Roots of Resilience Handbook

Education for Resilience for Climate Active Citizens

Contents

About

Roots of Resilience is a project with the aim of offering high quality education for resilience to climate active citizens. For the last two years, it took the form of a partnership of people working with [Pioneers of Change](#), [Region im Wandel](#) and [The Ulex Project](#). Several activities of this partnership and the writing of this handbook, is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. For more information on background, offers, and trainings; visit www.rootsofresilience.eu.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This handbook is written and informed by several years of exploration, organising and training work, of the individuals writing and the organisations providing resources. The Ulex Project has been working in this field for more than a decade and has developed, together with its many partners, a strong foundation that we are building on with the Roots of Resilience project. A lot of credit goes to them and their work on the *Rooting Resilience* PSR Training Manual by W4BW project.

This handbook is a collection assembling effective narratives, tools and methodologies in education for resilience - to make a comprehensive range of approaches accessible. It is, in a way, an introduction, while still trying to be comprehensive and provide depth where we.

Who is it for?

This handbook is designed for a broad spectrum of climate active citizens in Europe, encompassing various practices aimed at fostering collective power and agency. We use the term 'climate active citizen', or often 'activist' in the handbook, quite flexibly, allowing individuals to choose alternative descriptions that better align with their work. Although the primary focus is on Europe, it is acknowledged that adaptation is essential when applying this material to different geographic and socio-cultural contexts within the continent. The tools in this manual have been applied in a wide range of activist settings. Still, we want to recognise the limitations imposed by the perspectives, socialisation and position of the people writing it. The handbook is a work in progress and is expected to evolve as diverse groups engage with it, adapt it, and make it their own.

Regenerative Activism and Psychosocial Resilience

Sustaining activism alone is insufficient. Just like a sustainable economy isn't at this point. Instead, what's required is a regenerative approach, drawing inspiration from regenerative agriculture's principles of restoring, renewing, and revitalising energy and resources.

In the context of severely depleted social and cultural environments marked by neoliberal hegemony and a history of oppression, regenerative activism aims to go beyond sustainability. It seeks to replace extractive behaviours with practices that foster relationships, support each other's potential, and cultivate cultures of care and solidarity.

Much of the activism we meet today is challenged by eroded communities, historic failures, and difficulties envisioning a flourishing future. Activism's soil has been depleted, and transformative ambitions have often fallen short. Regenerative activism envisions rebuilding activist practice and culture to become a creative, powerful, and caring force.

This movement is part of a networked shift in practice seen across diverse activist movements. It involves new conceptions of organising, the fusion of political activism and community engagement, the feminization of politics, the integration of inner and outer transformation, and attention to intersectionality and transversal forms of organising. These practices breathe life into our movements, creating networks and forms that sustain the roots of activism.

Regenerative Activism: An Evolving Approach

Regenerative activism is dynamic and continuously evolving, much like healthy ecosystems. It involves the renewal, adaptation, and continued learning of our movements. Rejecting the reductionist and mechanistic paradigms of modernity, it embraces interconnection, interplay, and mutual dependence, understanding the world in terms of relationships. Regenerative activism is a skill that balances various dimensions of practice and adapts to a changing equilibrium.

This approach has grown from initial work on activist burnout, which is explored in the following chapter. However, it's essential to consider it through the lens of resilience.

Activist Resilience

Resilience is considered a fundamental capability for social movements, involving the capacity to endure, adapt, and thrive despite difficulties and challenges. Resilience entails not only enduring but also strengthening collective efforts toward social transformation and the creation of flourishing worlds.

In the context of activist resilience, it encompasses the ability to weather stresses while strengthening the journey toward social transformation. Action Aid's resilience framework identifies three integral capacities: absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and transformative capacity.

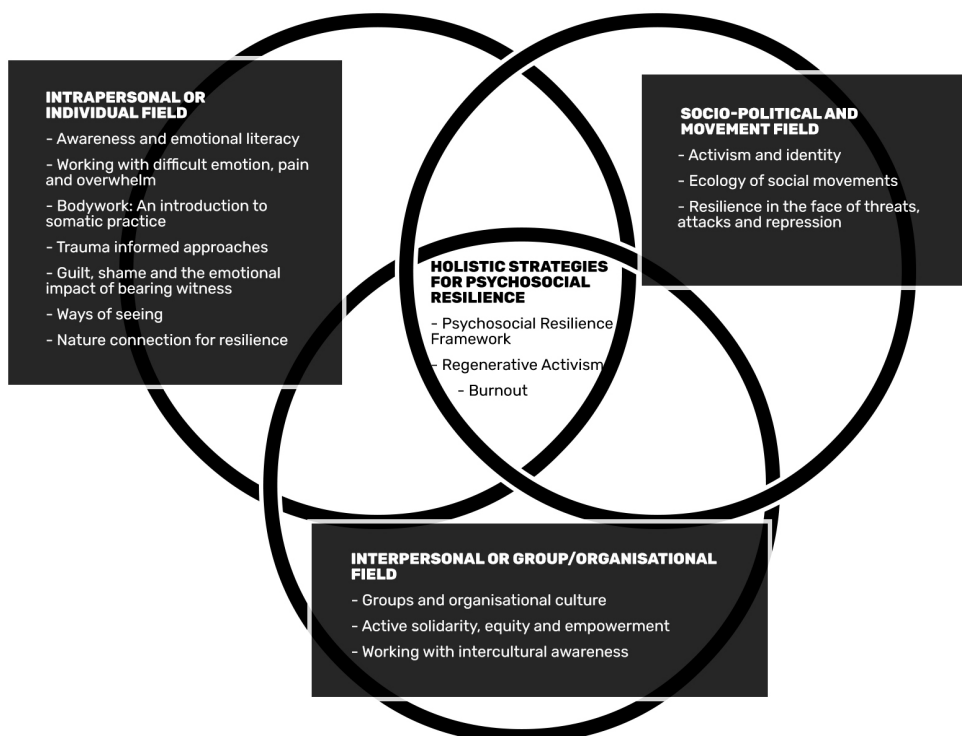**Activist Psychosocial Resilience: A Working Definition**

Psychosocial resilience in activism involves enduring, adapting, and building the collective agency needed to effect structural changes. It emerges from a diverse range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and political practices and is deeply interconnected with relationships in activists' lives, organisations, and networks.

Why Psychosocial Resilience?

Activist resilience depends on a complex interplay between intrapersonal and interpersonal conditions, encompassing inner lives, cognitive processes, emotional experiences, relationships, and socio-economic factors. Resilience emerges from the interconnectedness of people and their relationships, involving both the individual and the collective. Stress impacts not only individuals but also groups and movements. Strategies for activist psychosocial resilience address all these fields, emphasising the interdependence of individual, group, and movement well-being.

Taking a holistic, multi-dimensional approach is vital to build resilience. Resilience relies on the quality of connections between individuals, groups, and movements. It acknowledges the inseparability of inner and outer transformation and focuses on the quality of relationships and connections within and across these fields, within the broader context of social movements.

The Structure of the Work

INTRAPERSONAL OR INDIVIDUAL FIELD

- Awareness and emotional literacy
- Working with difficult emotion, pain and overwhelm
- Bodywork: An introduction to somatic practice
- Trauma informed approaches
- Guilt, shame and the emotional impact of bearing witness
- Ways of seeing
- Nature connection for resilience

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND MOVEMENT FIELD

- Activism and identity
- Ecology of social movements
- Resilience in the face of threats, attacks and repression

HOLISTIC STRATEGIES FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL RESILIENCE

