



GUIDE FOR GROUP LEADERS:

Forming and Leading a
Choosing Earth
Book Study Group

First Edition
May 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in forming and leading a group to explore the book *Choosing Earth*. Many of the challenges facing humanity are collective challenges, so it makes sense that we come together in community to explore our future, the direction our civilization is taking, and the choices before us. Each of us alive today has an essential part to play in guiding our planetary trajectory along a wiser path of healing and maturing. *Choosing Earth* provides a powerful catalyst for collective conversation.

BACKGROUND

This book study guide grew from the workshops and courses created and led by Duane Elgin and his partner and wife, Coleen LeDrew Elgin. Over five years, from 2018 to 2023, Coleen and Duane tested different approaches, themes, and materials for exploring our world in profound transition. We conducted workshops and courses both face-to-face and with online groups and people scattered around the world. Along the way, we worked with many others (acknowledged at the beginning) to refine and develop the curriculum for this Study Course. This guide was developed to support and empower people to organize and lead their study groups.

Before diving into the specifics of the seven sessions, we strongly recommend that group leaders review this handbook to familiarize themselves with the unique content.

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FORMING A STUDY GROUP

Stepping Forward to Host a Group

You can offer this course to an existing group or to a new group that you organize. In our experience, most people are aware of our time of crisis and great transition and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to explore this as a community with others. We have done our best to provide you with all you need to get started:

- 1 A well-developed, seven-session design with engaging inquiries.
- 2 Links to videos of Duane Elgin, the author, sharing specific content and insights.
- 3 Simple facilitation guidance.
- 4 Access to a free, electronic version of *Choosing Earth* as a PDF file.

As you begin preparing to facilitate a group, it's important to recognize that many of us come to this inquiry from a place of privilege. Becoming aware of our privilege (of wealth, education, race, gender, etc.) is essential for a fresh approach and a "beginner's mind" that does not have all the answers but is curious about the questions. Our world in transition is not a "problem to be fixed" but an opportunity to be realized—rising to a new level of collective maturity and balanced living that serves the well-being of all life. This Guide and the course materials are available for educational purposes and not intended for commercial or profit.

Recognizing the Challenge of "Great Transition" Work

Facing profound change, deep uncertainty, and the threat of collapsing civilization can be unsettling and anxiety-producing. This material can be distressing and evoke feelings of loss, grief, anger, anxiety, and hopelessness. Awakening to these feelings is vital to mobilize our inner wisdom, imagination, and resilience. Therefore, people need to have a degree of maturity, self-awareness, and resilience to engage with this material.

When starting a group, it is important to let participants know that complicated feelings may arise, and these are signals we are confronting the material clearly and truthfully. It is normal to experience anxiety, despair, and grief when thinking about existential threats, knotty societal problems, and the suffering in our world. These study groups aim to foster resilience, increase each participant's sense of empowerment, provide a setting to discuss responses—from personal to planetary—and generate a tide of conscious choices for choosing this Earth as our home. This is

a challenging exploration. Please review the preface to the *Choosing Earth* book by Francis Weller. He sets the stage for the learning journey with his exploration of our transition through grief, initiation, and transformation.

Turning towards the truth of mounting interwoven crises is the first step in healing and transforming these problems into opportunities. The truth does set us free—to mobilize our capacity for creativity, cooperation, and choice.

There will be many opportunities to share the psychological impact of these explorations within your group. However, this study group is not intended to be a place for psychological therapy. For some, it may not be time to dive into this challenging inquiry—particularly if they are already dealing with depression, high anxiety, or feeling fragile. It will be up to individual members and group leaders to assess whether the timing is right for members to engage with this material. Therefore, when you are considering whom to invite to the study group, we suggest you keep in mind questions and concerns such as the following:

- Do you have or have you had any psychological issues that might affect your ability to participate in this study group or work with the content?
- Are you feeling emotionally vulnerable or experiencing any unresolved trauma? This doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't participate, but it does mean that you should inquire about possible support in case of challenging experiences that may arise.
- Do you ever experience anxiety or panic attacks that overwhelm your ability to function?

We are grateful for your engagement with this work and your willingness to step into a deeper understanding of what is needed to move through humanity's greatest transition and rise to the opportunity of becoming a member of a mature, planetary civilization.



Key Overarching Learning Objectives

- 1** Participants will expand their understanding of the global crisis facing humanity through a whole systems perspective.
 - 2** Participants will explore what supports transformation and resilience in response to the global crisis.
 - 3** Participants will explore their own relationship to climate change and discover steps they can take and choices they can make that are life affirming.
 - 4** Participants will take part in a community of learners and recognize the importance of building community within their lives.
 - 5** Participants can activate a deep commitment to embodying what they hold most dear so they can align and live from their deepest values.
-

Choosing the Structure for Meetings

Several decisions must be made when forming a study group, such as group size, how often to meet, when and where to meet, and the length of the meetings.

