**Loving Earth Meditation and response activites**

* **Before you start**

People need to feel safe before doing this meditation as it can raise some challenging issues. So before you start, please explain the response activity and timing of the workshop, showing the materials in advance and perhaps one or two examples of things people have made - stressing that this is not generally making ‘art’, but using materials as a way to explore. If appropriate, give it may be helpful for participants to introduce themselves and break the ice.

It’s also helpful to agree some general guidelines, such as mutual respect, no criticism or judgment of others, and general confidentiality. Everyone will be starting from a different place, and will have different information, skills, opportunities, constraints and levels of confidence. Actions that might be obvious and easy for one person might be very challenging for someone else. However, if people are happy to share and discuss their responses and possible actions, this can be very helpful.

We have recorded a Loving Earth guided meditation for adults and a shorter meditation for children and all-age groups. [ Link to Resources videos] . You can either use these or adapt the script below or adapt these, referring to particular topics in the day, and by using language appropriate to the group. People can also respond using different activities. Whilst the community textile project is our particular focus, some groups may want to include other art forms and responses in their local exhibitions.

For children or an all-age group, a shortmeditation preceeded by a short discussion about what we love, how it might be affected by climate or ecological change and how that might link with what we can do might be more appropriate. These could also be linked with previous conversations or learning.

* For a public sewing or craft group, a very short version of the meditation, or the recording may be sufficient before getting down to designing textile panels might be best. If you have a variety of textile materials available, looking through them can be part of the quiet reflection time and may feed into design. You can introduce follow-up discussion on environmentsl issues and actions once the making is well underway.
* For a series of meetings, an initial quick, paper-based response activity could follow the meditation, perhaps using drawing or collage. This could then be followed up by a longer activity or series of creative and/or learning activities. Allow opportunities for each participant to share something of their journey - joys and challenges - each time, and to ask others for help if needed.   
    
  Different people will work at different paces . Some people might complete their panel during a week; others will take much longer. There’s no right or wrong, unless panels are to be included in a particular exhibition or event. It’s fine to make more than one panel. We only accept textile panels (of appropriate size) for our Loving Earth collection, but you could also develop the reflection using clay, paint, mosaic, artist’s books, poetry/creative writing, or other creative practices, depending on your group and facilities.
* For a community-based or work-based group you could invite people to consider how the activities of the group or organisation will impact on the various things individuals love, and what they could do together to prevent damage and adapt to prepare for future changes.

The meditation would usually takes between 3 and 10 minutes.

Please ask people to continue to hold the quiet and not chat with each other during the response activity, if at all possible, so as not to interrupt the flow for other people. Encourage them to come to you with any questions instead.

Some suggestions for exploring or research are at <http://lovingearth-project.uk/getting-started/>.

* **Meditation script**

**I invite you to settle down for a period of quiet. Make sure your phone is off…. sit comfortably….closing your eyes… and relax**. Notice how you’re feeling today… if you are preoccupied or anxious, can you let go of your worries for a while?. [ Hand them over to God? ] …. Either they will still be there at the end of this activity or they may be changed in some way. …Notice your body… where your weight is carried….and where there may be stress. Have a little wiggle and adjust your position if necessary…

**Listen to your breathing….. and hear the silence beyound the sounds… out there….. in this room…. within yourself.**

**Now I invite you to think about something, you love which is endangered by environmental break-down.** This could be a place…. or a person…. or a whole species…. or an object…..or an activity…. or an experience… . Perhaps it’s something you see, hear or do that you choose to think about. Many of us have so many blessings and choices.…   
  
**Can you imagine how things will have changed in twenty, thirty, … fifty years’ time?… Perhaps it already has been directly affected ?**.….. The scientists tell us that coasts and low-lying lands will flood…. droughts and wildfires will multiply …. and extreme weather will become more frequent…..with really hot spells …. and unpredictable cold ones …. increasingly violent storms …. flash floods….. These in turn will disrupt life cycles…. including agricuture….and are likely to affect basic infrastructure such as plumbing, transport and energy supplies. … Famine, disease, mass movements of populations and violent conflicts are likely to follow…. How might these impact on the precious thing, place, person that you are thinking of…?

