

START
DOING
SOMETHING

STOP
FREAKING
OUT

INSTRUCTION GUIDE

ACTIVATE YOUR ACTIVISM

WELCOME TO THE SFO-SDS TOOLKIT.

We made this toolkit to encourage people (ourselves included) to move out of a state of paralysis and shock following the 2016 presidential election, and into one of positivity and—above all—action. The tool is designed to help you focus on your unique priorities and resources, and to make a practical plan for action.

We recommend using this tool as a group. Brainstorming and sharing your commitments in community is a great way to get started, and to create a shared habit of political activism.

HERE IS WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO GET STARTED:

- We recommend a group of five or more people
- A vertical space to post-up ideas (such as a flat wall or dry window)
- Printed set of worksheets for each person
- One pad of Post-it notes per person
- Pencil or pen for each person
- Timer

This guide is written as a script to be read aloud to the group. You can assign a “facilitator” to lead the group, or simply take turns reading the script as you go. Use the suggested instructions and times as just that: suggestions. Feel free to make the tool work for you in whatever way you see fit.

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GETTING STARTED

KICK OFF

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Before you launch into the script we've provided, take a moment to welcome everyone, thank them for joining you on this adventure, and share a little bit about what motivated you to host this event and your personal hopes and expectations for the experience. If you are hosting a public event, invite people to introduce themselves to one another in groups of five or two, and make sure everyone knows where the restrooms are!

INSPIRATION

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Before the group starts work, we encourage you to share the following passage as a reflection on the work you are about to do. Offer whatever introduction to this activity feels most authentic to you, and then read it aloud to the group.

"To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on the future, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty are better than gloom and safety. To hope is dangerous, and yet it is the opposite of fear, for to live is to risk.

I say all this to you because hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. I say this because hope is an ax you break down doors with in an emergency; because hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal. Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope. At the beginning of his massive 1930s' treatise on hope, the German philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote, 'The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong.' To hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment to the future makes the present inhabitable.

Anything could happen, and whether we act or not has everything to do with it. Though there is no lottery ticket for the lazy and the detached, for the engaged there is a tremendous gamble for the highest stakes right now. I say this to you not because I haven't noticed that this country has strayed close to destroying itself and everything it once stood for in pursuit of empire in the world and the eradication of democracy at home, that our civilization is close to destroying the very nature on which we depend—the oceans, the atmosphere, the uncounted species of plant and insect and bird. I say it because I have noticed: wars will break out, the planet will heat up, species will die out, but how many, how hot, and what survives depends on whether we act."

— Rebecca Solnit
Hope in the Dark, 2006

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GETTING GROUNDED

CALM, COOL, AND READY TO KICK ASS

Activity Time: 3 minutes

Let's take a moment to get grounded, focused, and prepared to work. Place your feet firmly on the ground, place your hands on your legs, and take a deep breath. We are going to set the timer for three minutes and take that time to sit in silence with our eyes closed. As you sit, bring your awareness to how the floor holds you up, how the chair holds you up, and bring awareness to your breath. See if you can track its flow in and out. Don't attempt to change your breath, just notice it.

Set the timer for three minutes and begin.

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WORKSHEET ONE

WHAT IS YOUR VISION?

Activity Time: 7 minutes

2020 Vision – Imagine that it is four years from today, and your aspirations for how the world might be have all come true. For some people, it can be challenging to start this exercise: but it's important to try as it is crucial that our work is grounded in optimism and hope for the world. We cannot relinquish our vision for what the world could or *should* be. If it is hard, just start. Every journey begins with one step, after all.

Set your timer for seven minutes and draw a picture of this future state.

REPORT OUT

Activity Time: 10 minutes

Take a minute or two per person to share your visions. If you are in a group larger than five, consider breaking into smaller groups to share.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO FEEL?

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Now that you thought about your vision for the future, ask yourself how you want to *feel* on the way to that future state. Take five minutes to write down your ideas in silence.

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WORKSHEET TWO

WHAT ACTIONS ARE YOU ALREADY TAKING?

Activity Time: 7 minutes

WHAT YOU'RE DOING MATTERS

Our hunch is that you have already started to do something. The question is: is it the “right” something for you? Worksheet two is an opportunity to brainstorm on the actions you’ve already been taking. Some of your actions you’ll want to celebrate and continue to pursue, while others you may want to reconsider.

In the “Plus” row, note actions that you find helpful and that you want to continue to pursue. Examples might include: giving money to political organizations; responding to Call to Actions on Facebook; reading “real news” from an actual newspaper; or talking with friends about your feelings.

In the “Delta” row, note actions you are taking that you might want to change or stop doing altogether. Examples might include: drinking or indulging more to manage stress; isolating yourself from other people; or spending too much time on social media for no good reason.

Set your timer to seven minutes for this activity.

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WORKSHEET THREE

WHAT CAN YOU GIVE?

Activity Time: 10 minutes

SPARE SOME CHANGE

It can be easy to fall prey to the idea that the potential problems we are facing are bigger than anything we ourselves can tackle. Well, it is true that we will need to work together—fearlessly and collaboratively—but it is also equally important to recognize that each of us has something important and unique to offer. Worksheet three is designed to help you brainstorm the ways that you are best equipped to help create meaningful political and cultural change.

This worksheet is organized in four categories:

The first category is **skills**. Your first instinct may be to identify skills connected to your specific work or craft (i.e. if you are a graphic designer, you might think of design skills first). However, odds are that you have more skills than that, so push harder. Can you make calls? Can you bake pies? Can you provide childcare at events?