Key considerations include:

■ Group details



ONLINE GROUP TYPE

An **online group** requires basic skills in communication technology (such as Zoom or Skype video conferencing platforms) and some understanding of the nuances of facilitating meetings in an online space.



FACE-TO-FACE GROUP TYPE

A **face-to-face group** in a private home, library, church, community center, or other public facilities.



SIZE OF THE GROUP

An ideal size for a study group is 8-12. If you are a skilled facilitator, you may consider a larger group. The size of the group will affect the level of participation and intimacy that is created, and larger groups usually need higher levels of facilitation to help them run smoothly and ensure everyone is participating.

■ Meeting details



MEETING DURATION

We have found that 90 minutes is the optimal duration for an online group and 2 hours is optimal for face-to-face groups. The session flow document has timing for a 90-minute session. If you are planning a two-hour session, we suggest adding 10 minutes to each of the two inquiries and then saving 10 minutes at the end of the session to reflect on how it was to do the session. What feelings, sensations, and insights did the session evoke?



MEETING FREQUENCY

It could be weekly or every two weeks. We suggest weekly for maintaining connection and continuity.



MEETING SCHEDULE

It can be challenging to discover days and times when people can meet. Try using smart scheduling systems—such as www.Doodle.com—that don't require a lot of emails. Or you can select a time and then invite potential participants.

Preparing to Host a Study Group








Key tasks for the group leader organizing a book study group

- Reading the *Choosing Earth* book and becoming familiar with its content and impact on you.
- Reviewing this handbook to build your confidence and familiarity with it. Making adjustments that you feel will help you lead the group successfully.
- Watching the videos that are part of the course, so you are familiar with the content and how it fits within the course.
- Deciding on your technology needs for online groups, such as Zoom or Skype, or playing the videos on a smart TV in a face-to-face meeting and familiarizing yourself with their use.
- Developing invitations to send to prospective participants (example content is included on the website: <https://choosingearth.org/guide-for-groups/>).
- Communicating regularly with the group to maintain engagement (for example, sending reminders of the next meeting date and the theme to be explored).
- Becoming familiar with the design, flow, and facilitation elements of each session:
 - Welcoming people on arrival.
 - Conducting (or designating another participant to conduct) a brief meditation for settling and connecting as a group.
 - Having participants read excerpts from the reading material and share brief comments about why they chose the excerpt.
 - Using the homework as a check-in process builds group cohesion and shared understanding.
 - Offering both large-group and small-group inquiries.
 - Facilitating whole-group discussions.
 - Describing the reading and exercise assignments.
 - Conducting (or designating another participant to conduct) a closing process for each session—this could be a prayer, a poem, or a simple dedication, such as: “We dedicate our time together to the well-being of all life.”



Structure of the Sessions

We have tested the following basic structure and flow and found it works well with both online and face-to-face groups. This structure can help you and the participants in the learning process.

| | |
|---|--|
|  | Welcome to the session |
|  | Meditation |
|  | Check-in regarding the homework assignment |
|  | Read excerpts |
|  | Questions for reflection and sharing |
|  | Review next session's assignments |
|  | Dedication and close |



Sessions Explained



Welcome

Welcome participants to the session and share the session title. We often let participants know we are happy to see them and appreciate the group being together.



Meditation

We have allocated time for a short meditation at the beginning of each gathering to bring people into a settled and shared consciousness for our time together. We also encourage you to include a closing dedication at the end of the session to consciously complete your time together and to support people in re-entering the world. These important practices encourage an atmosphere of connectedness with one another and the sacred.

Meditation helps individuals and groups settle down and let go of their thinking minds. Meditation can be as simple as a few minutes of silence where we tap into our inner stillness or a moment to take in affirming messages that settle us into a sense of presence and appreciation and encourage a heightened awareness of sensations, feelings, and thoughts that arise during the group. In addition to group meditation, we encourage you as the group leader to meditate for a few minutes prior to each session so you are settled and present when it begins.

We suggest allocating from three to five minutes for the group meditation and giving ample time for the power of silence to be felt. When guiding a meditation, remember your voice is powerful, so don't speak too fast or say too much; instead, bring an unhurried sense of timing to your words. Also, pay attention to the pitch of your voice—lower tones tend to have a more settling effect than higher ones. Your role as group leader is not to tell people what to experience but to encourage them into their experience.

Here are some simple guidelines (depending on the group's level of experience with meditation):

- Invite people to settle into their chairs, feet on the ground, back upright.
- If they wish they can either lower their eyes, or close them, and for on-line calls you can invite them to turn off their video.
- Invite participants to turn their attention inward and to the movement of their breath with slow inhales through the nose and slow exhales through the mouth. After three or four full breaths, you could invite them to breathe normally.

