

Friendships for the Greater Good: Building Transformational Teams of Two in a World That is Falling Apart

A decentralized vision of mutual support for working on challenging issues. -- By Dennis Rivers and friends in the Companions in Blessing and EarthCitizens.net communities February 14, 2018, revision. Web address of document: <https://www.Companions-in-Blessing.org/library/transformational-teams-of-two.pdf>

[Companions in Blessing](#) and [EarthCitizens.net](#) are small, informal, emerging, cooperative support networks exploring the *Teams-of-Two* model of organizing: supportive pairs of friends working on shared projects in the areas of social justice, peace and ecology. These loosely-knit communities are experiments in mutual empowerment via **self-organizing networks** of cooperative action. In our case, we seek to encourage one another in living reverence for life as a spiritual path, and practicing Earth/Universe kinship and citizenship. Many writers have called this sense of kinship “the Great Turning”: a turning from isolation and efforts to dominate others, to a vision of compassionate and creative interwovenness.



How new thinking partners can help us think much-needed new thoughts.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with two of Einstein's most famous social commentaries: first, that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, and second, that we cannot solve our problems with the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. In spite of the fact that runaway free market industrial capitalism appears to be killing the planet, there are still loud calls for even lower taxes, even less regulation, and less planning. After a lifetime of studying the issues involved, I have become deeply convinced that the that the system which has provided us with child pornography, leaking nuclear power plants, heroin,

private prisons, and the rusted out wasteland cities of the Northeast and Midwest, will not be able to preserve the biological integrity of Planet Earth, will not be able to keep us alive.

In my experience, once having invested their hopes and dreams in a particular path of action, people become extremely reluctant to admit that the path chosen might have been a mistake. And the larger the mistake, the larger the reluctance. (I know this tendency well in myself.) Just think of the Iraq war: fifteen years of fighting, tens of thousands of lives lost, perhaps millions injured, several trillion dollars spent, with the situation now much worse than when the war began. And people are still arguing that this war was a good idea! As an American citizen horrified by the Iraq war, it makes me wonder... will the death of the Earth follow the same blind path as the destruction of Iraq? We have already shown how reluctant we humans can be to facing the consequences of our own actions and inaction. If ever there were situations that cry out for some new thinking, climate change and chronic war must be at the top of the list.

In order to think new thoughts, we will often need new thinking, brainstorming and creative exploration partners. Although every now and then people can think wonderful new ideas all by themselves, thinking still has a deeply social element in it. Those wonderful ideas will probably not get developed unless there is someone to talk with. We learn to think, early in life, in the company of those from whom we learn to speak. Then we spend ten to twenty years in classrooms and teams where our thinking power unfolds even more in the company of others. In this social view of language and thinking (for which there is a large body of evidence), whatever ideas we hold, we almost always hold in the context of a circle of conversation partners.

In our time, the early decades of the 21st Century, continuous war and out-of-control industrialization are pushing the web of life to the breaking point. Our desperate circumstances are challenging us to think big new thoughts about what sort of social arrangements will allow life to flourish rather than perish. We already know the kinds of social arrangements that have brought us to our current

impasse. Inventing something new and actually better (*evolution!*) will be the great cooperative challenge of our lifetimes.

As one possible way of beginning to meet that challenge, I am proposing in this article that each of us begin by cooperating with at least one other person, each partner giving the other permission to "think outside the box," and also to care about life in widening circles, outside the box of one's own immediate and individual life goals. As one anti-nuclear protester put it, "there are no dividends on a dead planet." When you start thinking new thoughts about the society in which you live, or start to care with a wider caring that your society allows, you risk evoking intense hostility from people around you who may have given up all hope of a better world. Having a small circle of supportive friends, or even one, can make all the difference. You could think of that new conversation partner as a swim-buddy for the ocean of life, or perhaps a Mother Earth accountability partner.

Resilient Teams of Two

The circle of colleagues exploring the *Teams-of-Two* organizing paradigm are searching for ways to nurture in one another the creative resilience and transformational kindness we need to face of the multiple breakdowns of our era. By weaving friendship into social action, we hope to provide people with the resources and encouragement needed to stay involved with difficult issues for long periods of time. We live in a time in which many churches, government agencies, non-profits and businesses have betrayed the trust that people placed in them, perhaps contributing to a widespread distrust in all organizations, large and small. But in spite of all the many organizational betrayals we may have suffered, the Web of Life still needs our love and care. I am convinced that *Teams-of-Two* can be a way of starting over.