- Psychosocial Resilience Framework
- Regenerative Activism
- Burnout

INTERPERSONAL OR GROUP/ORGANISATIONAL FIELD

- Groups and organisational culture
- Active solidarity, equity and empowerment
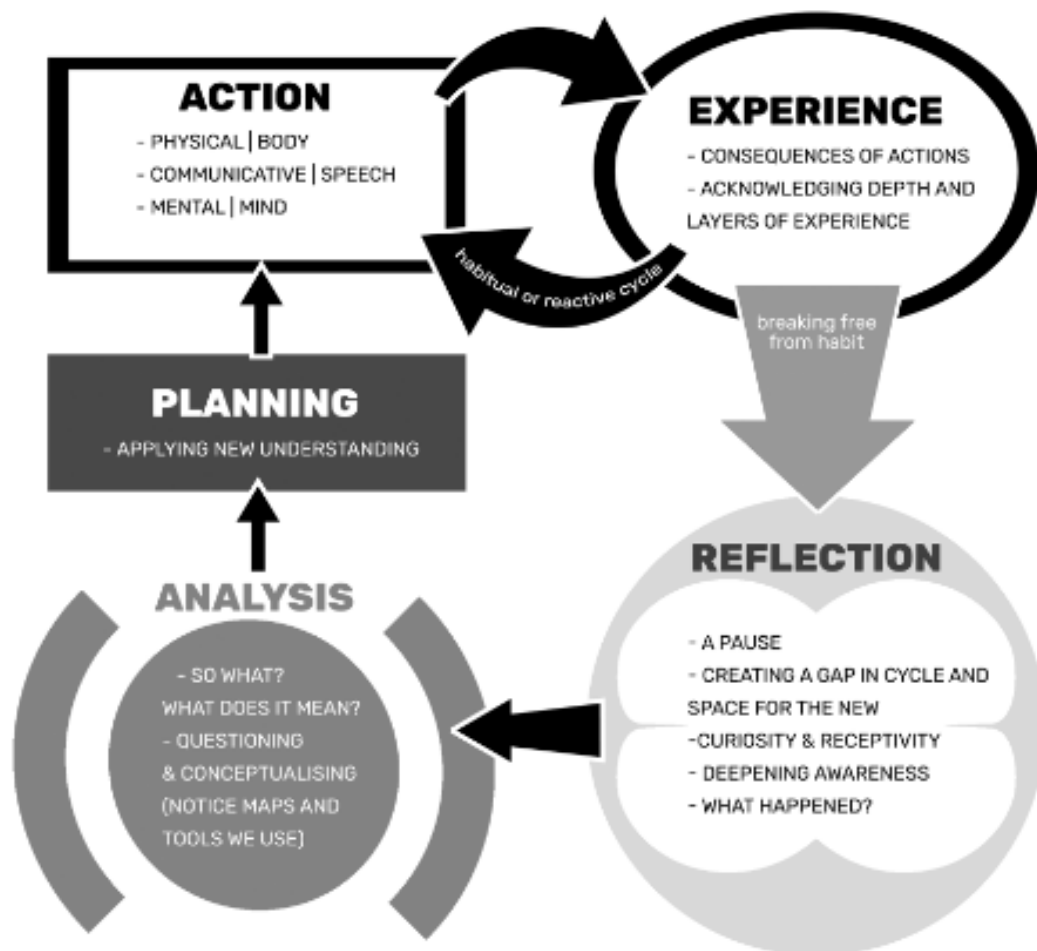- Working with intercultural awareness

About Learning

The aim of this handbook is to facilitate learning. Perhaps, it's good to take a moment to acknowledge that and for you, as a reader, to consider how you might best learn from this content. Consider what it is that has led you here, what it is that you want to get out of it, how you might be able to let it inform your life.

Take a moment now... To let these questions land. Perhaps you want to take 5-10 minutes to write with the questions above as a prompt.

One way in which this handbook might help, is in allowing for and creating a space for reflection. The importance and value of this can be shown in the model below, that serves as a basic framework for building learning, healthy feedback, and responsiveness into our personal and group or organisational lives.

THE CREATIVE SPIRAL OF THE ACTION LEARNING CYCLE

ACTION
- PHYSICAL | BODY
- COMMUNICATIVE | SPEECH
- MENTAL | MIND

EXPERIENCE
- CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIONS
- ACKNOWLEDGING DEPTH AND LAYERS OF EXPERIENCE

habitual or reactive cycle

breaking free from habit

PLANNING
- APPLYING NEW UNDERSTANDING

ANALYSIS
- SO WHAT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
- QUESTIONING & CONCEPTUALISING (NOTICE MAPS AND TOOLS WE USE)

REFLECTION
- A PAUSE
- CREATING A GAP IN CYCLE AND SPACE FOR THE NEW
- CURIOSITY & RECEPTIVITY
- DEEPENING AWARENESS
- WHAT HAPPENED?

Exploring Burnout

Where does it stop?
Every time I scratch my limits
Every time I go beyond
Every time I do it one more time
Fighting it
instead of meeting it with grace
Instead of meeting me with care

Let's approach the topic of burnout with care.

Tread mindfully to avoid pathologising our bodies and our minds, to beware of wanting to fight our own limits instead of meeting them with care and grace. And if we can't avoid, let's try to notice our relation to this concept and ourselves. Does this exploration become another way in which we need to 'do better'? Or can it help me find understanding and care for how I am?

As painful and challenging as experiences of burnout can be, they can also be the starting point of a valuable and transformative journey. The challenges related to burnout may prompt us to stop and reflect more deeply on our practices, and to discover healthier and more holistic approaches to work and witness. Healing and preventing burnout asks us to develop resilience practices that contribute to a greater sense of coherence, enabling us to more fully embody our values, restoring a sense of meaning to our actions, and establishing eco-systems of self and collective care.

Exploring burnout is one step on the way to a more resilient form of activism. Awareness supports prevention and can increase our sense of agency in facing patterns or even cycles that create burnout. *We highly recommend going through this in groups of at least two or three, to be able to share and support each other in the process.*

What is Burnout?

Burnout is a complex and varied phenomenon that can be useful to think about in terms of three kinds of experiences:

- **Depletion** is commonly the way that burnout is recognised. It represents a draining away of energy and vitality. Our inner being can feel empty, and spent. We rarely feel fully nourished or properly recharged. Motivation and inspiration are more difficult to access. There is less and less we have to give.
- **Contraction** is a protective response to the loss of energy and capacity - imagine a body shape that tightens up into a ball. One way that people feel it is as a denseness and blockage in their body. We can contract emotionally, pulling away from others and our capacity for empathetic engagement can diminish.
- **Disconnection** is disengagement from life and relationships. Disconnec-tion can also be felt as confusion, numbness, or emotional detachment. We become disconnected from ourselves, our feelings, our bodies, and isolated from sources of nourishment and support.

Common Signs of Burnout

A helpful way to understand the experience of burnout is by looking at the wide range of experiences of people encountering it.

FEELINGS
- Heavy sense of burden and low energy
- Lack of joy and anticipation
- Entrapment
- Loss of control
- Anger and resentment
- Lack of support
- Low in confidence, feeling hopeless, useless
- Undervalued
- Disempowered
- Lost or confused
- Fearful or over anxious
- Shame and inadequacy
- Numb and unable to feel anything

BEHAVIOURS
- Lack of flexibility, creativity and responsiveness, rigid and stubborn
- Chaotic and unpredictable
- Blaming others for what is happening
- Passivity and helpless behaviours
- Resistance to further responsibility
- Refusal to rest, even when work patterns are unproductive
- Withdrawal, avoidance, self isolation
- Seeming absent or dazed
- Expressions of cynicism and pointlessness
- Flight/escape/avoidance behaviours (not showing up, staying in bed)
- Increased use of intoxicants
- Crying
- Anger and aggression
- Constant procrastination
- Small stressors create disproportionate responses

BODY
- Rigidity/tightness/tension/cramps
- Shutdown/blank affect/numbness
- Dissociative moments/episodes
- Hypersensitivity
- Sleep problems (over or under sleeping)
- Sexual problems
- Eating problems
- Contracted body shapes
- Collapsed body shapes
- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Lower back pain
- Digestive problems
- Breathing problems
- Dental problems- due to jaw clenching and teeth grinding

Sources: Rooting Resilience and PSR Training Manual by W4BW project.

Burnout Self-Assessment Scale

Adding up the results of the questions below will give you an indication of how close you are to your limits or how far beyond them. The factors leading to burnout are multiple and complex - see burnout wheel. It can be difficult to acknowledge to ourselves when we are struggling - so thanks for taking the time to check-in.

Over the past 3 months, how often have you experienced the following:
0 - Never   **1** - Very rarely   **2** - Rarely   **3** - Sometimes   **4** - Often   **5** - Very often

1. Do you feel fatigued in a way that rest or sleep does not relieve?

2. Do you feel more cynical, pessimistic or disillusioned about things you used to feel positive about?

3. Do you feel a sadness or an emptiness inside?

4. Do you have physical symptoms of stress, eg.: insomnia, stomach pains, headaches, migraines?

5. Is your memory unreliable?

6. Are you irritable or emotional with a short fuse?

7. Have you been more susceptible to illness lately, eg colds, 'flu, food allergies, hay fever?

8. Do you feel like isolating yourself from colleagues, friends or family?

9. Is it hard to enjoy yourself, have fun, relax, and experience joy in your life?

10. Do you feel that you are accomplishing less in your work?

My result: _____   Date:

Results
None of these results give an assessment of your achievements or your value. You are navigating complex circumstances and challenges. Below are some suggestions to support you in caring for what might be needed.

0 – 15   You don't seem to be at risk of burnout.

16 – 25   You don't seem so well. Perhaps find a buddy to check in regularly about what you struggle with. The burnout wheel could help you assess the different factors and find next steps.

26 – 35   You are struggling and on the road to burnout. It's important that you make changes now and find support to help you sustain them.

36 – 50   You need to take action immediately – your health and well-being are threatened.

Whatever your results - May care be with you.

Sources: Adapted from *'Burnout Rating Scale' by* The Change Agency, adapted from *The Tiger's Mouth: An Empowerment Guide For Social Action,* Katrina Shields (2000) self published, p.130. via Ulex.

Other 'indicators' of being over-stressed or approaching burn-out for me are...

The Causes and Conditions of Burnout

There are a wide range of factors which can produce susceptibility to burnout. It is rarely simply a matter of uni-linear cause and effect. More often than not a number of different kinds of conditions act in combination to give rise to burnout. The shift from causal to conditional thinking is important, as we begin to recognise the range of both personal and environmental conditions.

Consider how these different aspect affect your own susceptibility to burnout and try to be as precise as possible. As you fill it out also consider which aspects you tend to be more aware of and how quickly you look to strategies.