- Invite participants to take a moment to scan their bodies, noticing any sensations, thoughts, or emotions present, and then turn their awareness back to their breathing.
- Tell participants you will sound a chime when it is time to bring the meditation to a close.
- When participants open their eyes and return, watch to make sure everyone is present before you move on.
- Experienced facilitators can offer what feels most aligned with the composition of your group.

Leading a silent meditation is the simplest approach. We all have busy days, and sharing some moments of silence can be refreshing. Let the participants know they will sit silently and still for three minutes and that you will ring a bell when the time has passed. If on Zoom, check that participant mics are silenced so there is no distracting background noise.



Check-in regarding the homework assignment

Each week, participants will have a homework assignment that affords a more personal experience with the learning and time for reflection. It also provides an opportunity for the learning to be more fully integrated. When participants complete the homework, they tend to have a more embodied sense of the material.



Read excerpts

For each session (except Session 7), we suggest allowing some time for participants to read short passages they have selected from the reading assignment. Reading and listening to excerpts can help the group become more grounded in the moment with the material. It also highlights what parts of the material participants find moving, challenging, inspiring, or useful. Within 10 -15 minutes, you can have 4-7 people read an excerpt and make a brief comment about it. Suggesting that people keep comments brief so more participants can read is helpful.



Inquiry

Each session also includes two or more inquiry processes. These inquiries are a central part of the learning, providing space for participants to grapple with the book's content, deepen their understanding, and learn from each other. Some inquiries begin with a time for journaling to help participants reflect and bring to the surface key ideas or insights. We also suggest dyads or triads and large group discussions. Group Leaders can decide whether to go into dyads or stay in the large group. Most participants appreciate the dyads and triads as an opportunity to speak with other participants more intimately. Since some participants don't share as often in large groups, breakouts provide a way for

all participants to speak and listen personally. Breakouts also provide a way for participants to get to know one another.



Review the next session's assignments

We have found it helpful to briefly review the next session's reading and homework assignment before closing the meeting. Even though all participants will get a copy of these assignments at the start of the course, reviewing them helps clarify what is expected and elicits any questions they may have about the assignments.



Dedication

Completing your study session with a dedication is a simple way to bring an expanded sense of appreciation and well-being into the group. You might offer, for example, "We dedicate this inquiry to serving the well-being of all life." Some sample dedications follow, and we encourage you to develop your own expressions of dedication.

-
- *"We dedicate this session to all beings on the planet far and near. May we all awaken to the gift of our planet and to the unique gifts we each can contribute to this time of great transition."*
 - *"We dedicate this inquiry to the teachers, guides, and ancestors who have walked this path before us, whose shoulders we stand on, and whose wisdom is alive within us."*
 - *"We dedicate this inquiry to the youth of the world and the generations that will follow us. May they continue to contribute their unique gifts and feel supported."*
 - *"We dedicate today's exploration to the well-being of all species—both animals and plants—who bring wonder, beauty, and aliveness into our lives."*
-



Preparations for the Initial Study Group Session

- Sign up participants. Make sure to collect both an email address and a phone contact.
- Send a welcome email to participants affirming their courageous choice to explore our challenging future in community with others. Include the following:
 - Dates, times, and location of the sessions.
 - Include the link to the participant course handout: <https://choosingearth.org/guide-for-groups/>
 - Mention they can obtain a copy of *Choosing Earth* as a print version, e-book version, or as a free PDF at the link above.
 - Ask participants to select a brief excerpt from the reading assignment to share with the group (something inspiring, challenging, or meaningful).
 - Include your contact information.
 - Include the reading assignment and homework preparation listed in the Outline for Session 1 - Group Leader Prep.
 - *Optional*—ask participants to send you their bio and photo so you can compile a bio document of participants. Ask them what they would like to be called, and what pronouns they use. Participants can also include email addresses and websites. Sharing the participant bios helps facilitate learning about each other's backgrounds and interests and helps create a sense of community in the group. You may want to wait until the end of the first or second session to request participants send you the information (this way, they have had some time to experience the group and may be more interested in being part of the participant bio document).

Introduce Guidelines to the Group

It's helpful to set a tone and intention for the group conversations. This helps people orientate and can also be beneficial when disagreements arise (going back to the guidelines).

We recommend that you introduce the following guidelines for dialogue in the first session. The group leader can read them or have participants take turns reading a guideline. We suggest pausing after each one is read to address questions, clarify, or simply appreciate how these guidelines create an inclusive and supportive space.

These were adapted from the *Community Groups Handbook* produced by the Institute of Noetic Sciences. The following guidelines are included in the participant handout.

