

STARTING YOUR DISCUSSION



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INTRODUCTION

GREETINGS FROM THE NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE!

Thank you for your interest in Northwest Earth Institute programs. At the heart of NWEI's work is a series of seven study guides that facilitate small group dialogue. These discussion guides can be offered in the workplace setting, your home, center of faith, or anywhere groups are inspired to meet. Discussion guide topics include:

- ▶ *Menu for the Future*
- ▶ *Global Warming: Changing CO₂urse*
- ▶ *Choices for Sustainable Living*
- ▶ *Voluntary Simplicity*
- ▶ *Healthy Children – Healthy Planet*
- ▶ *Exploring Deep Ecology*
- ▶ *Discovering a Sense of Place*

The small group discussion experience provides a unique framework for exploring personal values, attitudes, and habits while addressing the relevant issues of our times. Each program listed above is a participant-led series of discussions held over a four to nine week period. Participating groups meet for an hour to an hour and a half each week to discuss readings included in the discussion guide.

Over the past 16 years, over 100,000 people have participated in NWEI programs. In 2007 NWEI made the commitment to address the critical issue of global warming, exploring ways in which citizens can make a difference in their communities. In 2008, NWEI released *Menu for the Future*, which explores emerging food system alternatives and the effects of modern industrial agriculture on human and ecological health, and offers practical suggestions on creating and supporting a more sustainable food system.

On behalf of the thousands of organizations, workplaces and volunteers who are involved in promoting Earth Institute programs, we trust your experience with the courses will be of deep value.

Best Regards,

Northwest Earth Institute Outreach Team

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Northwest Earth Institute Organizer's Guide

THANK YOU for taking the initiative to offer Northwest Earth Institute discussion courses. This guide provides information that will assist you in beginning NWEI programs. If you have any questions about the process please visit our website at www.nwei.org or contact any member of NWEI's Outreach Team at (503) 227-2807, or by email at contact@nwei.org.

To order discussion guides, fax or mail the order form attached at the end of this guide, or call the NWEI office directly.

STEP 1

FORM GROUP(S) - IDEAL GROUP SIZE IS 8-12 PEOPLE.

In certain regions, an NWEI representative may be available to assist you in getting started. Visit www.nwei.org/n_american_network to see a list of regions where NWEI representatives may be available to mentor new groups and offer introductory presentations on NWEI.

The following are tips if you choose to host an introductory meeting:

- ▶ Introduce yourself and have a round of introductions
- ▶ Describe the discussion guide topic (use the attached flyer for reference)
- ▶ Describe the process for the course (see below, and also refer to 'Guidelines' at the beginning of each guide)
- ▶ If you've already ordered discussion guides, pass them out for attendees to review and collect payment from those who wish to participate (Note: it is helpful to have the guides on hand during an introductory meeting)
- ▶ Remind everyone to do the readings for the first session and agree upon the time and place to meet for the following course sessions

THE FOLLOWING METHODS HAVE BEEN USED TO FORM NWEI GROUPS:

Invite others to join NWEI programs via newsletters, email networks, personal invitations or the media. Download NWEI program flyers at www.nwei.org, or refer to enclosed flyers. Include location information, times and dates for the entire program. Set clear registration deadlines for signups.

Order materials from NWEI and get discussion guides to participants before the date of the first group meeting.

Call a noontime meeting or host a brown bag lunch in a workplace to offer an informal presentation on NWEI programs and how they work.

Host an introductory group meeting at home, your community or faith center, local library or municipal office.

*If you would like to host an introductory group meeting in order to form a group, visit www.nwei.org/course_resources to download NWEI's Introductory Presentation Manual for ideas.

STEP 2

FIRST CLASS SESSION - GETTING STARTED

TAKE THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS WITH YOU TO THE FIRST SESSION:

1) Course book, 2) Course schedule (attached) for participants to sign up for opener and facilitator roles for the remaining sessions, and 3) NWEI registration sheet for names and addresses of class participants (attached).

HAVE A ROUND OF INTRODUCTIONS.

Introductions serve several important functions, even if the group is already well acquainted. Participants begin to know each other on a personal level and provide an opportunity to “get each person’s voice into the room.” A person who has spoken and been listened to early in the session is more likely to participate in the rest of the session. Ask participants to say their names and something personal about themselves. As the organizer of your group, you should give your answer first to model the length and content.

DESCRIBE THE GROUP PROCESS.

NWEI programs are designed to encourage discussions that clarify personal values and attitudes. Consensus is not the goal, and the group should not seek to reach agreement at the expense of diversity of opinion.

Each discussion guide is divided into sessions. Most groups meet for an hour to an hour and a half for each meeting. Each session will be led by a volunteer facilitator from the group. Point out the “Guidelines for the Weekly Facilitator” near the front of the course book.

