

Online Course

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# Activism Inside Out: Your personal, step-by-step guide to becoming a more effective change- maker



## Foreword

Nowadays, increasing numbers of change-makers are hopeless and are in despair. Many are anxious about what the future will bring. I was one of those people, and I am here to share my personal story and explain how this course will help you improve your wellbeing and become a more effective change-maker.

I am a person driven by ideals, morals and values. I have a strong sense of fairness, equality and solidarity - as I am sure you do too. Driven by these motives, I placed a heavy burden on myself - I wanted to be the hero that would change the world.

While working to create change, I noticed that my activism did not achieve what I wanted it to. I was not able to drive the change I wanted to make. As a result, my personal wellbeing deteriorated and I was left with a sense of hopelessness.

This was not an easy time, and it took me a while to get back on my feet and feel like myself again. Once I was, I started to wonder why? What did I do wrong?

In recent years, I have learned an important lesson. I saw change-making as something external. I forgot that I too was part of the very systems, structures and institutions I sought to change. And this is exactly why my activism was ineffective, stressful and unhealthy - for myself and for the planet.

Looking back, I think: It makes sense. The climate crisis and all the others that we're going through require urgent action. I had no time to stand still and reflect, or to pause and look at what was going on inside me. Yet this is exactly what it took to ensure my wellbeing would improve and my activism become effective. And this is exactly what this course aims to help you do for yourself.

This course is not a roadmap. It's the beginning of your journey to improve your wellbeing and become a more effective change-maker. It will help you uncover the story you hold about yourself as an activist. You'll understand more clearly the narratives you hold about others and the world within your activism, and why these stories matter for the change you want to make. You will find your own place in the change process, a place where your wellbeing can improve and the change you seek to make is effective.

## Introduction

Are you concerned with the current state of affairs of our planet? Do you want to create a fairer and more sustainable world? Do you struggle to keep up with all the events and crises that are happening in the world, and the accelerating pace at which they are unfolding? Do you sometimes feel a sense of hopelessness in the face of the challenges our world is going through?

If so, then this free online course is for you. It will help you improve your personal wellbeing and become a more effective change-maker by:

- Revealing the stories you hold about yourself, others and the world in your activism,
- Understanding that these stories are important for the change you want to make,
- Finding your role in the change process.



## About this course (not another toolkit for activists!)

The majority of courses and toolkits seek to provide us with a roadmap for how to 'do' activism. They look at change-making as something external, while neglecting an important thing: we are part of the very systems, structures and institutions that we seek to change. The personal lens through which we see ourselves, others and the world is important.

When we forget this, our activism can be ineffective, stressful and put a strain on our physical and mental wellbeing. This manifests itself in an increasing number of change-makers feeling hopeless, despairing and burnt out.

This course looks at the inner dimension of change. This course is about you. It will help you to develop new skills, new capacities and new ways of seeing yourself, others and the world in your activism – the work is personal. By helping you understand your role as an activist, this course will help you become a more effective change-maker, in whatever area you're working in.

This course will help you uncover the internal narrative and story you hold about yourself, others and the world within your activism. It will provide you with space for reflection on how this story impacts the change you want to make. Of course, you'll also receive tips and tricks on how to implement the skills you've learned in your activism to make effective change. As well as being a learning experience, the course will also be a fun journey for you personally, one that will help you understand yourself better, connect more easily with others and think outside the box.

## How to take this course

It's your journey! This course is self-paced, and asks you to reflect and work on five areas:

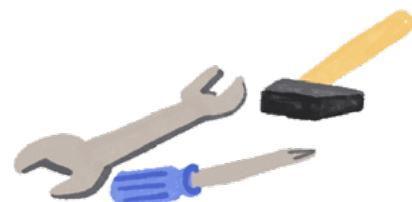
- The concepts of stories, personal lenses and bias.
- The stories you unconsciously hold about yourself as an activist.
- The stories you unconsciously hold about others involved in your activism.
- How the stories you hold about the world really matters for activism.
- How to integrate what you have learned into your activism.

Each session consists of introductory content, assignments, questions for reflection and material for further exploration.