**Notice how you feel about this** …….. Do you feel grief …. pain……anger…. sorrow…? Don’t stifle them….. These can inspire and empower you to act, if you let them……

………pause ………..

Now I invite you to **imagine how your activites and choices contribute to that threat. …..** [ individually or as a group]

**This is not about guilt, rather it’s about understanding how we are are interdependent.** We are not responsible for the society and economic system we are born into, Everything we eat, drink, breathe or use comes from somewhere…. it is grown or mined, or manufactured… can you imagine any links between the thing you love and where your food comes from… your home… your activities… travel… waste …. You may find this a difficult one, and you don’t need to know it all! …. But for example if you are thinking about polar bears and the melting ice caps, then your carbon footprint will impact on them… ie what you choose to do and buy …  
… Similarly, there is no “away” to dispose of our “waste”. So can you imagine what happens to it… ?

………pause ………..

**Now think about what could you do, or are you doing, to help prevent harm?**   
  
**There are many possibilities**….. some will be choices you can make yourself, or have already made….. some will depend on others…. but you may be able to work with them or influence them ….

**What is the most radical thing** you can imagine that would help reduce the threat? …… can you think of anything you can do that might help that come about? **……**

**What is the tiniest thing you could do?**……What else can you think of ?………What help might you need ? ……… What more might you need to find out? **…..…**

**Now think of something you could do right away, in the next week…… perhaps just a first step?**

**Perhaps you are already engaged in making a major change** …. you might prefer to focus on that, and reflect on the difference it will make, and why you are committed to carrying this through.

………….pause ………..

**Now I invite you to open your eyes and hold the silence as you respond to these questions using your hands.** Don’t worry too much about where you start, but let your hands be led.   
There will be opportunities to share something of your responses with others later, but nobody will be obliged to speak. If you want to jot a few words down on paper very quickly before starting the next activity, that’s fine. But please don’t spend time on that. You have about [ ???? ] minutes; I will tell you when your time is nearly up.

* **Response activities** [[1]](#footnote-1)

**I**t’s best to hold the silence for 20 minutes or so if the time is available - throughout the time for a short response activity, or for the first 20 minutes or so of a longer one. This time is needed for the ideas and the form of the response to gel. Children may not need quite so long. Having a time-limited response can be liberating; if people ant to continue after the initial sharing that can be an option. Give people a few minutes warning before time is up.

* **Short paper-responses activities** (20 minutes)
  + **Drawing with pencils/pens/chalks/crayons** [[2]](#footnote-2)

Use whatever is to hand; blendable crayons or chalks are ideal. A3 paper (about30x40cm) works well.

You can also do this exercise with watercolour or gouache if you have facilities for wet work, but plenty of space and advance preparation is needed.

Facilitator’s Script:  
When you have focused for a while with closed eyes, let two different colours choose you. Hold one in each hand, close your eyes, and make marks for a minute or two with your eyes closed. (This can feel like a long time: don’t hurry). When you come to the right time, open your eyes, and look at the marks you have made. You may want to look at this in different ways, turning the paper, noticing details, how different marks relate to each other, any sense of movement or stillness…. After a bit you may want to develop the image, dreaming into the picture, strengthening some parts, blending others, adding details, different colours, contrasts etc. You may decide this is to be an image of something connected with the meditation or a more abstract expression of your response.

When you have finished, jot down a word or two, or a phrase or sentence to sum up.

* + **Paper Collage**

For this activity people will need a range of different scraps of paper in different colours and textures and some paste or glue - glue-sticks generally work well. (No scissors are used in this exercise; this amakes it necessary to use both hands which releases creativity.

