

# **Inner Work: Discovering your Thread in the Climate & Meta-Crisis**

*Towards answering the question: What's mine to do?*



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## Introduction

My reflections are informed by my experience facilitating “The Edge” – a 4-day retreat designed to:

- a) Help people to stand tall, and look our predicament in the face - from a place of resilience, courage and clarity.
- b) Find their ‘thread’ – what’s theirs to do.

... and also many hundreds of one-on-one and small group coaching conversations with people seeking to do just that.



The language of ‘threads’ was inspired by this mythic story, as told by Michael Meade:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VaEKZRar1Q&t=239s>

## Framing

**An important frame is my belief that we should think of inner work as possible pathways - rather than “here’s a 7-point plan all should follow!”. To see these ideas as a smorgasbord, rather than a one-size fits all prescription.**

Another insight that many of my clients have shared is that our thread is iterative – it changes, evolves and unfolds as we deepen our understanding. That’s certainly been the case for me. Indeed, I find it hard to even see the Climate Emergency as a separate issue at all these days – and prefer to think of a ‘meta-crisis’, of which climate is only one part, and a consequence of Overshoot brought about by the illusion of separation. A culture of disconnection from our deeper selves, from each other, and from Nature which has developed only quite recently in the large scheme of things.

Another frame I’d like to put on this is that all this is largely, by definition, a *spiritual* inquiry. It doesn’t lend itself, therefore, to a neat set of how-to’s. We have to grapple with the mystery and ineffability of all of it.

However, we do appear to be able to discern a personal “through-line”, which is often at a deeper logical level than simply looking at what we get up and do each day.

*"When something calls to you—be it an act of service or a vision that's really compelling—and you commit to it, you begin to see who you really are" says Lynne Twist, in her new book "Living a Committed Life: Finding Freedom and Fulfillment in a Purpose Larger Than Yourself". Her thesis is simple and life-changing: When we find something greater than ourselves and lean into it with conviction, our essence and purpose are revealed. And what follows is greater meaning, joy, clarity, and connection.*

As a personal example, I think my through-line is LOVE. That has manifested in many different ways over the years. Right now my thread is offering free psychological, emotional and spiritual support to people waking up to the meta-crisis. Five, ten or thirty years ago, my day to day activities looked very different – but it was always still driven by LOVE as a core value.

## Pathways

I outline here seven potential Pathways. Different pathways may appeal to different people, depending on a whole range of factors. We can engage with some of them – or all of them.

They are in no particular order of importance – nor are they sequential.

**Find the Quiet Within**

**Find your Joy**

**Reconnect with Nature**

**Find the Others**

**Courage & Acceptance of Uncertainty**

**Get comfortable with Feelings**

**Self-Inquiry – Ask Powerful Questions**

## Find the Quiet Within



*"Do not try and change the whole world, or do anything grandiose,  
Instead, create a clearing in the dense forest of your life – and wait there patiently  
Until the song that is your life falls into your cupped hands, and you recognise and  
greet it.*

*Only then will you know how to give yourself to this world – so worthy of rescue"*

*Martha Postlethwaite*

The key line in the piece above, for me, is “... *create a clearing in the dense forest of your life*”.

It is difficult or perhaps impossible to perceive the gentle whisper of inner wisdom without having a somewhat clear mind. It's like trying to hear a gentle flute whilst there's a very loud brass band playing in your head at the same time!

## Approaches

There are a myriad of approaches humans have used over the centuries to help us get quiet and find our inner stillness, including:

- Being in nature
- Meditation
- Various mindfulness techniques
- Three Principles and other spiritual understandings/practices
- Yoga and other 'embodying' practices
- Breathing
- Prayer
- Rituals and Ceremonies
- Psychedelics and Plant/Fungal Medicines.
- Journalling

## Find your Joy



One of my favourite quotes is from Wendell Berry, which I have on the wall in my home:

***"Be Joyful – though you have considered all the facts"***

Here's a powerful question:

***What makes your heart sing? And where does that take you?***

However, I need to mention my Three Principles understanding here, because it can sometimes seem to fly in the face of conventional wisdom – which is typically "outside-in".