The course is self-paced, but we suggest you allow about a week for each session, to allow time for reflection. Along the way, you can explore the impact through writing, with a local group or circle of friends, and/or within the discussion forum we have created for this course. If you want to reflect on the course content with your friends, family or colleagues in a more structured way, you're welcome to use our reflection questions at the end of each session.

We'd like to thank everyone within and outside the European Youth Forum for their support, in particular the group of people from our member organisations and young climate activists directly involved in developing this course.

**Enjoy your journey!**



## Module 1: Understanding the concepts of stories, personal lenses and bias

### Introduction

In this session, and throughout the course, we'd like to ask you to open your mind for the stories, assumptions and beliefs that you'll uncover.

We will begin with exploring the concept of stories and bias. As all other sessions, this session consists of introductory content, an assignment, questions for reflection and material for further exploration.

Imagine you were to walk down the street with a friend, and suddenly you see a large dog running towards you. Your friend really loves dogs more than people, so they'd be thrilled and think the dog is the cutest in the world. However, if you had been attacked by a dog in the past, or experienced another unpleasant event at some point in your life, you might find this a really scary moment. So, is the dog cute or scary?

In fact, a dog is just a dog - it's neither cute nor scary. However, we as human beings, are machines who assign meaning to everything we see, thereby creating our own experience, our own story. Whether we perceive the dog as pleasant or unpleasant, cute or scary, arises from our own experiences.

In other words, we see things through our very personal lenses. The internal narratives we create about the things we witness and experience are all biased by the default setting of our mind; something that we're not conscious of. And this happens in every sphere of our life, including our activism.

One of the most common biases that shape the stories we create about the events we witness is that of confirmation bias. Imagine you believe that a person driving an SUV cares less about the climate than people taking public transport. Now, whenever you encounter someone driving an SUV who doesn't care about the climate, you're likely to place greater emphasis on this 'evidence' that supports what you already believe. At the same time, you're less likely to seek information that challenges your beliefs.

Whether it's confirmation bias or any other kind, the stories we create are necessarily not impartial. Instead of seeing things as what they are - for example, a dog as a dog or an SUV driver an SUV driver - we assign meaning to all the things we witness. And we do so in a biased way. We create our own stories, ones where the dog is dangerous and the SUV driver is careless.

However, as already pointed out by David Foster Wallace in one of the best-known commencement speeches to the 2005 graduating class at Kenyon College - entitled '[This is Water](#)', we have control and therefore a choice over how to think and perceive things. Rather than adopting the default setting, we can choose to see things differently. This is what we'll try in this session.

### Assignment

To start this assignment, let's consider the SUV example once more. Imagine you're on your way home from work. The roads are packed with SUVs moving slowly in the dense traffic, like a snail. Almost automatically, we start to feel angry about all these people polluting the air and contributing to the climate crisis. We believe that these people in their SUVs don't care about the environment and climate. We get mad about how spoiled and stupid they all are.

Yet is that really the case? Isn't it possible that some of these people in SUVs may have experienced a horrible car accident in the past? Perhaps the only way they feel safe enough to drive is to do so in a huge, heavy SUV.

In this exercise, we'd like you to uncover some of the beliefs you hold that can introduce bias into the way you see things and tell a different story.

To start, identify a situation, event or choice you're facing; a doubt, an uncertainty in your activism - something about which you "don't know what to think" or "don't know how to decide". For example, an article or social media message you want to publish, a political debate about the climate crisis you watched on TV or a news piece you read.

On a piece of paper, write down two separate interpretations of the situation, event or choice, entitled 'Story #1' and 'Story #2'. In both stories, try to answer the following questions.

- What are the bare facts of the event, situation or choice you have to make (e.g. describe the event from an observer point of view)?
- What's your own interpretation of the event, situation or choice (e.g. what does the event mean to you, what's your personal perspective on it)?
- What does the story say about yourself?
- What does the story say about other people that are part of it?

### Questions for reflection

Once you finish both stories, take some time to write down what you noticed. You can reflect on this by yourself, with a group of friends or colleagues and/or within the discussion forum of this course.

