

## Interhelp Newsletter, Fall 2014

Dear Interhelpers and Friends,

Gathering 2014 was an event to remember and celebrate as forty-one of us (our largest group for many years) explored our theme Stronger, Together: Courage for the Great Turning. On Friday evening we each invited an ancestor to be with us and to lend us their special gifts; on Saturday we co-created a Truth Mandala in the morning and a Shambhala Warrior Banner of Courage in the afternoon; we closed Sunday morning affirming the power of Bodhichitta as we sang and danced the prayer “May All Beings Be Well and Happy.”

Next month I’ll be sending a report about the Earth Leadership Cohort; for now I’ll simply say that the ELC participation at Gathering inspired the heck out of old-timers like myself.

Save the day, January 31<sup>st</sup> in Cambridge, to explore with Interhelp Council possibilities for the future of Interhelp. More information to come soon.

See below for more about Gathering, news about support groups, my rave review of the updated *Coming Back to Life*, and more.

Gratefully,  
Paula Hendrick  
[interhelpeditor \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:interhelpeditor@gmail.com)

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Diane Szymaszek and Verne McArthur are holding an initial Work That Reconnects **support group** meeting in Hartford, CT, on Monday eve Dec 1, 5:30-7:30. Contact Verne at

[vernemca \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:vernemca[at]gmail.com). Verne and Diane are also available to lead workshops in the western MA/Hartford area.

Kaat Vander Straeten is forming an ongoing **Inner Work group** in Wayland, MA as a part of Transition Wayland. Joseph Rotella and Aravinda Ananda offered a daylong WTR workshop as a kickoff event for this group. Contact Kaat at [kaatvds \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:kaatvds[at]gmail.com)

Also interested in helping start **support groups** in their area are Jeanne Mayell, Wellesley, MA, [mothermayell \[at\] icloud.com](mailto:mothermayell[at]icloud.com); and Marcia Berry, Newville, PA, [jmarcia.berry \[at\] yahoo.com](mailto:jmarcia.berry[at]yahoo.com).

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News from Canada about an **upcoming workshop**: Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy, Dec 6 & 7 at The Living Centre Ontario.  
<http://www.thelivingcentre.com> (click on calendar).

For those of you who were unable to attend either of the Rowe workshops with Joanna Macy this fall, **Jennifer Browdy** has written an evocative report of her weekend there. All of Jennifer's Transition Times blog posts are thought-provoking and well written.

<http://bethechange2012.wordpress.com/2014/09/29/reconnecting-with-the-earthwith-joanna-macy/>

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***Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to The Work That Reconnects*** is the new version of the old stand-by for WTR facilitators, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World*. I love this new book, and I recommend it for anyone reading this newsletter. It lays out the same basic

information as the earlier version, with some substantive additional topics, which I'll get to in a moment. But even familiar topics are newly engaging. Sometimes the text is verbatim, freshened by a clearer and more open layout. In areas where the context and practice of the work have broadened or refined over the past 20 years, subjects are presented anew. For example, the topics "Psychological sources of repression" and "Socioeconomic sources of repression" are combined, with a few new subheadings, into "What deadens heart and mind?" Anyone intrigued (or baffled) by the brain food segments of workshops, will find much of that material presented here with utter clarity. The sections on guiding the work have also been updated.

So what's in the 100 additional pages that this edition includes? "Learning with Communities of Color" is co-written by Joanna and colleagues of hers from within those communities. Other new chapters focus on working with children and teens; using the work in a corporate setting; integrating movement in workshops; and using the spiral in writing workshops.

I paid full price for this book at my local indy bookstore, and I will be repaid many times over. (Or order from the publisher at [www.newsociety.com](http://www.newsociety.com)) A big thank you to authors Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown for their efforts.

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And finally, two reflections from Gathering participants about their experience with the Nature as Oracle exercise, led on Saturday afternoon by Joyce Reeves. The first is from Sunny Rehler, the second from Carol Harley.

## **Connecting with the Web of Life**

### **Sunny Rehler**

Joyce asked us to think of a specific question and then go outside in silence, being attentive to any entity that attracted our attention and open to receiving a message from this being. My question was this: “How could I take the insights from the Work That Reconnects back home to Pennsylvania and incorporate them best into my daily life?”

As I walked down the dirt road from Woolman Hill, I noticed a flock of sparrows hopping from one bush to the next. They did not allow me to get very close, but also did not fly very far away. After walking about a quarter mile, following the sparrows, I looked up into the tall trees. The trees were bare of leaves, so I could easily see several hawks flying just above the treetops. They flew in big graceful circular patterns, sometimes in spirals, sometimes figure 8s and sometimes just big circles. I wondered why they flew like this; they did not seem to be flying for any particular purpose.

Then it came to me, perhaps they have a message for me. The hawks were perhaps just enjoying the thrill of allowing their momentum and the wind to carry them! They did not need, it seemed, to achieve any particular “useful” purpose in their flight. I translated this to mean that I may be able to do some of my best work (both with myself and others), if I also take time each day to just feel the thrill of being alive and present without any particular objective in mind. Thank you, dear hawks, for giving me such a beautiful example of how to bring the Work That Reconnects back to my home!

## **How Can I Help?**

### **Carol Harley**

It seems impossible that a mere three weeks ago, I was reflecting on that morning's torrents of Truth Mandala sharing. I was feeling open, tender and a bit raw as we progressed to the next phase of the spiral. At Woolman Hill, the crisp air was punctuated by strong cold gusts. We needed to bundle up snugly, as we filed silently outside to listen to messages from "Nature as Oracle."

We had all meditated together; I remember I was instructed to invite a question to pose to a Being I would encounter (and who would beckon to me, rather than being chosen by me). The question that arrived was "How can I help?"

*How can I help?* I asked the mighty clump of eight-foot-high grasses. This Being with flower stalks rising yet higher, towering over my head. The stalks appeared dry, yet with green grasses forming a mantle underneath and all together a single entity; one Being swayed elegantly in the breeze.

*Strong roots are essential. You have to be able to be flexible. Share your beauty.*

Thank you, grasses-being!

I slowly proceeded on, curving around the chapel as I noticed the sharp smell of decay carried by winds rippling the landscape. Several large old sugar maple trees had toppled or lost major branches in this area.

*How can I help?* I asked the moss-bark-together Being. It was quietly present at the base of a maple standing intact and venerable.

*Help people by realizing "no separation," and then sharing that*

*knowledge.*

*Be dignified in old age even as those around you are broken and fall.*

*By standing as tall as you're able, you can inspire, bring comfort, be a huge and significant presence.*

Thank you, bark-becoming-moss-becoming-bark!

As I now reflect on the gifts of the 2014 Gathering, I find I am facing challenges for which these messages apply directly. I am so grateful for the Work That Reconnects in my life. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.