

## Gratitude for Earth - Adults

This guide contains many resources. We recognize that every community's needs are different, so feel free to pick and choose what works best for you.

### Key goals and ideas

Just as we have successfully been in partnership with fellow humans, we can be in fruitful interdependence with Earth.

There are examples in human history, and in our own lives, of people and communities living in right relationship with Earth.

We already have the seeds of knowledge for living in healthy interdependence.

### Preparation

Discern which (if not all) of the readings and quotes you want to use.

Choose queries to ask and plan for how you will use them (possibilities are explored [here](#)).

### Introduction

In a garden, we witness the partnership between soil and seed. The soil provides a foundation, moisture, and nourishment to the seed, and as the seed germinates and grows, its roots help hold the soil in place to prevent erosion and shades the soil from being baked by the sun. One is not seen as superior to the other. Between humans, we also seek to partner with one another in this same spirit. For example, Right Sharing of World Resources works in partnership with women's groups in Guatemala, India, Kenya, and Sierra Leone. Colonial and modern narratives suggest people from these countries are "less than" in various ways. This idea makes it harder to have a mutual partnership. The relationship between humans and Earth faces greater challenges. Stories of human supremacy and domination over Earth are deeply embedded in many of our cultures.

What learnings from partnerships within our human family can we bring to bear onto a living recognition of our interdependence with Earth, our wider ecological community, that humanity and Earth might live together like soil and seed?

## Readings and Quaker Quotes

“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ‘I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth.’”

Genesis 9:8-10

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.”

Job 12:7-10

“Interdependence is the law of our universe. Community was written by God into the nature of things. Our planet is a delicately balanced eco-system in which everything is interdependent. Earth puts forth grass, trees, plants in endless variety, all giving out oxygen which animals need: Animals in turn breathe out carbon dioxide and provide manure which plants need. Earth has many recycling systems of land, air, and water, powered by the sun, all members one of another, a marvelous unity with diversity... why cannot we live in harmony with Gaia, our planetary Earth Mother?”

Elizabeth Watson, [The Cool Green Hills of the Earth](#)

“We have no autonomy, no integrity as a species separate from the other species of this world, no collective existence as a creature apart from the animate Earth. We can understand ourselves, and feel what it is to be human, only through our interaction and engagement with all these other, nonhuman beings with whom our lives are so thoroughly tangled. And yes, of course we can and indeed do feel a deep solidarity with one another, and with the rest of our kind. Yet we cannot stretch that bodily empathy out to all of our single species except by way of the more-than-human Earth. We cannot extend our senses to the whole of humankind without the sensitive and sentient Earth getting us there. It is this vast and sensitive sphere, glimmering with sensations, that grants us that ability to feel and resonate with one another, to ache when another aches—whether it be a small girl hospitalized in Iran or a young elephant whose mother was killed by poachers, whether an old man struggling to breathe in China or an aging sea lion snagged and tangled in a fishing net. Our real collective Flesh is not that of ‘humankind’ as an autonomous abstraction, but is the living Body of this biosphere, breathing. That’s us.”

David Abram, [In the Ground of Our Unknowing](#)

“We’re *never* going to have respectful and reverential relationships with the planet – and sensible policies about what we put in the air, the soil, the water – if very young children don’t begin learning about these things literally in their houses, backyards, streets and schools. We need to have human beings who are oriented that way from their earliest memories.”

Elise Boulding, [Concentrating On Essence](#)

**Queries - Choose whichever are appropriate for you, a mix of queries that approach the range of human experience (emotional, intellectual, personal stories) often work best**

Who were the people who lived on this land before we did, and how did they live and care for the earth?

What do we know about partnerships that can help us care for the Earth?

How is partnership between human beings different from how we can be in relationship with Earth? What’s the difference between partnership and interdependence?

Share an experience where you feel you’ve been in a mutually beneficial relationship with Earth. This could be with a place, an animal, or a plant, for example.

How has a landscape formed you? For example, grasslands, valleys, rivers, hills, mountains, sky, even concrete, pavement, glass, and buildings (being alive in their own way) and the community of non-human beings that make up that landscape. Does that place impact your life now?

What are the challenges of practicing simplicity in caring for the Earth?

What’s a community, in the present or in the past, that you see as living in recognition of its interdependence with Earth? What actions do you see that you can emulate?

Where do you see an opportunity to live in deeper recognition of our interdependence with Earth and what would be the first steps for doing so?

**Suggested practice for the next week:**

Organize a group to pick up trash on a walk together, and choose a few of these queries to discuss together while on the walk