- How difficult was it to distinguish facts from interpretations?
- How difficult was it to write both stories?
- Which of the two stories was easier to write?
- Which one did you struggle with, and why?
- What do you think shapes the biases that impact your stories?



### For further exploration

- [The Beauty Of Not Knowing](#) and [A Limited View](#): These podcasts, published by Secular Buddhism, explore the beauty of not recognising and understanding that we have a limited perspective. You can find many inspiring podcasts in this series, including - among others - the episode on [Unlearning](#), [check them out](#).
- [My News Fast](#): In this short video, Charles Eisenstein explores how our exposure to the news shapes our world view.
- [Why we need to address polarisation if we want to tackle the climate crisis](#): In our opinion piece, we explore why we see things the way that we do.
- [Meaning Making Machines](#): In this video, Timber Hawkeye talks about how we assign meaning to everything we see in a totally biased way.

## Module 2: Understanding the stories you unconsciously hold about yourself as an activist

### Introduction

In the first session, we focused on understanding the concept of stories and bias. We took a dive into how we see and interpret things through our personal lenses and how the internal narratives we create and stories we hold and what we see and experience in our activism are biased.

However, we don't only hold stories about external events, but also about ourselves in our activism efforts. And it's exactly these stories that can lead to unrealistic or unhelpful expectations about what we can and can't do, potentially leading us to a sense of hopelessness and despair. Most of the time, we hold these stories unconsciously. In other words, we're unaware of holding a certain narrative about ourselves, yet it determines the role we assume we have in making change and in tackling the climate crisis.

In this session, we'll try to understand the story we hold about ourselves as change-makers and thus our role in tackling the climate crisis. We'll also look into the implications this story has for our wellbeing and our ability to make change.

### Assignment

In today's climate activism, two of the most common stories we hold about ourselves as change-makers position us as the hero or the victim. However, there are many more stories out there.

To find out what story you hold about yourself, take a moment to reflect on the statements below and note whether they seem *true* or *false*.

#### The hero's story

- You believe that your generation is the only one that can solve the climate crisis.
- You think it's your responsibility to find solutions to the climate crisis.
- You believe that if you just work harder and with greater dedication, you'll be able to fix things.

- You take on more and more projects and get involved in more and more actions to help solve the climate crisis.
- You frequently work beyond your normal working hours to get things done.
- You think that simultaneously taking care of yourself and solving the climate crisis isn't feasible - you have to make a choice.
- You often do things you don't have the motivation or energy for, out of a sense of obligation.

Did you answer *true* to most of the statements? If so, then the chances are that you unconsciously think you are the hero who can save others and the world. And you're not alone, many of us feel that way. The underlying assumption in this story is that you, as the hero, are in control and are the one with the power to fix the climate crisis.

Naturally, this particular personal narrative puts a lot of pressure on you as a change-maker, as it places all the responsibility on your shoulders. Moreover, it assumes that you can actually control and fix things. Of course, given the complexity of the climate crisis and the complex answers it requires, this is impossible in reality, and it risks burning you out.

#### The victim's story

- You think other people should solve those issues they created and that are affecting you negatively.
- You believe that no matter how hard you work, you won't be able to fix things, as the power to change lies with other people.
- You feel marginalised and unheard by others, particularly those people with decision-making power.
- In order to try to be heard, you place the sole focus on the negative impacts of the climate crisis
- You think the power in the system is fixed, and you don't have it.
- You think the system is screwed, and that it can't be changed to serve the people and the planet better.
- You think governments and policy makers are responsible for the climate crisis, yet they fail to take any meaningful action.

Which did you agree with most? If you mostly replied *true* to the statements, you have likely fallen into the victim trap. That's okay, it happens to many of us. The story that positions you as the victim of the climate crisis implies that others have caused it and therefore others need to solve it. Instead of seeing yourself as an expert who's able to think out of the box and develop creative solutions to the climate crisis, you place the agency on other people.

### The story of...

Do you hold none of the above stories about yourself as an activist? Do you hold a number of them? Can you think of any other story you hold about yourself? For example, that of a caretaker, a rebel or a creator?