The second category is **time**. Where can you make time in your life to become more politically active? This may mean dedicating 15 minutes every morning to contacting legislature. It may mean making a commitment of 20 hours to a specific project, or it could mean volunteering on a regular basis. The point is to discover both the micro and macro ways you can begin to commit your time to political action.

The third category is **money**. Political and cultural organizing takes money! In this moment, I would encourage you to consider how much you can give and then dig a little deeper. Even if it's just \$5 a month, every penny counts. Take this time to evaluate how much you can give and in what intervals (i.e. one-time donations or regular donations per week or per month).

The fourth and fifth categories are **community** and **self**. It is critical that we also take care of our community and ourselves in this tumultuous time in order to sustain our actions.

What can you give to your *community*? How can you stay connected? How do you show care for those around you?

What can you give to *yourself*? It may be scheduling time to rest or exercise, or taking time to make art.

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WORKSHEET FOUR

WHAT ISSUES? WHAT ELEVATION?

Activity Time: 7 minutes

ELEVATE AND ACTIVATE

Worksheet four is designed to help you focus on the issues that speak most to you, and at what elevation. Start by naming the top five issues you want to work on. We know it can be hard to choose in this moment. We also know that in the coming years and months much of our activism will be defined by responding to Federal policy issues. And that's fine. In this moment, we are asking you to—given what you know today—pick the top five issues you want to pursue.

Once you have named your top five issues, consider at what elevation you want to work on. As a suggestion, we have identified a list of proposed elevations for you to consider: International, National, State, Local, Institutional, or One-on-one.

Working on an issue at the International level may involve donating or volunteering your time for international organizations or local organizations that are working on international policy or cultural issues.

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- Working at the **National level** may involve donating or volunteering your time to organizations working on national policy or cultural issues.

 - Working at the **State level** may involve donating or volunteering your time for organizations working on state level policy issues.

 - Working at the **Local level** may involve donating or volunteering your time and skills for organizations working on local policy, cultural, issues or direct actions.

 - Working at the **Institutional level** may involve advocacy within a specific institution such as the organization you work for, the school your child attends, or your local police department

 - Working on an issue at the **one-on-one level** may involve having purposeful conversations with people in your life such as relatives, coworkers or neighbors about issues you care about.

Set your timer for seven minutes to complete this worksheet on your own.

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WALL POST-UP

ACTIONS BRAINSTORM

Activity Time: 15 minutes

THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL

The great part about doing this as a group is that you can share ideas for potential actions. For this next activity, you are going to use your Post-it notes to share ideas. Arrange a grid on the wall using Post-it notes for headers. The vertical columns should read Skills, Time, Money, Community and Self. The horizontal rows should read: International, National, State, Local, Institution and One-on-one. (It should look like a wall-sized version of Worksheet four.)

For this activity take five minutes to write down all of your ideas regarding what actions you might take within each category. Write one idea per Post-it note. Set your timer for five minutes so that everyone in the group can post their ideas into the corresponding categories.

Once everyone has posted their ideas, set your timer for five minutes to allow everyone to read all of the ideas on the board, to ask questions, and to spark new ideas.

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WORKSHEET FIVE

ACTIONS OUTLINE

Activity Time: 10 minutes

STRIKE A BALANCE

So now you have the chance to think through the actions that you're already taking; the actions that you want to continue; the resources that you have; how you want to contribute in terms of your skills, your time and your money; and how you are taking care of yourself and the people in your life. Now it's time to write down all of the future actions that you want to take and at what elevation. The purpose of this exercise is to collect all of your ideas regarding potential actions and put them in one place. When you have completed the worksheet, you may notice certain patterns, for example: are all of your volunteering and donation plans at the National level? If so, you may want to re-prioritize your giving to spend more of it at the Local level. Or, conversely, you may notice that you are allocating more of your time at the Local level and may want to explore investing more time at the National or International levels. This is about balancing your priorities and time for maximum impact.

Set your timer for 10 minutes to complete the worksheet on your own.

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WORKSHEET SIX

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN?

Activity Time: 10 min

A ROADMAP TO REVOLUTION

Worksheet six is designed for you to capture—on one piece of paper—what your plans for action are. You'll see that there is a space to note a quick summary of your vision from Worksheet one as well as a summary of how you want to feel on your journey. You can also write a summary of actions you will take in the categories of Skills, Time, Money, Community, and Self.

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WORKSHEET SEVEN

WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT FIVE STEPS?

Activity Time: 10 min

TAKE FIVE

Worksheet seven is an addendum to Worksheet six (“What Is Your Plan?”). After reviewing your plan, identify the **five specific actions you will take**. This should be framed as SMART goals, meaning they are: **Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Reasonable, and Tangible**. It is important to set specific timelines for each goal i.e. ‘When will you get this done?’

Set your timer for seven minutes to complete this worksheet on your own.

If you have time, it may be helpful to share your next five steps and your plan with a buddy and agreed to follow up with one another to see how you’re doing.

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CELEBRATE

CONNECT WITH PURPOSE

Congratulations! You made a plan! You stopped freaking out and are starting to do something!! Consider this a victory in-and-of-itself, and that you have taken those first vital steps towards creating a more just and sustainable world.

We would love to hear about your experiences using this tool.

Feel free to drop us a line at info@stopfreakingout.org.