

Relationships with Our Fellow Rebels

“...it’s about relationships. Our relationships with ourselves and personal histories, our relationships with what we struggle against, our relationships with other individuals day to day, and our relationships as a group-these are completely interdependent.”

XRUK P&V #3: We need a regenerative culture

This section focuses on our relationships with other people. These can take different forms - within XR it could be with other rebels, within our groups, during actions, and also with our allies and others outside the XR movement.

Many people who have spent any time in XR will say that they found the most rewarding thing is the relationships with other rebels who have been motivated to come together to act for a better future for all on the Earth. Sharing that intention is a very powerful connection, especially when other people in our wider world may not seem too concerned about the climate and nature crises. Equally, at some point, many of us find that one of the most difficult things to deal with is our relationships with others and that is because we are human!

We are always ‘in Relationship’

Humans are relational beings, we exist in a web of relationships with our family, friends, fellow activists, our community, our heritage, cultural background, the rest of nature and our environment.

We often feel and act differently depending on who we are with and where we are located. We are often more fluid and less the fixed and separate individuals we sometimes think we are. Even when we are “lost in thought” we are ‘in relationship’ to the subject of our thoughts, sometimes ourselves. We are also part of the relationship that happens “inbetween” us and other people (or beings).

We can think of a tree as trunk and branches, but we know now that a tree is part of a complex web of roots and mycorrhiza and fungi and bacteria and other trees. It is the relationships between these aspects of ‘tree’ that determine the health of all of them. In a similar way it makes sense for us to take care of our relationships.



As activists we are motivated by the aim of righting the wrongs and damage of an extractive society (one that takes out more than it puts in e.g. certain farming and fishing practices, mining etc). As we bring our energy and passion to this work it is a short step to arrive at a position of 'us' and 'them.' We can easily become polarised, feeling threatened by difference or the beliefs of others. We see this reflected in the increasingly polarised outside world in politics or on social media.

When we are involved in the "extinction rebellion" we sometimes come to our relationships with others (inside or outside the XR movement) with a habitual sense of separateness and a belief in the rightness of our position as opposed to the wrongness of other people's ideas and beliefs. We can experience others as a threat or obstacle to our goals.

Alternatively we can begin to imagine or sense ourselves as belonging in an ecosystem of relationships (as do many indigenous societies, quantum physicists, buddhists and those exploring regenerative cultures). We might then find ourselves in a less certain world, but with less attachment to confined 'self-solo' ways. We may feel deeply connected, with more freedom to respond to ever changing events in a world that we cannot control.

“ I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding.

John O'Donohue.