Personal Material Needs	**Psychological and Emotional Needs**
Wider Social and Structural Factors	**Personal Behavioural Tendencies**
Interpersonal: Group and Organisational Dynamics	**Views, Beliefs and Expectations**

Once you are done filling it out, highlight the three things you can most easily address. If you also notice the ones that it may be difficult for you to address, take a moment to care for yourself and your response to this activity.

Agency and The Power of Awareness

In the world of activism, our minds and hearts play a pivotal role in shaping our experiences. The quality of our awareness and emotional intelligence profoundly influences how we navigate our work, relationships, and our place in the world. Recognizing our agency, we can develop our mental and emotional capacities intentionally, enhancing our resilience and creativity. While inner work may seem self-indulgent, it's a vital part of our holistic approach to activism, connecting our individual well-being, our impact on others, and our capacity to bring about positive change. Embracing awareness empowers us to choose wisely and develop our minds for clearer thinking, better focus, and attentive decision-making. By enhancing self-awareness, we become not only more effective activists but also more supportive allies, trainers, and friends in our shared mission for change.

Find a posture you like - Practice

Take a moment to notice your body and how you are sitting in this moment. How does it feel? Is there anything that feels uncomfortable? Take a moment to notice the comfort and discomfort. You may notice that now that you are aware of your posture, you can also change it. How do you want to change it? More ease or comfort? More clarity and uprightness?

Do you want to move a little and be less static while you are reading. Try it out. Change your posture. Find a posture you like.

The Agency Practice - Practice

This is a partner activity that you can use to retrospectively gain more awareness of yourself after situations where you have lost your composure and perhaps as a result more agency in situations that follow.

It is an iterative process that helps us connect with the present moment, dissolve identifications, and learn about ourselves and our capacity for action. It is best done in pairs, with one person asking the questions and the other answering. It can also be used as a journaling practice.

Where do I lose my composure?
We invite curiosity - a curiosity that wants to explore and not necessarily change anything.

1st Question: How was the situation for you?

2nd Question: When you look at it with genuine curiosity, where did you begin to lose your composure?

3rd Question: What do you notice within yourself now (here and today) as you talk about it? Where in your body do you feel it?

4th Question: How is it for you to see this now (here and today)? What needs can you identify, and what could support you now or in similar situations in the future?

After going through the questions, you go through them at least another 1 or 2 times.

Source: Adapted from Leadership^3 - https://www.leadershiphoch3.de/

Nervous System and Emotional Literacy

Sensing
Feeling
Thinking
Talking
Acting
Is that not the order of things?

When we are engaged in activism, our focus can quickly end up on action alone and loose track of many other aspects of our being that are important to create radical change. Our ways of sensing, feeling and seeing/thinking have a huge impact on the way we can act and respond to the world around us.

We may view the state of our nervous system and our emotions as given and uncontrollable, perhaps even as annoying or as something that gets in the way. What we want to advocate for here, is that understanding, caring for and developing our nervous system and emotions is essential to bring about radical change, and even more so if we want to do it regeneratively.

The Basics of our Nervous System - Sensing

We can think of our nervous system as a way we are sensing and transmitting information and energy through our body, as well as connecting with our environment and other people. Your body's built-in compass, steering your sensations and responses, guiding you through the landscape of sensations and feelings, and influencing your actions in a dance with the world around you.
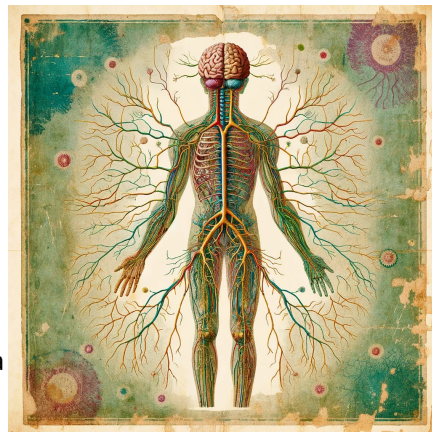
Navigating Your Nervous System

A first step toward greater resilience is expanding our awareness of the foundations of our body, as well as those of other people and animals we encounter repeatedly. This step is most effective when accompanied by concrete actions that allow us to use our expanded awareness to care for these foundations.

You can examine whether how you feel or how you react to a situation aligns with what you truly need or desire in the world. You can consider how well your current state matches the situation you are in or whether the situation evokes memories of past painful moments. This in turn may allow you to care for or seek the support to care for what your nervous system needs to respond differently. (See Bodywork and Somatics later on)

The Activation Curve

The Activation Curve derives from the polyvagal theory and provides a model for understanding our nervous system's activation states.[1] In this model, our nervous system operates in three key states: "I am," "I can," and "I can't" or "I must." When we feel safe in our surroundings, we find ourselves in the green zone. Here, we can relax, engage our creativity, learn, rest well, and digest experiences. As demands increase, our activation level rises and we transition to the yellow zone, providing us with the energy needed for effective responses. Increased activation is necessary for activities like driving or engaging in sports, but it can also manifest during challenging situations, such as conflicts, demonstrations, or moments of excessive responsibility and stress, when our nervous system readies us for fight, flight, or even shrinking

---

[1] Here's a link for an article if you want to look at it in more detail - they call it the polyvagal ladder -
https://www.traumageek.com/blog/how-to-use-the-polyvagal-ladder

ourselves to swiftly resolve the situation.

At the border between the green and yellow zones, we encounter a delightful state of flow, where we can combine a sense of playfulness and creativity with high focus and clarity. It's when we find just the right level of challenge and comfort.

As we approach the red zone, an undercurrent of helplessness, pressure, and compulsion becomes more pronounced. In the red zone, we often disconnect from our emotions, needs, and desires, adopting a more mechanical approach to navigate life's demands.

To better understand these states, we can pay attention to physical cues such as muscle tension, heart rate, and breathing patterns. Additionally, we can be attuned to your emotional responses, our sense of choice and thought processes. With practice, we can identify the transitions, enabling us to make choices that are more suitable to our situation and enhance our overall well-being.

Pause for a moment to study the chart. Reflect on which zone you most frequently occupy and what resonates with your experiences.
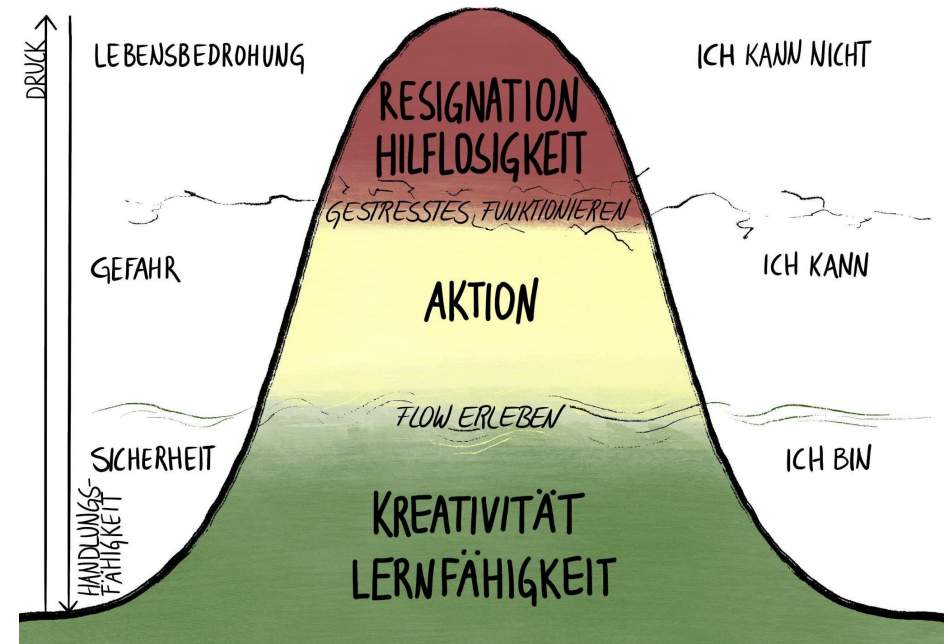
For an illustration and description in English, visit this blog-post by Traumageek.

Emotional Literacy - Feeling

We can learn to intentionally cultivate our emotional qualities. Aversion, the habit of disliking and pushing things away, is a common emotional response. While natural, it can lead to grumpiness and cynicism, contributing to burnout. By practising openness and developing emotional intelligence, we can engage with our experiences and others more fully. This emotional growth is not about ignoring or pasting over 'difficult' emotions; it's about staying open to them, fostering tolerance, and thereby enhancing our well-being with emotions that are a part of our lives.

Political Implications

This emotional reorientation challenges traditional notions of emotional "strength" and gender roles. By taking emotional work seriously, we gain emotional literacy and skills that allow us to share the emotional labor that has historically fallen on women. It's not about masking negative emotions but strengthening our capacity to stay open and empathetic in challenging situations. This empowers us to connect and engage creatively and courageously, serving radical transformation. The process involves deliberate practice, cultivating emotional awareness, self-awareness, and nourishing our emotional landscape.

Building Connection and Resilience

Fostering emotional intelligence enables deeper self-connection, empathy, and solidarity. It diminishes fear of being overwhelmed and fosters motivation and genuine care for our work. We can develop these qualities individually and collectively, nurturing people's well-being. An increased ability to hold and process emotions without shutting down or becoming overwhelmed results in true resilience. As we learn to hold a wider range of emotional experiences, we discover the interconnectedness of joy and pain. This emotional work is essential for emotional literacy and resilience.