The *Teams-of-Two* approach is also one possible vision of how we might work on issues of ecological sustainability in ways that are themselves emotionally sustainable (for the participants). *Teams-of-Two* is an effort to carry forward and develop the practices that have appeared in recent decades under the headings of "affinity groups," "accountability partnerships," and "peer coaching." And, the *Teams-of-Two* idea is also

ancient, with a long history in Buddhism (*kalyana mitra*), Judaism (*havruta*), [Christianity](#) and [Celtic spirituality](#), and, of course, in marriage and in the parenting processes of many living species. Among its many facets, the *Teams-of-Two* approach is an example of *bio-mimicry*: following the patterns (in this case, the two-birds-protecting-their-young pattern) that nature uses to succeed in nurturing life.

In his recent book, [Powers of Two](#), Joshua Wolf Shenk explores the highly productive dynamics of creative partnerships and alliances, such as that between rock 'n rollers Paul McCartney and John Lennon, scientists Marie and Pierre Curie, and the leading French Impressionist painters Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir. The power of these partnership is often invisible to us, Shenk argues, because of the way our culture idealizes the heroic struggles of the lone genius.

Inspired by all the examples noted above, we hope to renew, promote and extend this way of organizing cooperative effort in the context of serving the Web of Life in Her hour of great need.

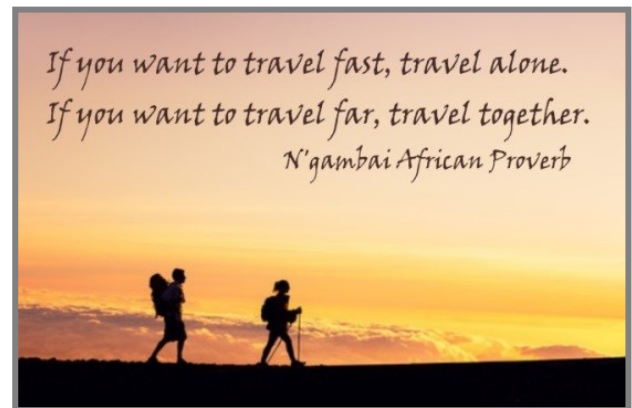


Photo credit: epicstockmedia / 123RF Stock Photo -- Text: Traditional

Emotional support in "enduring emergencies"

One of the fundamental principles at work in this approach is the idea that ***the greater the task we ask a person to embrace, the deeper the support we need to offer them.*** Many of the topics encountered in today's eco-activism and social change advocacy are profoundly disturbing of a person's sense of physical and mental well-being. So we are committed to weaving emotional support practices, information and reflection into all our presentations of those difficult

topics. For example, if I am going to appeal to you to make strong efforts over many years to keep the world from being poisoned by leaking nuclear power plants, then it seems quite compelling to me that I should also provide some opportunity for you to express the kinds of distresses you might feel as you master and live with the unhappy facts about radioactive contamination.

Many anti-nuclear and climate change groups have not yet begun to operate at this level, but it is greatly to be hoped that this level of support will emerge as ecological advocacy groups evolve and mature. (All our documents on this and related topics are in the Creative Commons, and you can find them as free PDFs online.) Eco-philosopher and anti-nuclear activist Joanna Macy is an inspiring pioneer in this area, and her work has deeply inspired and influenced our thinking, and contributed to our online resources.

A good deal of ecological activism follows what I think of as the “house on fire” model. Which is to say, “drop whatever you’re doing right now and attend to *this*, over here” because *this* is the most important emergency. In the case of fighting a fire, you don’t give any thought while fighting the fire to the kind of person you hope to become in the course of your lifetime, nor the kinds of strengths that might have made you a better firefighter.

The ecological crises of our time, however, and the chronic wars and global economic inequalities that kill millions of people every decade, may well last longer than our entire lives. They are what you might call *enduring emergencies*. Prof. Rob Nixon has coined the expression, *slow violence*, to describe our predicaments. Global warming and Chernobyl and Fukushima include processes of injury that will unfold over hundreds or even thousands of years.

In relation to such life-long challenges, *I don’t think we can or ought to give up on our quest to become more fully realized persons..* These crises are, for better or for worse, the contexts in which we will become persons. Responding to emergencies usually does not include learning new skills or cultivating new strengths. But from where I stand now, it seems self-defeating for us to assume that we already have today all the personal strengths, all the personal skills, and

all the personal webs of mutual support we will need to contribute effectively to the mending of the world over the rest of our lifetimes.

