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The Work That Reconnects

The Work That Reconnects, based in the teachings of **Joanna Macy**, follows a Spiral of practices, described in detail below. The following links will help you learn more about the Work and how it can support you in meeting the crises of our time.

- [Joanna Macy, Root Teacher](#)
- [Foundations of the Work \(assumptions and aims\)](#)
- [Three Stories of Our Times](#)
- [The Three Dimensions of the Great Turning](#)
- [History of the Work](#)

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The Spiral of the Work That Reconnects

The Work That Reconnects, based in the teachings of Joanna Macy, unfolds as a spiral journey through four stages: **Coming from Gratitude**, **Honoring our Pain for the World**, **Seeing with New/Ancient Eyes**, and **Going Forth**. Each of these stages leads naturally to the next. The journey helps us experience first hand that we are larger, stronger, more creative – and more deeply interconnected – than we knew.



Image by Dori Midnight

The Spiral begins by **coming from gratitude**, because that quiets the frantic mind and brings us back to source, stimulating our empathy and confidence. It helps us to be more fully present and opens psychic space for acknowledging the pain we carry for our world.

In owning and **honoring our pain for the world**, and daring to experience it, we learn the true meaning of compassion: to “suffer with.” We begin to know the immensity of our heart-mind. What had isolated us in private anguish now opens outward and delivers us into the wider reaches of our inter-existence.

Experiencing the reality of our inter-existence helps us **see with new/ancient eyes**. We can sense how intimately and inextricably we are related to all that is. We can taste our own power to change, and feel the texture of our living connections with past and future generations, and with our brother/sister species.

Then we **go forth** into the actions that call each of us, according to our situation, gifts, and limitations. With others whenever and wherever possible, we set a target, lay a plan, step out. We don't wait for a blueprint or fail-proof scheme, for each step will be our teacher, bringing new perspectives and opportunities. Even when we don't succeed in a given venture, we can be grateful for the chance we took and the lessons we learned.



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And so the Spiral begins again, with gratitude. There are hard things to face in our world today, if we want to be of use. Gratitude, when it's real, offers no blinders. On the contrary, in the face of devastation and tragedy it can ground us. Especially when we're scared, gratitude can hold us steady for the work that must be done.

In addition to forming the container for Work That Reconnects workshops, the Spiral may also unfold naturally over the span of a project, over the course of a day, several times in one day, or even over a whole phase of one's life.

The Spiral is fractal in nature. The sequence can repeat itself in ever new ways. Sometimes the whole sequence plays out within one particular stage. We come back to it again and again as a source of strength and fresh perspectives.

Joanna Macy, Root Teacher



Photo by Adam Loftin

Joanna Macy PhD, is a scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. A respected voice in the movements for peace, justice, and ecology, she interweaves her scholarship with five decades of activism. The author of more than twelve books, she is the root teacher of the Work That Reconnects.

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Foundations of the Work That Reconnects

To those of us growing up in the Industrial Growth Society, a breathtakingly new view of reality arises from deep ecology, systems thinking, and the resurgence of nondualistic



spirituality. These three streams attest to our mutual belonging in the web of life, and to powers within us for the healing of our world. They are basic to the core **assumptions** and **aims** of the Work That Reconnects. [Read more...](#)

Three Stories of Our Time



Rather than offering its own analysis of causes and solutions for the crises of our time, the Work That Reconnects invites us to take a fresh look at what we see happening around us. The model of “Three Stories of Our Time” helps us do this. Each of these

