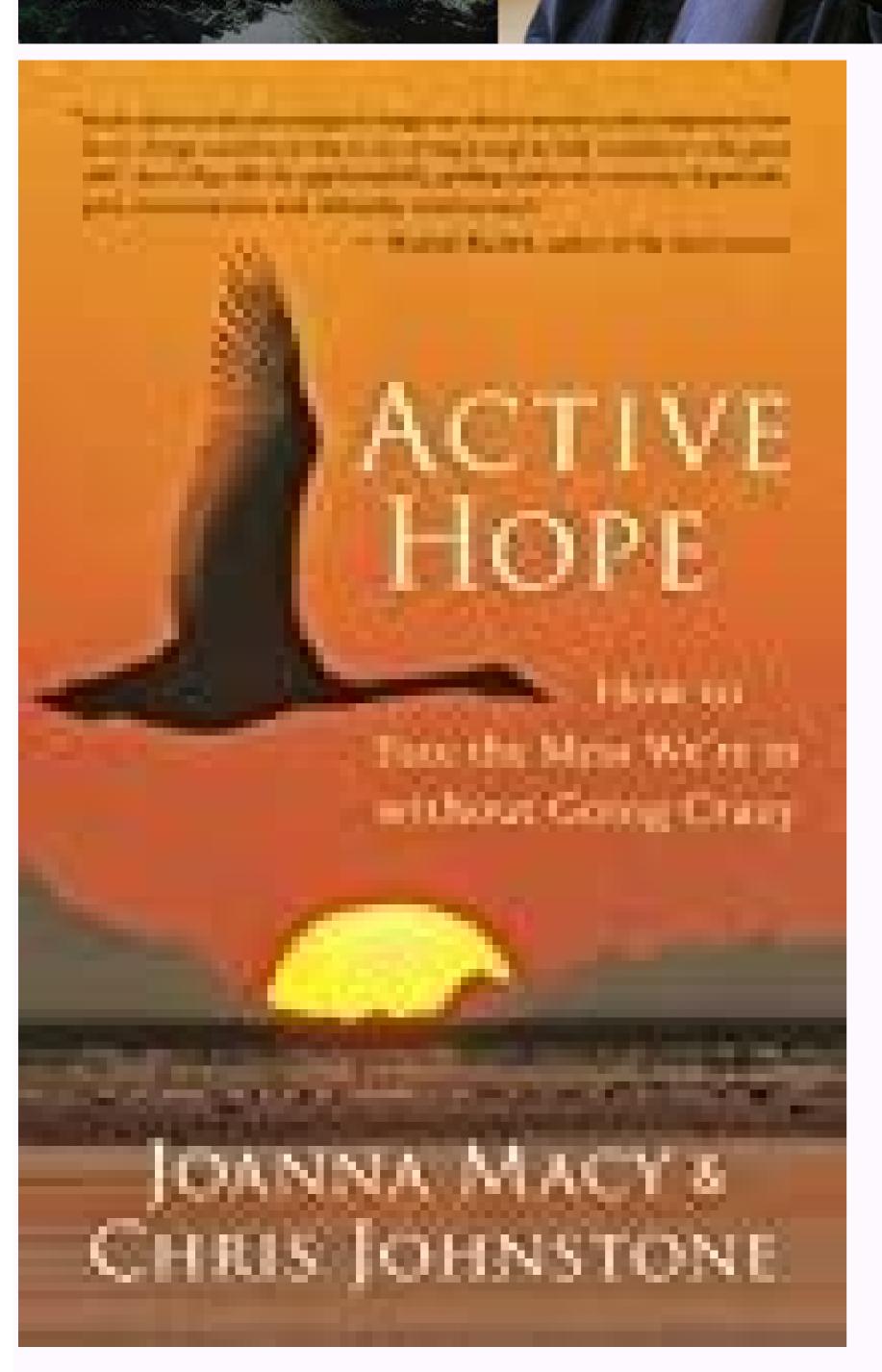
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for the WORLD JOANNA MACY and the Work of Our Time EDITED BY STEPHANIE KAZA

WILD

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JOANNA MACY MOLLY BROWN

THE UPDATED GUIDE TO THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS FOREWORD BY MATTHEW FOX

coming back to LIFE



A WILD LOVE JOORT JOANNA MACY

EDITED BY STEPHANIE KAZA



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Many of us feel called to respond to the ecological destruction of our planet, yet we feel overwhelmed, immobilized, and unable to deal realistically with the threats to life on Earth. Noted spiritual and environmental thinkers Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown contend that this crippling response to world crisis is a psychological defense mechanism. that has been endemic since the years of the Cold War arms race, when we had to adapt within a single generation to the horrific possibility of nuclear holocaust. Since its publication in 1983, Joanna Macy's book, Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age has sold nearly 30,000 copies and has been the primary resource for groups of men and women confronting the challenging realities of our time without succumbing to paralysis or panic. Coming Back to Life provides a much needed update and expansion of this pioneering work. At the interface between spiritual breakthrough and practical guide. The first third of the book discusses with extraordinary insight the angst of our era, and the pain, fear, guilt and inaction it has engendered; it then points forward to the way out of apathy, tio "the work that reconnects". The rest of the book offers both personal counsel and easy-to-use methods for working with groups in a number of ways to profoundly affect peoples' outlook and ability to act in the world. Table of ContentsForeword by Mathew Fox1. To Choose Life2. The Greatest Danger: Apatheia, The Basic Miracle: Our True Nature & Power4. The Work that Reconnects5. Guiding Group Work6. Affirmation: Coming from Gratitude7. Despair Work: Owning & Honoring Our Pain for the World8. The Shift: Seeing with New Eyes9. Deep Time: Drawing on Past & Future Generations10. The Council of All Beings: Rejoining the Natural World11. Going Forth12. Meditations for Coming Back to LifeJoanna Macy has developed an international following over the course of 40 years as a speaker and workshop leader on Buddhist philosophy and the deep ecology movement Joanna Macy & Molly BrownThe original Coming Back to Life has helped people transform denial, despair and grief in the face of the social and ecological challenges of our time. global crises and the cognitive, spiritual and perceptual revolutions occurring all around us. Praise for Coming Back to Life Here is a blueprint for our present time—an honest and openhearted appraisal of our globally destructive and abusive behavior, and the work required to transform, to shift into a life-sustaining culture. Joanna Macy and Molly Brown outline the simple and essential choices we need to make, and give us the tools to make this shift. A vitally necessary book. -Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee Ph.D., Sufi teacher and author, Spiritual Ecology, the Cry of the Earth The Dalai Lama nailed it: a timeless manual for Earth healers, Coming Back to Life inspires actionable hope. The new edition reminded me again how to replace despair with constructive optimism; blame with imagination, innovation and collaboration. As a former middle-school teacher, I say Hooray! for the new chapter designed to aid mentors and teachers on whom it will fall to guide those likely to suffer the worst consequences of the Great Unraveling: Generations X through Z and beyond. The meditations at the close of the book are both balm and goad. From their unique and clear-eved analysis of our present crises and their causes, through exercises to catalyze the Great Turning, Macy and Brown's book models the changes it aims to facilitate in our hearts and minds. A heart-lifting read. - Ellen LaConte, author, Life Rules and Afton: A Love Story In a time of catastrophic climate change, Joanna Macy and Molly Brown offer a treasure-trove of principles, practices, poems, and prayers that must become as natural to us as breathing. Only this guality of spiritual nourishment can sustain us in our planetary hospice condition. These tools not only fortify us for the long haul, but intimately join us with the Earth, our bodies, and one another, thereby enabling us to experience an exuberant aliveness. —Carolyn Baker, Ph.D., author, Collapsing Consciously and Love In the Age of Ecological