By way of personal example, most of my life has been over-shadowed by issues involving nuclear weapons and nuclear waste. I grew up practicing weekly atom-bomb shelter drills and later lived downwind from a nuclear power plant built on an earthquake fault. Since this is the only planet I’ve got, I am searching for ways to become a kinder and wiser person in the middle of my activities against nukes and on behalf of the web of life. In the course of my struggles, I have found many interesting and inspiring examples of how this might be done: Gandhi’s Karma Yoga, the engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama, the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Quaker *Book of Faith and Practice*, and the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. When I look at my life from the perspective of decades, the pattern of in-breath and out-breath suggests itself as a model. For every great challenge I face outside of myself, there appears to be a set of corresponding deep strengths that I am being challenged to develop in myself and encourage in my circle of co-workers. In a similar way, I have now become convinced that ***the deeper the ugliness we intend to confront and mend in the world, the deeper the beauty we need to let into our lives and carry with us.*** (This conclusion reminds me of the Navajo blessing: “Walk in Beauty.”)

Expanding the circle of emotional support

One challenge that we face in organizing a peer support network is that in Western societies the psychotherapy profession has come to dominate the process of emotional support-giving. In recent decades psychologists in the United States even moved to classify all processes of emotional support and discussions of personal development as the unique province of licensed professionals (themselves). (This effort failed because of freedom of speech and religious freedom issues.) For the most part, however, the gradual monopolization of emotional support conversations by psychotherapists has not been the result of a conscious plan on their part. It is much more an unfortunate byproduct of the process of professionalization itself. Whenever one group in

society starts specializing in a particular activity (brain surgery, house wiring, shoe making, etc.), they generally do it better than everyone else, and most other people stop doing it, leaving it to the experts.

This professionalization brings good results in many areas of life but, I would suggest, terrible results in other areas. Many of the challenges facing us today, such as chronic war, climate change, nuclear waste, and global disease and early death related to tobacco use, can't be solved by experts alone. They involve society-wide consensus-shifting and the participation of as many people as possible. So we need to learn from examples of wide participation, such as 12-Step groups and the Civil Rights movement. We might also learn from other examples, such as how specific card games are played around the world with relatively little supervision, how popular songs spread across the world, and the structure of amateur sports, to understand more about how such movements and activities reach out to involve and empower new participants.

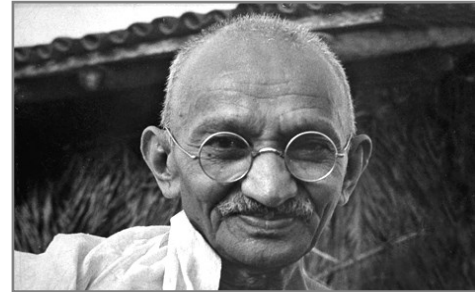
In contrast to the division-of-labor model, in which a few highly-trained individuals provide emotional care for many people who are feeling overwhelmed, the *Team-of-Two* paradigm envisions and encourages every human rights and ecology activist to be an ongoing giver and receiver of emotional support. This emphasis on everybody taking care of everybody expresses contemporary psychology's growing interest in what is now identified as "emotional literacy."

Three empowering ideas

We are searching for resources that could empower people newly concerned about the fate of the Earth. How could we live more courageously, compassionately and supportively? We begin with three ideas from three inspiring "spiritual permission granters:" Mahatma Gandhi, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy.

From Mahatma Gandhi we receive the idea that we have the power to be the change we want to see. I am convinced that this idea is partly rooted in Gandhi's Hinduism. Hinduism is based on the overarching idea that your individual soul (Atman) is a wave in the ocean of God's Being (Brahman). Therefore, you have infinite resources of love, awareness and

understanding within you, although you may not have learned yet how to mobilize these resources for the good of everyone. *But having such resources means that we can stop waiting for someone else to do something wonderful! We can find a way to start doing that something wonderful in our own lives, in our own towns, in our own countries.*



Mahatma Gandhi

It is possible to express this vision of empowerment as based in nature, as well, for those of us who are not members of a specific religious community. (This brings to mind the nature mysticism of John Muir and Hildegard of Bingen.) Starting in nature, one could say that every cell in your body contains the five hundred million year history of life, therefore you have within you a well of living intelligence to draw on in overcoming whatever obstacles your society faces.