Guidelines for Participating in the Group

- Speak truthfully, from your heart.
- Listen respectfully and deeply without judgement.
- Be attentive to the underlying assumptions and the truths being expressed.
- Engage in friendly disagreement when appropriate and strive to understand the positions of those who disagree with you.
- Welcome silences as they often “speak with unceasing eloquence.”
- Love the questions and let the answers emerge naturally.
- Pay attention to the frequency and duration of your speaking. Be a role model for clarity and brevity. Refrain from interrupting, cross-talking, and commenting on each other’s check-ins.
- Encourage quieter people to engage.

Resources Available for Group Leaders and Participants

The following resources are available for study group leaders and group participants on the Choosing Earth website: <https://choosingearth.org/guide-for-groups/>

- Participant Course Handout with reading and homework assignments
- Content you can use to promote the course
- Example welcome and reminder letters
- Links to short video files to play during the sessions with Duane Elgin
 - Welcome video (can be shared before Session 1)
 - Three Future Pathways (Session 2)
 - Excerpt from documentary Choosing Earth: Choosing Life (Session 3)
 - Living Universe and Aliveness (Session 5)
- Links to the documentary film: Choosing Earth: Choosing Life.

LEADING A STUDY GROUP

Session Outlines

On the following pages are the outlines for each session.

Each session is timed to be 90 minutes long for an online session, but it could easily be adapted to a two-hour session by adding time to the check-in and inquiry sections.

Session 1 has the tightest timing since there are logistics to cover. If you are doing 90-minute meetings, you may want to arrange for Session 1 to be two hours. Alternatively, you could have a preliminary meeting before Session 1, for, say, an hour, to meet participants, cover the logistics, read the guidelines for group dialogue, review the session flow, handout the homework, and complete the participant introductions. That way, Session 1 can dive into the materials, and participants may be more likely to have completed the reading assignment.

Session 1: Introduction to *Choosing Earth*

Our World in Great Transition

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Send welcome email to participants, which includes:
 1. How to obtain copy of the *Choosing Earth*: <https://choosingearth.org/book/>.
 2. Participant preparation for Session 1:
 - Read Preface and Part I (pages 7-40).
 - Find one phrase or one sentence in the book that captures one reason you have for being on the course (which you will share during the check-in).
 - Which of the 13 growing resilience actions (pages 30-32) are you already doing in some way, and which is something you want to realize more fully?
 - Select an excerpt from the reading to possibly share (something that was inspiring, challenging, or meaningful).
 3. Zoom call or location details.
 4. Participant Handout as attachment & summary of Growing Resilience.
- Bring a bell or other way to keep time and signal timing on group process.
- Be prepared to lead the meditation or ask someone else to lead it.
- Craft closing dedication in advance (see previous section for examples).

Session 1 Outline

Notes



Welcome 1 min.

- To the *Choosing Earth* book study group Session 1.

Review logistics and flow 5 min.

- Session flow: Welcome, brief meditation, check-in around homework, reading excerpts, group dialogue and inquiry, review the next week's homework, dedication and close.
- Each week we will have readings and mini-assignments and practices.
- Keep an awareness of our privilege, as it applies to us.
- It helps to evoke 'Beginner's Mind'—openness and freedom from preconceptions. Available in the moment, fresh and curious.
- Review basic Zoom features if doing Zoom, or the meeting space logistics.



Read Group Guidelines
6 min.

- These are in the Participant Handout and hopefully everyone has read them. We will review just a couple of them:
 - We keep confidential what is shared here.
 - Pay attention to the frequency and duration of your speaking. Be a role model for clarity and brevity. Refrain from interrupting, cross-talking, and commenting on each other’s check-ins.
 - To be able to stay within our timeframe, we may sometimes have to interrupt a lengthy share by ringing a chime when we are out of time in the current section and need to move on.



Meditation
3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Group check-in
15 min.

- *Participant Introductions:* Share your name, where you live, and one phrase or one sentence from the book that captures one reason you have for being on the course.



Read excerpts
10 min.

- Participants read brief excerpts from the book that they selected from the reading assignment (pages 7-40).
- Depending on the size of your group—you may need to select a couple people to read (and rotate who shares each time you meet).



Inquiry
20 min.

Inquiry 1.1:

- Facilitator reads quote from book Preface (while participants note what is coming up for them):
This is from the Preface by Francis Weller:

Initiation ripens us and readies us for greater participation in the care of the cosmos. This is at the heart of why we are here as a species. Our cosmological purpose is to keep the dream of the world alive. There is beauty, dignity, and grandeur in that calling. It is becoming increasingly clear that this realization must become deeply embedded in the hearts and souls of people in the coming decades. In essence, we are being asked to consecrate our lives, to practice reverence in our actions. This is the first truth that must settle into the bones of anyone who undergoes this planetary initiation.

(Pause and allow students to reflect for a moment.)

Now read: This is from Chapter 1 by Duane Elgin

"Our time of collective choice has profound consequences that will carry forward for thousands of years. There is no way around our rite of passage—there is only going through. We created these times and we can move through them, consciously, creatively, and courageously." (pause)

25 min.