CALL ATTENTION TO THE EVALUATION FORM IN EACH DISCUSSION GUIDE.

Encourage participants to fill out the form and share any feedback with NWEI. Participants can mail feedback directly to NWEI, or you as the organizer may choose to collect evaluation forms and send them to NWEI.

CIRCULATE THE REGISTRATION SHEET (ENCLOSED)

Once completed, please fax or mail the form back to NWEI. Participants will have the opportunity to receive NWEI’s quarterly newsletter or quarterly email updates. We respect your privacy and your personal information will not be shared.

CIRCULATE THE COURSE SCHEDULE (ENCLOSED)

This gives group members an opportunity to sign up to present an opening and to facilitate one of the sessions. Information on opening and facilitating is included at the beginning of each discussion guide.

STEP 3

FIRST CLASS SESSION – DESCRIBE/PRESENT THE OPENING

Each session should begin with a brief and informal opening (2-5 minutes) by one of the group members. The purpose of the opening is to provide a transition into discussion. A simple, authentic opening will best encourage participation in discussion.

FIRST SESSION MATERIALS CHECKLIST

- opening (if materials are needed)
- course book
- course schedule for participants to sign up for opener and facilitator roles for the remaining sessions
- NWEI registration sheet for names and addresses of class participants.

JOIN NWEI'S EFFORTS IN CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

NWEI is a recognized national leader in the development of innovative programs that empower individuals and organizations to protect the Earth. NWEI discussion guides are a tremendous educational and community building resource for those working to promote and create a sustainable future.

Since its start in Portland, Oregon in 1993, NWEI has offered discussion courses throughout North America and beyond. Through the North American Earth Institute Network, community organizers and partner organizations have offered discussion courses to over 100,000 people. When the course is completed, one or more participants may decide to continue with another course, or to offer courses to others in the community. NWEI is always looking for organizational and community partnerships. Additionally, NWEI is host to a network of Sister Earth Institutes, which offer NWEI programs on a permanent basis in over 20 regions throughout North America.

If you would like to discuss more formal partnerships and collaborations, please contact the NWEI Outreach Team. We look forward to working together in the years to come.

Consider sharing a personal story, reading a poem or quote pertaining to the topic at hand, or sharing a passage from a related book or current news story.

For example, an opening might capture a person's:

- ▶ *Connection to food or experience gardening (Menu for the Future)*
- ▶ *Experience facing news of global warming (Global Warming: Changing CO₂urse)*
- ▶ *Concern for future generations (Choices for Sustainable Living)*
- ▶ *Attraction to simplicity (Voluntary Simplicity)*
- ▶ *Childhood experience in nature (Healthy Children – Healthy Planet)*
- ▶ *Attachment to a place (Discovering a Sense of Place)*
- ▶ *Appreciation for nature (Exploring Deep Ecology)*

STEP 4

FIRST SESSION - FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

READ "GUIDELINES FOR THE FACILITATOR"

Before the first session, carefully review the "Guidelines for the Weekly Facilitator," located in the course book.

EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR.

Tell the group that you will help keep the discussion personal, focused, and balanced among the participants. Show them where to find the "Guidelines for the Weekly Facilitator," at the front of their course book. Encourage each person to review these before taking their turn at facilitation.

CIRCLE QUESTION.

Following the opening, the first step is for each person to answer the Circle Question. The question provides a focus for the day's discussion.

STEP 5

FIRST SESSION - CLOSING

Watch the time, and stop discussion a few minutes before the session is scheduled to end. Note whether the Course Schedule is completed. If it is not, work with participants to complete it. Confirm the time and place for the next meeting. Be sure to end the class on time. This shows respect for the participants, and demonstrates that their time commitment is predictable.

STEP 6

DURATION OF NWEI PROGRAM

Your group will meet four to nine times, depending on the chosen discussion course and the meeting dates set by participants. Each session will be led by a rotating

GIFTS TO SUPPORT NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE

NWEI is a non-profit organization committed to offering high quality sustainability education programs. To fund our efforts, the Northwest Earth Institute relies on individual contributions and foundation grants. This broad base of support helps sustain the important work of NWEI. Please offer course participants the opportunity to contribute using the enclosed contribution cards at the end of this guide. We are grateful for your support.

member of the group. Note the “Putting it into Practice” and “Further Reading” lists at the beginning of each session for ideas on further educational opportunities as well as tips for applying the learning into your life.

CLOSING

FINAL SESSION - CELEBRATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The final session in each discussion guide is an optional celebration, and is an opportunity to:

- ▶ *Celebrate the completion of the program and evaluate your experience.*
- ▶ *Discuss options for continuing as a group and consider goals and action items.*

The final session is often a potluck and sometimes held at a different location from where the class took place. As part of the final meeting, ask each participant to reflect on the experience, and what he or she will take away from it.