You have the power, in both of these visions, the spiritual and the spirit-in-nature, to begin the change you want to see. And you have the power to stand against the entire world in those times when the world sinks into the confusion of greed and violence. In terms of a mutual support network, Gandhi's vision allows us to see one another as partners in the mobilization of that profound compassionate intelligence, hidden, but yearning to be born, in every human being. ([Mahatma Gandhi Study Resources](#))

From the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., we receive the idea of the "Beloved Community," a vision of inclusiveness that grows out of the belief in one supremely loving Creator, who has created us all as brothers and sisters. Because of that, our vision of the transformation of society must necessarily include all those people with whom we now disagree, all those people we see as creating society's problems. In Dr. King's vision, the power of love reaches out to

include everyone, to transform unjust social arrangements, and to lift us up to be the generous and noble human beings we were intended to be by our Creator. In terms of a mutual support network, Dr. King's vision allows us to see one another as partners in the mobilization of that deep love, hidden, but yearning to be born, in every human heart. ([Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Study Resources](#))



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

From the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, we receive a profound idea that changes our relationship to the crises of our time. Our pain for the world, she insists, is not a problem that we should try to be getting rid of. Our society, obsessed with success, views every discomfort is a sign of failure, which must be medicated or therapized out of existence.



Joanna Macy, founding teacher of
The Work That Reconnects

To the contrary, Joanna Macy declares, with the deep strength of a grandmother determined to protect her family and the Family of Life as well, our pain for the world bears witness to our love for the world. Our pain for the world is not a failure, it is the best part of us yearning to be expressed. Even more, our pain for

the Web of Life and the obliteration of countless species, **is the Web of Life itself speaking through us**, moving through us, and calling us to a life of heroic service.

The way forward, in Joanna Macy's vision, is not to avoid our pain but to enter into it fully and consciously, and to find the love that is hidden within it. Empowered by that love we can go forth and participate in the healing of the world. In terms of a mutual support network, Joanna Macy's vision allows us to see one another as partners and companions in the radical transformation of personal pain into courageous love. ([Joanna Macy Study Resources](#))

Three visionaries of peer support

Another strong source of inspiration for the Teams-of-Two vision is the work of Carl Rogers (1902-1987), a 20th-century psychologist, university professor and scholar of human development. In the course of analyzing hundreds of psychotherapy transcripts, Rogers discovered that there were three underlying attitudes on the part of the therapist that seem to help the client take the next step in their developmental journey. These three attitudes were ***caring, sincerity, and an actively voiced empathy*** (a nonjudgmental effort to see the world through the eyes of the client, and reflect that world back to the client).

Rogers built on his experience to propose that ***these three attitudes are the universal ingredients of developmental encouragement***, whether between therapist and client, teacher and student, parent and child, minister and parishioner, spouse and spouse, or friend and friend. Rogers' discovery, explored in his book, [On Becoming a Person](#), offered the possibility that we might grow toward becoming a more empathic civilization, because these attitudes could be adopted (with some conscious effort, of course) by everyone.

The need for developmental encouragement is more than merely the need of individuals. The developmental problems of individuals become the developmental problems of entire societies, and vice versa. A society permanently at war, such as the one I live in, becomes a society in which the cruelty and deceptions of war become the norms of everyday life. (Citizens of the United States are at war in three ways:

at war with other countries, at war with the Earth through savage resource extraction, and at war with each other through in a society organized around relentless competition.) As we work to steer our lives toward kindness and truthfulness, following the path opened up by Carl Rogers' research, we work not only to improve our own lives, but also to steer our culture out of the self-perpetuating labyrinth of war.

Unfortunately, Rogers' discoveries about caring, sincerity and empathy collided with the needs of the emerging psychotherapy profession, which needed, in order to justify its professional existence, to have access to specific tools and techniques that were by definition beyond the reach of "unlicensed" laypeople. Although Carl Rogers did not succeed in his efforts to universalize the three attitudes he had documented, it is not too late to develop the life-enhancing implications of his work. A small but steady stream of psychologists and psychotherapists have been doing so over the past forty years.

Such is the case with the following two writers, whose work has encouraged me with materials that could be used to deepen peer-to-peer mutual support communication and communities.

