

A top-down view of a succulent garden. The scene is filled with various types of succulents, including a large, prominent purple-tinged succulent on the left, several clusters of small pink flowers, and numerous green and blue-green succulents of different shapes and sizes. The plants are interspersed with light-colored gravel and several flat, greyish rocks. The overall composition is dense and textured, with a variety of colors and plant forms.

Deep Adaptation Gatherings Principles

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1. Getting started

This guide is intended for those hosting or wishing to host online and offline Deep Adaptation (DA) gatherings. It's available for you to use freely when designing and hosting DA gatherings, as a way to enable connection and constructive discussion on Deep Adaptation and related topics .

The [Deep Adaptation Forum](#) is a non-profit network founded by Prof Jem Bendell to enable loving responses to our climate predicament. If you wish to affiliate with us so you and your group can benefit from promotion to our community, facilitation trainings, peer support and other resources within our [Affiliation Network](#), please reach out to us at the contacts provided below.

Last but not least - thank you for considering or initiating a Deep Adaptation gathering and/or community. We value your intention and your stepping up to bring people together in a positive way in these unprecedented times!

2. About Deep Adaptation

The term “Deep Adaptation” originates in prof. Jem Bendell’s paper: [Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy](#). Published in July 2018, it provides readers with an opportunity to reassess their work and life in the face of a near-term social collapse due to climate change.

People who adopt the framework of Deep Adaptation to enable their discussions and actions, do so on the basis of believing that a collapse in our normal way of life is either likely, inevitable or already unfolding.

Outlining major research and evidence to support the relevance of such an approach, Deep Adaptation invites us to ask:

“What are the psychological and spiritual implications of our predicament?”

and

“What are the practical means to support individual and collective wellbeing ahead of (and during) social breakdown?”

instead of

“Is climate-driven social collapse a possibility? What can we do to prevent it?”

Downloaded by more than half a million people, Jem Bendell’s original paper has served as a basis for the creation of two main discussion spaces online:

The Professions’ Network (professional focus) - an international space to connect and collaborate with other professionals who are exploring the implications of a near-term societal collapse due to climate change from within their professional sector or interest. Through this free forum, people can join regular webinars, seek advice and co-create shared resources for their field of expertise.

The Deep Adaptation Facebook group (personal & collective action focus) - a place for sharing information on our outer and inner deep adaptation to unfolding societal breakdown due to climate change. The focus of the group is on sharing information on emotional, psychological and spiritual implications, as well as knowledge of practical means to support wellbeing ahead of (and during) social breakdowns. Those practical means may be at household, community, national or international scales. Collective action in a spirit of compassion is particularly welcomed, rather than defensive prepping for conflict.

The larger online Deep Adaptation ecosystem includes the network of affiliated groups we are developing, as well as Jem’s efforts on raising awareness on the topic through his research, media appearances, [blog articles](#) and the Deep Adaptation Quarterly Newsletter.

3. Core Values and the 4Rs

We recommend reading [“The Love in Deep Adaptation” blog article](#) to make sure you understand and align with the values and principles of Deep Adaptation. You can use them as inspiration and guidance for personal and collective inquiry, discussions, decision-making, conflict resolution, project ideation, design and execution, and other community Deep Adaptation efforts you wish to engage in. For quick reference, they can be summarised as follows:

DA Values

- **Compassion.** We seek to return to universal compassion in all our work, and remind each other to notice in ourselves when anger, fear, panic, or insecurity may be influencing our thoughts or behaviours. It is also important to remember to take care of ourselves, especially when the urgency of our predicament can easily lead to compassion burnout.
- **Curiosity.** We recognise that we do not have many answers on specific technical or policy matters. Instead, our aim is to provide a space and an invitation to participate in generative dialogue that is founded in kindness and curiosity. Valuing curiosity also invites us to challenge some of the ingrained or 'invisible' assumptions that underpin our worldview. For example, is the anthropocentrism implicit in the notion of 'societal collapse' helpful? How can we acknowledge and counter the privilege that often underpins this discussion?
- **Respect.** We respect other people's situations and however they may be reacting to our alarming predicament, whether they are first learning about impending collapse or already experiencing it. We seek to build and curate nourishing and inclusive spaces for deep adaptation.