For me, **Joy** is different than Happiness, Pleasure or Satisfaction – it's deeper and more profound, and it definitely comes from inside rather than outside. It has nothing to do with our external circumstances.

Joy is one of a number of innate qualities that we're born with... and when we're feeling at HOME in ourselves, it automatically bubbles up. There's nothing we need to add, do or learn. It's more a question of seeing through our stories – our thinking – about why we're not feeling Joy in this moment. In this way, the Inside-Out Understanding is subtractive, rather than additive.



I call this the 'Wellbeing Umbrella'. As well as Joy, it encompasses:

- Clarity
- Presence
- Wisdom
- Resilience
- Freedom of Mind
- Peace of Mind
- Natural Confidence/Flow
- Love & Compassion
- Gratitude
- Natural Motivation
- Creativity

All of these are innate to human beings, when we're Home. It's who we are when we don't have noise in our heads about how and why things should be different than they are.



The only thing that takes us away from these qualities in any moment is our thinking. Or, more accurately:

**Thinking that doesn't look like thinking – it looks like Truth and Reality.**

***"All we are is Peace, Love and Wisdom – and the capacity to believe that we are not any of those things" Jack Pransky***

Of course, we experience other feelings too... and there's nothing wrong with that. All feelings are useful guides, and should be fully felt and experienced. (See "Get Comfortable with Feelings")

## Approaches

Learn more about what works for you that helps you to "Come Home". Rather than trying to manufacture Joy, when we come back home Joy is there already - naturally. It's a given.

***"You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet." Franz Kafka***

For more Outside-In approaches, I recommend "Recapture the Rapture" by Jamie Wheal.

## Reconnect with Nature



Maybe there's a better way to put this, because of course we ARE nature.

"Reconnect" may not quite nail it either. For some, it will be "Connect with Nature", as they are almost completely divorced from the natural world.

Interestingly, recent studies into plant medicines are showing that the most significant changes people report after a 'trip' is that they become ONE with NATURE, rather than seeing themselves as separate.

When we explore this pathway deeply, we develop a Reverence for all Life, and ... the only word that seems to fit is AWE.

If we listen, we can hear the hum of the universe, and it's exquisitely beautiful.

We can rewild ourselves – at least a little.

With more than half of the world's population living in cities, many humans have lost touch with nature. The concrete jungle and the rat race suck up our time and energy and we feel stressed, anxious or like we have lost meaning. We have middle life crises, travel to 'find ourselves', fight depression with pills, change jobs and cars but, somehow, we cannot fill that void. We don't know what's wrong.

What we are truly lacking is a connection with the wild world and its rhythms. Today we don't need to hunt or gather food for sustenance, work hard to build a shelter or collect wood for fire every other day in the winter. We don't need to protect ourselves or our food from predators. Our lives revolve around paying bills, buying things we don't actually need, drinking to feel something and staring at a computer screen.

Even in a world where most eco-systems have been devastated and wild animals are a rarity, there are many things we can do to reconnect with nature, find purpose and feel more alive.