Self Solidarity Practice (Meditative)

Purpose: This activity aims to develop self-awareness, counteract self-aversion, and strengthen well-being through self-love, enhancing empathy and solidarity.

Duration: 25 - 40 minutes

Materials Needed: Cushions, blocks, blankets, mats, chairs for comfortable sitting.

Instructions:

1. **Preparation**:
   - Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can sit undisturbed.
   - Understand that this practice is about fostering a kinder relationship with yourself, recognizing the importance of self-compassion in personal growth and activism.

2. **Meditative Practice**:
   - Sit comfortably and start by bringing attention to your posture. Feel grounded, connected to the earth, and simultaneously open and spacious in your body.
   - Notice your current physical, emotional, and mental state. Welcome whatever you find without judgment, bringing kindness and patience to your experience.
   - Focus on the sensations in your chest or heart area. Observe the breath and any emotional tones. Encourage a sense of warmth and openness in this area.
   - Explore different approaches to cultivate kindness towards yourself:
     - Think of someone or something you love and transfer that feeling to yourself.
     - Acknowledge your efforts and qualities you appreciate about yourself.
     - Notice any self-judging thoughts and respond to

them with kindness.
   - Visualize being a friend to yourself, offering support and understanding.

3. **Concluding the Practice**:
   - Gradually expand your awareness to your whole body and surroundings. When ready, gently move your body and open your eyes.

4. **Debriefing**:
   - Reflect on your experience. What worked for you? What was challenging? How do you feel now?
   - Understand that it's normal to face distractions and resistance. Practicing kindness towards yourself is a skill that develops over time.

Conclusion: Acknowledge the challenge and value of this practice. It's not just about self-care; it's a radical act of developing a more compassionate and understanding relationship with yourself, which in turn enriches your activism and connections with others.

Working with difficult emotions, pain and overwhelm

Working with difficult emotions, pain, and overwhelm is crucial in building resilience, especially for activists frequently encountering injustice, violence, and oppression. This chapter focuses on handling strong, painful emotions which, if not managed well, can lead to burnout, cynicism, or apathy.

Dealing with Painful Emotions: Activism often brings us face-to-face with suffering, evoking emotions like grief, anger, fear, and despair. While avoiding these feelings is a natural response, it's not always beneficial. These emotions, though painful, are essential feedback mechanisms. They connect us to what we love and care about and fuel our motivation to act. Suppressing them can lead to emotional numbness and disconnect us from our creativity and energy sources.

Building Emotional Capacity: To effectively work with these emotions, it's vital to develop a robust emotional capacity. This includes:

1. **Cultivating Kind Regard**: Establishing a foundation of emotional openness and warmth is crucial. This prepares the ground for handling more challenging emotions.
2. **Welcoming Emotional Experience**: Accepting and acknowledging difficult emotions as necessary and healthy can transform our relationship with them. Recognizing grief as love or anger as a sense of justice can be transformative.
3. **Non-Identifying with Emotions**: Understanding that we are not our emotions and learning to step back can help us view them as transient experiences.
4. **Cultivating Spacious Awareness**: Creating mental and physical space around intense emotions helps manage them without being overwhelmed.
5. **Reflecting on Impermanence**: Remembering that emotions are not permanent can provide perspective and reduce their intensity.
6. **Grounding in the Body and Mind**: Using physical grounding techniques like stable posture or connecting with the earth can provide a sense of stability during emotional turmoil.

Practices for working with difficult emotions.

In working with difficult emotions, we want to strongly encourage you to seek support and practise with other people or beings. This applies to all and most practices here and can be particularly difficult when working with emotions and perhaps for that reason it gets a special mention here.

We suggest looking for offerings near you or online - Grief Circles, for example, as they are offered by people in the Grief Practitioner's Network, check out our call on the role of grief work in social movements (german), or the Grief Toolkit assembled by Camille Sapara Barton.

Apart from that, we also want to offer some online videos, that we found helpful. Here's a grief practice led by Prentis Hemphill 'On the other side of grief' at the RITA Summit in 2023 and another interview with them on meeting emotions with curiosity.

If this, right now, is not an option for you and you are looking for something to do for yourself now, here are a few recommendations - don't worry about following them all.

1. Create a container for yourself. Decide that you will give yourself some time and space to feel. Take care of practicalities necessary to avoid interruptions or distractions. Find or set up the space so you feel held.

2. Anchor yourself with support. There are many different ways in which you may feel supported. By going outside to a place that feels supportive. By having some objects close to you that you like. We can also recommend lighting a candle and having a bowl of water with you and to be in relationship with these elements as you grieve. Perhaps by calling or texting some people to let them know. Perhaps by asking your ancestors to be with you.

3. Don't force yourself to feel - the things that want to come up will come up. If nothing comes up, that itself is part of how you feel and how you are doing and giving space to the numbness can be a wonderful experience.

4. Move and let it flow. Try getting in touch with the places in your body where you can locate the feelings and move in connection with that place.

5. Check in with the ground and how it's holding you, carrying your weight. Allow yourself to let go perhaps.

6. Sometimes opening a window helps if feelings are stuck.

7. It can at points be great to also connect to your dignity. Find the full height of your body and to see how you can feel even if you are in your full height and dignity.

An Introduction to Working with our Bodies - Somatic Practice

Our bodies are the foundation of our existence, serving as the primary interface with the world. They mediate and process all our experiences, including sensory perception, emotions, and thoughts. Every aspect of our identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability, is intimately connected to how our bodies are perceived by society. Our bodies are the medium through which we express our values and engage with the world. Therefore, a holistic approach to resilience involves somatic practices, which focus on working with our bodies to enhance our well-being and connect with our values and information. Unfortunately, Western culture tends to prioritise rationality

over our felt and sensory experiences, leading to a disconnection from our bodies and the information they provide. This disconnection hampers our ability to process stress and inhibits our capacity for awareness and empathy, critical components of resilience. Thus, we must embark on a journey of embodiment, becoming more conscious of bodily sensations and feelings, as well as reconnecting with our bodies.

What causes disconnection from our bodies?
Oppressive societal norms and standards shape our relationship with our bodies, creating a climate of self-disgust and fear. Messages conveyed through social media, cultural representations, and daily interactions inundate us with unrealistic and harmful ideals regarding age, body shape, skin colour, gender expression, and attractiveness. This can lead to body hatred, discomfort, and avoidance as we try to conform to these norms.

Traumatic relational experiences, such as those influenced by patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, and ableism, can leave physical and emotional scars that manifest as body disconnection. These experiences can include physical harm, sexual abuse, and violence, all of which may lead to anxiety, mistrust, and physical tension. As a result, we seek to avoid our bodily experiences, breaking the connection and reducing awareness.

Overstimulation, lethargy, and addictive behaviours are also factors in body disconnection. In today's fast-paced, screen-centric world, we often experience sensory overload and mental or physical exhaustion, leading to states of stress and adrenal activation. To cope, we withdraw from bodily sensations and numb ourselves to discomfort, which, combined with sedentary lifestyles and a lack of physical activity, results in detachment and desensitisation. In some cases, addictive behaviours like overconsumption of food and media, substance abuse, and other forms of avoidance further disconnect us from our bodies, hindering our ability to stay present and embodied.

Reconnection and Resilience

Reinvigoration, energy, aliveness, and pleasure: Reconnecting with our bodies revitalizes our resilience. Often, we suppress our body experiences, emotions, and energy, creating a state of numbness and tension. Reconnection unlocks this suppressed energy, offering newfound vitality. We become more open to experiences, intensifying our enthusiasm, interest,

care, and pleasure, even though it makes us more sensitive to challenging aspects of life.

Broadening the scope of awareness: Somatic awareness provides valuable feedback, enhancing our ability to make choices that support resilience, especially related to burnout, trauma, stress, and anxiety. It also enriches our relational skills, allowing us to better understand and connect with others.

Integration, integrity, and embodying values: Reconnecting with our bodies helps integrate our experiences into a coherent whole, fostering congruence, continuity, and alignment with our values. This integration enhances our capacity to manage tensions and act in harmony with our values. Embodied practices also contribute to dismantling patterns of oppression at the micro-level of our actions and movements. By reshaping these patterns, we can raise awareness and transform the unconscious reproduction of systemic oppressions, promoting a sense of agency. Furthermore, the embodiment of our vitality and boundaries empowers us to become free and flourishing agents, empowering ourselves to a new level.

Bodywork and Somatic Practice

Bodywork and somatic practice aim to enhance our felt body connection, increase awareness, integration, energy, and sensitivity to life experiences. These practices help us access body-states of ease, relaxation, centeredness, grounding, and balance. They improve our capacity to moderate, process, and respond to various stimuli, ultimately enhancing resilience.

Basic Self-Care: Attend to the basics by ensuring regular movement, exercise, quality rest, nutritious eating, and other bodily needs, including sexual connection and touch. Basic self-care is crucial for relaxing the body, supporting connection, and promoting awareness. If basic needs remain unmet over extended periods, it's essential to strategize and change conditions that prevent meeting these needs.

