

LETTERS TO THE EARTH



A Community Resource for Writing and Sharing Letters

This is a resource for communities, organisations and groups (i.e. workplaces, families, social and faith groups) to use as a stimulus for writing, creating and sharing their Letters to the Earth.

A Letter to the Earth is a creative response to the planetary crisis. It is a way of expressing what's important to you: to create a message for a better future.

The below activities are designed to take people on a journey where they can form stronger connections with nature and others, leaving them with a greater sense of agency and power to make change.

We encourage:

SAFE SPACES

Where difference is welcomed and celebrated, and where people take responsibility for their needs and respect the needs of others.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Where people are given space to speak without interruption.

RADICAL PARTICIPATION

Where everyone is included and invited to take part, speak and be heard, with no one voice dominating. People should also feel empowered to decide if something's not for them.

CONNECTION TO FEELINGS

Where people are given the opportunity to express whatever is alive in them and with the security of confidentiality.

FREEDOM OF THE IMAGINATION

Where people are encouraged to dream big for a better world.

We invite facilitators to be actively involved in the exercises if and where possible, so that they can go on the same journey as everyone else and can model the above values.



A Workshop Plan

The below workshop has been made in collaboration with Glimpse and Still / Moving. In total, it takes an hour to complete. You are welcome to experiment with timings and add your own activities too, if you feel confident to do so. It can be adapted for online.

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1. Check in (10 - 15 mins)

Connecting to what we most love about the natural world helps us foster a deeper relationship and connection to the planet. It can spark feelings of appreciation and belonging as people connect to the beauty and wonder of the natural world. It's a great place to start from and a great way to get to know others!

In a circle, people introduce themselves with:

- ◆ Where they've come from today
- ◆ A place in nature they most love

We suggest giving up to 2 minutes for each person to introduce themselves. Giving time to this exercise will reap benefits as the group will open up to each other and feel comfortable.

Another nice way to check in is by asking what kind of weather you are feeling today? eg "I'm feeling sunny!", or "I'm feeling drizzly and foggy"

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2. How are you feeling about the future? (10 - 15 mins)

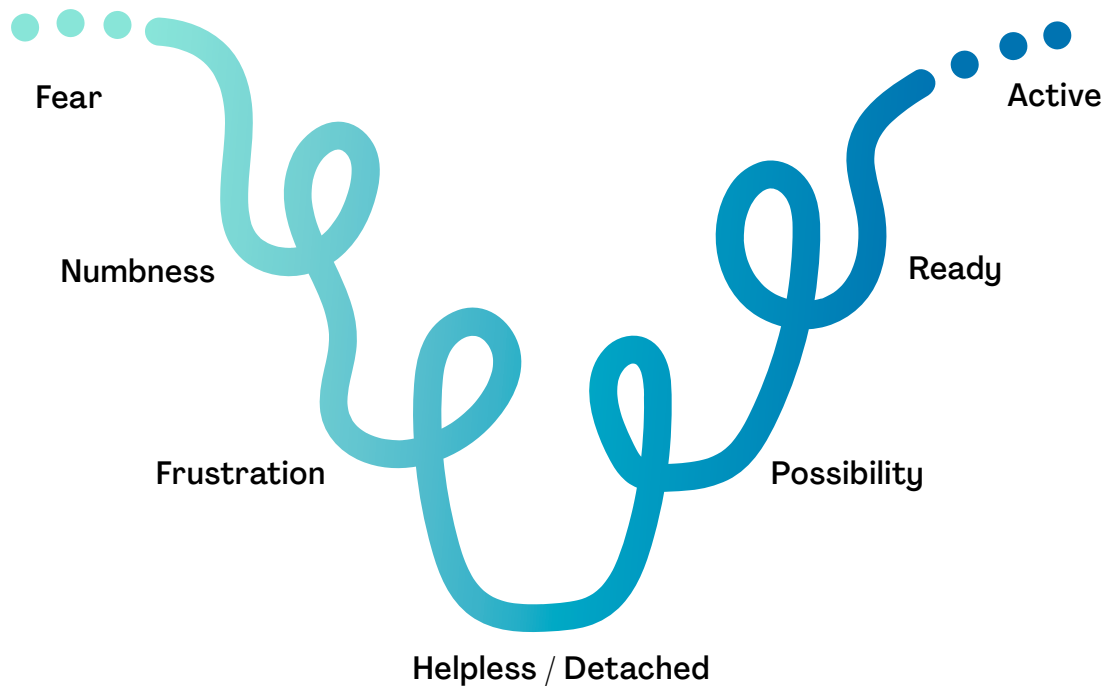
We recognise that all crises are connected: the climate and ecological crisis; the economic crisis; the social crisis; the pandemic. This question is open enough to give space to all the concerns that people might have as we face the future. We suggest that the facilitator brings their own personal reflection at this point about what they feel about the future, to model the kind of responses that could follow. All responses are valued and welcome.

This question can be asked of the particular place you're in – your village, town, city, county.

It can also be asked more generally about the future of the planet.



Place these words onto the floor, creating a map. Invite participants to stand by a word that resonates for them when asked ‘When you think about the future what do you feel?’



Invite people to turn to the nearest person to them, to share what they’re feeling and why.

Invite everyone to share reflections back with the whole group.

The map above is based upon the ‘Change Curve’ by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. It shows that it is possible to move through emotions: we don’t have to get stuck in one. By expressing ourselves, we have the opportunity to shift our feelings. It is possible to reach a place of ‘acceptance’ in the face of difficulty, and from there be able to move forwards with a greater sense of meaning and renewed purpose.