Apocalypse Joanna Macy's and Molly Young Brown's new book is a spectacular and accessible blueprint for conflict resolution, environmental sustainability and a planet we all hope to embrace collectively and enjoy. The measures recommended in this book are ones that every individual and community can get behind. Coming Back to Life is a perfect title for a marvelous book. -Michael Charles Tobias, president, Dancing Star Foundation We live in truly perilous times. If you want to face what is happening with an open heart and mind, if you want to use your suffering can be the birthplace for a greater capacity for healing. It shows you how. It's a brilliant guidebook to the power you have at your core to let your light shine its brightest even in the presence of fear and planetary anguish. If you want to see new life arise out of despair, Coming Back to Life has my highest possible recommendation. —John Robbins, author, Diet For A New America and co-founder and president, The Food Revolution Network A must for all who want to mobilize humanity in service of all beings. These concepts, exercises, and meditations have proven to work across generations, religions, ethnicities and races. -Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Director of Social Justice Organizing at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College Modern civilisation has brought the planet and untold numbers of species, including our own, to the brink of existence. To honestly witness this with our hearts, minds, and spirits wide open and remain able to react, adapt, and, when necessary, resist, often seems impossible. Coming Back to Life, the wisdom, clarity and urgency of Joanna Macy's lifelong body of incredible work shines brighter and more important than ever before. Our very lives now depend on being present in order to stay sane amidst this suicidal culture, and Macy shows us the way. -Dahr Jamail, journalist and author Coming Back to Life is the aptly-titled compendium of what has been learned over many years and can be shared with us all from the successful Work That Reconnects workshops that Joanna Macy and associates have offered to thousands of people from all walks of life. The book ranges from the purpose of such work and its role in what's called the Great Turning to the most specific details of how to conduct a successful workshop of this kind. It's a fine example of something the progressive world often lacks: a way to pass on what's been learned in one successful project or another so that this work can grow. —Michael Nagler, president, Metta Center for Nonviolence Coming Back to Life is for me a treasured core text and I am among the many who are delighted with this upgrade. It distils a further sixteen years of experience, names more clearly the context we face and broadens the reach of this work with important new chapters. Thank you Joanna and Molly. --Chris Johnstone, co-author, Active Hope The earlier edition of Coming Back to Life has been a roadmap to me and to others at the Gandhi Institute for years, especially for strengthening our systemic thinking in relation to social injustice and for increasing our capacity to practice mourning in community settings. This new edition is a gift, like a visit from an old friend during a rough time. I feel so grateful to Joanna and to Molly for choosing to return to and refresh this work - a

more timely, practical book is unimaginable. I pray that it strengthens our collective ability to lovingly take action on behalf of our descendants. --Kit Miller, Director, MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence Every generation needs its sacred texts, its scriptures. Our journey through the damaged landscape and perilous time on this precious Earth requires a new kind of soul guide. Coming Back to Life gives voice to our generations' psalms, praises, and lamentations, our call for justice. It provides practices and meditations so we can make sense of who we are. This book is our wisdom text. —Carolyn Raffensperger, executive director, Science and Environmental Health Network, and cofounder, Women's Congress for Future Generations Reading this blessed treasure of a book is a healing experience. It names and honors the overwhelming emotions, paradoxes, complexities and desires that swirl deep in us as we face the reality of this time. And with gentle assurance it offers us actions that reconnect us to our deepest sources of well-being, energy and love, no matter the external realities. I am forever grateful that this book returns to our world at this time. - Margaret Wheatley, author, Leadership and the New Science, Perseverance and So Far From Home If you ever feel pain or guilt for events