



Critical Hope

An approach to environmental
education

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Activity Title:

Group Introductions

Appropriate for:

Any workshop

Type/goal of activity:

Ice breaker

Age Level:

Youth and Adult

Adjustable to other age groups?

Yes No

Physical Activity Level:

High Moderate Low

Materials needed:

None

Time Needed:

Approximately 10 minutes.

Source:

Macy, J. & Young Brown, M. (1998). *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect our lives, our world.* Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers. pp. 85-87

Activity Instructions:

Macy and Young Brown's instructions for the activity are as follows:

1. Start on a positive note, by asking *participants* to share in one of these ways:

As you tell us your name and where you're from, tell us also something particular that you love about being alive. (Or)...share something you did or saw today that made you glad to be alive. (Or)...tell us about a place you love. (Or)...tell us what makes your heart sing.

2. We can move then to our personal responses to the plight of the world. WE need to get to this soon, because many people come to the workshop just for the opportunity to express out loud and a last their feelings of apprehension without fear of being seen as morbid, sick, or unpatriotic. To keep that initial sharing vivid, immediate, and concrete, we can say:

Let's go around the circle again and each briefly share an experience of the last week or so that caused you pain for the world. It can be an incident, a news item, a dream... If tears should come, please share them, too...

Remember to model the sharing first, including stating your name even though *participants* know it. Before you begin, allow some moments of silence. This lets *participants* tune into their own experience and chose what they want to share, so they can listen more attentively to others.

At the conclusion of these introductions, you can point out to the *participants* that, in each case, the deep concerns that they have just shared have something in common: they extend beyond the separate ego, beyond personal needs and wants. Whether experience with fear, anger, or grief, they are rooted in caring, and they are to be honored as evidence of our interconnectedness. You might introduce the practice of "breathing through" (Chapter 12) for *participants* to use in the workshops as well as in their lives, to hand pain in a way that grounds them in the realization of their interexistence.

This kind of initial sharing is useful in other settings as well, in any meeting or classroom setting on issues of collective concern. It engages people on a deep level, cuts through unnecessary verbiage and competition, and build solidarity.



(Macy, & Young Brown, 1998; pp. 86-87).

Adaptations:

The questions we use, instead of the ones suggested by Macy above are below. Other questions that suit the theme of the workshop can be used as appropriate.

- Something you love about being alive
- Something you've experienced lately that makes you go "wow"
- Tell us about a place you love