Exercise: Regular exercise is beneficial for unlocking energy flow, releasing well-being chemicals, and helping the body relax and rest. Activities such as running, swimming, walking, stretching, sports, and dance can be transformative, especially for those with sedentary work routines.

Body-Awareness Practices: The deeper benefits of somatic practices lie in the relationship between the body and awareness. These practices uncover emotional richness, create an integrated body-mind connection, release tension, and help discover the depths of one's being. Just five minutes of daily Centring or Body Scanning can significantly impact well-being.

Common Somatic Practices: Examples of somatic practices include meditation, mindfulness, Focusing, authentic movement, Feldenkrais, body-mind centring, Tai Chi, Tension Release Exercises (TRE), feminist self-defense, martial arts, yoga, and massage.

Many activities and practices that we mention and the methodology that we use, particularly those in chapters like Awareness and Emotional Literacy or Bodywork, draw upon traditions and practices from the global South or non-Western contexts. Using such practices without proper care can perpetuate post/neo-colonial dynamics, and it's crucial to avoid cultural appropriation (defined as the "misuse of a group's art and culture by someone with the power to redefine that art and, in the process, divorce it from the people who originally created it"). As such we want to honour these long held traditions and thank the people that have carried them and shared them.

Centering Practice

Here is a [5 minute video](#) of a guided practice for being centered, connected and on purpose.

Trauma-Informed Practice

In recent years, the recognition of trauma's profound impact on individuals and groups involved in solidarity and activism work has grown. People in these roles frequently encounter trauma, whether through personal experiences of oppression, witnessing harm and discrimination, or facing violence and repression. Trauma, stemming from oppressive systems and institutions, poses a significant threat to resilience. Awareness of trauma's effects reveals how it obstructs, confuses, disempowers, and disconnects individuals and groups. Recognizing this, we must develop strategies for addressing and transforming the impacts of trauma to empower our work and organisations. This section presents trauma-informed practices and strategies.

Understanding Trauma Trauma arises from overwhelming experiences where one's natural defence responses are thwarted, leaving residual energy that disrupts the body, thoughts, memory, and emotions. Trauma can result from both severe events and sustained exposure to disempowerment and oppression. A nuanced understanding of trauma as a spectrum of experience intensity is helpful for cultivating care, patience, and awareness.

Trauma-Informed Practices and Strategies In this handbook, we share some practices to help individuals engage with and process trauma. These practices focus on safely releasing emotional and physical pain, softening defensive patterns, restoring body awareness, rebalancing the nervous system, processing overwhelm, and creating supportive group cultures. Building trauma-informed groups and spaces involves psychoeducation, affirming our

inherent capabilities, creating safe conditions, supporting body connectivity, encouraging emotional connection, and regulating nervous system states. In some cases, professional therapeutic support may be necessary, but peer-to-peer approaches and cultures of care can also play crucial roles in addressing trauma. Building safe conditions, trust, and supportive relationships is paramount, as healing from trauma requires empowerment and connection. Group practices for trauma processing should consider the context, power dynamics, and diverse experiences within the group.

Strengthening Our Capacity to Create Trauma-Informed Groups and Spaces

1. **Psychoeducation**: Understanding the physiological processes related to trauma helps make sense of difficulties that may arise in groups.
2. **Affirming Our Own Capabilities**: Recognizing our innate capacity to work with trauma fosters resilience.
3. **Creating Safe Enough Conditions**: Establishing trust and group cohesion creates spaces for healing.
4. **Supporting Body Connectivity and Somatic Awareness**: Developing the ability to recognize and transform patterns of tension related to trauma is vital for healing.
5. **Encouraging Emotional Connection and Being With What We Feel**: Feeling and releasing the tension around difficult emotions helps prevent suppression.
6. **Regulating our Nervous System States**: Understanding the nervous system's responses to trauma and developing practices for up-regulation and down-regulation can help manage stress and trauma responses effectively.

Guilt, Shame and Witnessing Harm

Human interaction involves non-verbal communication through attunement and resonance, which can both soothe and make us vulnerable. Activists often witness suffering, leading to secondary trauma. This indirect stress is particularly felt by climate activists and those working in humanitarian fields, as they are constantly aware of global issues, which can be overwhelming.
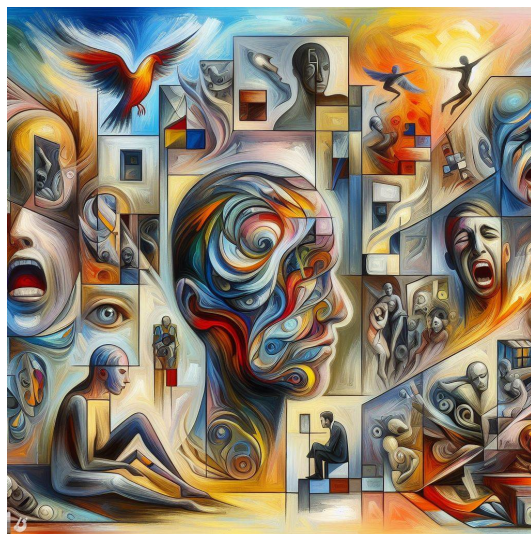
Coping strategies include:

1. **Constant Activity**: Staying busy to avoid dealing with cumulative stress.
2. **Denial and Numbing Out**: Disconnecting from feelings or using substances to minimise responses.
3. **Disengagement**: Avoiding feelings of helplessness and moral injury.
4. **Displaced Emotion**: Redirecting feelings in other ways, potentially causing harm.

These strategies may offer temporary relief but often lead to disconnection or overload. Ignoring the body's needs can result in stress-related health issues. Activists may experience despair, cynicism, and disillusionment, contributing to burnout. The combination of unprocessed emotions, continuous stress, and isolation is a common cause of deep burnout. Recognizing and processing these aspects is crucial for sustainable activism.

Guilt and Shame as obstacles to resilient activism

Observations by the Activist Trauma Support Network highlight the complex mix of guilt, shame, and secondary trauma faced by volunteers. This is exacerbated by denial of symptoms, societal and cultural pressures, and reluctance to practice self-care. Understanding and addressing these aspects of secondary trauma is crucial for effective regenerative practice.

Climate activists often grapple with the awareness of their unearned privileges like race, class, and nationality, especially when confronted with the suffering and marginalisation of others. This awareness, combined with the realisation of being part of damaging systems of production and consumption, can lead to discomfort, guilt, and a sense of complicity. In response, some activists deny themselves care and support in an attempt to 'cancel' their privilege, a tendency especially noted among white-identified or white-passing individuals in climate justice work.

Staci Haines describes 'over-accountability' as shame arising from feeling overwhelmed in impossible situations, leading to self-blame for things beyond one's control. In "The Politics of Trauma," Haines notes that this form of shame leads to polarisation and immobilising guilt rather than constructive action.

This cycle of self-sacrifice, feeling undeserving of care, and neglect of emotional wellbeing often leads to burnout. Such behaviours not only undermine the activists' intentions but also strain group dynamics and reduce overall effectiveness.

Antidoting Guilt and Shame

To address unhelpful guilt and shame, we must understand injustices within a broad power and social change analysis, knowing where our responsibility starts and ends. Recognizing internalized blame and judgement helps use our privilege effectively and in true solidarity. Acknowledging the pervasive, historically conditioned suffering

and the complex process of societal transformation is vital. This requires patience alongside passion for justice, balancing suffering awareness with our limited agency.

Emotional literacy and reflection on our role in social change strengthen our capacity to differentiate between healthy remorse and debilitating guilt. Remorse involves recognizing and intending to change behavior, while guilt implies an intrinsic flaw.

Regenerative Practice around Secondary Trauma

To address secondary trauma, we need to unpack cultural individualism, embrace mutual support, and use relational tools for emotional overload and stress. Key approaches include:

1. **Awareness and Respecting Experience**: Recognize and respect the impact of witnessing injustice on ourselves and others. Practices like contemplation and exercise help process emotions and relieve stress.

2. **Practicing Solidarity with Ourselves and Others**: Emphasize positive self-regard to transform our relationship with our work and maintain sustainable responsibility.

3. **Spaces for Processing Experience**: Create safe spaces for emotional processing, whether alone or with others, and foster a culture where rest and stepping back are valued.

4. **Shared Responsibility for Action**: Keep aware of the broader socio-political context and collective efforts to avoid self-blame and savior behaviors. Moving towards shared accountability and political solidarity requires supportive relationships and group cultures.

5. **Sustaining Meaningful Narratives**: How we view our actions and their impacts greatly affects our wellbeing. Viewing challenges as opportunities for growth and expressing values through actions, as suggested by Rebecca Solnit's "Hope in the Dark," can alter our experience positively.

Looking towards Collectives

Cultivating a Culture of Collective Strength and Resilience

Resilience within groups and organisations extends far beyond individual tenacity; it's the tapestry woven from the collaboration and collective spirit of its members. This fabric of cooperation is essential, providing the platform where collective strength and social transformation can flourish.

Essentials for Nurturing Resilient Groups

In the realm of activist engagement, our group dynamics and organisational ethos form the backbone of our effectiveness. They shape our identity, guide our relationships, and influence our ability to learn and act. Recognizing the interconnectedness of our causes and actions, we commit to collaboration, standing against the tide of individualism that pervades our society.