The 4Rs Framework

The Deep Adaptation approach to our predicament invites conversations and initiatives which respond to four questions. These are not prescriptive, and should simply be used as tools for discussion.

Resilience: What do we most value that we want to **keep** and how?

Relinquishment: What could we **let go of** so as not to make matters worse?

Restoration: What could we **bring back** to help us with these difficult times?

Reconciliation: With what and whom shall we **make peace** as we awaken to our mutual mortality?

4. Hosting DA Gatherings

As awareness of our predicament spreads, it becomes possible for more and more of us to address our need for local community as a key element of our personal and collective Deep Adaptation. As a result, as of August 2019, our estimation is that there are hundreds of independent groups being initiated without our direct involvement, with more on the way. Most of these groups have a focus on a location, but some are nationwide, language specific or focused on a particular subtopic, such as parenting.

One of the main tools for fostering and growing a Deep Adaptation community are the online and offline gatherings being organised. They provide a space for emotional support, connection and engagement on a deeper level around DA and relevant topics. Whether you have experience with group facilitation or are just getting started, we'd like to encourage

and support your efforts by offering some guidelines of hosting a Deep Adaptation gathering. Additional training and support for using them is available upon affiliation (reach out to us if interested).

4.1 Principles of Deep Adaptation Gatherings

In our unprecedented times, we acknowledge there is no right or wrong way of going forward, no special people who have all the answers. As Joanna Macy shared in her Q&A with us, part of the exquisiteness of being alive right now is the invitation to explore shared ways of learning and knowing. This is why the first two principles of holding a DA space are rooted in the spirit of **curiosity**:

Principle 1: Co-creation

We invite the DA community to share, explicitly, their own practices. These can be based on individual experience (practices that people have found helpful when going through their own DA journey) or emergence (ones that emerge from DA spaces as people gather and feel inspired to create together), as well as exploration of a multitude of well-established facilitation processes that assume that knowledge is relational, provisional and subjective.

Principle 2: Open dialogue

A DA gathering provides a safe space for loving generative dialogue. It is about exploring questions together rather than giving answers. Thus, we invite community starters and facilitators to create gently held spaces to support collective learning, activated by their own presence and energetic awareness of group dynamics and flow.

Our predicament and Deep Adaptation to it also calls us, as individuals and as a collective, towards deep emotional, psychological and spiritual work. We believe that this work is best done within a spirit of **compassion**.

Principle 3: Awareness

In a DA gathering, we come together to deepen our individual and collective consciousness by remaining with what's present within each of us here and now. From that space, we aspire to enable and embody loving responses to our experiences related to our predicament, with a focus on reducing harm. We also invite awareness of the ways in which the 'invisible' stories of progress, patriarchy, power, and 'othering' – which have collectively shaped the journey towards our predicament - may still be moving unconsciously within each of us and continuing to influence the ways we make sense of the world and relate with each other, so we can acknowledge and seek for ways to move beyond them.

Principle 4: Connection

The story of separation is part of what got us here in the first place and we are not equipped to navigate our times in isolation. As we come together, we come into a space to relearn how to connect with each other, as well as to the greater force that lies beyond us from a space of compassion and curiosity. We welcome the different names everyone will

use to call that force (Nature, Universe, God etc) and explore how we can relate with what's unknown within, outside and ahead of us.

This brings us to the third core value of Deep Adaptation - **respect**. We respect other people's situations and however they may be reacting to our alarming predicament, while seeking to create nourishing spaces for deep adaptation. This is the basis of the last 2 principles:

Principle 5: Inclusivity

We welcome differences that might have kept us apart before (age, gender, sex, ethnicity etc) and allow them to sit next to each other in a spirit of solidarity and equality. We also direct that inclusivity inward by inviting ourselves and each other to welcome any energy, to show up fully and express the variety of what arises in our bodies, hearts and minds.

Principle 6: Ownership

Everyone is invited to step into a DA space with a clear intention that each of us seeks to recognise our experiences as our own, rather than blaming others or debating our claims about other people or groups. When welcoming all energies, we need to be ready to face conflict and the uncomfortable emotions that might arise as we seek the way towards ourselves and each other. This is why we ask questions that help us take responsibility for our own experiences, returning to our center and leaving space for others to do so too. Eg "Why is it that this emotion that I am experiencing right now is triggered within me? What is the way in which it serves my growth and that of the collective?"

