Rebel Inner Work

> Activism can foster meaningful engagement only if it takes time out to contemplate. It is the stillness out of which activism is born. It can only illuminate and shift the status quo when it delves into the shadows that merge in the night, eventually making way for the clarity of the day. In a time when inequality and lack of equity abounds, activism calls us into the realms of equanimity. We slow down into the urgency. Trans-formation, re-storation and re-generation, can only begin from within.
>
> — Rutendo L Ngara - South African healer, philosopher and engineer.

We can help the **regeneration of our extinction rebellion** well by not only attending to our self care but also taking responsibility for our behaviour.

- Understanding we are part of a toxic system, we do our best to work with the “tricky” parts of ourselves. This may mean intentionally and with kindness, beginning to investigate our places of reactivity, our habits of judgements or othering.
- We all have “shadow” aspects of ourselves, the places or emotions we try to hide from ourselves and others. These parts of ourselves are not bad and are a completely normal part of being a human being but the strategies we use to avoid feeling or exposing them can be destructive.
- There may be fears, rage, shame or hurt that has resulted from difficulties we have faced during our growing up and subsequent experience. However, by gently shining a light on these painful parts of ourselves we can begin to transform them and integrate them into our personality in a healthy way.

Things that can help

There are many practices and trainings that can help us with this work. They generally include self reflection and facilitate a way to understand ourselves and our feelings and reactions more fully. These include mindfulness and meditation, Internal Family Systems, NVC (NonViolent Communication), co-counselling, psychotherapy, therapeutic groupwork, decolonisation workshops and reading, some religious paths, journalling. You may find some helpful resources in that section of this shelf.

Here is a short practice for becoming more aware of our triggers:

- Make an intention to take some time to reflect if you notice that you have been triggered by someone or something.

- Make sure you are in a settled enough place and not in a dysregulated state of agitation or overwhelm.
- If you feel very overwhelmed during this process, pause and see whether it is wise to continue or to stop and do something nurturing or soothing instead. This might not be the right time to do this work.
- Choose a space for reflection where you feel comfortable and won't be interrupted for 30 minutes.
- You may want to have a book with you in which to note any discoveries
- Take five minutes to settle yourself, through a breathing exercise or other grounding practice, stroke a pet, listen to some soothing music.
- Run through the triggering situation in your mind. How were you feeling immediately afterwards, some time later and now as you remember the situation. Are you able to distinguish any accompanying body sensations, tension, nausea, pain, butterflies?
- Were you aware of any particular thoughts, about the situation, about yourself or other people involved. This is an invitation to look at your thoughts without getting involved in them, stepping out of rumination; that circular thinking of defense and blame.
- You might find it helpful to note down some of these thoughts and reflect whether they are familiar. Do they fit with a particular belief you hold about yourself or the world?
- Take a pause, holding your present experience with as much kindness as you are able.
- Thank yourself for taking this time to reflect on your triggers, recognising it is a challenging thing to do.
- Do something that is nurturing to complete this practice.

We are often triggered by situations that evoke difficult experiences we have gone through in our lives which consequently result in difficult feelings.

As we become more aware of the kind of situations where we become triggered, we can begin to question whether the beliefs we have about ourselves or others are accurate.

We can also see how we might look after hurt parts of ourselves. We might begin to see how certain needs we have — e.g. for safety, for understanding, to matter — feel unmet in these triggering situations and how to attend wisely to these.