Credit: Still/Moving

3. Where do you find Hope? (5 mins)

In the same pairs as before, each person will have 2 minutes to finish the open sentence: 'I find hope...'

For example 'I find hope in... when I see... When I hear...'

You can repeat the opening sentence however many times you wish in your 2 minutes.

For this we encourage active listening, where the listener doesn't comment at all on what's being said; but quite simply they listen. There may be silences, and this is fine.

We find the words of Joanna Macy's 'Trusting the Spiral' a useful reminder about the power of active hope.

Trusting the Spiral —Joanna Macy

Active Hope is not wishful thinking.
Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued
By the Lone Ranger or by some saviour.
Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life
on whose behalf we can act.
We belong to this world.
The web of life is calling us forth at this time.
We've come a long way and we are here to play our part.
With Active Hope we realise that there are adventures in store,
Strengths to discover, and comrades to link arms with.
Active Hope is a readiness to engage.
Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths in ourselves and in others;
a readiness to discover the reasons for hope
and the occasions for love.
A readiness to discover the size and strength of our hearts,
our quickness of mind, our steadiness of purpose,
our own authority, our love for life,
the liveliness of our curiosity,
the unsuspected deep well of patience and diligence,
the keenness of our senses, and our capacity to lead.
None of these can be discovered in an armchair or without risk.



4. What does a better world look and feel like? (10 - 15 mins)

Invite the group to finish this sentence:

‘If I could change anything about the way the world is right now...’

This question can be facilitated in a number of ways:

- ◆ In a circle, people can be invited to speak freely or one at a time to answer the question
- ◆ On a blank bit of paper, people can have just 3 minutes to ‘free-write’, starting with that sentence and then writing without stopping and without thinking! What’s important is to just see what comes, and allow for surprises; follow the flow of writing. We encourage reading back in pairs to reflect on what’s written.
- ◆ In pairs each person can finish the open sentence and actively listen for 2 minutes each

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5. Write Your Letter (20 - 25 mins)



This can be a Letter *to* or *from* anything you choose:

the Earth; another species; future or past generations or other people, including people in positions of power.

Give people time before they start where they can consider what they’d like to give voice to. The following prompts can help:



We suggest up to 10 minutes to write. People may not finish their Letter in this time, and that is fine. For some, this is just the beginning of something they can finish later or continue to explore. They may wish to write more than one Letter — a Letter a Day!

Gather people in pairs or small groups of up to 5 people. Invite people to read their letter aloud in their groups. We encourage bravery, but if people prefer, they can talk about what they wrote. Invite people to actively listen, and to then have a conversation about what they heard.

- ◆ How did the Letters make you feel?
- ◆ Are there any similarities in the Letters? Common themes, ideas or expressions?
- ◆ Do the Letters inspire you to get more active to make change happen?

6. Closing: How do you feel at the end of this workshop?

Thank you for participating. By providing space for people to engage and face the planetary crisis, we believe we can, together, become courageous, connected and creative in our response.

To close the workshop, you can go round in a circle and share if people feel different at the end of this process to when they started. Or you can invite people to speak or write down one word about how they're left feeling.

Your participants have hopefully been on a transformational journey.

Though it may seem simple, and perhaps even small, we believe the act of writing and sharing a letter can change the world.

Share Your Letter

We are gathering your messages, visions and dreams for a better world and making sure they are seen and heard. The below are some ways you can share your Letters to make sure they have impact.

You can start a conversation in small groups to explore the ways the messages in peoples' Letters could be amplified so that more people can come into contact with them.

You can make your own 'Letters to the Earth' collection or book.

We also invite people to share their Letters:

In your community

Can you organise an event where you can read or present your Letter to spark conversation between people? Who would you like to be there? Could you invite local councillors, politicians or other people with power and influence to make change?

Where could you publicly display your Letter for all to see? Could the Letter be turned into a work of art – a key message painted or displayed in public?

Read or share your Letter with your neighbour, friend or colleague and inspire them to write their own.

In the post

Is there someone you want to send your Letter to, either in the post or by email? Could you invite them to write back?

Online

You can post your Letter, a picture or video of you speaking it on social media using the hashtag [#LetterstotheEarth](#)

Instagram: [@letterstotheearth_](#)

Facebook: [@letterstotheearth](#)

Twitter: [@letterstoearth_](#)

Submit your Letter to our website www.letterstotheearth.com where we will amplify it and make sure it is seen and read.

Other Ways to Activate your Community

As well as running a workshop, there are many other ways you can invite people to write a Letter to the Earth and get creative with their messages.

Whether it's a street party, festival or event, here's some ideas:

Set up a Letter Writing Station

- Print out our letter writing [Prompts](#) and stick these on noticeboards or walls for people to engage with
- Print out our [Template Letter](#) and leave a stack for people to pick up and write on
- Make an installation or exhibition for people to add their Letters and messages to – you can use string and pegs for example

Get creative!

A 'Letter' is also open to interpretation. It can be a poem, spoken word, a performance, a drawing, an artwork, a song, a dance. What creative form gives expression to what you want to say?

How can you distill a key message from your Letter and make it public for all to see? Could you...

- Project your message?
- Paint your message?
- Make a piece of public art with your message?

Remember to use environmentally friendly methods!

What other ways can you think of for your Letter or message to be seen and heard by as many people as possible to inspire change?

For example Letters and further inspiration, visit www.letterstotheearth.com and get your own copy of our book at Bookshop.org

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