

# Facilitator as Rhizome: Community Engaged Learning and Cultivating Hope

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**Keywords:** Community Engaged Learning, Pedagogy, Hope, Facilitation

Our students at universities are facing some of the most complex and urgent problems of our time. As they learn more about the problems we collectively face, they can become paralyzed with anxiety, fear, and despair (Ray, 2020; Kelsey, 2020). How as instructors can we create educational experiences that soothe, support and inspire them to feel prepared to act and supported in their desires to work towards change and collective resilience? (see Wallace *et al*, 2020) Community engaged learning allows students to experience hope as David Orr described: “Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up,” (in Kelsey, 2020). In this workshop I will explore and demonstrate classroom practices, pedagogical approaches and course orientations that help students understand themselves as embedded in networks of communities working for social and ecological change. I will share reflections on fifteen years of community engaged teaching and focus on three essential practices in Community Engaged Learning: classroom as community, commitment to reflection and mentorship, and cultivating reciprocity. For each of these practices I will share specific techniques I employ as a professor in Community Engagement. I will explore what these commitments look like in community engaged classes and our option in community engagement in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Victoria as well as in cocurricular experiential offerings I facilitate supporting students in facing climate anxiety and despair influenced by the work of Joanna Macy’s *Work that Reconnects* and Mark Coleman’s *Awake in the Wild*. I will invite participants to share their techniques and ideas for directing our student experience towards hopeful solutions so we may practice a collective orientation within the session that I have witnessed so fruitful in cultivating hope in my students.

## Resources

Coleman, Mark. (2006). *Awake in the Wild*. Novato: New World Library.

Ray, S. (2020). *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kelsey, E. (2020). *Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.

Macy, J. and Brown, M. (2014). *Coming Back to Life*. Gabriola: New Society Publishers.

Wallace, R.L., Greenburg, J. & Clark, S.G. Confronting anxiety and despair in environmental studies and sciences: an analysis and guide for students and faculty. *J Environ Stud Sci* **10**, 148–155 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13412-020-00609-6>