Yet, the challenge of working together is inherent — we are diverse, with varying needs and sometimes conflicting behaviors. The health of our group can be compromised, affecting resilience and the broader mission of activism. Addressing this, we look to the knowledge and skills that can fortify our group culture against the pressures that threaten it.

Sustaining Resilient Activist Groups

What breathes life into our groups, what fuels their resilience, may sometimes feel elusive. Still, by nurturing key aspects of our communal life, we enhance our chances for adaptability and rejuvenation in the face of challenges.

1. **Vision and Purpose Clarification** At the core of every resilient group lies a clear, shared sense of purpose. This is the compass that guides our collective energies and serves as a beacon during tumultuous times.

2. **Mindful Group Formation** Conscious attention to how a group forms, its culture, boundaries, and membership, sets the stage for aligned energies and expectations. We adopt learning as a foundational principle, framing group culture as a space for exploration and growth.

3. **Embracing an Action-Learning Approach** A resilient group is one that learns from every action and adapts. It's about fostering responsiveness and adaptability — the lifeblood of resilience.

4. **Participatory Process Awareness** Understanding the ebb and flow of group dynamics and the power plays within is vital. By anticipating conflict and embracing it as part of a creative journey, we bolster our group's resilience.

5. **Balancing Act** Task, process, and relationship — maintaining a balance between these elements is crucial. While tasks may dominate our focus, the processes we employ and the relationships we cultivate are equally important for a group's longevity and success.

6. **Working with Power** Addressing power dynamics is a significant challenge. We must develop the skills and courage to confront these issues, listen to one another, and collectively devise strategies. Creative and respectful engagement reduces fear and triggers, fostering individual and group empowerment. Resilience involves not only dismantling harmful power dynamics but also creating empowering environments where everyone can thrive, benefiting from the richness of intersectionality.

7. **Making Decisions Well** Effective decision-making is crucial in groups and organisations. Good practices can lead to accountability, creativity, and a sense of collaborative synergy, making the process enjoyable and fulfilling.

8. **Working with Conflict** Conflict is inevitable, but with the right skills, it can be managed constructively. Learning to engage with conflict and having a clear 'justice system' within a group are important for maintaining harmony.

9. **Working with Teams and 'Types'** Embracing diversity in teams can prevent misunderstandings and conflict. Understanding and celebrating differences can enhance group performance and energy.

10. **Strategic Thinking and Planning** Strategic planning turns vision into action, avoiding confusion and wasted effort. Developing these skills can make groups more responsive and reduce the time spent on tasks.

11. **Strengthening Self and Collective Care** Self and collective care are vital for long-term success and for preventing burnout and conflict. Nurturing spaces help people feel connected and appreciated, enhancing teamwork.

12. **Skilful Communication** Communication shapes group culture. Kind, helpful, and harmonious communication, along with good listening, can mitigate conflict and foster resilience.

13. **Cultivating Awareness and Emotional Literacy** Awareness and emotional literacy are fundamental for positive group dynamics. They enable creative engagement and are skills that can be developed through practice.

Each group is unique and demands specific focus at different junctures. By applying these principles thoughtfully, we can consciously craft a culture that is robust, balanced, and resilient.

Active Solidarity, Equity, and Empowerment

In the context of our work within a global system of oppression, our focus is on addressing power imbalances and structural oppression within our groups and organisations. This involves recognizing and transforming systems of privilege and discrimination based on gender, race, ability, and other factors. By actively practising solidarity, equity, and empowerment, we aim to create more inclusive and empowering spaces while fostering trust and resilience.

What it Means

Active solidarity, equity, and empowerment encompass efforts to dismantle existing power dynamics related to various systems of oppression, such as capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. These practices focus on internal group dynamics and organizational structures to challenge and change oppressive patterns.

How to Practice

1. **Basic Education**: Ensure everyone has a foundational understanding of how power dynamics related to gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability influence group dynamics. Avoid relying on marginalized individuals to educate others.
2. **Acknowledging Power and Privilege**: Foster awareness of social privilege and how it shapes interactions within the group. Recognize that privilege is often invisible to those who have it.
3. **Emotional Awareness and Trust-Building**: Develop emotional intelligence to navigate issues of wounding, defensiveness, and discomfort. Building trust may be a slow process, especially in groups with histories of oppression and discrimination.
4. **Addressing Oppressive Behavior and Conflicts**: Address oppressive behavior with consideration for the well-being of affected individuals and the group as a whole. Choose appropriate strategies, whether group discussions, individual conversations, or a combination.
5. **Feedback and Accountability**: Embrace the inevitability of making mistakes and create structures for sharing experiences and giving feedback. Motivate actions from a place of commitment to positive change rather than fear of error.
6. **Moving Beyond Polarisation**: Challenge dualistic thinking and avoid simplistic categorizations. Acknowledge the complexities and tensions inherent in addressing oppression while maintaining discernment.

Active solidarity, equity, and empowerment involve ongoing, nuanced work that aims to create more just and inclusive communities and organisations.

Identity and Activism

Activist identity formation is crucial for movement building, offering a sense of empowerment, belonging, and meaning. However, it also presents challenges that can lead to burnout and reduced effectiveness. Three modalities of identity formation are identified:

1. **Empowering Identities**: Created around shared political or social endeavours, these identities enhance personal and collective agency and community.
2. **Limiting Identities**: Arise when empowering identities become rigid, hindering adaptability, connections, and alliances, and leading to depletion.
3. **Liberating Identities**: Develop by moving beyond limiting tendencies, embracing flexibility, diversity, and responsiveness, aiding in radical transformation.

Political struggle involves forming identities like feminist, environmentalist, or socialist, which mobilise action and define communities. These identities are essential in realising social change but can also hinder it by becoming rigid or exclusionary.

Identity construction involves both inclusion and exclusion. While inclusion fosters belonging and empowerment, exclusion can lead to conflict but is also necessary for social change. However, excessive exclusion can result in unhealthy polarisation and 'othering.'

Limiting Identities in Activism: These manifest as exclusionary subcultures, often sidelining broader socio-political goals for group perpetuation. They can lead to internal group conflict and fragmentation across movements.

Liberating Identities: These are empowering identities held with awareness and flexibility. They enable activists to navigate inclusion and exclusion without falling into polarisation. Liberating identities acknowledge the provisional nature of our identities and promote growth, understanding, and empathy within the activist community.

Activist identities, influenced by various factors like identity politics and different strategies for transformation, contribute to the diversity of social movements. Liberating identities allow for creative engagement with this diversity, transforming potential conflicts into generative tensions and contributing to a more vibrant, resilient movement ecology.

The Ecology of Resilience

Ways of Seeing

Our views and beliefs, whether unconscious or explicit, strongly influence our activism and solidarity work. Reflecting on these beliefs can help us identify and let go of unhelpful views, recognize their provisional nature, and hold them lightly, enhancing our ability to learn and adapt. This self-awareness is key to building resilient and regenerative approaches.

Key Views Shaping Activist Practice:

1. **Human Nature**: Our ideologies are often based on core beliefs about human nature, whether inherently selfish or benevolent, competitive or cooperative. These views colour our trust in others and our activist goals.

2. **Essentialism and Conditionality**: Beliefs about whether human traits are innate or socially constructed affect our ability to forgive and support change in others.

3. **Racism, Patriarchy, and Oppression**: Recognizing and challenging these ingrained societal views is crucial in our personal and organisational development.

4. **Self-Views**: Influenced by childhood narratives and socialisation, our self-view can empower or disempower us, affecting how we engage in activism.

5. **Social Change Theories**: Assumptions about how change occurs, whether from the ground up or top down, gradually or suddenly, shape our strategic approach.

6. **Causality and Complexity**: Simplistic views of causality can limit our understanding of complex social dynamics, affecting our perception of agency and impact.

7. **Individualism**: Balancing individual responsibility with collective action and interdependence is crucial for effective collaboration.

8. **Time and History**: Understanding our views about historical directionality helps us navigate between hope and hopelessness.

9. **Scarcity, Productivity, and Perfectionism**: Mindsets derived from capitalism, emphasizing continuous improvement and competition, can lead to unhealthy standards and undermine cooperation.

Attending to Our Ways of Seeing: Our views shape our experiences and actions. Being aware of and holding these views lightly allows for greater openness to other perspectives, deeper listening, effective collaboration, and enhanced learning capacity. Recognizing the habitual and unconscious nature of our views can prevent rigidity and defensiveness, fostering a more liberating and creative approach to activism. This awareness increases our ability to choose our paths consciously, rather than being driven by unconscious biases.

How we can practise

Acknowledging the Partial and Provisional Nature of Views Recognizing that our views are partial and provisional helps us hold them lightly. This understanding allows us to see our views as functional approximations rather than absolute truths, acknowledging that the world is more complex than our perceptions.

Understanding Why We Hold On Realising that our views are part of our psychological and existential survival strategies explains why changing them can be unsettling. This change often involves deepening self-awareness, emotional literacy, and creating safe spaces for letting go of old views.