We invite you to think about any other narrative you might hold about yourself as a change-maker and write it down. If you want, you can come up with statements for your story – such as the ones above - and share them with your friends/colleagues or in the discussion forum for this course, in order to inspire others.

### Questions for reflection

To continue exploring the stories we hold about ourselves, we invite you to reflect on the following questions. You can do so on your own, with your friends, within your organisation or group, or in the discussion forum for this course.

- How does the story you hold about yourself impact your activism?
- Why do you think your story impacts your activism the way it does?
- What do you think is the dominant narrative within your organisation or group?
- Why did you begin your activism in the first place?
- Where does the motivation for your activism come from?
- What other stories can you think of that would be more useful for you as an activist?



### For further exploration

- [Never Enough](#) and [The Freedom To Be You](#): Once more, we're turning to podcasts from Secular Buddhism about the attitude of "never enough". It explores how this can lead to a form of emotional abuse that we inflict on ourselves, and how the story we hold about ourselves impacts our wellbeing.
- [Don't be a martyr](#): In this short video, women's rights activist and writer Zainab Salbi talks about the need to let go of the 'hero' narrative and take care of our wellbeing in order to become a more effective change-maker.
- [Burnout and Balance: Finding an Identity Outside Of Your Activism](#): Jamie Margolin, a young climate activist who is Co-Executive director of [Zero Hour](#), shares her experience of how she learned to take care of herself and how it impacted her activism.
- [Archetypes](#): This podcast from [This Jungian Life](#) explores what archetypes ('original pattern' in Greek) are and how they manifest themselves as dream images that feel numinous and 'other' in individuals and as mass movements in the collective.
- [Understanding Personality: The 12 Jungian Archetypes](#): In this article, you can learn more about how the 12 Jungian archetypes and how they shape our personality.

## Module 3: Understanding the stories you unconsciously hold about others in your activism

### Introduction

In the previous sessions, we took a deeper dive into how we interpret the events we witness, how we see ourselves and how the internal narrative we hold about ourselves impacts our change-making. Session three will shift the focus away to seeking to understand how we perceive others in our activism.

Often, climate activism is defined by the idea of resistance and struggle against someone else - the fossil fuel industry, politicians, corporations or meat eaters. We are trying to identify and fight enemies, an approach that is reinforced by social media, which simplifies complex issues and leads us to decide who's right and who's wrong, who's good and who's bad.

And yes, we like to put a face to the problem. We prefer to think that the climate crisis is someone's fault - and of course, we're partially right in doing so. People in powerful positions have a responsibility for the state of the world. Yet, the personification of 'the enemy' has significant risks. Although specific groups have certainly played a role in getting us into our current position, personification of the problem shifts the focus away from the wider systemic issues that are causing the climate crisis.

In your climate activism, do you believe that multinational corporations are the enemy? Is it the fossil fuel industry? If so, did you ever think about the driving forces behind the way they operate and why they do what they do? Our system operates through competitive advantage, both in national markets and globally. It's based on a win-lose game theory, which encourages actions that give people and entities a competitive advantage, rather than those that benefit humanity and our planet as a whole.

Under our current system, companies are forced to make profit to remain in business and survive. If they don't, they risk being eaten up by their competitors or going bankrupt. This gives companies in our current system strong incentives to exploit nature and people. This framing as win-lose shapes the decisions companies make. Let's look at an example.

Imagine a forest with all its biodiversity, providing both livelihoods and benefits for the climate. As a company, you can either decide to cut down the forest or not. Cutting down the forest would create financial profits, not cutting it down doesn't. In a perfect world, the forest would remain standing, as we know it is essential for our and the planet's wellbeing. However, in our current system, companies are incentivised to profit from cutting down the forest. Why? Because it gives them a competitive advantage and they know if they don't do it, there's a good chance someone else will.

Although the abuse of power and resistance to change by certain groups is certainly a key factor in that system, pitching people up against each other and increasing polarisation won't help us address the climate crisis effectively - that much is clear from recent decades. Maybe it's time to stop looking at the world through our 'us vs. them' glasses, and to start thinking about the bigger picture - the underlying system that is causing the climate crisis.