Gerald Goodman, now emeritus Professor of Psychology at UCLA, did research in the 1960s that led to his 1972 book, *Companionship Therapy*, which focused on the beneficial effects on troubled ten- and eleven-year-old boys of being in the regular presence of a "supportive other," in this case university students selected for their interpersonal skills. Goodman went on to write [The Talk Book](#), a popular communication skills self-help book intended to empower us all to become "supportive others" in one another's lives. (Rogers and Goodman were major inspirations for the creation of the [Seven Challenges Workbook](#), a 100-page, free, PDF introduction to cooperative communication skills and conflict management now in use around the world.)

Lawrence Brammer is an emeritus professor at the University of Washington, and author of [The Helping Relationship: Process and Skills](#). Brammer points out that most people who are experiencing distress in life are not mentally ill. They simply need the presence of a supportive other in order to help them mobilize their coping resources. We could all learn

specific skills and attitudes that would allow us to be more supportive of one another in times of acute distress and disorientation. Brammer documents these skills in great detail. (What I would add to Brammer's analysis is that widespread knowledge of how to be a supportive presence does not fit well into the dominant script of professional success in our society, which requires that one master a rare specialty, and focus on people with spectacular distresses.)

The strength of these books is that they unfold the process of being a supportive companion in great detail. The limitation of these three books is that they most often conceive of the helping relationship as being primarily between skilled helper and a less-skilled person in need. Our challenge is to translate these ideas into a vocabulary of mutual support rather than one-way helping in a fee-for-service context. (In terms of eco-organizing and social change, I view the fee-for-service model as inherently fragile, because whenever the money runs out, the conversations have to stop. So I am searching for alternatives.)

The Three-Part Learning Companions vision of all human relationships

One important aspect of the universal Teams-of-Two theme is an emerging, **three-part vision** of what it means to be on an equal footing with another person, given that no two people ever have exactly the same experiences, temperaments or skill sets.

In my experience, with *every* person I meet, I have (and am invited by life to deepen) at least three parallel, different and complementary relationships, like a chord of three notes played on the piano.

- There are some areas and topics in life where you know more than I know and you have lived more than I have lived. In relation to those areas I am your student and apprentice.
- There are some areas and topics in life where we know roughly the same amount and/or we've had roughly the same amount of experience. In relation to those areas, I am your companion and co-explorer.
- And there might be some areas and topics in life where I know more than you do, or have had more

experience than you have had. In relation to those areas, life calls me to be your servant-mentor. My task is to support you and encourage you in your learning and exploration.

In a society based on competition and merit examinations, there is a powerful focus on knowing more than other people, and on having specialized knowledge that other people do not possess. To the degree that I succumb to that influence, I would tend to focus almost entirely on the areas where I know more than you. But if I were to do that, not only will I become an unpleasant person to be around, I will also be seriously out of touch with you, missing most of the creative possibilities in our conversations. In relation to the complex journey of becoming a person, you already have much to share, much to teach me. You have had many life experiences that I have not had, and you may have struggled through many difficult situations that I have not yet encountered. Awakening to this, I strive to look at each person I meet and know through this new three-dimensional lens. I invite you to do the same, so that new creative partnerships might unfold in your life and in our world.

Co-mentoring: A Different Way of Teaching

Within the [Companions in Blessing](#) extended peer support network, *we are all teachers-by-example*. (I am convinced that this is also true for every person on Planet Earth.) From this view, we may as well accept responsibility of being teachers, because we are all already teaching-by-example all the time. I may not be teaching algebra all the time, but every waking moment that I am in the presence of other people I am teaching by example how to be a person, how to love, how to live, how to tell the truth, how to express reverence for life, how to forgive, etc. So in relation to these basic qualities of being a person, the division of any human group into teachers and learners covers up something really important. ***We may not be teaching particularly inspiring lessons, but we are all teaching each other and all learning from each other all the time!*** I conclude from this that since we are already fully on the stage of the world, we may as well learn to sing better. This for me is one of the most important messages implicit in the discovery of the “mirror neurons” in the brain that predispose us to imitate one

another whether we want to or not. (I invite you to read up on mirror neurons:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_neuron.)

Of course, in relation to the really important human strengths, I can only show others as much as I have really learned and lived. And the further you go along the path of human unfolding, the more you realize that at any given moment a challenge could come along that would be so large that it would cause you to fail. So at a deeper level, all the beginners and all the experts in this world are really in the same human boat. We are all perpetual beginners, each of us facing our own multiple horizons of the unknown. That is why I enjoy the chambered nautilus as one of my guiding images. We are never finished evolving. All the great human virtues call us toward open horizons.

