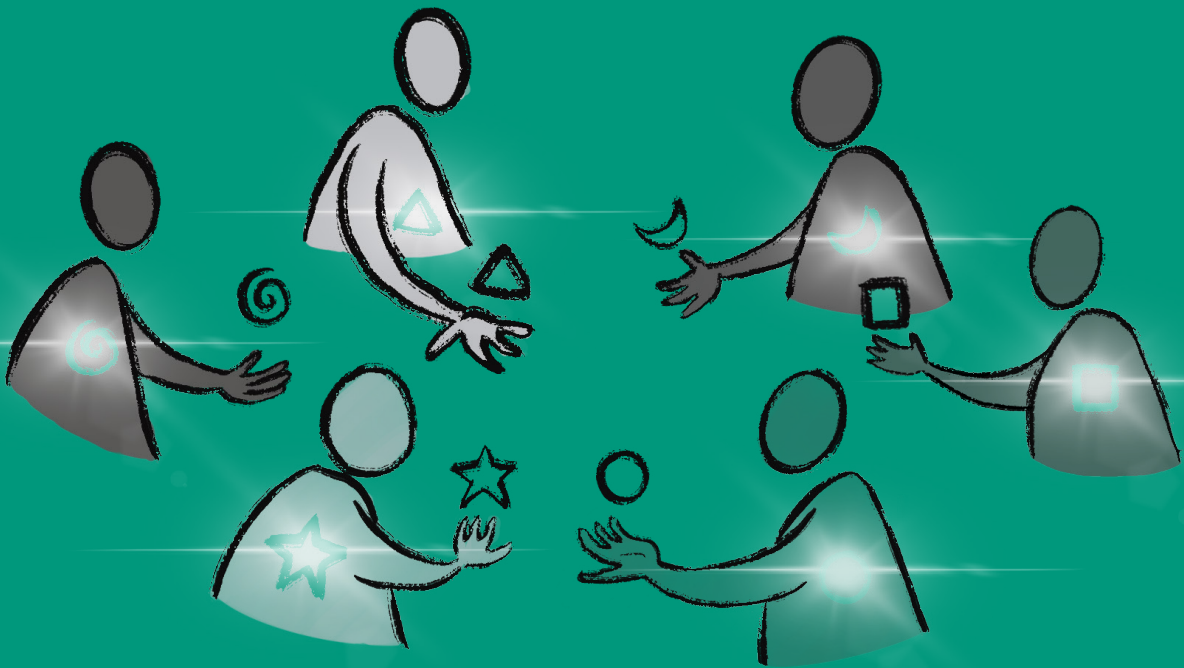


NURTURING HOPE



—an interactive learning resource

Derick Wilson, Duncan Morrow, Jean Horstman and Dong Jin Kim

Learning Partners | Professors Andrew Hill & Irene Young (St Philip's College), Migdalia Garcia and Neil Lewis (North West Vista College), Alamo Colleges District, San Antonio

Professors Gibeom Lee and Young-Chul Chung (The Okedongmu Project, South Korea)
Prof. Kyungmook Kim (Waseda University, Japan)



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In times of increasing social conflict, distrust and polarisation, how do we find our way together into the future? How do we nurture hope? How do we face our questions and find answers together?

Rooted in the Northern Irish reconciliation experience since 1965, “Nurturing Hope” is a resource to support us all in sharing our honest differences together, allowing trust to grow between us and all lives to flourish.

‘WE LIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS’

‘Living well’ always means living well together. Throughout our lives, we are and remain inter-dependent with one another and with nature. Hope is always the possibility of finding a way for each of us together, where each unique person has a real place and we find ‘freedom in relationship’ with others.

‘Living well together’ is best for our mental and physical well-being. This interdependence is eroded by self-interest and ruthless individualism. At the international level, long-standing agreements about those impacted by war and violence, those needing asylum and sanctuary, and emergency aid in disasters and pandemics, are sometimes now discarded in the name of national self-interest. In our world, political divisions often result in the vilification of our fellow citizens, and economic disparity means millions of children go hungry, while others see their wealth increasing exponentially. At the personal level, we are lonelier (See Cigna’s 2018 U.S. Loneliness Index).

In more recent times, the kinds of relationships through which different or opposed positions could be resolved—inter-personally, institutionally, or diplomatically—have weakened. Beliefs and positions pre-dominate and are now more strident and polarised. Potentially, a revitalised civil society is one space in which hope can still be nurtured!

People from very different societies have inspired Nurturing Hope. People who refused to surrender their hope when faced with the promotion of polarising and divisive actions related to conflict and war, race, gender, cultural identities and religious beliefs. Nurturing Hope belongs to them.

‘Nurturing Hope’ is inspired by the actions of many individuals and small groups who, against all odds, still committed and commit themselves to build more open societies and cultures and a more interdependent world.

THE INSPIRATION BEHIND NURTURING HOPE

“We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters, or we will all perish together as fools.” Martin Luther King Jr.

This is the challenge that led to the development of Nurturing Hope. We seek to learn with others who are also creating spaces in which people build relationships through which we all experience the intimacy of our honest differences. Our team has sought to promote hope in societies where systemic discrimination, antagonism, fear, and violence have been, and sometimes still are, part of life, and in which models of action that engender hope have provided a generative response to these dynamics.

If we have hope, we can risk change.
If we have hope, we can make plans, conceive a strategy; and move from isolation into possibility.
Hope is a future orientation: it looks at what may be possible, not what is or has been.
Hope is a place owned by all of us.

SHARING HOPE

We believe—and have experienced—that ideas, in the right time, emerge, take on a life of their own and are spread through relationships. We believe that all meaningful change is mimetic before it is cognitive. We know that many people are hungry to bridge the polarisation in our societies, but often lack diverse relationships, language, conceptual frameworks, and structures for doing so. Nurturing Hope offers one such language—one we know can lead to transformative relationships and structures with people we have seen as our ‘other.’