- Large group discussion-what feelings, sensations, and thoughts did this statement evoke?

Inquiry 1.2:

- Facilitator: Have participants take turns reading the 13 growing resilience actions in Chapter 1.
- Move into dyads. Each person takes a turn sharing: What are you doing already and which of the 13 do you want to realize more fully?
- If there is time, come back to large group to share work from dyads.



Review
3 min.

Housekeeping regarding next session:

- Please arrive 5-10 minutes early for each group so we can start on time.
- Please let us know if you are going to be absent before the session, as it can be disruptive to the group when people disappear.

Preparation for Session 2:

- Homework: Look for where the Wide, Deep, and Long or systems approach is being used for problems and solutions in the larger world. Note a good example of using this approach and a second example where a challenge or opportunity would benefit from being addressed in a wide, deep, and long approach. Bring your insights to share at the next session's check-in.
- Read Part II: Pages 41-57, which explores three possible pathways ahead. Observe your body as you read. Make note of sensations and emotions.
- Select a short excerpt for possible sharing with the group.



Close and Dedication
2 min.

Session 2: Three Futures for Humanity

Collapse, Authoritarianism, and Great Transition

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Have Video Clip Ready: *Three Future Pathways*.
- Prep music for journaling (if using).
- Have Closing Dedication ready.

Session 2 Outline

Notes



Welcome
1 min.

- Welcome to Session 2 - Three Futures for Humanity



Meditation
3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Check-in
15 min.

- From homework assignment: Invite examples of the Wide, Deep, and Long being utilized in beneficial ways and examples where the challenge or opportunity being addressed could benefit from a wide, deep, and long approach.

Introduce Focus of the session
1 min.

- Exploration of Three Different Pathways/Scenarios: Crash and Collapse; Authoritarianism empowered with AI; Great Transition.



Read excerpts
15 min.

- Participants read excerpts they selected from readings and make a brief comment as to why they selected the excerpt.

Play video
5 min.

- Three Pathways



Inquiry
20 min.

Inquiry 2.1:

- Move into Triads.
- Each person shares with the triad: Where do you see these Three Pathways already present in our world? Then group discussion.

25 min.

Inquiry 2.2:

- Journal for a few minutes on:
 - Your hopes and fears for the Three Pathways, remembering that all pathways are present now and likely will be in the future.
- Share out from journaling and discuss the nature and magnitude of the evolutionary “Lift” needed to realize a Great Transition. (Remember that this doesn’t require everyone to be on board, but a strong 20-25%, which

requires us—because we’re the ones carrying the intention towards Lift and Great Transition.)



Review
3 min.

Preparation for Session 3:

- Reflection: When you reflect on the Three Pathways, where do you see them being expressed in your community, workplace, family, and/or the media that you take in? When you hear or see this, where does it land with you? Take note of any feelings or sensations that arise.
 - Reading: Pages 59-101. Select excerpt to share.
 - Be sure to watch the film *Choosing Earth: Choosing Life* if you haven't yet. <https://choosingearth.org/>
-



Close and Dedication
2 min.

Session 3: Stages of Initiation (Part 1)

The Great Unraveling, The Great Collapse, and the Great Initiation

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Have Video Clip Ready: *Excerpt from Documentary.*
- Review Repeating Question Process in Handbook.
- Have graphic of Timeline ready to display when assigning homework.
- Have Closing Dedication ready.

Session 3 Outline

Notes



Welcome
1 min.

- Welcome to Session 3 - Stages of Initiation (Part 1).



Meditation
3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Check-in
20 min.

- Participants report back on reflections on the Three Pathways.
- How did you see these being expressed in your community, workplace, family, and/or the media?
 - Where did these land with you? Did you notice any sensations or feelings arising?

Introduce Focus of the session
1 min.

- Exploring the 20s, 30s, and 40s and mention this is a challenging section of the book.



Read excerpts
12 min.

- Participants read short excerpts taken from pages 59-101.

Play video clip
3 min.

- From documentary: *Choosing Earth: Choosing Life.*

**Inquiry**

15 min.

Inquiry 3.1:

- Journal: Take a minute and jot down notes on what may be coming up for you, just noticing the sensations, feelings or thoughts that are connected to the film. Now come back into the room.
- Large Group: Share feelings or emotions that are coming up, sparked by the video clip or when you previously watched the film.
- Facilitator: Then ask about Joanna Macy's statement in the video, *'The only way forward is through.'*

30 min.

Inquiry 3.2:

- In dyads: Take turns answering this statement, then discuss. As I face the Great Unravelling, what breaks my heart is... ask one partner to ask the question and the other to answer. The idea is to uncover more each time you answer. The one asking does not comment, just listens. Repeat at least 5-6 times before switching who asks and who answers. *Facilitator: You may want to set a specific amount of time for each person to answer and then ring a bell and have them switch.*
- Large group sharing: Share what came up in dyads.