Noticing the Indicators Being aware of physical tension or emotional rigidity can indicate we're holding onto views too tightly. Recognizing these signs helps us explore and possibly revise our tightly held beliefs.

Optimising Multiple Perspectives Rather than discarding certain views, it's about balancing and applying them contextually. It involves balancing autonomy with interdependence, linear thinking with systems thinking, and short-term planning with long-term perspectives.

Dialogue, Inquiry, and Analysis Engaging in group discussions, critical inquiry, and non-polarizing debate helps deepen self- and group-awareness of our views. Avoiding echo chambers is crucial in genuinely testing and evolving our beliefs.

Creating Space for Reflection Spaces for reflection, where we suspend the need for immediate answers and allow curiosity to guide us, are vital for deepening awareness. Though less 'productive,' this reflective practice is essential for personal growth.

Positive Association Having supportive friends and associates who encourage our potential and offer feedback on our blind spots with kindness is key to shifting entrenched perspectives, especially about ourselves. Such positive environments aid in adopting more empowering and liberating viewpoints.

Ecology of Social Movements

The Ecology of Social Movements

In building deep activist resilience, attention must be paid to networks and movement levels. This involves fostering solidarity, cooperation, and support, while managing conflicts within social movements. An ecological approach to social movements recognizes a diversity of actors and roles, emphasizing the interconnectedness and multiplicity within movements, crucial for collective agency and radical transformation.

Why an Ecology of Social Movements?

Mario Diani defines social movements as networks of informal interactions among diverse individuals and groups engaged in conflict based on a shared identity. However, an ecological approach goes beyond this, accommodating non-aligned, even antagonistic identities within a movement. This diversity is key to building the collective agency needed for transformation. A healthy social movement field thrives on diverse identities, strategies, and roles, contributing to resilience and effectiveness.

Diverse Strategies, Identities, Roles, and Actors Reflecting on diverse contributions to movements, we consider transformative strategies, roles, capabilities, activism's interface with everyday life, and various issues and struggles.

1. Transformative Strategies

Different strategies for transformation include:

    a. **Creating Alternatives Within the System**: Linked to the Social Democratic tradition, this approach involves expanding social power while sometimes strengthening aspects of the existing system.

    b. **Building Alternatives Outside the System**: Associated with the Anarchist tradition, this strategy focuses on developing new forms of social empowerment in the margins of society.

c. **Ruptural Strategies**: Related to Socialist/Communist traditions, these strategies involve organizing for a radical break from existing social structures.

These diverse strategies, aligning with various political traditions and cultures, all contribute to the broader aim of radical transformation in contemporary practice. From municipalism to autonomous social centers and ecovillage movements, each approach offers unique value to the ecology of social movements. In his Envisioning Real Utopias, Wright offers the following schematic representation:

TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGY	ASSOCIATED POLITICAL TRADITION	PIVOTAL COLLECTIVE ACTORS	STRATEGIC LOGIC IN RESPECT TO THE STATE	STRATEGIC LOGIC IN RESPECT TO CAPITALIST CLASS	METAPHORS OF SUCCESS
RUPTURAL	Revolutionary socialist/ communism	Classes organised on political parties	Attack the state	Confront the bourgeoisie	War (victories and defeats)
INTERSTITIAL METAMORPHOSIS	Anarchist	Social movements	Build alternatives outside of the state	Ignore the bourgeoisie	Ecological competition
SYMBIOTIC METAMORPHOSIS	Social democratic	Coalitions of social forces and labour	Use the state: struggle on the terrain of the state	Collaborate with the bourgeoisie	Evolutionary adaptations

All three seem to imply different forms of organisation and distinct ways of conceptualising and working with power. In this sense the connotations and practices of leadership are likely to be quite distinct and the differences in their analysis of power lead to distinct types of organisational culture.

2. Diverse Roles in Movements

Diversity in movements also involves a wide range of roles. Bill Moyer's typology identifies four key roles: rebel, reformer, citizen, and change agent,

each playing a significant part across different phases of a movement's life cycle.

Expanding on Moyer's work, Natasha Adams' research on environmental and LGBTQIA+ movements in the UK introduces additional roles. Her extended typology includes news media, thought leaders, artistic and cultural production, and roles in grassroots and professional NGO organising. This broadens the scope of a social movement to encompass actors like news media and thought leaders, who play crucial roles even if not traditionally identified with the movement.

3. Movement Capabilities

To be effective, social movements need a range of capabilities. Drawing from Zeynep Tufekci's framework in "Twitter and Teargas," we identify six key capabilities: Narrative, Disruptive, Institutional, Cooperation, Resilience, and Prefigurative. These capabilities categorize diverse contributions within movements:

- **Narrative Capability**: Movements must effectively tell stories, analyze conditions causing injustices, articulate visions, and propose actions. These narratives often underpin a shared sense of purpose and collective identity but can also contain competing elements.
- **Disruptive Capability**: Visible actions like massive demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, occupations, and direct action are crucial. They pressure systems, raise costs for the status quo, and escalate tension to make demands heard.
- **Institutional Capability**: As highlighted by Tufekci and Chantal Mouffe, movements need to engage with institutional politics to constitute a systemic threat and achieve lasting impact. Movements lacking this capability may struggle to make sustainable changes.

- **Cooperative Capability**: Effective change requires alliances and collaboration between diverse groups. Skills in bridging, aligning, and cooperating with various actors are essential for building collective power.
- **Resilience Capability**: Central to this manual, it involves sustaining motivation and weathering repression as movements build power. For further details, refer to the sections on Regenerative Activism and Activist Psychosocial Resilience.
- **Prefigurative Capability**: Movements should embody the social relations they advocate for, including practices of care, anti-oppression, equitable power dynamics, and decision-making processes.

Each capability relies on a variety of contributions and skills, from front-line activities to behind-the-scenes efforts, encompassing all aspects of movement work.

4. The Interface with Everyday Life Different movement organizations interact with everyday life and social routines in various ways, influencing their economic models and public engagement. Laurence Cox identifies several contexts in which activism occurs:

- **Workplace-based Movements**: Activities like peasant and labor struggles or resistance actions during historical events.
- **Community-based Movements**: Organizing within residential or social communities, including working-class, LGBTQI+, and ethnic or religious movements.
- **Professional or Full-time Activism**: Involves activists employed by movement organizations like parties, unions, NGOs, etc.
- **"Leisure" Activism**: Movements taking place in social spaces typically reserved for leisure activities.

Each context represents different forms of institutionalization, affecting aspects of activist culture, economic relations, power dynamics, resourcing, and influence.

5. Issues and Struggles The most visible differences in movements often revolve around specific issues or causes. While these struggles can appear competing, there's growing recognition of their interconnectedness and the shared goal of contesting power for a more just future. Understanding the systemic injustice linking various issues, movements increasingly focus on transversal organizing and building solidarity across diverse, interlinked struggles to effectively address complex systems of oppression.

Movement Timelines Activity

Purpose: This activity helps you understand social movements within a historical context, recognize yourself as a historical subject, and develop awareness of the continuity and discontinuity in movement life.

Preparation: Choose a social movement you feel connected to and research its key events, stretching back at least a couple of decades.

Instructions:

1. **Create Your Timeline**:
   - Draw a simple timescale on a large sheet of paper.
   - Mark significant dates and events, including those within the movement, affecting stakeholders or adversaries, and contextual events like elections or conflicts.
   - Allocate more space for recent periods with detailed events.
2. **Add Graph Lines**:
   - Turn your timeline horizontally and mark a plus sign (+) in the top left corner and a minus sign (-) in the bottom left corner.

- Plot the rise and fall of the following factors along the timeline with different colors for each:
    - Power of the movement (momentum, energy, numbers, support)
    - Internal cohesion (impacts of conflict, clarity of direction)
    - Progress on the issue
    - Opposition (push-back, resistance, repression)

3. **Reflect and Discuss**:
    - Reflect on what contributed to progress or lack thereof, how you measure power, forms of opposition, any emerging patterns, surprises, curiosities, and current relevance.
    - Share your findings with a group or partner, discussing new insights gained.

Conclusion: Reflect on the ongoing nature of learning from historical perspectives. Emphasize how understanding the past can inform and enhance resilience and strategic planning in social movements.

Movement Mapping Activity

Purpose: This activity helps you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your social movements, recognize your role, appreciate diverse contributions, and consider strategic interventions for resilience and effectiveness.

Preparation:

- Choose a social movement you feel connected to and research key actors, events, and dynamics.
- Gather materials: A1 sheets, pens, paper, scissors, glue/tape.

Steps:

1. **Define Your Movement**: Choose a movement and define its geographic context, like 'European Climate Justice Movement'.
2. **List Key Actors**: Identify organizations, groups, individuals, and other elements involved in the movement.
3. **Create Actor Circles**: Cut paper circles representing each actor, with the size indicating their level of power or influence within the movement.
4. **Categorize and Symbolize**: Identify key categories and characteristics relevant to your movement (e.g., types of organizations, movement capabilities, roles). Assign a symbol for each characteristic.
5. **Label the Circles**: Mark each actor circle with symbols representing their characteristics and roles.
6. **Analyze Balance and Spread**: Examine the distribution of characteristics across your circles, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the movement.
7. **Assemble the Map**: Arrange the circles on a large sheet, drawing lines to show relationships between actors. Use different colors or styles to indicate the nature of these relationships (e.g., strong, weak, conflictual).
8. **Analyze the Map**: Reflect on your map, considering the distribution of power, diversity, strengths, weaknesses, and potential new relationships or alliances. Think about expanding boundaries to include additional actors that could contribute to the movement.