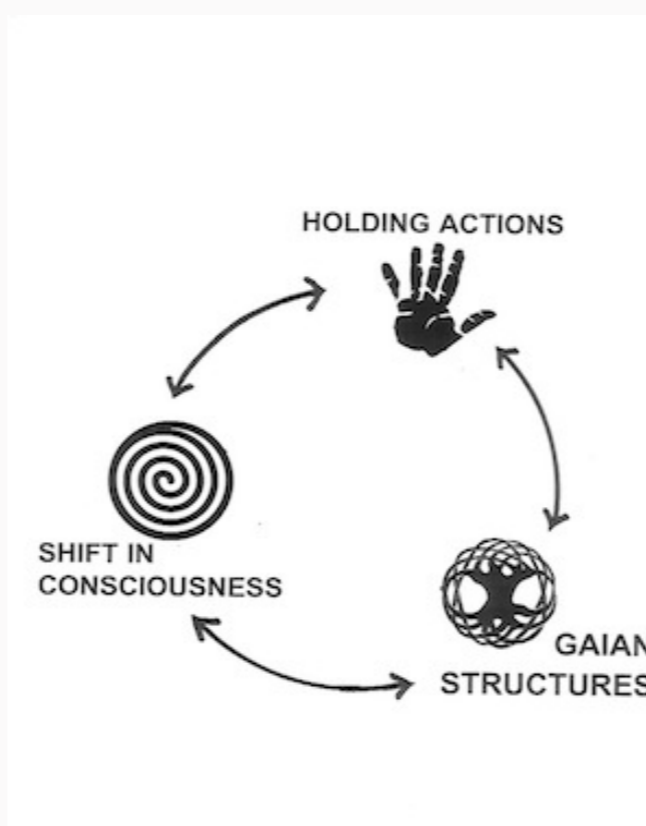
stories reveals a profoundly different lens through which people understand the world we all live in. Taken as a whole, they assist us in both making sense of what we see and experience, and also in choosing how we want to live our own lives and engage in the work of change.

These stories are **Business as Usual**, the **Great Unraveling**, and the **Great Turning**. While all three simplify vastly complex global realities, they can help us to See with New Eyes and clarify our commitment to collective human liberation and the living web of Earth. [Read More...](#)

Three Dimensions of the Great Turning

Imagining that we can look at the “Great Turning” from the perspective of future generations, we see how it is gaining momentum today, through the choices of countless individuals and groups. We can see that it is happening simultaneously in three areas or dimensions that are mutually reinforcing. These are:

1) actions to slow the damage to

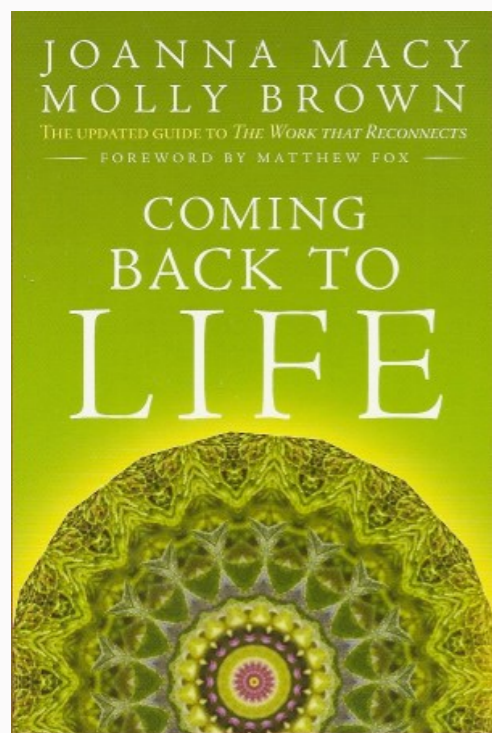


Earth and its beings;

2) analysis and transformation of the foundations of our common life; and

3) a fundamental shift in world-view and values. Many of us are engaged in all three, each of which is necessary to the creation of a life-sustaining society. [Read more...](#)

History of the Work



This form of group work arose in North America in the late 1970s, during a time of escalating concerns about nuclear weaponry and the hazards of nuclear power. Chellis Glendinning, Joanna Macy and Fran Peavey observed that when people share with others their feelings of fear, anguish or despair, their power to act for change is released. Thus began “despair and

empowerment” work (phrase coined by Chellis). Joe Havens and Sarah Pirtle added the concept of “the turning” – the natural release of energy and insight that arises out of the mutual acknowledgement of shared feelings. [Read more...](#)

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