



# The Work of Sustaining All Life

It is possible to limit the effects of human-caused climate change and restore the environment—and some big changes are needed if this is to happen. These changes will require a massive movement, spanning the globe, of people of every background.

In Sustaining All Life we believe that the barriers to building a sufficiently large and powerful movement include (1) longstanding divisions (usually caused by oppression) between nations and between groups of people within nations, (2) widespread feelings of discouragement and powerlessness among the populations of many countries, (3) denial of or failure to engage with the environmental crisis, and (4) difficulties in effectively addressing the connections between the environmental crisis and the failures of capitalism. Sustaining All Life works to address these issues and others.

## ***The source of the environmental crisis***

We modern humans have lived on the Earth for about 200,000 years. For much of this time we have struggled for survival. Ancient fears for our survival have been passed down to each generation and have resulted in societies based on exploitation, oppression, and division.

These societies demand growth and profit with little regard for people, other life forms, or the Earth. And they have come to rely on dividing us, scaring us, discouraging us, and hurting us in other ways, to keep us from making meaningful change.

## ***The role of oppression***

Oppression (such as racism, classism, sexism, and the oppression of young people) is institutionalized in our societies. This makes it much more difficult for us to address and end climate change. All of us, at some point in our lives, are targeted by oppression. We are all harmed by it. Then we are pulled to act out on others the hurts that we have experienced. Much of the emotional damage done to humans is the result of this passing on of hurt. Oppression is neither inherent nor inevitable in human beings. It arises from and operates on the basis of emotional hurt.

## ***The importance of healing personal damage***

The emotional harm done to us in our societies interferes with our ability to think clearly and sets groups of people against each other. This makes it difficult for us to think about and respond effectively to the environmental crisis. People would not cooperate with a society that exploits people and damages the environment if they had not first been hurt.

We can heal from hurtful experiences if someone listens to us attentively and allows and encourages us to release the grief, fear, and other painful emotions. This

happens by means of our natural healing processes—talking, crying, trembling, expressing anger, and laughing. Sustaining All Life uses the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling\* to help people build ongoing mutual support for this personal healing.

Healing from the hurts that drive oppression and other damaging behavior is not quick or easy work. Many of us resist it. We may feel like there isn't time. We may feel that we have been able to succeed in life only by not showing anyone how much we've been hurt. We may feel ashamed of or embarrassed by our feelings. We may have survived by numbing ourselves to the damage we carry and by assuming that we will never be free of it. We may feel it would be unbearable to look at and to feel those feelings again. Perhaps this is because we have had no opportunity to tell our stories or have not been treated well when we have tried to tell them.

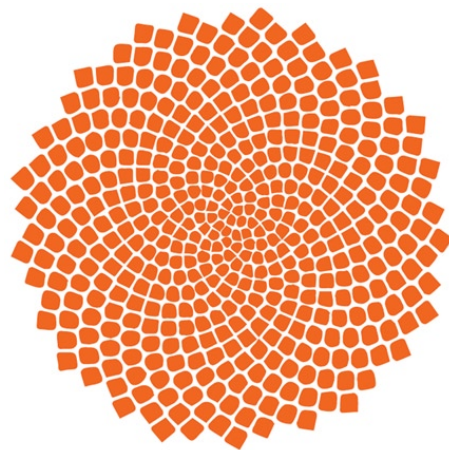
In Sustaining All Life we have learned that it is possible to free ourselves from these hurts.

By releasing distressed feelings in a supportive network, we can stay united, hopeful, thoughtful, joyful, and committed. This will strengthen us in building our movements.

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\* Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a well-defined theory and practice that helps people of all ages and backgrounds exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the emotional scars of oppression and other hurts. By taking turns listening to each other and encouraging emotional release, people can heal old hurts and become better able to think, to speak out, and to organize and lead others in building a world in which human beings and other life forms are valued and the environment is restored and preserved.

**For more information, see:**  
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## **Sustaining All Life**