**Review**

3 min.

Preparation for Session 4:

- Reflection: As you read about the six decades ahead, reflect and journal on how you are affected having looked at the future decade by decade. Then reflect on the meaningful ways you honor and care for all of life (including your life, your community and loved ones, the natural world). Go out to places you love. Then journal—where do you find meaning? Where do you serve life? Be prepared to briefly share your insights.
- Take a walk to consider a significant initiation or profound crisis in your life (e.g., moving from adolescence to adulthood, experiencing a major health crisis, or the loss of a loved one). How did you move through this time and what supported you to move beyond it? When you get back, take a minute to consider where your experience is reflected in the 13 actions (or what you would add to 13 actions).
- Read pages 101-116. No excerpts needed for Session 4 (participants will read a summary aloud).

**Close and Dedication**

2 min.

Session 4: Stages of Transformation (Part 2)

The Great Transition, The Great Freedom, The Great Journey

Group Leader Prep

- Send reminder email about having paper ready.
- Review the Timeline instructions beforehand.
- Have timer (such as timer on a phone) ready for Timeline Dyads.
- Have Closing Dedication ready.

Session 4 Outline

Notes



Welcome
1 min.

- Welcome to Session 4.



Meditation
3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Group check-in
15 min.

- Instructions - have participants choose one of the assignments to share (if there is time, share both).
- What came up in your reflection and journaling on:
 - Meaningful ways you honor and care for all of life? (Including your life, your community and loved ones, the natural world.)
 - Where do you find meaning? Where do you serve life?
 - Share how you met an initiation or crisis in the past. Do any of the 13 Growing Resilience actions connect with your initiation?



Read excerpts
10 min.

Instructions: Have participants take turns reading one decade each from Summary of Scenario of Humanity's Initiation: 2020-2070 (pages 60-61 in PDF).

- Have participants take some brief notes on each decade while they are listening to the summaries being read.



Inquiry

15 min.

Inquiry 4.1:

- Now read each of these reflections and pause after each to allow time for people to reflect and journal. Reflection on:
 - 1) What you may experience during your lifetime.
 - 2) What younger generations in your family or community may experience.
 - 3) What you love in nature and how it will be affected (plants, animals, places, ecosystems, and so forth).

20 min.

Inquiry 4.2

- *Break into dyads:* Share with your partner feelings, images, and thoughts that came up from hearing the summaries of each decade and the reflections above.

20 min.

- *Large Group:* Discussion on what came up in dyads and any insights.
-



Review

3 min.

Preparation for Session 5:

- Reflect on How am I changed—inwardly or outwardly—by contemplating the future in this way? Record insights, feelings, reflections.
 - Go back to the list of Growing Resilience actions in Chapter 1 to explore which you can use to help you this week.
 - Reading: pages 117-148.
 - Select a short excerpt for possible sharing with the group.
-



Close and Dedication

2 min.

Session 5: Uplifts for A Transforming Future (Part 1)

Aliveness, Consciousness, Communication

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Have Video Clip Ready: *The Living Universe & Aliveness*.
- Prepare music (if using).
- Have Closing Dedication ready.

Session 5 Outline

Notes



Welcome
1 min.

- Welcome to Session 5.



Meditation
3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Check-in
20 min.

- Share how you were changed—inwardly or outwardly—by contemplating the future through the decades.
- If you went back to the list of Growing Resilience actions in Chapter 1, share which one(s) you used to help you integrate and grow in this past week.



Read excerpts
12 min.

- Participants take turns reading out loud brief excerpts from pages 117-148.

Play video
3 min.

- Duane Elgin on Aliveness and Living Universe.



Inquiry
10 min.

Inquiry 5.1:

- Large Group: What connects for you around this video on aliveness and the living universe?

5 min.

Inquiry 5.2:

- Journaling: Describe your relationship or journey with aliveness and consciousness. Where are your growing edges or what are you working on now? Before you begin, stand up and take three breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly, then shake out your body and sit down to begin journaling.

15 min.

- Triads – Share your direct experience with Aliveness and/or insights from your journaling.

15 min.

- Large group – How might you talk about this with others?



Review
4 min.

Preparation for Session 6:

- Pause several times each day to notice the aliveness around you. Jot down how that shifts your experience. This is a practice you can do beyond this week to increase your connection with all of life. You may find it helpful to create a way to remind yourself—using a calendar reminder, a note on your desk, or a special object you see regularly throughout the day that will remind you to pause and notice aliveness. You can also partner with someone in the course and text each other gentle reminders or words of inspiration. See handout on ways to open to aliveness.
- Select an Uplift to focus on, journal on, and synopsize to share at the next session. Prepare a paragraph synopsis to share with the group that reflects some of your interests, curiosities, and/or knowledge or embodiment of that Uplift. Alternatively create artwork that reflects your learning and be prepared to share at the next session.
- Reading: Pages 148 - 173.
- Select a short excerpt for possible sharing with the group.
- Bring journaling materials.



