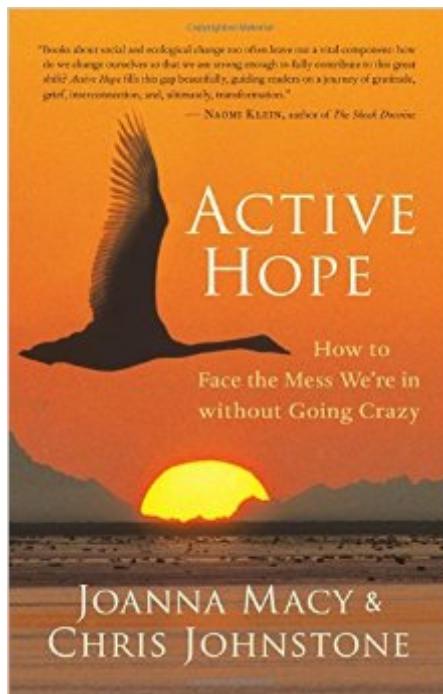


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Active Hope: How To Face The Mess We're In Without Going Crazy



Synopsis

The challenges we face can be difficult even to think about. Climate change, the depletion of oil, economic upheaval, and mass extinction together create a planetary emergency of overwhelming proportions. Active Hope shows us how to strengthen our capacity to face this crisis so that we can respond with unexpected resilience and creative power. Drawing on decades of teaching an empowerment approach known as the Work That Reconnects, the authors guide us through a transformational process informed by mythic journeys, modern psychology, spirituality, and holistic science. This process equips us with tools to face the mess we're in and play our role in the collective transition, or Great Turning, to a life-sustaining society.

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Customer Reviews

Our identities (and, to a great extent, our destinies) are shaped by the story we, consciously or not, tell ourselves about the events in our lives, how we interpret them and how such interpretations make us behave. This makes sense in our personal lives -at least, it does for me and many, many people I know first hand-. This book shows that it is not only sensible but crucial to apply the same principle at the collective level- starting by ourselves, that is. For those of us who refuse to seek comfort in wishful thinking or ignore the increasingly obvious symptoms, cries and dangers of a system thrown out of balance, yet feel trapped into a sense of powerlessness and other painful emotions, this is a must-read. As its authors contend, great revolutions start in the fringes. It shows a "third story": neither "we'll figure something out, just keep doing what you are doing" nor "we are already screwed, what is the point of anything?", but the very human ability to rise to the occasion

and finally reach our collective adulthood as a "life-sustaining society", to use their words. I cannot yet say that I have become an optimist, at least not a full-time one. But maybe that is precisely the point -central in the book, to be sure-: is it only worth fighting for something we have good chances of succeeding at? What if we do not have a clue about the chances we actually have, what if we even KNOW that they are slim: does that make the very cause of making our world a place in which life is celebrated, and not exploited, not worth the effort?I do not think so. As Frankl attests, even in the worst conceivable conditions, nobody can take away from me the freedom to choose my attitude and find meaning in my life. There is a phrase that has been popping a lot into my mind lately.

How do we face the grim reality of the state of our world, with looming depletion of key resources, widespread ecological devastation, global climate change, and massive disparities in the distribution of wealth? How do we take on these problems without being overwhelmed by their sheer immensity? How do we marshal our energy, talents and skills for the betterment of our world knowing that we are not likely to succeed, and that it may, in fact, already be too late?These are the central questions that the book tries to answer.It is an unusual topic to grapple with. All the other books on the subject of environmental activism that I've read failed to mention it, instead devoting their time to facts and figures that left no doubt about the gravity of the situation, the ways of thinking that have brought us to the brink, and the changes that we'll have to make to dig ourselves out. This suggested an unspoken assumption that informing us about the crisis ought to be sufficient to prompt us to avert it.My experience has been quite different. Despite being exposed to the problem through various media, I took no interest in it until my late twenties. Once I did, I found it just as difficult to get the attention of others. Some didn't consider it relevant - they had more pressing personal issues to attend to and goals to pursue. To my surprise, there were others who also avoided the subject despite having a fairly good grasp of its magnitude and severity. They felt powerless to do anything about it, so they chose to make the most of the present circumstances and not dwell on tomorrow.

There are three questions that I ask of this book; `what is it about, what can we learn from it and what do I think about it'?What is `it' about? The book is about building our capacity, resilience and intention to act in the face of a world of uncertainty characterised by climate change, peak oil, overpopulation, water scarcity, habitat destruction, loss of top soil and rising toxin levels. The name Active Hope describes the practice that we can follow. This is based on the "Work that Reconnects" which as described below has four stages that circle in a spiral effect. Fundamental to the success

of the practice is the narrative we tell ourselves which they note comes in three main forms; business as usual (more of the same will sort things out - head in the sand approach), it's a disaster/it's all too late (the climate is changing and there is nothing much we can do about it) or The Great Turning (this is an opportune time in history for us to change our way of living together on the planet). The later describes a kind of transition "from an industrial society committed to economic growth to a life-sustaining society committed to healing and recovery in the world" (p.5). The assumption here is that we can choose the narrative we tell ourselves and better we tell ourselves a narrative that will help sustain life in the future. The rest of the book then refers to the "empowerment process" that we can employ to strengthen our capacity to contribute to this great turning. There are four stages to this; coming from gratitude, honouring our pain for the world, seeing with new eyes and going forth". Central to this in a discussion on "widening circles of self" which begin with the individual, family/group, community, human society and web of life (p.90. Fig. 5).

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