Debriefing:

- Share your insights and key learnings with others.
- Consider how this new understanding can be applied to your social change efforts.

Conclusion: Reflect on the ongoing nature of learning about movement dynamics and how these insights can enhance your planning and actions.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

CONNECTION

PEOPLE TO
NATURE

PEOPLE TO
THEMSELVES
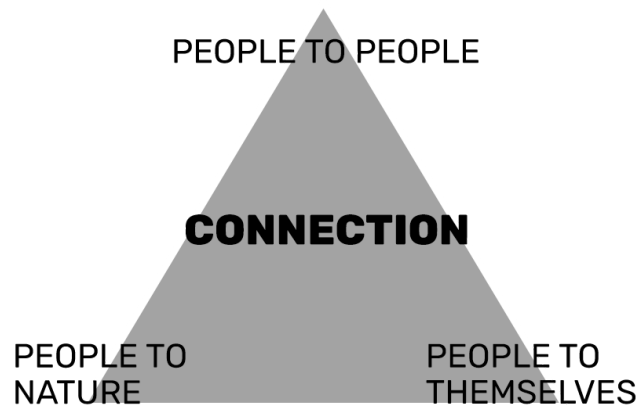
Nature Connection for Resilience

In a society marked by disconnection, reconnecting with nature emerges as a vital source of psychological, interpersonal, and social resilience. The industrialised, urbanised nature of our lives often limits our interaction with the natural world. However, actively engaging with nature can be restorative, empowering, and offer deep nourishment. It helps process emotions, integrate experiences, and reawaken senses.

Aspects of Nature Connection Practice:

1. **Nourishing and Enlivening**: Spending time in nature, whether through short walks or longer immersion, offers a break from productivity-focused lifestyles. It revitalises our senses and provides restorative experiences.
2. **New Perspectives**: Nature connection shifts our perspective, helping us see ourselves as part of a larger ecological system. This understanding can counteract feelings of isolation and urgency, offering a broader, more empowering view of our role in social change.

3. **Nature's Wisdom**: Observing nature reveals effective, efficient strategies and adaptations. For example, the resilience of trees in storms teaches us about rootedness, flexibility, and collective support. Similarly, exploring the edges between different habitats in nature can inspire us to embrace diverse tactics and collaborations in social movements, leading to greater impact and growth.

Applying these lessons from nature to our activism can foster more resilient, effective, and regenerative movements. [Adrienne Maree Brown](#)'s "Emergent Strategy" exemplifies this approach, emphasising nature-aligned resilience practices.

Edward Abbey, in "The Monkey Wrench Gang," advises balancing activism with enjoyment of nature. Embracing adventure and pleasure in the natural world is crucial, promising a victory over the disconnected, desk-bound lifestyle of modern society.

Sit Spot Activity: Connecting with Nature

The sit spot is a simple yet profound practice for connecting with nature. Choose a spot in nature and visit it repeatedly to observe its rhythms, patterns, and the life that passes through. Whether it's in sunshine, rain, day, night, summer, winter, or around a storm, each visit can deepen your connection and understanding of this place.

How to Do It:

1. **Choose Your Spot:** Find a place in nature that feels right for you. It doesn't have to be perfect. Just ensure it's accessible, relatively quiet, and comfortable. Avoid areas that are too busy or difficult to reach.

2. **Regular Visits:** If possible, visit your sit spot daily or as regularly as you can. Even if you can't return often, a single visit can still be beneficial. Over time, try to experience your spot at different times and in various weather conditions to deepen your connection.

3. **Minimise Distractions:** Bring as little as possible with you. Essentials might include something to sit on, waterproof clothing, water, a notebook, or binoculars, but try to keep it minimal to avoid distractions.

4. **Time for Observation:** Spend at least 15 minutes in your spot initially. This duration allows the natural environment to resume its normal rhythm after your arrival. Gradually, you can increase this time as you become more comfortable and your attention span grows.
5. **Reflect and Share:** After your sit spot session, reflect on your experience. What did you notice? How did you feel? If you're comfortable, share your observations with someone else. Discussing your experience can enrich your learning and provide new insights.

Benefits of the Sit Spot:

- Deepens your connection with nature.
- Enhances awareness of natural cycles and wildlife.
- Offers personal insights and a sense of peace.
- Can be a grounding and restorative practice.

Remember, the sit spot is adaptable to your lifestyle and can be a powerful tool for nurturing a deeper bond with the natural world around you.

Resilience in the Face of Threats, Attacks and Repression

To sustain our organisations and movements, it's crucial to address the risk of attacks from State and non-State actors who oppose our transformative efforts. Understanding these attacks, analysing risks, and developing protective strategies are essential for building radical resilience.

Key Concepts and Strategies:

1. **Social Reproduction**: Recognizing how social systems maintain themselves helps understand attacks within the broader framework of systemic self-preservation. This involves passive reproduction (everyday activities reinforcing the system) and active reproduction (institutional mechanisms designed for system maintenance).
2. **Suppression and Repression**: Attacks aim to limit our working spaces, including physical, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental, and mental/emotional spaces. Understanding these attacks as mechanisms to inhibit action, mobilization, and collective organization is vital.
3. **Analyzing Threats and Developing Security Strategies**: It's crucial to analyze threats realistically, balancing objective data with subjective experiences. Strategies include:
   - **Acceptance**: Creating wider acceptance of our work and legitimacy.
   - **Deterrence**: Deterring opponents by increasing their potential negative consequences.
   - **Protection**: Implementing defensive measures like property security systems and digital protocols.

Acknowledging vulnerabilities and privileges, attending to emotional dimensions, and considering the subjectivity in perceiving threats are important aspects of this process. Tools and exercises can help unpack how these impacts work and develop responsive strategies to strengthen relationships and deepen resilience. Collaboration with security experts like Front Line Defenders, Tactical Tech, and the Holistic Security Collective can also be valuable.

Reflect on Your Responses to Perceived Threats

This activity focuses on recognizing your habitual responses to threats, understanding the diverse reactions within a group, and identifying indicators to assess the existence of threats. It's part of preparing for risk and threat analysis.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Understanding Your Reactions**:
   - Think of a time you felt threatened. Choose an event that's not too overwhelming.
   - Reflect on how you responded. Was this reaction typical for you? Common responses include freezing, flight, complying, tending to others, befriending the aggressor, posturing, fighting, among others.

2. **Group Responses and Awareness**:
   - Consider discussing these responses with your group or a partner. Acknowledging various reactions helps in making informed decisions during challenging circumstances and supports each other effectively.

3. **Identifying Threat Indicators and Information Sources**:
   - Reflect on how you typically assess or identify threats.
   - Consider what your baseline condition is (a stable condition to measure changes).
   - Think about indicators and sources of information you use to identify changes in risk or threat levels. These can include personal experiences, specialist analysis, media, internal reports, and wellbeing indicators.

Emotional Considerations: Reflecting on threats can trigger emotions. Acknowledge these feelings and consider discussing them in a supportive environment. This awareness is integral to analyzing risks and threats effectively.

Conclusion: Remember, understanding your responses to threats and how you perceive them is crucial for developing security strategies. Ensure you feel supported as you conclude this activity, especially if difficult emotions have surfaced. This is a step towards more comprehensive risk and threat analysis and strategy development.

How to make changes and apply learning

Integrating transformative learning into our lives and groups presents a significant challenge. This type of learning, which is reflective and holistic, aims not just to acquire knowledge but to change behavior, thinking, and relationships. However, habitual resistance and obstacles often delay the application of new insights and practices. Transformative change requires time, steady application, and clear intention. To support this, it's crucial to plan and intend for the application of learning in practical terms.

Key methods and tools to facilitate this process include:

1. **Action Learning Methodology**: This encourages applying and reflecting on learning to understand its limitations and gain new insights. It involves a cycle of action, reflection, analysis, and planning for future application.
2. **Visioning Exercises**: These help in visualizing future goals and directions, engaging imagination, heart, and body, aiding in decision-making and guiding change.
3. **Resourcing Ourselves for Change**: Identifying supportive conditions like friendships, knowledge, and material resources, and planning to overcome challenges.
4. **Overcoming Obstacles**: Anticipating and planning for foreseeable challenges in personal habits, relationships, funding, and political contexts.
5. **Getting Strategic About It**: Developing strategic thinking skills and plans for long-term transformation, including using tools introduced in 'Taking it Forwards' sessions to apply learning more deeply.

These approaches enable us to make concrete plans and take actionable steps, ensuring the learning translates into effective change in behavior, thinking, and group dynamics.

Getting in touch and further resources

If you're interested in any of the topics and would like further resources and links, check out our website at https://www.rootsofresilience.eu/ressources/ or contact us at contact@rootsofresilience.eu.

Feedback

We would very much appreciate your feedback on the handbook to help us evaluate its impact and learn for the future. Please fill out the form here or contact us at contact@rootsofresilience.eu.