Close and Dedication
2 min.

Session 6: Uplifts for A Transforming Future (Part 2)

Maturity, Reconciliation, Community, and Simplicity

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Have Journaling Music ready (if using).
- Have Closing Dedication ready.

Session 6 Outline

Notes



Welcome

1 min.

- Uplifts for A Transforming Future (part 2): *Choosing Maturity, Choosing Reconciliation, Choosing Community and Choosing Simplicity.*



Meditation

3 min.

- See suggestions earlier in this Guide.



Check-in

15 min.

- Share: How was it to pause several times per day and notice the aliveness around you? How did that change your experience?



Read excerpts

20 min.

- Instead of excerpts from the book, participants read their own short synopses that they wrote about the uplift they chose (or share artwork they created).



Inquiry

15 min.

Inquiry 6.1:

- Large Group discussion: How is racial and economic justice intertwined with the challenges and opportunities of our time? What is lost in the absence of economic and racial justice?

25 min.

Inquiry 6.2:

- Journaling: Choose one of the other “Uplifts” from this chapter: Maturity, Community, or Simplicity—and give an example of how this helps support the Great Transition. How might it connect to the work of Reconciliation (between races, generations, economic groups, cultures)?
- Large Group Sharing (3-4 people share examples depending on time left):
 - Share examples of how the Uplift you wrote about supports the Great Transition.
 - Share how it connects to the work of Reconciliation.



Review
3 min.

Preparation for final session:

- Contemplation: What can you do or shift to deepen your relationship to the foundation you chose, be it Reconciliation, Maturity, Community, or Simplicity? Sit with this question each day for a few minutes, perhaps after meditation or a walk in nature when your mind is settled. Notice what challenges or resistances you become aware of. Consider finding an image or creating a collage, painting, drawing, photograph, poem, etc., that evokes or expresses the feeling you are moving toward. Bring it to the next session to share.
- Reading for Session 7: Pages 174-175; note what moves or draws you.
- Also, review the website for resources to support you at www.ChoosingEarth.org.



Close and Dedication
2 min.

Session 7: Choosing Our Future: Integration

What was Learned? What Shifted? What's Next?

Group Leader Prep (to be done before the session)

- Have Closing Dedication ready.
- Be prepared to thank and encourage participants.

Session 7 Outline

Notes



Welcome
1 min.

- Choosing Our Future: Integration.



Check-in
15 min.

For this final session, we are going to check-in from the homework before our meditation, because we're going to do a meditation that ties into this week's reading, which we'll discuss after the meditation.

Let's begin with a check-in, on what you can do to shift or deepen your relationship to the Uplift you chose (Reconciliation, Maturity, Community, or Simplicity). What challenges or resistance might you have noticed? If you like, share artwork, image, poem, or another expression of the Uplift you chose.



Meditation
12 min.

Group Leader: We suggest this simple facilitator-led meditation for this final session using the items listed in the reading from the section, *Choosing Our Future* (pages 174-175). Read:

- During this brief meditation we are going to reflect on the Uplifts that are in the last chapter of the book. Let's take a few moments to arrive and bring ourselves into presence.
- Find a comfortable seated position, or any posture that is right for your body's needs.
- And, as we settle into stillness, feel free to close your eyes or gaze softly downward.
- Notice the places where the body makes contact with the surface beneath it. Perhaps, the contact of your hips and thighs on the cushion beneath you, your feet on the floor, notice how that contact feels— soft, hard, heavy, light?

- I invite you to bring your awareness to your breath, noticing what sensations you experience as you breathe in through your nose, down into your chest and belly, and back out again.
- Notice the natural rhythm of your breathing, the aliveness that is right here, right now, in the body.
- We will sit for a few minutes in silence. And I invite you, as you are sitting in stillness, to listen to the suggestions in the book that I will read one by one, and reflect in the pause on what arises within you.

From the book: Uplift calls forth a new humanity; the call and the potentials are real, actual, genuine. Let's summarize them to emphasize their authentic promise.

Uplift involves:

- Choosing to live from our direct experience of *aliveness*. (pause)
- Choosing *reflective consciousness*. (pause)
- Choosing to mobilize our potential for local-to-global *communication*. (pause)
- Choosing to grow into our *early adulthood*. (pause)
- Choosing *reconciliation* and consciously seeking to heal the wounds of history. (pause)
- Choosing to pull together with a feeling for local-to-global *community*. (pause)
- Choosing *simplicity* as a way of life that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich (pause)
- Now for a moment, feel into what you're grateful for. (pause)

Now, bring your awareness back to your breath, and notice the sounds around you, when you're ready, gently open your eyes and take a minute to take in your surroundings, look around at the light, the room, and now return to the group.