## Approaches

- Learning from Indigenous Peoples
- The simplest way to get back into the way of life of our ancestors is to travel in a more traditional way. We didn't evolve driving on a motorway or riding a train. Slowing down, and walking to the top of a mountain, canoeing across a lake, riding a horse...
- Take note of changes in the seasons.
- In urban areas there aren't many places where wildlife can find shelter and thrive. Help nature by giving it a home. Build a pond, make a birdhouse to put in your garden, leave water out for foxes and hedgehogs or place a bird feeder in your garden. You can also plant wild flowers to help the bees or grow gorse to offer shelter to birds. Getting close to wild creatures will make you feel connected to the natural world.
- Take time to visit truly wild places. Whilst a walk to the park is always pleasant, you should make an effort to spend time in wild places where you can observe a variety of natural eco-systems. Go for a long walk in a nature reserve or a natural forest and stop for at least 10 minutes to have a look around you. Try to spot a red squirrel or a bird you've never seen before, or just take in the view and listen.
- Walk barefoot. Feeling the soil under your feet is an excellent way to feel more in touch with nature.
- Grow your own food.
- Use your senses. Touch the bark of a tree, pick the pine nuts in a pinecone, listen to the birds sing, feel and disassemble a leaf or smell freshly broken pine needles.
- Watch the sunset or sunrise.
- Forage some wild food.
- Spend a night outdoors occasionally.
- Look at the stars.
- Talk to the trees, and listen for their wisdom.
- I recommend the book: "Earthwalks for Body and Spirit" by James Endredy

## Find the Others



*Photo: The Edge October 2022*

One of the few prescriptive things I'd say in this context is:

**Don't try and do this on your own.**

There is healing, nourishment and strength in our relationships and connections with others. Others can inspire us when we're feeling gloomy, remind us of our strength and courage when we falter, and help us see through our own blind-spots.

*None of us are as smart (or wise) as all of us.*

By working, struggling, laughing, crying, celebrating, playing and re-imagining TOGETHER, we begin to see through the illusion of separation that creates so much suffering in the world – and this can only send out ripples through the culture of individualism that surrounds us.

### Approaches

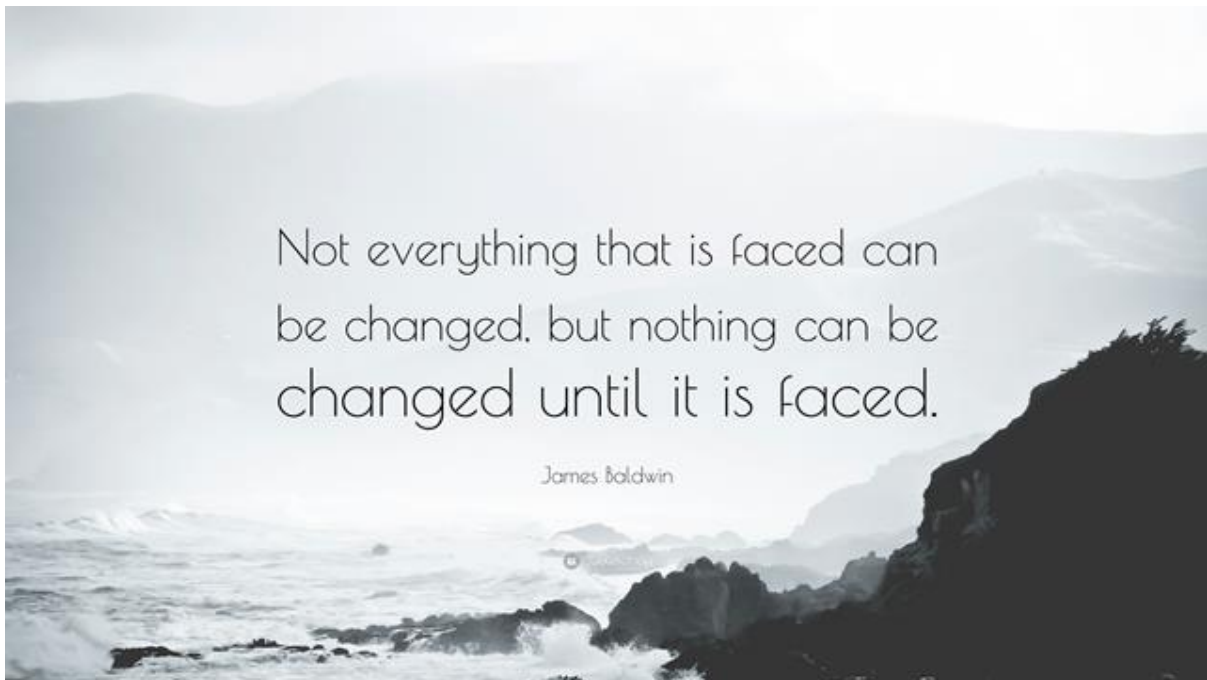
Find or create local and online communities. Get involved in existing local groups:

- Deep Adaptation
- Transition Towns
- The Work That Reconnects
- Religious or Spiritual Groups
- Climate Cafes
- Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, etc.