EVALUATIONS

Collect the written evaluations to be mailed to NWEI or encourage participants to mail evaluations directly to NWEI.

NEXT STEPS

Discuss the following possibilities as a group. Consider participating in other NWEI programs or continuing with a group action project. If the group would like to become more involved with offering NWEI programs, any member can contact the Outreach Team to discuss ways to be involved. We thank you for your participation.

“Action on the environment comes from thinking about it - comes from real conversations about the real facts, our real lives, our real hopes. Northwest Earth Institute courses are one of those places that make those conversations happen, and that’s why they’re a vital part of the change we need to see.”

-Bill McKibben, author, *Deep Economy*

REGISTRATION FORM

Partner organizations and Sister Earth Institutes may choose to maintain a record of all course registrants. This information is for NWEI use only, and is not shared with any other organization. Please circulate this sheet during the first session and send a copy to NWEI or your local partner organization. Thank you.

COURSE COORDINATOR'S NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____
PHONE (H): _____ PHONE (W): _____
E MAIL: _____

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E MAIL: _____

TO BE FILLED OUT BY THE COURSE ORGANIZER, OR NWEI VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE WHO FACILITATES THE FIRST MEETING:

START DATE: _____
MEETING TIME: _____
COURSE NAME: _____
COURSE COORDINATOR: _____
MENTOR (IF APPLICABLE): _____
TYPE OF GROUP [HOME, COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, NON-PROFIT]: _____
NAME & ADDRESS OF MEETING PLACE: _____

THE NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE NETWORK

Northwest Earth Institute thanks you for your participation in NWEI programs.

NWEI maintains an office with staff to provide resources, training, and support for the Earth Institute Network. The work of NWEI is made possible through the generous contributions of individuals, foundation grants, and the donated time of many volunteers. If you would like to help support this effort, we'd welcome your contributions.

YES! I would like to make a contribution to the Northwest Earth Institute. My gift will support the continued work of NWEI.

ENCLOSED IS MY TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIFT FOR:

- \$35 Regular \$250 Sustainer
- \$50 Contributor \$500 Patron
- \$100 Earth Steward \$1000 Founder

I would like to receive Earth Matters, the quarterly newsletter of NWEI.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____
PHONE (H): _____ PHONE (W): _____
E MAIL: _____

Please make checks payable to Northwest Earth Institute. You can also donate online at www.nwei.org.

MAIL TO:
NWEI
317 SW Alder, Suite 1050, Portland, OR 97204
Your contribution is deeply appreciated.
THANK YOU.

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THANK YOU.

COURSE BOOK ORDER FORM



YES! I would like to order NWEI discussion course guides.

Please note that payment is due at the time of order. If you must pay with a check, payment is due within 30 days. Unpaid orders past 30 days will be assessed a 1.5% late fee. We are unable to accept returns or exchanges.

DATE: _____
 NAME: _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____
 PHONE (H): _____ PHONE (W): _____
 FAX: _____
 E MAIL: _____

COURSE LOCATION (CHECK ONE) *PLEASE NOTE COURSE START DATE:

Home/Neighborhood Community or Faith Center; Please list _____
 Business/Workplace; Please list _____ Organization/University; Please list _____

COURSE BOOKS:	QTY.	COST
<input type="checkbox"/> Menu for the Future	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Global Warming: Changing CO ₂ urse	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Choices for Sustainable Living	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary Simplicity	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Children - Healthy Planet	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Discovering a Sense of Place	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring Deep Ecology	\$20.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> NWEI Organizer Guide*	\$3.00 x	= \$
<input type="checkbox"/> NWEI Membership**	Starts at \$35.00	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Donation to National Network**		\$

* Suggested if this is your first course.

** Optional - Become a member or just show support and receive our quarterly newsletter, EarthMatters.

SHIPPING / HANDLING:

1-2 Books	\$5.00	\$
3-15 Books	\$11.00	\$
16-30 Books	\$22.00	\$
31-45 Books	\$33.00	\$
46-60 Books	\$44.00	\$

TOTAL \$

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call 503.227.2807 or email contact@nwei.org.

You may fax this order to 503.227.2917 or mail with your check or credit card information to:

Northwest Earth Institute
 Outreach Team
 317 SW Alder, Suite 1050
 Portland, OR 97204

VISA/MASTERCARD #: _____ EXPIRATION DATE: _____
 NAME AS IT APPEARS ON CARD: _____
 SECURITY CODE - (3 DIGIT CODE ON THE BACK RIGHT SIDE OF CARD) - _____

I understand that selected readings in Northwest Earth Institute course books cannot be reprinted without the author's permission. NWEI recommends the discussion guides be used in small groups. The Northwest Earth Institute appreciates your efforts to bring discussion groups to your community or organization.

Sent Date & Initials (Office Use Only): _____

Paid
 Due