## Assignment

We'd like to explore why we often portray others as the enemy in our story without understanding the underlying system. We also want to look at the biases that make individuals, groups of people, companies or institutions think or act in a certain way.

To unpack the story you hold about others in your activism, the one that drives polarisation and hinders us in making effective change together, we invite you to make a drawing or draft a short story that includes the following aspects.

- The 'something' or 'someone' you identified as the enemy or barrier to solving the climate crisis
- The reasons for why you think fighting this particular enemy will help tackle the climate crisis and make a difference.
- The context and underlying conditions that make the enemy act in a certain way
- The possibilities and opportunities for the enemy to act differently.

## Questions for reflection

If you want to continue this reflection and uncover these dynamics, we encourage you to reflect on the following question by yourself or with others.

- To what extent do you define your strategy as a struggle against 'something' or 'someone' else, and why?
- Can you imagine that you may be perceived as the enemy in other people's or organisation's activism?
- What would it take to disassemble the story of the enemy about 'someone' or 'something'?
- When you imagine your perceived enemy, can you think of something positive about them?
- Do you believe that thinking in categories of good and bad is helpful in tackling the climate crisis? If, so why? If no, why not?



## For further exploration

- [Why we need to address polarisation if we want to tackle the climate crisis](#): In our opinion piece, we unpack how social media fuels in-group favouritism or out-group animosity.
- [Which side are you on?](#) In this video, Charles Eisenstein talks about how picking a side can actually divert attention from the underlying cause of the issue.
- [Mitigating Existential Risks](#): Together with Daniel Schmachtenberger, we dive into the existential risks threatening humanity, and how we can mitigate them.

## Module 4: Understanding how the story you hold about the world really matters for your activism

### Introduction

In the previous sessions, we worked on understanding the stories and narratives we hold about ourselves and others in our activism, and how these impact our change-making. The third and last story we'll investigate in this course is the story we hold about the world - and why it matters for our activism.

Through the course of humanity's history, our relationship with nature has changed dramatically. Long ago, we believed that there was no fundamental distinction between the human and the non-human world. On the contrary, there was an important interrelationship. We understood that we depended on ecosystems, on the land, on non-humans for our survival in order to flourish. This connectedness and interrelation created strong moral and cultural barriers, which prevented us from exploiting and polluting the ecosystems we depend on.

However, in recent centuries, this perception has changed dramatically. Today, we often see nature as separate from us. We think of ourselves as unique in having consciousness, mind and reason. Somehow there's no ethical barrier to the exploitation of nature, as long as we can view it as simply an object without life and consciousness.

We also see this happening in the climate discussions. The complexity, interrelations and uncertainties of our world are reduced to one thing: greenhouse gas emissions; in particular, carbon dioxide. While this is an important element, the result of this 'carbon reductionism' is that the solutions derived to tackle the climate crisis merely focus on reducing this aspect, while failing to consider the complex relationships, connections and feedback loops of our environment.

To demonstrate the problem, consider the Bujagali hydropower dam on the Victoria Nile in Uganda, completed in 2011. The dam - contested for years in Uganda and internationally - submerged ecosystems and small-scale traditional farms while displacing more than 8700 people. It also had a significant negative impact on local culture. Before the damming, the Bujagali Falls were an important element of one of the traditional faiths of Uganda's people. Like many other dams still being built in several parts of Africa, India and China, it was constructed to generate renewable energy and cut greenhouse gas emissions. At first glance, the dam achieved what it should. But what about those people who were displaced, resettled and lost their assets? What about the pristine ecosystems that were destroyed? What about the traditions and culture that was lost? Furthermore, it's unclear whether the dam will actually be able to produce energy and reduce carbon emissions in the future, as climate change has a severe impact on the Victoria Nile.<sup>1</sup> Hence the importance of considering interconnectedness.

### Assignment

To uncover the, often unconscious, story you hold about nature and the impact it has on your activism, we invite you to read two articles proposing different solutions to the climate crisis:

- ['Carbon capture: Europe's trump card for waste treatment?'](#)
- ['Guyana focuses deforestation prevention efforts on conservation and management'](#)

After reading them, take some time to reflect on the underlying story about nature prevalent in both articles. Below you can find a few questions that might help you.