Read excerpts
8 min.

- Instead of reading excerpts, ask participants to briefly share what moved them during the meditation, and/or what in the book inspired them to take a further step.



Inquiry
12 min.

Inquiry 7.1:

- Dyads – What have you learned in this group? What has shifted in you since you began this study and inquiry?

15 min.

Inquiry 7.2:

- Large Group: What is most alive for you about the work we've done as a group, including our conversations, reading *Choosing Earth*, and viewing the documentary *Choosing Earth: Choosing Life*?
- 20 min. **Inquiry 7.3:**
- Journaling – Prepare for the closing circle. Considering what you've learned and experienced in this time together, what do you see as your next steps? What are you willing to commit to? What do you need to move forward? Be prepared to share a few sentences of what you're willing to commit to.
 - Large Group Share – Closing the study group experience.
 - Each person shares what they are willing to commit to.
 - Facilitators emphasize: Please condense down to no more than one or two minutes depending on group size.
 - If time allows, ask: What do you need to move it forward?

- OPTIONAL: Community building**
3 min.
- Ask participants: Do you want to remain connected as a group? If yes, what might that look like? Who will take responsibility for the next step?

- Final Announcements**
2 min.
- Thank participants for all the work we have done over these seven sessions.



Close and Dedication
2 min.



APPENDICES

Responding to Challenging Group Dynamics

There will likely be instances where you will need to play a more active role in offering guidance and support to a group member. Below are some challenging group dynamics and ways to respond.

Monopolizing the conversation

- Establish a ground rule at the beginning of the group that affirms one goal to be providing everyone with a meaningful opportunity to express themselves. A core practice is to be respectful and mindful of sharing group time with others. Ask people to “Pay attention to the frequency and duration of their contribution.”
- If necessary, respond to the member directly and acknowledge you appreciate their comments. Still, you need to move to the next group member because it is essential for everyone to have a chance to talk. Because interrupting a group member can be challenging, especially over a virtual platform, you might need to say something such as: “What you are saying is important, and I wish we had more time to go into it. If there is time left at the end of the group, we can continue this conversation. However, we are running out of time and need to move on. Would you please wrap up your comments with a sentence?”
- If individuals are unable to self-regulate the time they spend sharing, you can use a timer to signal the need to wrap up comments.

Conflicts occur

- Conflicts and tensions are normal parts of a group process. If a conflict is dominating group time, it is helpful to remind group members of the guidelines: “Listen respectfully, with care, and without judgment. Engage in friendly disagreement when appropriate and strive to understand the positions of those who disagree with you.”
- Try to put yourself in each person's position and understand the emotional impact our situation creates for them. Acknowledge the legitimate nature of each person's concerns and views.
- Acknowledge the disagreement and agree to move on. Let the group know that conflict is a healthy part of group dynamics and can enhance learning.

Participants becoming emotionally distressed

- If a group member experiences emotional distress, it's important to acknowledge the feelings being expressed while at the same time understanding that it is not your job to "fix" or "solve" the distress.
- The first step is to find your state of calmness by taking some slow breaths, planting your feet on the ground, and being mindful of your reactivity.
- Acknowledge verbally to the group member (and the group at large) that you are aware of what they are experiencing and ask the group to pause to provide space to sit for a moment with presence, care, and compassion.
- If it feels appropriate, you can acknowledge this person's experience and reflect on what you are noticing without attempting to interpret or analyze what you observe. You can also ask other group members if they are now experiencing—or have experienced in the past—similar feelings (e.g., "I see that you are experiencing sadness and tears, and I wonder if anyone else in the group has experienced sadness and sorrow while moving through this material?").
- If appropriate, you can have the group pause for a few moments, sit quietly, and sense the body and the breath moving in and out.
- Remind the group members that there are resources on the Choosing Earth website.
- At the end of the session, check in with the group member and refer to specific resources on the website if needed.

Making statements that are offensive or inappropriate

- Acknowledge to the group that you are uncomfortable with a subject or statement.
- If you feel it's inappropriate for the group, you can redirect the conversation (e.g., "I don't feel that this is an appropriate discussion for this group, so we are going to move on.").
- If you feel an offensive statement was made, acknowledge your discomfort with the statement and that it may also be triggering to others in the group. You can bring the focus back to the goal at hand (e.g., "I am uncomfortable with the comment you made, and I am concerned it may also be triggering to others in the group. I'd like to remind everyone to be considerate when choosing your words and be respectful of one another. Our task now is to work together in a community to understand and respond to the planetary emergency.").
- If you feel a group member may be incapable of following the group guidelines, you may need to ask them to leave the group.
- Consult with a trusted friend or colleague to get support for how to respond.