

Menu of Offerings by Didi Pershouse

Soil Health as Public Health

Soil health—the result of the work of living organisms that build the structure and function of soils—has a profound impact on public health. Microbes and plants work together to create a living sponge that provides clean abundant water, safety during extreme weather events, and nutrient-dense food that prevents many modern diseases.

Didi Pershouse, author of [The Ecology of Care](#) and [Understanding Soil Health and Watershed Function](#), will lead us through an exploration of how to rebuild the fundamental infrastructure of life.

The Ecology of Care: Shifting from a Sterile to a Fertile Paradigm

The discovery of bacteria as a cause of disease ushered in a "sterile" era in which medicine and agriculture tried to kill off germs, bugs, weeds, and other perceived pests in hopes of improving life.

This approach has led to a massive failure in the function of the complex systems that support us. Can we shift back towards a fertile paradigm of care for our inner and outer landscapes? Author Didi Pershouse will show how to work in collaboration with living systems inside and around us to restore health on a large scale.

Microorganisms, Unseen Workers of the World

The microorganisms that we host in our bodies do much of the work that we take credit for ourselves. They carry out and direct many of the essential processes that enable us to think, play, and work in daily life. Even the cells that we call our own are in fact microorganisms that have organized themselves to work together in a living system that we call "a human body." You could call it a worker's cooperative. Microorganisms in the soil also do important work that we are mostly unaware of, because—like the working class—their work is quiet and hidden from view. Yet

these workers provide most of the essential goods and services we rely on for daily life (clean water, protection against flooding and drought, and the nutritional integrity of our food, just for a few examples.)

Society teaches us to credit the “owners” and “managers” of companies with the products of a company’s labor—not the working-class people who sit in the factory and do the real work. Our relationship with microorganisms echoes this pattern, (and often for reasons of profit as well.)

When we don’t understand or acknowledge the intelligence, power and work of microorganisms, and try to take too much control over life’s processes, we make management decisions that tend to lead to poor functioning of the whole, often creating conditions in which those organisms cannot do their work or even survive.

Didi Pershouse, author of “The Ecology of Care: Medicine, Agriculture, Money, and the Quiet Power of Human and Microbial Communities” will describe the shift from sterile paradigms of care—that kill off what we don’t want—towards fertile paradigms of care that work in collaboration with the microscopic workers of the world.

Healing Generation RX: Supporting Our Young People Without Psychiatric Drugs

Is our current society a safe place for young people to be themselves and learn resilience? Are we offering our young people the nutritional support and physical outlets that their systems require in order to self-regulate and thrive?

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, half of all 13 - 18 year olds have had a mental illness at some point in their life, and one out of 5 is said to have had a “seriously debilitating mental illness.” The use of psychiatric drugs is escalating wildly. These statistics call into question who is profiting from these diagnoses and whether we’re looking at the whole picture.

Using research on the microbiome, the gut-brain connection, changes in soil microbiology and agricultural practices, and the role of connection in human resilience and development, Didi Pershouse (author of *The Ecology of Care* and founder of the Center for Sustainable Medicine) offers a whole-systems perspective on “mental illness” and brain function. She will lead participants through exercises for developing strong communities of peer support, and outline a strategic plan for

young people, educators, parents, and healthcare providers to grow a generation of zestful, empowered, and grounded young leaders for the next generation.

The Commons of Care: A New Paradigm for Human Health (and Agriculture)

Current social norms enforce the subtle yet potent message that at any given time, we are either burdening someone else, or they are a burden to us. Profit-based society capitalizes on these unconscious assumptions to create elaborate and expensive ways of providing care. Yet, historically, cultures have provided care within the context of community and family structures, without any need for monetary exchange. Didi Pershouse, author of *The Ecology of Care*, will offer examples of successful models of care that work outside of the established health-care system to help us envision a fully functional, robust, and sustainable “commons of care.”

Climate, Water, Soil and Hope: A Whole Systems Approach to Thinking about How Landscapes Function

Around the world, people are growing healthy landscapes that take atmospheric carbon and turn it into a water-holding, climate-cooling “soil carbon sponge.”

Didi Pershouse of the Soil Carbon Coalition will lead participants through several investigations that demonstrate the biological processes and principles involved in landscapes that actually work. These landscapes provide many interconnected “ecological services,” such as:

- Nutrient-dense food and clean water
- Cooling of the surrounding atmosphere
- Preventing algae blooms, erosion, flooding, drought and wildfires
- Restoring local economies
- Reducing conflicts over resources
- and improvements in public health

You’ll never look at soil the same way again!

A few of the questions we will answer are:

- How does soil biology influence water issues such as runoff, water storage, and filtration?
- How does soil carbon accumulate, and what is its relationship to atmospheric carbon, ocean acidification, and global warming?
- How do you change the productivity of soils, and profitability of farm and range land, without paying for chemical inputs?