in the world, dismay at useless cruelty, rage at environmental damage and waste, or powerlessness because you do not know what to do, this is the book for you. In Coming Back to Life Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown show how these feelings need not be suppressed. Far from being an agonizing companion, they can be a friend and an aid at reconnecting with your heart and taking useful action. —Piero Ferrucci, author, Your Inner Will Coming Back to Life opens our eyes to both the difficulties and the possibilities — while inspiring our hearts and minds with practices that allow us to become wise activists in a very complex world. —Lynne Iser, founder, Elder-Activists.org Joanna Macy and Molly Brown in their expansive new book Coming Back to Life help used. understand the urgency of and the steps to take for this necessary journey. This book is as challenging as it is breath-taking, our own, other's and the planet's. Not to despair but to live out and embody our spiritual being in mutuality with each other and the world. They offer practical exercises to help us on our way. Rays of joy leap from the pages but without a guarantee that we will prevail. I found myself continually feeling grateful for this book and the wonderful beings who bring up the necessary challenge of reconnecting and coming back to life —John Powell, director, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, UC Berkeley This legacy edition reflects forty years of highly refined, time-tested experiential group work that has now spread around the globe. Built on the wisdom and principles of Macy's life work, the volume offers a bounty of resources for teachers and facilitators engaged in social transformation. New chapters include insights and progress from expanding the work to children, young people, and activists of color. Macy and Brown provide clear analysis and guidance for cultivating a profound shift in perception critical to a viable future. They express great urgency about what must be done, yet their methods are grounded, powerful, and proven as a path of action. The creative strength of the work lies in its confidence in the human imagination as a basis for hope. This work is wisdom work, an inspired project for healing the wounded parts of the earth and the human imagination as a basis for hope. It is filled through and through with the huge hearts and passionate dedication of all those who have been touched by this compelling vision and most visionary teacher. --Stephanie Kaza, author, Mindfully Green Joanna Macy is one of the great teachers of our age. It is cause for great celebration that an updated guide to her Work That Reconnects has now appeared in the form of a new edition of the classic she wrote with Molly Young Brown. As the world spirals ever deeper into disconnect, as we witness the natural world plundered and unravelling into horror, it becomes ever more difficult to muster the psycho-spiritual resources necessary to face the reality unflinching and compassionate, to swim against the current of egoism and denial and to represent life, speak for life. The testimony and practices contained in this volume offer us priceless and practical resources for transforming despair into creative action and answer the questions: how are we to live at such a time? How are we to represent the 4 billion years of living ancestry on whose shoulders we stand and whose future lies in our trembling hands? —John Seed, founder, Rainforest Information Center, Australia Whenever I am leading group processes to feel both the urgency and revolutionary moment on Earth, I turn to this book. The exercises poetically deposit just right amount of theory in the explanations, and for more depth, one can just flip through the chapters. First introduced to Coming Back to Life and The Work That Reconnects in the context of a 2014 leaders of color cohort with Joanna Macy and Patricia St. Onge, the words and energy of this book illustrate the interconnectedness of social justice, environmental, and liberation theology movements for wholeness. —Sarah Thompson, executive director, Christian Peacemakers Teams Where there is bewilderment, Joanna Macy brings wisdom. Where there are division and discord, she speaks for the Other. Where there is despair, she joins hands to dance. Humankind is about to make a Great Turning in one direction or another. If we find a way to turn toward a deeper, fuller humanity, one of the reasons will be the fiercely compassionate genius of Joanna Macy. [This] book is a great gift to the reeling world. --Kathleen Dean Moore, author of Wild Comfort and co-editor of Moral Ground Copyright © 2014 by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown. All rights reserved. Cover design by Diane McIntosh. Cover Art: iStock -- Nature Mandala : srdjan111 First printing September 2014. New Society Publishers acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund (CBF) for our publishing activities. