Nothing Wrong with Misery:
The Climate Challenge Through a Transformational Lens

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Overview

• What are we facing?
• How do we respond?
• How do we foster hope?

Source: http://cloudsmartz.com/disaster-recovery-care-for-employees/
The Apocalypse...

... is already here

Richard Tol at IPCC AR5 release: “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”
Global Warming

When his ship first came to Australia, Cook wrote, the natives continued fishing, without looking up. Unable, it seems, to fear what was too large to be comprehended.

Jane Hirshfield
After (2006)
No Time To Lose

450 ppm CO$_2$eq by 2100:
- By 2050: 40-70% emission reduction globally
- By 2100: near 0 (or below)

Source: IPCC 2014
How Close Are We to Staying “Safe”?

Between the Impossible and the Unthinkable

“That is where we are: Stuck between the impossible and the unthinkable. And so for the rest of your life, your job is to make the impossible possible.”

David Roberts, Ted talk (2012)

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pznsPkJy2x8
“Catastrophe. In a nutshell, that’s basically it. The end of the world as we know it.”

“Oh, just devastation. I mean the effects of it are so widespread, and we can’t even anticipate all the effects. So it is scary.”
Between the Impossible and the Unthinkable

Loss of health
Loss of life
Loss of home
Loss of livelihood
Loss of places/sense of place
Loss of social connection
Loss of sense of security
Loss of well-being
Loss of trust in future
Loss of identity
Loss of hope

Photo: Americas.org
What Are We Facing?

- Untold suffering
- Countless endings
  - Environmental
  - Socioeconomic
  - Psycho-cultural
- Wide range of psychological responses – entirely understandable
- Appropriate and inappropriate expressions of responses
- Ill-equipped support systems to assist and navigate the coming transformation

Photos (t-b): sacredactivations.com; Joel Sternfield, Shannon Stapleton/Reuters
The Human Geography of Transformation

Adapted from Bridges (2004)
Approaches to Mental Health “Problems”

Common Practice
- Ignoring, reacting
- Pathologizing
- Individualizing
- “Treating”
- Patronizing

Needed Practice
- Truth-telling, accepting, confronting
- Validating, framing
- Normalizing
- Mapping, supporting
- Empowering
Fostering Psychological Skills for a Transformation

Severance

The courage to transcend cultural norms
Saying yes to change
Failure consciousness
Death consciousness
Being with deep emotions
Reflexivity and asking the big questions

Source: Berzonsky (2016)
Supporting the Transformation with Radical Acts of Courage

"To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing."

- Raymond Williams
Varieties of Hope

Passive Optimism
“Pollyanna Hope”

Active Optimism
“Heroic Hope”

Passive Skepticism
“Stoic Hope”

Active Skepticism
“Grounded Hope”

Active Transform’n
“Radical Hope”

Seven Ingredients of Authentic Hope

1. **Clear-eyed diagnosis**: Where are we at?
2. **Vision of a worthwhile outcome**: What is achievable?
3. **Feasible path**: How can we get from here to there?
4. **Strategy for setbacks and interim goals**: What to do when the going gets tough?
5. **Meaningful role for me**: What can I do?
6. **Call on my highest self**: Who do I most want to be?
7. **Doing it together**: What will you (others) do?
Thank you!

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