

Book review

Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy, by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone; 2012; New World Library

A book is intriguing when one of the authors is a "scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. The authors take a refreshingly new approach to creation care, ecological change, and climate change. They bring the reader on a journey of renewal and hope by articulating how we can change ourselves in order to address critical issues such as climate change and threats to our planet.

The authors define active hope as hopefulness, desire, and practice. Active hope is doing rather than something to have. The book has three sections: The Great Turning; Seeing with new eyes; and Going Forth.

The great turning is going from business as usual, our current culture and lifestyle, to the unraveling of our climate and threats to the planet, to the great turning to actively engage in changing business as usual.

The other remarkable gift of this book is the many self-help and group exercises throughout the book that allow the reader to engage in methods to allow active hope to be practiced. For instance: TRY THIS: OPEN SENTENCES ON MAINTAINING ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM. These open sentences can be used when journaling, in conversation with friends, or within a group. They work well in conjunction with the water level mapping process. - Things that drain, demoralize, or exhaust me include....

- What nourishes and energizes me is.....

- The times I'm enthusiastic are when.....

A quote from the book cover: "Drawing on decades of teaching an empowerment approach known as the "Work That Reconnects," the authors guide us through a transformational process of informed by mythic journeys, modern psychology, spirituality, and holistic science. This process equips us with tools to face the mess we're in and play our role in the collective transition, or Great Turning, to a life-sustaining society."

John Hanson