Nurturing Hope has five modules.

Module 1 introduces readers to a transformative and restorative learning approach.

Module 2 offers a Facilitators Guide

Modules 3-5 explore ten dynamic models in each of three areas: relationships; conflict affected societies; relational and structural elements of hope.

These models are rooted in and have emerged from:

- **The work of the Corrymeela Community since its inception after 1965**
- **The authors' practice work and research in the practice of reconciliation, mainly in Northern Ireland.**
- **The practice of our various learning partners in and beyond Northern Ireland.**

The models are currently being piloted in the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain, Korea and The United States.

The exploration of each dynamic includes an introductory text, guided individual reflection, and an individual and/or group exercise. The texts and the learning methods are not prescriptive. There are no right and wrong answers! Each person is free to make their own reflections and choices.

1. A LEARNING APPROACH THAT IS TRANSFORMATIVE AND RESTORATIVE

'Nurturing Hope emphasises the importance of creating and sustaining relationships, groups and organisations where people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs meet and work together respectfully.

The materials explore how, when we model freedom with and for each other, we create spaces for all to experience the possibility of meeting and acting together in new and more open ways.

We nurture hope with each other in relationships and structures where disagreement is welcomed as an opportunity for exploration, not a cause to hate.

2. A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

The facilitators guide, and the access to associated support resources with it, affirms and encourages people to engage in group facilitation and learning over time, nurturing and maintaining diverse reflective learning groups.

3. SOME DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIPS

This module supports learning and reflection on ten dynamics that shape our relationships. The dynamics examine the role of mimesis in the creation of free and supportive relationships as well as the contribution of escalating desire in the creation of destructive and violent relationships that can culminate in scapegoating.

4. SOME DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT-AFFECTED SOCIETIES

This module introduces and explores ten dynamics evident in conflict-affective societies where opposing group identities dominate relationships, politics, and civil society leading to separation, avoidance, politeness, and the generation of group 'sacreds and absolutes' that often end in tit-for-tat revenge and retaliation.

5. SOME DYNAMICS FOR HOPE

This module explores ten dynamics that promote ways of acting and thinking that nurture trust, personal and group agency, and open hopeful relationships. It provides a deep dive into the principles that underpin meeting together in hope: equity, diversity and interdependence and the values that shape how we engage in freedom with each other: respect, inclusion, and no-violence.

The contribution of shared rituals and the creation of new events, patterns, structures and norms in nurturing hope are explored in two of the dynamics in this module.

Readers are encouraged to explore the potential of inter-generational learning and meeting together around local and global issues, without becoming isolated and hopeless.

This module explores restorative practices that nurture new relationships between individual and groups, influencing the character of trusted and responsive civic and public organisations.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Derick Wilson was a youth tutor with the Community Relations Commission, NI, (70-73); Principal Lecturer in Youth Work (Ulster Poly (73-78); Corrymeela Centre Director (78-85) and Research Fellow, Centre for the Study of Conflict, Ulster, funded by JRCT (85-89). Co-director with Duncan Morrow of the Future Ways Project' (Ulster), a reconciliation practice

and research programme, he was Assistant Director, UNESCO Centre; Reader in Education with Restorative Practices (89-2013); and now is Reader Emeritus in Education.

Visiting Research Fellow: Uppsala (87); the Maori Institute, Auckland (98). and US-UK Fulbright Scholar- in-Residence, St Philip's,, San Antonio, the first HBCU&HSI College in the US (2019-20). He was a Foundation Trustee of the Spirit of Enniskillen Award Scheme and Mill Strand Integrated Primary School, Portrush.
dawilson@ulster.ac.uk



Juana 'Jean' Horstman is a US network entrepreneur, with a background in systems thinking, facilitating bridging social capital, and organisational development. The Founding CEO of Interise, she developed a program licensing model for its signature small business development program, the StreetWise 'MBA' resulting in a national

network of partners in 46 US states. In 2018, Interise was selected as a finalist for the Drucker Prize in recognition for its innovative approach to generating wealth and creating jobs in low-income communities by scaling established small employer firms. In the 15 years Jean lived in Europe, she held leadership positions in cultural policy and management, working in the UK, Germany, and, after 1989, the new democracies of Eastern and Central Europe.
jjeanhorstman@gmail.com



Duncan Morrow is a Politics Professor at Ulster and has published in conflict resolution, Northern Ireland politics and the relationship between religion and politics. Research interests include Conflict and Religion, Ethnic Conflict, Northern Ireland Politics and the work of Rene Girard. Currently Director of Community Engagement (Ulster).

For ten years, as Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council he championed the concept of a shared future and peace-building by developing the Council's role in policy, research, active learning in organisations, working on interfaces, parading and regeneration, and in work with victims and survivors of conflict.
dj.morrow@ulster.ac.uk



Dong Jin Kim is Irish School of Ecumenics Senior Research Fellow in Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Trinity College Dublin, having been the Irish Research Council-European Union 'Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow' there (2017-20). He is a Goodwill Ambassador for Peace on the Korean Peninsula (Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea), and has

been working as a policy advisor for the Korean Peacebuilding NGOs including the Okedongmu Children in Korea (OKCK) and the Korean Sharing Movement (KSM). He is co-editor of a forthcoming book, Reconciling divided states: Peace processes in Ireland and Korea (Routledge, 2022), and his most recent book is The Korean peace process and civil society: Towards strategic peacebuilding (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
KIMDJ@tcd.ie

Stephanie Heckman is the Visual Facilitator for Nurturing Hope.
stephanie.a.heckman@gmail.com

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