESPONSE, triggering action and awareness of the resources available, including connection with allies on the journey.

Thus we GO FORTH to play our part in identifying and taking practical steps that move our vision forward.

It's a SPIRAL rather than a cycle as we move through these stages again and again, even minute by minute - each time, we will experience the process differently.

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RAMBLING REFLECTIONS ON ACTIVE HOPE

I purchased this book at YM in 2019, and it pulled me out of a state of deep despair and grief for the planet, after the return of the Morrison government with its evident determination to continue and expand fossil fuel developments.

I still struggle with these emotions. How can one not, with the news both locally as from elsewhere constantly reminding us of the fatal course so many governments are taking us on.

I will be turning to this book regularly to remind myself of the perspectives and strategies one can use to deal with these disempowering feelings, including the many meditations it includes.

I can see many useful methods we might use as a group, to strengthen ourselves in our work. Some of these are:

(p. 199) Taking turns to Interview each other as each identifies goals and resources
(p. 206 ff.) Study-Action Groups: a method of gathering information and translating it into practical steps, all the while the members supporting each other

Below I've copied out five vows that Joanna developed for one of her working/study groups. It was an approach suggested by a colleague who noted that vows help channel thoughts and energy more powerfully in the desired direction. The GreenFatih workshop, 'Living the Change' has a similar idea in asking participants to write out a specific pledge at the end of a session, noting that this is more powerful than simply making a resolution. I wondered if this is an approach that would appeal to us instead of a "Vision" or "Mission" statement? If so, does this particular set speak to all our concerns?

VOWS

I vow to myself and to each of you:

To commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.

To live on Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products, and energy I consume.

To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth. The ancestors, the future generations, and my brothers and sisters of all species.

To support others in our work for the world and to ask for help when I need it.

To pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart, and supports me in observing these vows.

Pp 202-3 in Active Hope
Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone
New World Library, Cal., 2012

