

The Spiral of the Work That Reconnects



Joanna Macy and her colleagues see the Work That Reconnects as occurring in a spiral, mapping a journey through four successive stages: **Coming from Gratitude, Honoring our Pain for the World, Seeing with New Eyes**, and **Going Forth**. These four stages support one another, and work best when experienced in sequence. They help us experience first hand that we are larger, stronger, deeper, and more creative than we have been brought up to believe.

The spiral is fractal in nature. The sequence can repeat itself in ever new ways, and even within a particular stage of the spiral. The spiral can be discerned over the span of a lifetime or a project, and it can also happen in a day or several times a day. We come back to it again and again as a source of strength and fresh perspectives.

The spiral begins with **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**, 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 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, ever again, 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.

And the spiral begins again. 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.