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-86571-775-6 eISBN: 978-1-55092-580-7 Inquiries regarding requests to reprint all or part of Coming Back to Life should be addressed to New Society Publishers at the address below. 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For further information, or to browse our full list of books and purchase securely, visit our website at: www.newsociety.com LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION Macy, Joanna, 1929-, author Coming back to life : the updated guide to the work that reconnects / Joanna Macy, Molly Brown ; foreword by Matthew Fox. Revision of: Coming back to life : practices to reconnect our lives, our world / Joanna Macy, Molly Young Brown ; foreword by Matthew Fox. — Gabriola Island, B.C. : New Society Publishers, 1998. Includes bibliographical references and index. Issued in print and electronic formats. ISBN 978-0-86571-775-6 (pbk.).—ISBN 978-1-55092-580-7 (ebook) 1. Self-actualization (Psychology). 2. Human ecology--Religious aspects. 3. Nature-Effect of human beings on. 4. Conservation of raticipation. I. Brown, Molly Young, author II. Title. In grateful memory of Francis Macy (1927-2009) who loved and named this work and is ever at our side as it continues to flower. Contents Permissions Message from Dalai Lama Foreword by Matthew Fox Preface by Joanna Macy Preface by Joanna Macy Preface by Molly Young Brown CHAPTER 1: TO CHOOSE LIFE We Can Still Opt for a Life-Sustaining World Choosing Our Story 1. Business As Usual 2. The Great Unraveling 3. The Great Turning The Great Turning 1. Holding Actions in Defense of Life 2. Transforming the Foundations of Our Common Life 3. Shift in Perception and Values CHAPTER 2: THE GREATEST DANGER — THE DEADENING OF HEART AND MIND What is Pain for the World? What Deadens Heart and Mind? 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Dance to Dismember the Ego Bodhisattva Check-In Council of All Beings CHAPTER 9: DEEP TIME — RECONNECTING WITH PAST AND FUTURE GENERATIONS To Reinhabit Time Practices Invoking the Beings of the Ancestors Audio Recording to the Future Letter from the Future The Seventh Generation Field Work on the Great Turning The Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword in the Storytellers Convention CHAPTER 10: GOING FORTH Discoveries Made So Far in the Spiral Practices Networking Communicating Our Concerns and Hopes Life Map Imaging Our Power The Sword Image Power The Consultation Groups Corbett The Clearness Committee Dialoging with Mara to Strengthen Our Resolve Bowing to Our Adversaries Creating Study/Action Groups The Four Abodes Five Vows Circle of Blessings Two Poems for the Road Ahead CHAPTER 11: THE WORK THAT RECONNECTS WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS What Do Children Know and Feel? 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Box 189, Gabriola Island, BC VOR 1X0, Canada (250) 247-9737 Message from the Dalai Lama ALTHOUGH IT IS INCREASINGLY EVIDENT how interdependent we are in virtually every aspect of our lives, this seems to make little difference to the way we think about ourselves in relation to our fellow-beings and our environment. We live at a time when human actions have developed a creative and destructive power that has become global in scope. And yet we fail to cultivate a corresponding sense of responsibility. Most of us are concerned only about people and property that are directly related to us. We naturally try to protect our family and friends from danger. Similarly, most people will struggle to defend their homes and land against destruction, whether the threat comes from danger. or flooding. We take the existence of clean air and water, the continued growth of crops and availability of raw materials, for granted. We know that these resources are finite, but because we only think of our own demands, we behave as if they are not. Our limited and self-centered attitudes fulfill neither the needs of the time, nor the potential of which we are capable. Today, while many individuals grapple with misery and alienation, we are faced with global problems such as poverty, overpopulation and the destruction of the environment. These are problems that we have to address together. No single community or nation can expect to solve them on its own. This indicates how small and interdependent our world has become. In ancient times, each village was more or less self-sufficient and