- What is the purpose of nature for us, our wellbeing and our economy?
- What assumptions are we making about the relationship between nature and human beings?
- What are the implications of the proposed solution for nature?

1 Umar, K. & Mwesigye, F. (2021). [Cultural Heritage and Renewable Energy: How Bujagali Hydro-Electricity Generation Project sparked a latent conflict.](#)

Now we've had a look at society's narrative around nature, we should examine our own. Write down the main actions, goals and vision of your activism and think about the underlying narrative around nature. Is it a story of connectedness, interrelatedness and interdependence, or is it one of separation and disconnection?

### Questions for reflection

If you want to continue this conversation within your organisation or group, with your friends or family, you can reflect on the following questions together.

- What story about nature does your current activism imply?
- How could your activism differ from one story to another; e.g. 'we must save the planet' and 'we are nature defending itself'?
- What could your activism look like in a different story?



### For further exploration

- [A New Story Of The People](#): In this video, Charles Eisenstein explores how we can make the transition from the old story of separation, competition and self-interest to a new 'Story of the People'.
- [Beyond Climate Fundamentalism](#): In chapter 2 of Eisenstein's book 'Climate - A New Story', he explores the detrimental consequences of carbon reductionism on the wellbeing of our planet and people.

## Module 5: Integrating what you learned into your activism

### Introduction

Throughout the previous sessions, we explored the narrative we create around ourselves, others and the world and how they impact our wellbeing and shape the change we want to make. We looked into how we perceive ourselves and our role in the change process, and how unrealistic expectations and pressure can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Our relationship with one another is often defined by 'us vs. them'. This perception of disconnection pits us against each other, rather than us against the system we need to change. Finally, we took a dive into the story of our relationship to nature and what it means for our activism.

Before we move onto the practical tips and tricks on how to integrate what you learned into your activism, we'd like to bring some positive light. All the stories you have uncovered over the past weeks - stories of hope, despair, connection or separation - can change; in fact, we can change them. It's up to us to develop the narrative of ourselves as change-makers, and how our relationship with others and the world contributes to our wellbeing and enables us to make effective change. Changing your story is a process, a personal journey both alone and together with others.

In the following section, you can find a few ideas and recommendations to help you develop your story as an activist, and your story about others and nature. Before you start, we'd like to share with you an inspiring podcast from Charles Eisenstein on 'The Story Of Separation', where he explains how a story of connection can help us solve 'impossible problems'. Check out [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of the series.



## Develop empathy for yourself and others

As human beings, we feel a need to belong. In a world of 'us vs. them', one in which groups and individuals often assume their moral correctness, we live in constant fear of rejection when voicing an opinion or acting in a way that doesn't concur. We constantly try to look good (and avoid looking bad). In other words, we respond in ways that we feel are more appropriate or socially acceptable to others. Carl Gustav Jung, Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, calls this public version of ourselves our 'persona'.

However, just because things are not said or done doesn't mean they don't exist within us. According to Jung, all these things that we subconsciously try to hide from other people unite in what he calls our 'shadow'. This contains all the things that are unacceptable not only to society but also to our own personal morals and values. Ignoring the nature of our shadow can negatively affect our own wellbeing and relationships with other people when we project it on others. [Take a look at this short webinar explaining the concept of shadow.](#)

A practical way to work with your shadow and develop empathy for yourself and others, which will help you judge less and understand more, is the [3-2-1 process](#). This is a simple and effective tool for working with any part of yourself that you unconsciously repress or deny and mirror on others. It'll help you practise self-acceptance and build relationships with others.

## Take time for reflection

The increasing number of crises and ever-accelerating pace at which they are occurring are driving a sense of urgency, feeding our reactivity and making us feel increasingly insecure - the climate crisis is one of these. The urgent and immediate action required to stop climate change and ensure a liveable planet places an enormous pressure on us to act now. This is why, as activists, we tend to jump from belief to action within minutes or even seconds. Yet, it's crucial for us not to succumb to the eleventh-hour syndrome to improve our wellbeing and enable effective change.

