

[00:00:07.250] - Chris Johnstone

Welcome to the Active Hope Foundations training, I'm Chris Johnstone, co-author with Joanna Macy of the book "Active Hope". When we wrote that, our goal was to draw together insights and practices that help us face our concerns about the world and respond in ways that contribute to positive change. My goal with this free online course is similar, it's to present - through a series of useful and engaging videos - a course that takes you on a journey designed to nourish and strengthen your ability to make a difference.

[00:00:44.730] - Chris Johnstone

Before I say more about what we've got here, I want to start by asking why? Why even have a course about facing and responding to world problems? When I work with groups - running workshops or giving talks - a question I often ask is: "how bad are things?" Asking people to rate the severity of the challenges we face on a nought to ten scale where nought is no problem at all, and 10 represents problems that are catastrophic. Considering your concerns about our world situation and the challenges we face, however you see them, where would you place the dial on this problemometer?

[00:01:26.720] - Chris Johnstone

At this end of the scale, there's not much of a problem... Here in the middle, there's more significant issues and towards this end, we're moving into disaster territory where, if we carry on the same old way, we're heading over the edge of a cliff towards the top of the scale catastrophe. What's your sense? Where would you put the dial? If you don't think there's much of a problem and that we can carry on the way we've been going, then this course probably isn't for you.

[00:02:00.160] - Chris Johnstone

Our starting point is concern, alarm, perhaps even horror at what's happening and at the direction we're heading in. I've done this scale with lots of groups who are engaged in addressing world issues. The average response is on the high end of the scale, about seven to eight, sometimes more. The first reason to have a course like this is that the stakes are high. We're in danger. We're in serious trouble. What kind of problems are we talking about?

[00:02:32.570] - Chris Johnstone

The important question here is what are the issues that concern you? Because this course isn't so much about what the problems and issues are. There's lots of information out there about climate change, about the vast amount of money spent on weapons while so many people starve, about racism and structural inequality, mass extinction of species and other vitally important issues of our time. The focus of this course is on how we respond, looking at how we can cultivate and nourish a response of Active Hope, where we're active in supporting the changes we hope for.

[00:03:09.710] - Chris Johnstone

It's for you to choose which issues you want to address. The course is here to support you in finding and developing your best response. So I'd like now to move to another scale, which I call our responseometer. If we were to look at our collective response as a society, how well developed on average do you think it is? Nought is where we haven't noticed and aren't responding at all... As the numbers rise, we're more aware of the issues and we're taking more steps... At this low end, our responses are a bit on the sleepy side - we haven't woken up - whereas over here there's a mass mobilisation of creative and committed engagement of people, governments, businesses, organisations, communities everywhere... Everyone's involved. We've really got it that the stakes are high and that we're rising to the occasion. What is your sense? Where would you put the dial for our overall collective response?

[00:04:13.510] - Chris Johnstone

When I've asked groups this question, the average response is somewhere between two and three. That's an average that hides huge variation with plenty of examples of inspiring activity. But the dominant response - with many of the big issues - is rather muted. So there's a mismatch, there's a mismatch between the size of the problem and the size of the response.

[00:04:39.240] - Chris Johnstone

As American author and activist Joanna Macy says, of all the dangers we face from climate chaos to nuclear warfare, none is so great as the deadening of our response. So that's the second reason for this course - there's a need to look at this issue of the blocked response and also how we can cultivate its opposite. We can take on the project of understanding what gets in the way and then also to look at how to enliven, encourage, nourish and nurture our desire for, our capacity for and our practice of making a difference.

[00:05:18.610] - Chris Johnstone

That's what I mean by Active Hope training. So there's a third scale I'd like to bring in, which is about how you rate your own response. When you consider issues that concern you, where would you put the dial of your own response to these on your own responseometer? I know for me it fluctuates - sometimes I'm more engaged and active and inspired, sometimes I collapse in a heap or turn the other way. We're going to be looking at what makes the difference.

[00:05:53.700] - Music Outro