independent. There was neither the need nor the expectation of cooperation with others outside the village. You survived by doing everything yourself. The situation now has completely changed. It is no longer appropriate to think only in terms of even my nation or my country, let alone my village. If we are to overcome the problems we face, we need what I have called a sense of universal responsibility rooted in love and kindness for our human brothers and sisters. In our present state of affairs, the very survival of humankind depends on people developing concern for the whole of humanity, not just their own community or nation. The reality of our situation impels us to act and think more clearly. Narrow-mindedness and self-centered thinking may have served us well in the past, but today will only lead to disaster. We can overcome such attitudes through the combination of education and training. This book by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown contains a wealth of advice drawn from their own experience for putting such training into effect, both on a personal and to encourage readers not only to give their approval, but to act upon it for the benefit of all sentient beings and this earth that is our only home. HIS HOLINESS TENZIN GYATSO The Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet September 7, 1998 Foreword by Matthew Fox ANEW MILLENNIUM, a time of planetary communication, the loss of legitimacy among our religious institutions, youth alienation, species disappearance — all these realities of our time require a book like this book and deep thinkers and activists like Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown. This is a source book in the true sense of that word source, our spiritual roots, so that our action will come from non-action; our action will be from our freedom and our self-awareness and not from our acting out or projecting. Joanna Macy, the root teacher of the Work That Reconnects, represents the best of her generation's (and my) efforts to replace the dualistic, secularist and anti-mystical biases of the modern era with compassion and loving action. Though descending from an impressive line of Calvinist preachers, Macy's deepest spiritual gift is her application of Buddhism's principles that acknowledge the deep suffering of the world and resolve to assist a Great Turning beyond that suffering. Like the mystics of old, she invites us into the despair and darkness and fear that grips all of us, dispelling the notion that denial, numbing or escape are valid options. She challenges us to analysis as well as action, and she gifts us with exercises that will strengthen our minds and hearts for the struggle ahead. Molly Brown's contribution, from years of coaching and teaching with tools of psychosynthesis, ecopsychology and the Work that Reconnects, is also well as challenging. In many ways this contribution, from years of coaching and teaching with tools of psychosynthesis, ecopsychology and the Work that Reconnects, is also well as challenging. book can be called a manual for mystics and prophets as we enter the 21st century. It is deep in its ecumenism and employment of interfaith and inter-spirituality practices, drawing not only on the rich Buddhist spiritual practices from other traditions and from the authors' imaginative experience in leading workshops in healing of despair all over the world. It has been my privilege to be present at several of those workshops, often co-leading with Joanna, and I have always gone away deepened and strengthened by her gifts of spiritual leadership. I recall our work together on an ecojustice workshop in Munich, on bringing the virtues of darkness and awareness of suffering to the Findhorn people in northern Scotland, and our doing Cosmic Christ and Buddha Nature workshops in Santa Barbara, California and at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland, California. All these experiences rise to the surface on reading this book, and blessings of strength and spirit fill my consciousness on recalling them. That is what is so special about Joanna Macy's work — not just her passionate commitment (this may be a hint of the healthy zeal she inherited from her Calvinist predecessors) and not just her strong analytic mind — but especially her awareness that learning takes place not just in the head but in the head but in the benefit of all the chakras. With Macy, her process experiences are just as valuable as her theory. Praxis and theory come together in this book as it does for other liberation the field, emanating from the wisdom of our ancestors East and West and coming from the heart, mind and experience of a spiritual visionary and a