We need time to think. It is only when we stand still that we are able to truly understand complex systems and adjust our actions accordingly. When we hit the pause button, we provide ourselves with the necessary space to reflect on the stories that shape our actions. One of these is the narrative of growth that guides our current economic model and is deeply ingrained in our heads and hearts. As activists, we often want to increase our knowledge, to reach and involve more people and to become more productive and do more. Without reflecting on and questioning this narrative, we will be unable to stop reproducing problematic values in our activism. This in turn will likely have a negative impact on our wellbeing and ability to make effective change. Good ideas often take time - so let's take it.<sup>2</sup>

## Cultivate humility and curiosity

Our culture is oriented towards achievement. We're conditioned to define our contribution as activists and individuals by our achievements. While we celebrate our successes, we tend to cover up our failures or put the responsibility for them on others. The issue with this culture is that it discourages learning, as learning includes making mistakes, reflecting and trying again. In a world defined by achievements, it's safer for us to stick to well-known solution templates rather than think out of the box and try new strategies. It also inhibits curiosity, an integral element in developing innovative ideas and ways to tackle the climate crisis.

Many of us are part of this game of politics and 'business as usual' because it's a familiar environment. It's less risky for us to engage there because it gives us a sense of competence and control. It also protects us from negative judgement from ourselves and others if we don't succeed. Yet, when working on a complex issue like the climate crisis, we need to step out of our comfort zone and explore new territory. We need to let go of the idea that everything that happens is within our control - often, we deserve less credit for our success and less blame for our failures than we think. To make effective change, we can't merely rely on past experience and best practices. We need to become comfortable with failure if we are to be creative and to learn.

2 Narbenhaus, M. & Sheppard, A. (2015). [Reimagining activism. A practical guide for the Great Transformation.](#)

When we let go of the idea of being in control, we also free ourselves from the idea of being able to fix the climate crisis single handedly. Instead, we can shift our efforts to our unique strengths and abilities. As a result, we can take our place in the wider community of activists and the change process, to collaborate for collective impact.<sup>3</sup>

### Reconnect to nature

It seems we all live busy lives, with shrinking time to care for ourselves, others and nature. Many of us live in concrete houses, on concrete streets with concrete pavements. If we're lucky, there may be a tree in front of our house – albeit embedded in concrete. It seems nature and the world we live in aren't one.

This disconnection from nature is linked to a range of mental and physical illness - such as anxiety, depression, heart disease, fatigue and reduced life expectancy – and hence has a significant impact on our wellbeing. Moreover, our disconnection from nature leads us to apply ineffective solutions to the climate crisis.

So, when was the last time you went for a walk in the forest, felt the wind in your hair and smelled the clean air after a rainy day? When did you last put your bare feet on grass and watched the bees buzzing around you?

If you can't remember, it's time to do so. Close your laptop, take off your headphones and go out for a walk in nature. The three key values of a mindful nature walk are: going slowly, being silent and using our senses to connect with nature. Try to integrate nature into your life by going for regular walks, picking berries and apples on your way or planting flowers, fruits or vegetables in your garden or on your balcony. Of course, there are many other ways to reconnect with nature - feel free to find what works for you.

### Find or create a community of practice

Finding your place in the change process and becoming an effective change-maker within the boundaries of your wellbeing and capacities is a journey, not a single event. On this journey, there's a lot of experience we can learn from and support each other with. At times, we might feel confused, lost and stuck. We might wonder if we're the only ones struggling to become the activist we want to be - and can be. We might even doubt whether we're on the right path. At times, we may lose perspective and heart when working alone or in a context that doesn't support our approach to change.

To help each other and to share and provide support, we set up a dedicated forum for this course. Through this, you can meet and exchange with people who share a common interest and concern. The forum is a space for reflection, connection and creativity. Interested in joining? [Fill in this form.](#)

If you would like to have a certificate for this course, [please fill in this form.](#) Certificates are created on a rolling basis. Kindly note only serious requests will be handled.



3 Narbenhaus, M. & Sheppard, A. (2015). [Reimagining activism. A practical guide for the Great Transformation.](#)