All of this has deep implications for teaching resilience in the face of ecological catastrophes. It suggests that however inspired one person’s discoveries about resilience might be, there are severe limits as to how much of those discoveries can be transferred with words directly into the minds of others. (Songs and pictures increase that transferability a bit, but not nearly as much as one would hope.) What we can do is walk along beside one another in a journey of exploration and discovery. And that walking-along-beside can be a powerful, life-giving, form of encouragement, even though it tends to unfold in quiet ways, and focuses on living with ongoing questions rather than providing dramatic answers. An analogy from sports would be to say, I can’t run for you, no matter how good a runner I am, nor you for me, but running together we can encourage each other to run further than either of us would have run alone. We are co-mentors on the road of life.





TWELVE NEW STEPS for TEAMS-OF-TWO
Suggestions for creating Teams-of-Two partnerships
to deepen your practice of engaged reverence for life

By Dennis Rivers and friends

The current global epidemics of greed and violence (and their combination in chronic wars and ecological devastation) have a powerful, self-perpetuating, momentum about them, like a whirlpool or an avalanche. Therefore, if we are going to live differently and change the societies in which we live, swim against the stream, as it were, I am convinced that we will need to be more deliberate and systematic about that journey than might have previously been our preference.

The following suggested action steps and suggested guiding principles are one possible systematic approach, drawn from the author's experience in, and study of, spiritual communities and anti-nuclear and social change movements. The steps and principles present here implement the non-hierarchical "Three-part Learning Companion" vision (explained above on page 6).

We invite you to participate in / adopt / adapt the Deep Green Awakening open-source vision of independent, self-organizing, peer accompaniment and encourage-ment, anywhere in the world, with anyone in the world, by exploring the following suggested steps and principles (and the linked support materials) as possible guidelines. You are also most welcome to use this material as a starting point to develop your own vision of peer accompaniment.

Twelve New Steps

1. Explore the vision of how we propose to live reverence for life more consciously, compassionately, courageously and creatively, and nurture/encourage

the same in the people around us. Please see the following web and print resources:

[The Eight Interwoven Strands model of creative resilience and compassionate resistance](#)

[The Five Wings Mandala Series Exploring Reverence for Life as a Spiritual Path](#)

[Companions in the Storm, Companions in Blessing \(article\)](#)

[Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects \(web page\)](#)

2. Follow your calling from the Heart of Life. Pick a specific study topic, create an action project, or select an existing public service organization, which strongly expresses your reverence for life and your evolving compassion for all peoples and all creatures. Here are some suggestions and reflections about picking a topic or project:

- Faced with all the contending appeals for help in the world, we suggest that you commit yourself to the topic/issue that most inspires you to love more deeply and to live more fully. (Inspired by sayings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. Augustine) As Howard Thurman put it, "Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Frederick Buechner expresses this as "Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need."
- A person who follows their deepest calling with love is much more likely to awaken the love and sense of calling in others, thus increasing the total amount of love energy moving in and through the world.
- Only the causes that move us to love, will move us to master the details and disciplines of our area of concern. Thus, the more we are moved to love, the better advocates we may become.
- The Shamanism of Lovingkindness: What we care about deeply fills us with its power and cares/acts through us to mend the world. (Thanks to Joanna Macy and John Seed for this deep idea.)

3. Find one or more project partners who share your deep interest, and invite them to become Team-of-Two / Study Group partners with you, dedicated to the above topic or project. Together, dedicate your shared work to the mutual well-being of all peoples and all creatures. To find possible partners, you can use the Internet to host a local “meet up” focused on your topic. Or you can use your Facebook page, or local network, to announce that you are interested in that topic and would like to find study partners. (For safety reasons, we strongly recommend meeting your study partners online via Skype or Google Hangout, or in public places such as bookstores or cafés.)

4. Explore and agree on project goals. Agree on what you would like to accomplish in a 3 to 6 month period of working together on behalf of the Web of Life as peer volunteers and mutual support partners.

5. Meet on a regular schedule to accomplish your goals, and keep a journal of your progress and challenges. Pass a “talking stick” back and forth to one another or invent other creative rituals to make sure that each person receives a roughly equal amount of listening attention. Make a space for expressing both joys and sorrows. Practice empathic listening. (Please see the [Seven Challenges Workbook](#) for suggestions about how to improve your team communication skills. Please see the [Spiral Journey Mandala](#) for more suggestions about how to work on demanding issues while nurturing the people around you.)

