

Session 3 Guide
Deepening Practices and Questions
Chapter 2: Translating Heartbreak into Action

This week focuses on **Chapter 2** of *A New Republic of the Heart*. There are many questions here. They are by no means all obligatory.

I recommend you read all the questions, and then select a manageable few, perhaps 3, to deeply consider, journal about and/or discuss. If you are in a group, perhaps each member can nominate 1 or 2 questions for group discussion.

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Once we have recognized our actual situation and our wicked multidimensional civilizational crisis, what then? It's a nearly overwhelming perception, and it breaks our hearts. We can't bypass the inevitable grief that arises when we metabolize the implications of the cold hard scientific facts.

And that grief can be seen as proceeding in Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's stages, of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In this chapter, I suggest that true acceptance requires contact with unconditional happiness and takes the form of activism*. Radical happiness fuels our ability to show up powerfully on the battlefields where our activism can make a huge difference.

This chapter goes on to explore how our inner and outer work are both absolutely necessary, utterly complementary and ultimately inseparable.

- The five stages of grief — denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance — are woven through our lives. We can cycle through them all in a single day, and in a sense, we only travel through them through deep maturation that takes place over months and years.

Please consider your relationship to the enormous shock of recognizing yourself as a member of a completely overheated and unsustainable civilizational system, and discovering this as that system approaches a fearsome epochal tipping point. In this chapter I argue that real acceptance coincides with evolutionary activism. Do you agree that this is true? Please consider the following questions:

- To what degree were you in touch with an unconditional happiness (for no reason) before you began this journey into facing our civilizational predicament?
- To what degree are you still in denial? In what ways?

* Remember, in Chapter 8, I define activism very broadly, to include action engaged to be of benefit in-the-system, against-the-system, and around-the-system.

- To what degree are you still in anger? In what ways?
 - To what degree are you still bargaining? In what ways?
 - To what degree are you still depressed? In what ways?
 - To what degree are in acceptance? How does that express itself? How has acceptance changed your relationship to the “terrible truth”? In what ways are you in touch with and sustained by radical unconditional happiness? In what ways does your acceptance express itself in practical action?
- Since completing the book, I have wondered whether it was optimal to use the word “activism” so much. This is because I’m learning that it has subtly negative connotations for most people, seeming to imply a mood of discontent, irritation and grievance. I used it in order to state a clear contrast between activism and outwardly passive “inner work”. It could also be called “practical work to be of benefit” or “change agency” or “creating systemic change initiatives”. But many people have a love/hate relationship to activism. Activists often burn out. There’s often a big “shaking finger of should” in our relationship to activism.

Please consider your own history and feelings and overall relationship to activism. *In what ways (in-the-system, against-the-system and/or around-the-system) have you been an activist? In what ways do you feel you “should” be more active? To what degree do you feel inner tension about this? How might you be able to reframe or shift your perceptions and liberate a freer, happier relationship to your work to be of benefit to others and the world?*

- Gratitude is probably the most accessible form of unconditional happiness. I describe it as “universal spiritual wisdom.” When we value and are grateful for all the beauty of the planet and our fellow humans, and when we see them under threat, we turn to activism—which is “simply the impulse to ‘be of benefit’ to something greater than yourself.” Thus, gratitude naturally leads to activism. *To what degree are you drawn into activism by gratitude? By grief? What might you want to shift or change in your feeling sense of it all?*
- In this chapter I talk about “finding your yes” (page 50) as a “no-matter-what commitment”. This is not a one-time choice, but a recognition that we arrive at in a moment, one that must naturally arise again and again in order to become durable and essential. It is important that we not relate to this as something we “should” feel, but that it be allowed to emerge authentically and naturally. Understanding that it is perfectly okay that we are all maturing our recognition of our situation and commitment, please share candidly about your relationship to this radical commitment. *What is real for you right now? What are you considering? Where are you still metabolizing the implications of the information you have so far absorbed only at the level of your intellect?*

- This chapter focuses on the “inseparability” of the inner work and the outer work. And yet most of us tend to view, practice, and engage them as separate activities. *In what respects do you practice the inner and outer work now? In what ways do these remain separate and distinct for you? In what respects do you experience them as a single matter? What do you understand about how you can mature in the inner work in a way that transforms and integrates it with the outer work?*
- Hardship and loss often lead to new levels of effectiveness, gratitude and appreciation, and even joy. *Explain the truth behind this paradox. Consider how grieving, activism, and joy can coexist and even be mutually reinforcing. (Especially see pages 46–52.)*