4.2 Suggested formats

You can use the principles of DA gatherings outlined above to choose and adapt facilitation processes you are familiar with to the needs of your community. If you need a starting point, below you will find some formats we've found useful.

Presencing - guided meditations are a wonderful way to support people in stepping into awareness and connection with themselves and the shared space. The meditation can be very brief (1-5 mins) and its purpose is to invite people to be here wholly - to let go of thoughts and tensions, come into their bodies, witness how they feel, acknowledge what's alive within them etc.

Check-ins and check-outs - simple open-ended statements or questions that generate a feeling of inclusivity and connection with others and serve to open the dialogue space. People can take turns to share their responses and point to the next one they'd like to speak. Example questions/open-ended statements can include:

- As I enter this space, what is alive for me is...
- As I enter this space, what I feel/notice in myself is...
- As I step out of this space, what I take with me is...
- As I step out of this space, I feel grateful for...
- Word/sound/gesture to express how you are feeling etc.

Mastermind Groups - a simple format that can be used to encourage an open dialogue around people's most important Deep Adaptation-related challenges. People are given instructions and split into groups of 4-6 people. Within those groups, a participant takes 3-5 minutes to share their biggest personal or professional Deep Adaptation-related challenge. When they finish, others are invited to ask questions that help clarify that challenge, discuss, offer different perspectives, ideas, advice, resources and anything they feel can help the one who shared. After that someone else shares and so on. One useful technique is for a listener to attempt to paraphrase what they think they heard, before any questions are asked or any suggestions offered. It's good to tell the group to keep an eye on timing, so everyone gets a chance to share their challenge and receive support.

Wisdom Circles - similar to mastermind groups, this is a condensed version of 'action learning sets'. Participants are split into groups of 3 ideally (or 4 if time allows). Each person has $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total time in which to share their issue and then receive reflections/mirroring from the others, and then receive 'counsel' in the form of questions, guidance, signposting etc.

1. Issue holder - shares the essence of the issue/or dilemma they are bringing?
2. Listeners - offer reflections (mirroring) - what I noticed/heard
3. Counsel - questions, guidance, signposting, support
4. Issue holder - short summary what's been useful

The aim of the session need not be to arrive at a neat solution, but to support the issue holder in deepening their own understanding of the issue. It's important to follow these steps one by one, and not skip the 'reflection' step and move straight into solutions and counsel. Here is a [video](#) of Katie introducing Wisdom Circles in a gathering of DA Guides.

Themed discussions - a great way to dive into topics that feel important to the community, where everyone gets to share and learn from others' perspectives. Themes can be sourced from the community prior to the actual meeting. People can be invited to bring a piece of poetry or excerpt of something they've read they'd like to discuss or share. Sentence starters can be used. Discussion can be done in small groups or with everyone. Some great themes to start with are:

- What themes/topics have been alive for you in relation to Deep Adaptation?
- What activities/formats would you like to experience or offer to the space?
- What I long for in this particular group is...
- What would make this space more interesting valuable for me is...

As a facilitator, be mindful of the fact that some people feel more comfortable about sharing their views in groups than others, and sometimes their voices (and therefore opinions) can come to dominate and shape discussions. Gentle interventions (or framings at the start of the discussion) can be helpful, as can simple processes focused on valuing all voices, such as using a talking stick or similar.

Deep Relating - a powerful practice that can be a main activity and is in line with all Deep Adaptation principles outlined above. It's a space in which everyone is invited to observe their present experience and take turns to share it as it arises, tuning into body, emotions, mind and intuitive knowing/imagery. Those who listen 'hold space' for the others,

empathizing with them and silently exploring their own responses to what is being shared from a space of presence and ownership. Holding such a space is an art in itself and we recommend that you take advantage of the opportunities we offer for you to experience it first before attempting to facilitate it. The 5 guidelines of an authentic relating circle are:

- Commitment to connection (staying present with ourselves and others, incl. the desire to disconnect if it arises)
- Welcome anything (within ourselves and others)
- Stay with sensation (honouring the wisdom of the body)
- Being with the other in their world (empathy and deep listening)
- Owning your experience (taking responsibility for our triggers and noticing our tendencies to label and blame others and otherness and seeing emotions as opportunities to learn more about ourselves)

