

## A Framework for Understanding the Development of Autonomy, Relationship & Sense of Place within Western Cultures

(modified from Ruthellen Josselson 1996. *The Space Between Us: Exploring the Dimensions of Human Relationships*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA). (Material in *italics* relates to experiences of the author – see: Hill SB 2003, Autonomy, mutualistic relationships, sense of place and conscious caring: a hopeful view of the present and future, in J I Cameron (ed.), *Changing Places: Re-imagining Australia*, Longueville, Sydney, NSW, pp. 180-196.

### Josselson's Eight Expressions of Relational Learning in Western Cultures

### Associated Expressions of Relationship with Nature and Place (modified from Hill, unpublished curriculum material)

#### Sensory Grounded Experience (from the beginning of life)

Holding: provision of safety, security and assurance; someone being there for you.

Safe, non-frightening early experiences lay foundation for expectation of support, feeling secure, at home and physically connected with nature and place.  
*Helped by time spent laying on the grass looking at the clouds and leafy branches and listening to the birds, with a carer near by.*

Attachment: acknowledged; reliable emotional (and material) connection(s).

Recognition of primacy of our dependence on, and relationship with, 'nature'; emotionally connected; beginning of 'sense of place'; nature as 'sanctuary' with also a therapeutic role; special and favourite places, basis for subsequent familiarity with physical and bio-ecological characteristics of particular environments.  
*Helped by ritual, childhood haunts, bush walking and camping.*

Passionate Experience: encounter intense pleasure e.g., through respectful physical contact.

Experience of multifaceted, holistic pleasure of nature; fascination and joy with its diversity, mystery and 'otherness'; stimulation, excitement and deep love of nature; basis for development of sense of stewardship and responsibilities.  
*Helped by intense experiences such as rock climbing, white water canoeing, backpacking, sleeping under the stars and skinny-dipping.*

Eye-to-Eye Validation: communication of authenticity; confirmation, encouragement, understanding and empathy for one's 'being'; and later also conditional approval of one's 'doing'.

Positive (and negative) feedback from interactions with nature (pets, other domesticated animals, wildlife and plants); becoming aware of both the predictable and knowable, as well as the spontaneous, emergent and mysterious properties of nature.  
*Helped by spending relaxed time with nature, including eye-to-eye contact with other primate species etc.*

## Dependant on Meaning Making and Cognitive Processes

Identification and Idealisation: recognition and respect for others' desirable qualities (and of the undesirability and repulsion of others); key drive for personal development and transcendence; basis for attraction to mentors and partners.

Recognition of the amazingness, wonder and power of nature, and of the value of the models in nature; its use in metaphors and mythology; basis for respecting its limits and working with its potential; needed for managing one's desire to contain, control, own and domesticate nature; and for designing and redesigning with nature.

*Helped by totems, sacred sites, mentors, cultural stories, vision quests, sweat lodges and other intense and special experiences; and by opportunities to interact responsibly.*

Mutuality and Resonance: simultaneously recognising similarities in one another's experiences, thinking and feeling and being willing to share them openly, thereby experiencing connectedness, communion and a sense of 'we'; finding oneself in 'the other'.

Through awe, compassion, integration and collaboration, learning to recognise synergy, synchronicity and mutuality in nature; further deepening of respect of limits and realisation of diverse possibilities and opportunities; involves letting go of competition and desires to control; deepening one's connection with 'the other'; described well in some nature poetry.

*Experienced through playing with and taking responsibility for pets, horse riding, swimming with dolphins, witnessing thunderstorms, torrents of water, mountains and glaciers; also through shared creative expression.*

Embeddedness: identification with our connectedness, and also recognition of our being a small part of a larger grouping; enables us to speak from our particular roles, groups and places, and also to contribute to them and feel that we belong; basis for interest in history, and a concern for inter-generational and global equity, 'others' needs and for meaning in one's life.

Deep connectedness to the planet and its other inhabitants; spiritual and soulful experiences in nature, and sense of our lineage and place within it; deepens our evolving sense of meaning, and of the wonder of life.

*Helped by our ongoing relationships with nature, journaling these and trying to convey them in poetry, creative writing, music and art.*

Tending and Caring: our experience of this enables us to choose to offer ourselves in the service of others; being there for them, particularly in times of need; involves diverse expressions of empathy and sensitivity to boundaries.

Recognition of the joy experienced in caring for nature, specific habitats, biodiversity, ecological cycles and processes, and protection from invasive species and materials.

*Helped by diverse expressions of caring for nature and place: from recycling to fundamental redesign of one's lifestyle and ways of interacting with nature and others.*

***Emeritus Professor Stuart B. Hill*** – [s.hill@uws.edu.au](mailto:s.hill@uws.edu.au) - ***Foundation Chair of Social Ecology*** – [www.stuartbhill.com](http://www.stuartbhill.com)  
*School of Education (previously School of Social Ecology and Lifelong Learning), Western Sydney University (Kingswood Campus)  
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW 1797, AUSTRALIA.*

*July, 2003*