Hopefully, Moderate Flank groups will soon be springing up too! (see [www.moderateflank.org](http://www.moderateflank.org) )



# Courage & Acceptance of Uncertainty



***"Stop trying to win at the game that is not only dying, but is also killing everything. Dedicate yourself to getting better and better at creating a different, better game"***

## Courage

I believe that Courage is a muscle, and can be developed.

As the old book title says – we can learn to feel the fear and do it anyway - when we:

- Insightfully recognise our own patterns of insecure, ego-ic thinking – and realise that there's no useful intelligence there that needs to be taken seriously.
- Make something else more important and meaningful

## A Note on Resistance

I have often noticed (including in myself) a resistance to finding our thread that stems from fear. I may not be enough, I may fail, and so on.

Sometimes, in this state of fear, it can seem easier to just keep searching for what's mine to do – because then I don't have to take the risk of doing it! (Perpetual Seeking)

## Benefits of Acceptance (not the same as apathy or resignation)

- Clarity (rather than confusion)
- Compassion (rather than blame)
- Love-in-action (rather than activism)
- Allows us to live fully, frees up energy, and fosters creativity
- Reprioritises everything in terms of what really matters most – and what doesn't
- Focuses attention on what's joyful, meaningful, local
- Freedom from "should", "must", and "ought to"
- Overwhelming gratitude for the gift of being alive, aware and able to feel deeply
- Truly realising the necessary impermanence of everything, and an expanded sense of the sacredness of all things

Adapted from Michael Dowd's work



## Approaches

Meg Wheatley's 'Warriors for the Human Spirit' body of work is well worth exploring

<https://margaretwheatley.com/2020-europe-warriors-for-the-human-spirit-training/>

Michael Dowd and his substantial body of work in the Post-Doom space

<https://postdoom.com/>

Deep Adaptation Forum <https://www.deepadaptation.info/>

## Various Non-Dual Teachings

Again, there is huge value here in doing this work with others. Research shows that our biggest prompt for our own behaviour is what others around us are doing. It's easier to 'step up' when we see others doing the same.

We are universally inspired by acts of courage. Jamie Wheal gives many examples in this talk, including many films and books that seem to have enormous global appeal.

## **Collective Sensemaking in an Age of Existential Risk**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0374g6vuGjg>

## Get Comfortable with Feelings



All of them.

Get comfortable with uncertainty and maplessness.

Oftentimes, we suffer more through trying to avoid, numb or distract ourselves from feelings we don't want to feel. Allow yourself to feel your feelings fully, knowing that they are all transient.

Your feelings may contain wisdom – something you're not paying enough attention to. But they can also just be the product of over-thinking – just lots of noise in the system.

It's OK to be human, and you don't need to be scared of your feelings.

All they're telling you about is your thinking in the moment. Intense feelings are not 'bad' or 'wrong'. Accept them – but know that it's just an indication that you're human and you have a lot of thinking about something right now.

It's not telling you anything about the world out there. Neither do the feelings mean there's anything wrong with you.

You can FEEL the feelings, but DROP the story.



## Approaches:

Three Principles – Understanding who and what you really are. Understanding that your experience is constructed inside-out.

See Daniel Schmachtenberger and the Consilience Project – developing ourselves to be OK with uncertainty. To be content with 'both... and' rather than 'either... or'.