Meeting with an agenda - it is common for groups to initiate collective action initiatives and projects. In such case, you can use the formats above to set the tone for an open discussion before moving on to your practical agenda. We suggest finding a way in which different members of your group can contribute to that agenda prior to your meetings. It's also useful to have an agenda owner to make sure this happens in a transparent way, everyone is given space to share their opinions and address concerns, minutes are taken and actionable items are extracted and followed up on. A useful format to support accountability before diving into certain topics, involves giving each team member a minute to briefly share:

- What I've done/progressed on since our last meeting is...
- What I want to do next is...
- What I haven't done/need help with is...

4.3 Wellbeing - facilitators and participants

Holding these spaces within the context of deep adaptation to climate-induced collapse means that facilitators need to pay particular attention to 'containment and boundaries'. Containment is usually understood as the process of creating boundaries around a group, which are intended to create a space that is 'safe enough' for participants to share and discuss on a personal and vulnerable level (that is, taking steps to remove or avoid creating circumstances in the way you host that can contribute to a feeling of anxiety or lack of safety). Containment does not mean that the space is more comfortable; on the contrary, it can mean that less comfortable emotions can be expressed and experienced. Effective containment can enable increased intensity, of both positive emotional experiences (connection, solidarity, joy, forgiveness, release) as well as negative ones (sadness, fear, loneliness, disorientation).

External Containment (establishing boundaries from the 'outside-in')

- Clear event description, including what Deep Listening is, what to expect, easy sign up process
- Opening the room on time.
- Making announcements about how to use Zoom technology, and what measures have been taking to ensure that the space is 'safe'
- Introduction that reiterates what to expect, and the expectations for how people will engage (eg confidentiality will be respected, speaking from personal experience, sharing openly but to a depth or vulnerability that feels safe enough, if using breakout rooms let

people know that they can use the ‘ask for help’ button, or return to the host in the main room whenever they like)

- If there’s a small group, make a decision (between host and co-host) about the extent to which you will participate in discussion, and make this clear to participants at the outset.

Internal containment (establishing boundaries from the ‘inside-out’)

- It is recommended that hosting of DA spaces is always be done by at least two facilitators, who should have given time and attention to deepening their own connection and building trust and mutual understanding between them prior to the event
- Show up with an intention towards transparency, deep non-judgmental listening, without the intention (conscious or not) to fix/rescue
- Take time to connect with your own relationship with the subject matter. Bring into consciousness the areas of your group practice where your own boundaries can become blurred, or begin to collapse. You may want to share with your co-facilitator.
- Consider how you might gently intervene if one or two voices dominate discussions, or if people speak in general (rather than personal) terms in ways that seem to be defining others’ lived realities.

At the end of the event, remind people that sharing on a deep level in this way may leave them feeling open and more sensitive than usual. Encourage people to exercise self-care, and be gentle with themselves as they carry on with the rest of their day.

Immediately after the event, consider sharing the following information with participants:

“Dear friend,

This deep connection may leave you feeling tender and vulnerable. Please be gentle with yourself, and take care. In case you’re feeling tender and vulnerable, please be gentle with yourself, and take care. If you are feeling wobbly, or think that you might be at risk because of these emotions, here is a resource that may help you cope better in the moment: <http://tiny.cc/not-ok>. And here is a link to other sources of emotional support, from Jem Bendell’s website:

<https://jembendell.com/2018/07/26/emotional-support-in-face-of-climate-tragedy/>.”

Finally, all facilitators who are active in hosting regular DA gatherings may wish to join the [DA Facilitators’ Group](#), a community of practice or ‘share and support’ space for people who are hosting, or would like to host, Deep Adaptation gatherings online. Members meet online monthly to check in, share practices, and for peer support. Hosting spaces for Deep Adaptation is a new and emerging landscape. The PDA Facilitators’ group is a community of practice, in which we are supporting each other in this difficult and emerging field.

5. Contacts

For any questions and suggestions related to hosting DA gatherings and being part of the DA Facilitators’ Group, please contact Terry LePage at dafacilitators@gmail.com.