committed activist for eco- and social justice, is a blessing for our times. To write a book entitled Coming Back to Life implies that death is around us and has overtaken us. How can there be a return to life without an acknowledgment of death? This seems to be the case, namely that ours has become a culture overwhelmed with death — some of it real and much of it brought on ourselves. When one sees the young lost, cigarette corporations growing rich on exploitation on a grand scale, climate warming and its denial, the tragedy of Fukushima, one becomes more and more aware of the presence of death. Spiritual death. Even physical death. Even physical death. Even physical death. Spiritual death. Even physical death. Even physical death. Spiritual death. Even physical death. Spiritual death. Even physical death. out of death. How do we go about coming back to life, i.e. spirit, in these troubled days? Macy and Brown offer us both theory and practice on how to do this. This is a spirit work. It heals and it gives us hope, thereby empowering us on the way to a healing life. Meister Eckhart, the great Dominican mystic and prophet of the Middle Ages who was condemned by the papacy because he supported peasants, women and other outcasts, once wrote that a healing life is a good life. A healing life is a good look. This book is a wisdom traditions the world over. It does not settle for knowledge alone. In addition, because so many of its stories and teachings have come from or been tested by thousands of persons around the world in workshops of healing, that too assures the wisdom of the collective. Indeed, the wisdom of the collective around the world in workshops of healing, that too assures the wisdom of the collective. born adds to the role of wisdom in leading us to spiritual awareness and action — as does the passion for the more-than-human beings with whom we are called to share community. This work is a healing work; it comes from healing work; it comes from healing work; it comes from healing work is a healing work; it comes from healing work; it institutions, in religion and in the hearts and minds of all workers for justice and ecojustice. Joanna Macy is one of those authentic voices in our time who is a prophet speaking out on behalf of the poor and those without a voice, the young, the dispossessed, the ecologically threatened. But she does not stop there. She also passes on this prophetic voice to others — she draws it out, she coaxes us not to be in denial. She encourages us, that is, she builds our courage up to find our prophetic voice and for our own. And we all welcome this book that is sure to unite many voices, hands and hearts. May it fulfill its promise! May we all fulfill our promise. Matthew Fox is author of 31 books including Original Blessing, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, A Spirituality, Hildegard of Bingen: A Saint for Our Times and Meister Eckhart: A Mystic Warrior for Our Times Preface by Joanna Macy THIS IS A GUIDEBOOK. It maps ways into our innate vitality and determination to take part in the self-healing of our world. It presents a form of group work that has grown steadily since the 1970s, helping hundreds of thousands of men and women around the globe find solidarity and courage to act, despite rapidly worsening social and ecological conditions. This work can be done alone and has reached into countless individual lives. It is most effectively done in groups, for its methods are interactive and their power synergistic. Workshops vary in length from one day to a full lunar cycle; but even in briefer time frames, such as in classrooms or churches, the practices can yield remarkable openings to the truth of our common condition. They can bring us into fresh relationship with our world, and not only arouse our passion to protect life, but also steady us in a mutual belonging more real than our fears and even our hopes. I know that the Work That Reconnects belongs to us all; that makes me all the more grateful for the ways the events and preoccupations of my own life, as mother, scholar, activist, provided soil for its roots to grow and spread. The spiritual and philosophical nutrients in that soil included, from my Protestant preacher forebears, the life of Jesus and the words of the Hebrew prophets. For the last 50 years, that ancestral legacy has been worked over and illumined by the Buddha Dharma, for which I thank kind and noble teachers in Asia and a wide-awake graduate school in the US. While I was there, systems theory set my mind on fire. Its convergences with Buddhist teachings generated insights that prepared me for the impact of Deep

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