See Ian McGilchrist ("The Master and his Emissary", and "The Matter with Things"). Our need for certainty comes from the left hemisphere's insistence on rationality, control and domination.

The Work that Reconnects (Joanna Macy) offers powerful processes through the spiral of Gratitude, Honouring our Pain, Seeing with New Eyes, and Going Forth.



Recently, the TWTR network have been hosting valuable online spaces, including those with Richard Heinberg, called "Resilience in the Great Unravelling".

This extraordinarily beautiful video with words spoken by Ram Dass is chock-full of non-dual insights that help here:

### **"How to Keep your Heart Open in Hell"**

<https://youtu.be/Ym4Rpd72tq8>

# Self-Inquiry



Sometimes, our 'thread' simply arrives without any intellectual or conscious 'forcing', and we know it when we see it.

For many though, once we have found the quiet – and we are tuned in to really listening for inner wisdom, it can be hugely helpful to reflect on powerful questions.

## Pathways:

One of the most useful formats for self-inquiry I've found is the 4R framework from Deep Adaptation.

I have added two more R's to this – **Re-imagining** and **Reverence**. See overleaf.

It can sometimes be even more powerful when done in a group setting.

**RESILIENCE** – What is it that we most value and how can we keep that? How can we build and sustain our resilience – both inner and outer? What’s MOST important now?

**RELINQUISHMENT** – What can we give up in order not to make matters worse?

**RESTORATION** – What can we bring back that has been lost?

**RECONCILIATION/RECONNECTION** – What can we do to make peace with, love and support others? How can we live with kindness, joy and peace?

**REVERENCE** – What do you want me to know? Who do you want me to be? What do you want me to do?

**RE-IMAGINING** – What’s the story of ALL life (including other-than-human) that I’m proud to tell now? How can we imagine and create the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible?

**The two columns exercise:**

<b>My Greatest Joys</b>	<b>What the World (or my Community) most Greatly Needs</b>
<i>List here all the things that light you up, nourish you and give you energy</i>	<i>List here the needs you feel most strongly – those that hit you in the gut</i>

Look for the intersections, and explore these.

## **A Perspective from Artificial Intelligence**

Semi-jokingly, I thought I'd get an AI perspective too, so I asked GPT-3! Here's what it said:

### **How to find what is yours to do in tackling the climate and ecological emergency**

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, as the best way to tackle the climate and ecological emergency will vary depending on the individual and their specific circumstances. However, here are five general tips on how to find what is yours to do in this regard:

#### **1. Look at the big picture**

It's important to have a broad understanding of the climate and ecological emergency in order to identify the most pressing issues and determine where you can make the most impact. Read up on the latest climate science, learn about the different types of environmental degradation, and familiarize yourself with the terms and concepts that are relevant to this issue.

#### **2. Consider your skills and resources**

What are you good at? What resources do you have access to? What can you do to make a difference? It's important to think about what you can offer, as well as what you need to learn in order to be most effective.

#### **3. Identify your priorities**

What issues are you most passionate about? What do you think is the most important thing to focus on in order to address the climate and ecological emergency? There is no one right answer, but it's important to have a clear idea of your priorities so you can target your efforts accordingly.

#### **4. Get involved**

There are many ways to get involved in the fight against the climate and ecological emergency. You can volunteer with an organization, attend a protest, or write to your elected officials. The most important thing is to do something – even if it's just starting out small.

#### **5. Stay informed**

It's important to keep up with the latest news and developments in the fight against the climate and ecological emergency. This way, you can stay informed about the latest initiatives and strategies, and you can continue to learn and grow as an activist.

# CONCLUSIONS



There are many paths to answering the question "What is mine to do?"

The seven pathways summarised here offer a smorgasbord of approaches – some of which will be more appealing than others to the individual reader.

I've come to see (after many an emotional roller-coaster!), that it's actually a great time to be alive!

What an adventure to be here in this liminal time – and to be in service to all Life.

**Let's get on with it.**

