

## SEVEN SENTENCE STARTERS IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVE HOPE

CAN WE HAVE A CONVERSATION THAT HELPS US MEET EACH OTHER MORE, FACE DISTURBING REALITIES AND SUPPORT A RESPONSE OF ACTIVE HOPE?

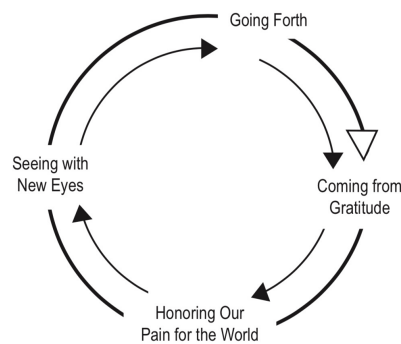
Please see each sentence starter as an invitation to speak, seeing what words naturally follow the prompts provided here. If doing this in pairs, allow a minute or so (or longer if you've time) for each one, taking it in turns to talk and hear each other. We suggest taking 1 and 2 together, then swapping speaker/listener roles, then 3 each way, swap again, 4 each way, swap again, then taking 5, 6 and 7 together before swapping for the last time.

5) LOOKING AT THE FUTURE WE'RE HEADING INTO, WHAT I DEEPLY HOPE FOR IS...

6) A PART I'D LIKE TO PLAY IN SUPPORT OF THIS IS...

7) A STEP I'LL TAKE TOWARDS THIS IN THE NEXT WEEK IS...

4) WHAT INSPIRES ME IS...



PLEASE START HERE  
1) I LOVE...

2) I'D LIKE TO THANK...

3) LOOKING AT THE FUTURE WE'RE HEADING INTO, MY CONCERNS INCLUDE...



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Active Hope is a practice we can apply to any situation.

It involves three key steps:

- 1) We start from where we are, taking in a clear view of the reality we face, seeing what we see and feeling what we feel.
- 2) We identify what we hope for, in terms of the direction we'd like things to move in or the values we'd like to see expressed
- 3) We take steps to move ourselves or our situation in that direction.

### *A Spiral of Active Hope*

Can we have a conversation that helps us meet each other more, support each other in facing disturbing world events, and nourish our capacity to play our part in responding with active hope?

Inspired by the work of US author and activist Joanna Macy, and the spiral practice described in her book *Active Hope* (co-authored with Chris Johnstone), the process described here offers a suggested conversation structure designed to head in that direction. Please see this guide as an invitation rather than prescription, with suggestions to follow and experiment with, while also respecting your choice about how and if you do so.

This conversation practice described here might take two people about 30 minutes to complete. For groups of three or more, please allow more time. It moves through four stages – *Gratitude, Honoring our Pain for the World, Seeing with New Eyes* and *Going Forth*. Partners take it in turns responding to the sentence starters for each part.

### *Stage One - Gratitude*

We begin with Gratitude as this helps resource us, putting us in a stronger starting point to face the disturbing information. Gratitude also reminds us of our inter-dependence, of ways we receive from others. Evolutionary psychologists identify gratitude as a social emotion that increases our desire to give back to the communities and networks of support we receive from.

There are two sides to gratitude – appreciation and thankfulness.

To experience appreciation, see what words naturally follow the start of a sentence that begins with the words "I love..." You're invited to name what you love, appreciate, relish and delight in – this might include people, places, experiences, colours, qualities, or anything else that follows the words 'I love...'. One partner times for a minute and listens, while the other partner speaks. Then swap over.

For thankfulness, you're invited to see what words naturally follow the sentence starter 'I'd like to thank...' Who or what have you received from, in ways that support you? See how it feels to name and thank them. Taking a minute or so each, then swapping over.

### *Stage Two – Honoring Our Pain for the World*

When we give attention to what we appreciate and feel supported by, we may also recognise ways these are threatened by conditions in our world. The next part of the spiral invites our witnessing of our own and each other's concerns, as well as the feelings these may arouse. We take in turns seeing what words follow this sentence starter.

'Looking at the future we're heading into, my concerns include...'

When each partner has finished speaking, the other can acknowledge what they've said, perhaps with a simple "I hear you" or "thank you for your sharing".

### *Stage Three – Seeing With New Eyes*

Facing disturbing realities can leave us feeling overwhelmed. If we're to give our best response it helps to open to perspectives that inspire, empower and resource us, that open us a sense of possibility. One way of doing this is to see what words follow a sentence that starts with "what inspires me is..."

### *Stage Four – Going Forth*

After each of you has shared your *Seeing With New Eyes* parts, you move into the last stage of the spiral, which is about looking at what we can do, the part we can play, in the larger story of acting for what we love, addressing our concerns or following what inspires us. Our hopes give us a guide here. See what follows these sentence starters

- Building on what I've said so far, what I deeply hope for is ...
- something I can do to help this happen is ...
- a first or next step I can take towards this in the next week is..

Please thank your partner as you bring this practice to a close.

### A note on timing

We've found this process works well when the partner who's listening times for a minute for each sentence starter – and when that time is up, raises a hand to let speaker know. That doesn't they have to stop straight away. If they're in the middle of saying something, they might want to finish that, or say whatever is needed to feel complete enough for now. If you have more time, you might choose to spend longer on each sentence starter – or explore this spiral form in other ways, as described in *Active Hope* by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone.

Please see the next page for the conversation prompts

For more information, please see the Active Hope Conversation Lab online resource at <https://app.ruzuku.com/courses/47761/about>

Thank you to Carlotta Cataldi for Seeing With New Eyes image on Page 1.

Text by Chris Johnstone.

Please feel welcome to use, copy and adapt this.