

Practicing Active Hope

Connie Myslik-
McFadden



Dear Connie,

I am forty-one, happily married, with three kids. Though my husband and I have had our disagreements and we struggle financially, our lives are basically good. But I feel overwhelmed by the huge problems that threaten our world: climate change, war, and now Ebola—just to name a few. I feel helpless and just want to hide my head in the sand. Any suggestions?

Thanks,
—Anita

Dear Anita,

I have a lot of empathy for your feelings. I think many people (including me) sometimes feel the same way. Many do figuratively put their heads in the sand, refusing to acknowledge or talk about issues beyond their immediate family or local concerns. Others, becoming angry, frustrated, or in fear, adopt radical positions in a vain attempt to control what they fear. Neither of those pseudo-solutions works.

What can work is, first of all, to squarely face the issues that concern you and allow yourself to feel the emotions come up around each issue—anger, sadness, grief or frustration—whatever. Even though they're not comfortable, these are all normal feelings. But it's common for people to push them aside rather than allow them to surface. Share your feelings with your husband or a trusted friend. Then ask yourself, is there anything I can do to

change this situation? Do I need to educate myself more so that I understand the issue more completely? Do I need to change some ingrained habits that might be contributing to the problem? Is there a concerned citizens group, locally and/or nationally, that I can join? Can I use social networking to arouse public opinion? Do I vote in every election? Though as individuals it's easy to succumb to feelings of helplessness and despair, in truth if each one of us took positive action, the world as we know it would change for the better. Ordinary citizens, combined, are demonstrating their power in many amazing ways across the globe.

Joanna Macy's book, *Active Hope*, encourages people to envision what they want—peace, a health-

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ier planet, a vaccination and effective treatment for Ebola, for example—and then, from the longing and hope that these things could become reality, to take action that will create the reality they hope for.

It's an excellent book in my view, with specific practices to help us move from fear and helplessness to creating positive outcomes. It's an antidote to despair.

It's important to practice the basics, meditation and prayer, every day that you can. Meditation can help you attain and maintain a balanced, peaceful mind and body as you practice active hope. Prayer sends the energy of intention out into the world and beyond, connecting your prayers with the prayers of like-minded others. This creates a powerful energy field that, when strong enough, empowers everyone connected to it to engage in transformative action.

I hope this is helpful. ■

Blessings,

—Connie

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Call Connie at 406-582-7450 or e-mail mtlionlady@gmail.com. E-mail sent to Connie is read only by Connie and will be held in strictest confidence. No identities will be published.

Disclaimer: The responses to questions in this column are for information only. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it because of anything you read here. Working with a skilled professional is highly recommended.

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