

**Session 12 Guide**  
**Deepening Practices and Questions**  
**Chapter 11: It's Not Too Late, and It Never Will Be**

This week focuses on **Chapter 11**, the concluding chapter of *A New Republic of the Heart*, so it is our second-to-last session in this course — our final session will integrate our learning on Wednesday, November 28th. As always, there are more questions here than you'll have time to discuss, so I suggest you select a manageable few to deeply consider, journal about and/or discuss.

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At the conclusion of the book, it is clear that we are each and all called to “be the change we wish to see.” These times require us, as never before, to make a fundamental shift. We are asked commit our lives to a healthy future, to care for all we hold dear, and fully *incarnate* what we value more decisively and powerfully (perhaps for the first time ever). We can't wait for someone else to do this for us, or wait to become perfected. Flawed humans like us are needed. The only “qualification” for this mission is a measure of understanding that it's necessary. This final chapter is addressed to each of us, from the heart to the heart, about the mission to which each of us has been entrusted.

**Deepening Questions:**

1. This chapter integrates the discussions of the book by confronting you, the reader, with the same challenge and opportunity that inspired me to write it. It begins: “The bottom line is starkly simple: We *are* it.” And it ends: “Let these be the most inspiring, exciting, meaningful, and deeply happy years of our lives, all the disaster and destruction and grief (including our own) notwithstanding. Let's show up as the greatness of the human spirit, in all the ways our predicament is calling for. It's time.” *In what ways does this suggest a shift in your way of being? Does it suggest changes in your life choices? To what degree does it seem possible for you to shift into a whole new pattern of being? To what degree and in what ways are you tending to fall short of this “heroic and saintly” calling? In what ways (regardless of your human limitations) can you see yourself actually rising to that calling?*
2. Disasters create opportunities. Consider the responses to the Fukushima nuclear disaster by a group of Swiss sustainability advocates, and how their work rippled beyond Switzerland to Germany (pages 331–32). This is an example of a sudden window of opportunity for major policy reform. Suddenly, it was possible to overcome the inertia of the status quo. *What kinds of preparation were necessary in order for the Swiss sustainability advocates to be able to take advantage of that window? Consider a thought experiment: What disruptive events seem fairly likely, in the near future? How might one category of such events open up a window of opportunity for more fundamental systems redesign? How could human beings begin to prepare now to take advantage of that opportunity?*

3. *Why is cynicism so destructive? How is cynicism different from healthy skepticism? Contrast cynicism (in its various manifestations, including giving up, blaming others, or merely taking a “position”) with taking a stance of responsibility in relation to our predicament. What is the inner shift of feeling and awareness that accompanies the shift into responsibility? What is your current relationship to the opportunity to live “on the other side” of that shift?*
4. True alchemy occurs “where our individual and collective *imperfections* meet our highest individual and group aspirations” (page 340) because “people who have taken to heart their best and their worst potentials, if they are intending to choose to practice in each new moment, can be trustable friends at a new level.” This means that we do not have to attain perfection; magic can still happen if we sustain our highest aspirations consciously, and if we keep them before us consistently enough that they catalyze our imagination, creativity and will. *How are you taking to heart your best and worst potentials? In what ways is this self-understanding engendering a commitment to a life of practice? In what ways might your life of practice be building new capacities?* Engage a thought experiment, and imagine that you *can and will* make a difference. *How might that look?* Imagine a connection between your practice and new capacities and a new level of responsibility, cooperation and co-creative leadership.
5. If you are over 55, consider this question. On Page 344, I wrote “Boomers...are the ones who have lived long enough to have the experience, capacities, wealth, and other resources to make a certain kind of difference.... people who have already enjoyed a full life have an additional basis for rising above self- protective fear to a new level of courage, commitment, and power.” Please re-read this whole paragraph. *Do you recognize a generational opportunity for heroism? How does it arise for you? What questions does it give rise to? What specific actions can you take to embrace this opportunity for heroism?*
6. *Why is “trusting the process of your life” (page 347) so essential for activists?* Consider the many ways that such trust expresses itself — trust in the process of evolution, trust in the state of wholeness in which we are grounded, trust of yourself, and trust that you are a part of a greater and more magnificent process than you can know. *How does a wise and trusting versus a subtly distrustful attitude show up in your actual experience? Can you identify what changes when you shift from distrust to trust?* (Note the paradox: to truly trust the process in our individual and collective lives means that this trust is ultimately unconditional — that means it is not contradicted or diminished by difficult experiences, even failures, dysfunctions, or temporarily losing trust!)
7. Consider the call-to-arms that is contained in this chapter as a whole. *In what ways does it resonate? In what ways is it a challenge for you to internalize this call? How can you integrate it more fully into your being?*