Facilitator’s Script:

When you are ready, look at the papers and let a few of them choose you. Take pieces to your seat, play with them, arrange them on your paper, tearing them as needed. (No scissors! ) Some may cover other pieces, or interweave with them. You might make an image or to a word may come to mind, using all the letters in that word (torn out of paper) as many times as you like. Pick up more papers as needed; you don’t need to use them all though. Don’t stick anything down till the last minute: they may all need to be rearranged near the end!

When you have finished, jot down a word or two, or a phrase or sentence, to sum up.

* **Longer response activities**

Making a textile square to join the Loving Earth collection or exhibitions. More detailed guidance is on our website. [[3]](#footnote-3) Textile panels should be 30x30cm finished size and can be in any textile medium.

Some people will want to sketch their idea on paper; others may prefer not to; the materials available may themselves offer inspiration. Be open to the design changing as your creation evolves and new ideas emerge. When you have finished, give your piece a title and write a few words about your piece, not forgetting to say what action you are taking and why. Please email them to us for inclusion (anonymously) in our online gallery. Your panel could be included in a local exhibition (if one is organised) and/or we may invite you to send it to us to join our collection, if it is on a topic not already much covered in our existing collection.

Other slower activities could include clay, making an artist’s book, or a box, weaving, etc, depending on skills and materials available.

**Sharing time …..**

Sharing a little of what you have made and thought in response to the meditation can be helpful to take the process further. Being selective is important. We may be surprised by what we say!

If it’s a large group, sharing in twos and threes first may be helpful. Beware of commenting or judging. Nobody should be obliged to share but doing so will be usually be helpful, so it’s worth encouraging this. Sensitive observations at the end are OK though nobody should feel obliged to respond.

* **Postscript**.

The initial aim of the Loving Earth Project was to help people to engage with the environmental crisis in the first place, but people now more aware of the problems and have taken their first steps. However the urgency is increasing and this is a continuing journey. The Loving Earth process can be repeated many times with different focuses, to sustain us on our journeys, help us acknowledge and express both gratitude for what we love and grief for what is being lost. Sharing new ways, and why we are making these changes can be affirming for us and inspiring for others when we see the textiles exhibited or hear people’s responses. So you are welcome to adapt the process accordingly.

The only hard-and-fast rules for the textile panels are that the finished size and that they are accompanied by a short statement which mentions an action taken or change made as well as what inspired it.

This process fits well with many other resources. It can be used in combination with other learning to help people digest it, acknowledge their responses and discern actions they can take.   
In particular it fits closely with the “*Work that Reconnects*” developed by Joanna Macy[[4]](#footnote-4) though it originated independently. Macy’s work empowers people to address the huge challenges of the environment, often through experiential group work. It has four elements:

* **Coming from gratitude** : giving thanks for what/who/where we love, for what supports our lives, for our blessings and for our choices and freedoms;
* **Honour the pain and grief**: acknowledging the facts, losses and damage past/present/future, and our feelings about the huge challenge of environmental crisis;
* **Seeing with new eyes** : recognising our interdependence with a variety of other living beings, and that we and what we love are but tiny parts of life on Earth. This can help us become more attuned to others’ needs, to see new possibilities, and to be less fearful;
* **Going forth:** Creating visions of the future and sharing them with others is essential. We can discern the next steps - alone or together. Taking action changes us too, and can bring new insights, joys, hopes and gratitude.

*February 2022*

1. These response activities owe much to the of Chris Cook and Brenda Heales in *Seeding the Spirit: the Appleseed Workbook,* published by Woodbrooke and normally available from the Quaker Bookshop . NB It’s always a good idea for the facilitator to do the response activity themself beforehand, so they have experience of the mechanics and timing! [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See separate instructions for LEP responses on paper at http://lovingearth-project.uk/resources/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See separate instructions for making a textile square, at <http://lovingearth-project.uk/resources/> . Each of these should have an image, plus some brief writing to explain the image. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See for example *Active Hope* by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone. There is also a wide range of online resources, for example at https://workthatreconnects.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)