6. Deepen your spiritual practice. We invite and encourage people everywhere to explore and develop a Web-of-Life-centered, daily, ongoing, spiritual practice that might include elements of prayer, meditation, blessing, gratitude, invocation, transformation, and opening to immanent and transcendent beauty (in the Navajo and Sufi senses). This could include communion with any and all the great souls who have inspired you on the path of compassion, communion with all your ancestors back to the birth of the Milky Way, and communion with all the future generations of Life on Planet Earth. (The Companions in Blessing community offers new visions of affirmation and prayer in our open source [Five Wings of The Heart](#) PDF book, as one of many possible starting places for this kind of ecological spirituality. You are also invited to visit our

[meditation, prayer and blessing exploration page](#) for a wide variety of examples and suggestions.)

7. Invite others to join with you in your project, if and when that feels appropriate. Encourage new participants to find and team up with new project partners. (Please give new participants a copy of this Team-of-Two document.)

8. Create a gift from your work. With your Team of Two (or more) partner(s), create a memo, report, book report, PowerPoint presentation, video, painting, sculpture or music performance MP3 that documents/expresses what you have done and learned.

9. Celebrate and share the results of your project with your circle of friends and extended community, with other communities, and with the whole world through the Internet. Place the results of your project or study in the Creative Commons as royalty-free resources so that others can learn from them and build on them.

10. Evaluate your experience together. Identify areas where you would like to function better and know more, both as advocates for the Web of Life and as Team-of-Two participants. Consider how you would like to deepen your spiritual practice. Record all the above in your personal journal, if you have one. (If you have not kept a personal journal up to now, this could be a good time to begin.)

11. Plan your next step. Renew your participation in a given project for another 3 to 6 months, turn your Team of Two into co-coordinators of a study/action group focused on your theme or project, or conclude your project and make a space for each Team-of-Two partner to bless the other to work on new projects and extend their circle of creative friendships.

12. Expand your circle of giving/receiving support. Meet other participants in your region and begin to have monthly or quarterly regional meetings/potlucks, where participants can share their ongoing work and evolve new forms of celebrating the Web of Life and our existence within Her. Deepen your knowledge and practice of the path of service that calls to you (see #2 above), then offer to co-mentor others in that path of service. Encourage your Team of Two partners to develop other Team of Two partnerships.

Recommended Reading List (in development 2-15-2018):

For PDF of this document with active hyperlinks please visit <http://www.Companions-in-Blessing.org/library/transformational-teams-of-two.pdf>

Communication skills:

[The Seven Challenges Workbook: Communication Skills for Success at Home and at Work.](#)

Dennis Rivers, MA, communication skills trainer and anti-nuclear activist. Available free of charge in PDF format at www.NewConversations.net

[The Talk Book.](#) Gerald Goodman, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, UCLA. <http://global-find-a-book.net/gerald-goodman-the-talk-book-1439246890-9781439246894/>

Supportive relationships:

[The Helping Relationship: Processes and Skills.](#)

Lawrence M. Brammer and Ginger MacDonald.

[Powers of Two: Finding the Essence of Innovation in Creative Pairs](#) Joshua Wolf Shenk.

[Power of 2: How to Make the Most of Your Partnerships at Work and in Life.](#)

Rodd Wagner and Gale Muller

Another writer who has done a wonderful job of carrying forward the work of Carl Rogers and his associates is Jacqueline Small. Her book, *Becoming Naturally Therapeutic: A Return To The True Essence Of Helping*, is a kind of universal guide to being a helpful companion on the bumpy road of life.

Co-mentoring:

A Philosophy of Havruta

Understanding and Teaching the Art of Text Studies in Pairs. Elie Holzer with Orit Kent. Academic Studies Press, 2013.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3045170/hit-the-ground-running/the-case-for-co-mentoring>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/how-do-life/201411/co-mentoring>

<https://platform.coop/stories/boston-collaboratory-school-mentoring-horizontally-up-down-and-sideways>

Collaborative egalitarianism:

Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Paulo Freire

Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Paulo Freire

Human development:

Developing Through Relationships: Origins of Communication, Self, and Culture

Alan Fogel

The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development Robert Kegan