



COMING BACK TO LIFE – Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World

By Joanna Macy & Molly Young Brown
Foreword by Matthew Fox

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This book manages to bring together theory and practice based on many years experience by the authors, of travelling nationally and internationally to lecture and lead workshops, addressing the urgent need for a 'great turning' in the way we understand the environment and our place in the natural world. The book is a good resource for all those who are concerned about environmental and ecological issues regardless of their faith tradition.

Joanna Macy is a Buddhist who has lectured on Buddhist philosophy, systems theory and deep ecology. She has written six books previous to this one including: *World as Lover, World as Self* and *Thinking Like a Mountain*..

Molly Young Brown as well as being a workshop leader and consultant has written three previous books on spirituality and healing the environment including: *Growing Whole: Self-Realization on an Endangered Planet*..

Coming Back To Life is accessible to everyone even though it offers ways of thinking and being which are challenging. It is no academic tome but will stimulate scholars and the general reader alike. The first half of the book puts forward the arguments for a changed way of thinking and the second half offers clear guidelines on how to lead workshops and meditations. Although the exercises are aimed at group work I have found that some of the practices are equally valuable in offering ideas of engaging with the material when alone. .

Non USA readers might find some of the expressions and exercises different in that some of the exercises are nation specific. In spite of this the basis of the theory and

exercises are applicable universally and can be adapted to the workshop leader's own experience. .

The 'Table of Contents' are detailed and perhaps the best way of offering a review of this valuable resource. The detailed index demonstrates that in this book of 220 pages the chapters are broken down into short manageable sections. .

Message from the Dalai Lama
Foreword by Matthew Fox
Preface by Joanna Macy
Preface by Molly Young Brown

TO CHOOSE LIFE

THE CHOICE FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

THE GREAT TURNING

"Holding actions" in defense of life on Earth

Analysis of structural causes and creation of alternative institutions

Shift in perceptions of reality, both cognitively and spiritually

THE GREATEST DANGER: THE DEADENING OF MIND & HEART

PAIN FOR THE WORLD

PSYCHOLOGICAL SOURCES OF REPRESSION

Fear of pain

Fear of despair

Fear of appearing morbid

Distrust of our own intelligence

Fear of guilt

Fear of causing distress

Fear of being unpatriotic

Fear of appearing weak and emotional

Belief in the separate self

Fear of powerlessness

SOCIOECONOMIC SOURCES OF REPRESSION

The mass media

Job and time pressures

Social violence

CONSEQUENCES OF REPRESSION

Fragmentation and alienation

Displacement activities

Blaming and scapegoating

Political passivity

Avoidance of painful information

Diminished intellectual performance

Burnout

Sense of powerlessness

BREAKING FREE

THE BASIC MIRACLE: OUR TRUE NATURE AND POWER

LIVING SYSTEMS THEORY

How life self-organizes

Fire, water, and web

The holonic shift in consciousness

Gaia Theory

Positive disintegration

DEEP ECOLOGY

Beyond anthropocentrism

The ecological self

Asking deeper questions

Related movements: ecofeminism, ecojustice, ecopsychology

ANCIENT TEACHINGS

The Abrahamic religions

Earth-centered religions

Buddhist teachings

THE NATURE OF OUR POWER

Power-over

Power-with

Power and feedback

The power of disclosure and refusal

Synergy and grace

THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS

THE GOALS OF THE WORK

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

THE SHAMBHALA PROPHECY

GUIDING GROUP WORK

PART 1

Why Work in Groups?

The Role of the Guide

Working with Strong Emotions

Personal Despair and Social Despair

Stresses in Guiding Group Work

PART 2

The Workshop Setting

Sequencing

Opening the Workshop

Helping People Speak and Listen

Sustaining Group Energy and Participation

Closing the Workshop

AFFIRMATION: COMING FROM GRATITUDE

THE VALUE OF GRATITUDE

EXERCISES

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Group Introductions
Brainstorm on the Great Turning
The Mirror Walk
THE PRESENCE OF GRATITUDE THROUGHOUT THE WORK

DESPAIR WORK: OWNING AND HONORING OUR PAIN FOR THE WORLD
NOTES ON GUIDING THESE EXERCISES
EXERCISES
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The Milling
Open Sentences
The Truth Madala
The Despair Ritual
Spontaneous Writing
Imaging with Colors and Clay

THE SHIFT: SEEING WITH NEW EYES
NATURE OF THE SHIFT
PART 1: BRAIN FOOD
Key Concepts
Pointers for teaching these concepts
PART 2
The Systems Game
Widening Circles
The Cradling
"Who Are You?"
The Dance to Dismember the Ego
My Choices for This Life

DEEP TIME: RECONNECTING WITH PAST AND FUTURE GENERATIONS
A HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIP TO TIME
EXERCISES
Invoking the Beings of the Three Times
Harvesting the Gifts of the Ancestors
Thirty Years Hence
Tape Recording to the Future
Letter from the Future
The Double Circle

THE COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS: REJOINING THE NATURAL WORLD
THE GENESIS AND PURPOSE OF DEEP ECOLOGY WORK
EXERCISES
Reporting to Chief Seattle
The Evolutionary Gifts of the Animals (or The Eco-Milling)
The Remembering
The Bestiary
The Cairn of Mourning

The Council of All Beings

GOING FORTH

LEARNINGS WE BRING BACK INTO OUR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

EXERCISES

Tales of Power

Imaging Our Power

Goals and Resources

Consultation Groups

Planning Actions

Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes – Exercise

Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes – Guidelines

Networking

Overcoming Obstacles

Affirming Our Commitment

Circle of Blessings

MEDITATIONS FOR COMING BACK TO LIFE

The Web of Life

Gaia Meditation

Meditation on Death

Meditation on Loving Kindness

Breathing Through

The Great Ball of Merit

Learning to See Each Other

APPENDIX A: CHIEF SEATTLE'S MESSAGE

APPENDIX B: THE BESTIARY

APPENDIX C: A COUNCIL OF ALL BEINGS: THE SITE SPEAKS

Reference Notes

Resources