## Group Practice:

- 1) Begin your book group with brief hellos.
- 2) Then read the 5 principles of evolutionary dialogue from the previous chapter, summarized briefly here:
  1. Real dialogue arises when we are more interested in what we do not yet know rather than in what we already know.
  2. It is easy to be too intellectual or too personal. Dialogue comes alive through our shared interest in what emerges, between us, in our developing understanding and in the field of consciousness.
  3. Really listening to each other enables us to develop a conversation that builds on each other's contributions. Really listening allows us to come together in an ever-opening comprehension. "
  4. Every conversation lives through our active participation. Even when you are not speaking at the moment, stay with the others and be with the conversation. Bring yourself fully in.
  5. Each dialogue finds its true meaning in recognizing itself as part of a larger dialogue.
- 3) Then read the following:
  - This chapter begins: "The bottom line is starkly simple: We *are* it." And it ends: "Let these be the most inspiring, exciting, meaningful, and deeply happy years of our lives, all the disaster and destruction and grief (including our own) notwithstanding. Let's show up as the greatness of the human spirit, in all the ways our predicament is calling for. It's time."
  - *In what ways does this suggest a shift in your way of being? Does it suggest changes in your life choices? To what degree does it seem possible for you to shift into a whole new pattern of being? To what degree and in what ways are you tending to fall short of this "heroic and saintly" calling? In what ways (regardless of your human limitations) can you see yourself actually rising to that calling?*
  - Consider these questions together. How can you come together to support each other in responding to this call for your highest possibilities?
- 4) Then, after brief check-ins, have a conversation about this chapter as a whole. Speak, in a free unstructured way, "popcorn style" (pop when you're ready) for the bulk of your time together, intending to allow the conversation to deepen, progress, and open up new understanding. Let yourself receive and be influenced by others' sharing and let your sharing reflect a shared understanding that develops as it progresses. Participate also in a way that allows the we-space field to deepen as you share.
- 5) Towards the end, take 10 minutes to speak spontaneously, popcorn style, completing the open sentence, "What WE are experiencing now is..."

- 6) Then, five to ten minutes before your end time, take turns sharing about your experience of this process of evolutionary dialogue in we-space.

### **Personal Practice**

Continue to engage in daily practices:

1. Continue to pay attention to your “Moments” practice, sometimes practicing mindfulness, sometimes adjusting your posture, sometimes remembering to recognize the Mystery of existence, sometimes breathing to and from the heart in random moments throughout the day, and remembering and enjoying the radical “okayness” of existence.
2. Continue to practice and refresh your “Mornings” practice. Include, if possible, at least 10 minutes conscious movement and 10 more minutes of conscious stillness (meditation). Prepare space in your home and agreements with others in your household as necessary. Consider a level of commitment that you can sustain for the duration of this course.
3. Consider and integrate your relationship to activism after the US mid-term elections. Focus on some of the most high-leverage ways you can make a meaningful contribution to a healthy future through “around-the-system” activism. *How can you “follow your heartbreak and your genius with your friends”?* Act in whatever ways are clear to you. Journal and dialogue if you are not entirely clear, and clarify your ways of making a difference.