- How does soil biology impact the nutritional integrity of food and human health?
- What are the principles necessary to grow healthy productive landscapes that absorb and filter water?

This workshop is great for educators, farmers, rural and urban planners, conservation groups, policy makers, and anyone interested in learning simple steps towards creating a better future.

Writing for Social Change: Using Your Personal Story to Shift the Social Narrative

The reality of our lives and work is often much more nuanced and hopeful than the nightly news would have us believe. Many of us have had experiences that run counter to the cultural assumptions and stereotypes that are increasingly being used to divide us. If we desire to address large issues of the day, we need to find ways to break down social barriers, offer realistic stories of hope, and work together to find common goals and places where our shared humanity becomes evident.

Do you have a story that others might find surprising, or that might change someone's view of a group, region, process, or cultural norm? Have you ever had an experience that might embolden and encourage readers on a topic that is often discussed with a tone of hopelessness?

The world of self-publishing has opened the doors for many new voices to emerge and tell their stories. Writing does not have to be perfect to be powerful, and we should all feel welcome to contribute to the new narrative of the world.

In this workshop, we'll employ a combination of shared listening time, deep exploration of our own stories, writing prompts, and other generative exercises. We will put our common and uncommon experiences into words and claim our places as full participants in the powerful work of creating the world we want.

Are We In Charge of the Rain? Reversing Drought, and Naturally Cooling and Rehydrating our Landscapes

Increased flooding, drought, and wildfires throughout the world are challenging local and national communities, economies, and food production systems. Rather than taking a victim's stance, Didi Pershouse will engage participants in an exploration of the the cooling and hydrating properties of the soil carbon sponge.

She will share land-management principles that individual farmers, ranchers, city planners, homeowners, and regional organizations are using to reverse these trends, and discuss ways that people are employing the wisdom of natural systems and microbiology to improve the water-holding capacity of soils in order to naturally cool and rehydrate desertifying landscapes.

Resilient Leadership: Creating Networks of Support in Challenging Times

One definition of leadership is “anyone who is working to make things go well in the world, whether their efforts are recognized or not.” Do you fit into this definition? Are you interested in entering local politics, but don’t know if you can deal with the stress? Is your organization filled with managers who can’t seem to think or try anything new? In this participatory workshop, Didi Pershouse will demonstrate ways of creating dynamic support networks for yourself and other emerging leaders in order to:

- Work in public (or hidden) leadership roles without burning out
 - Turn boring, unproductive meetings into places where great things happen
 - Create a network of support for (yourself or other) leaders and managers to be more resilient and innovative as they face challenges.
 - Ensure that your community or organization knows how to grow leadership and management that isn’t rigid, defended and calloused.
 - Develop resilient, thoughtful and creative new leaders for our organizations, communities, and nations
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Land Listeners Training Program

This is a train-the-trainers program for people who want to lead Soil Carbon Coalition monitoring and restoration projects in their communities. These projects empower farmers, students, conservation groups, policy makers, and others to be able to see, monitor, and map changes in whole systems landscape function. By doing this, we aim to increase participation in the joyful work of regenerating fertile soil, clean water, and thriving local economies.

We have three interconnected projects: our Climate, Water, Soil, and Hope curriculum; the international Soil Carbon Challenge; and our new participatory online map database, the Atlas of Biological Work (<https://atlasbiowork.com>). In all of these, we are aiming for a different kind of science, which allows everyday people to investigate the impact of human management on living systems and ecosystem services.

We are already receiving more requests for land monitoring, workshops, talks, and school residencies than we can currently fulfill. So we've decided to create a team of "Land Listeners" in each region who can guide others through a learning process.

Our goal is to show ways to engage schools and communities in monitoring, so that individuals and regions may:

- receive feedback on land management
- evaluate local land-use policies
- find out which land managers are doing effective restoration work that is worth using as a model for others seeking to take charge of their local watershed health.

We will cover:

- Connections between soil microbiology, carbon flows, and water flows, and their impact on public health, local economies, watershed health, and climate resilience
- Soil health principles
- Hands-on skills for mapping and monitoring changes over time in soil health and watershed function
- Group facilitation skills to maximize participation, connection, and learning

Through these workshops we aim to create a "community of practice" — a working group of closely-connected people in a region, with a shared set of skills, and an interest in continuing to learn together.

Pricing

- Presentation/talk: \$150-\$300
- Half Day Workshop: \$350-\$600
- Full Day Workshop: \$550-\$1,500
- 2-Day Workshop: \$1,500-\$3,000
- 3-Day Workshop: \$2,000-\$4,000

Please note: Sliding scale pricing is offered in all categories to ensure that offerings are affordable. For locations outside of Vermont, mileage and accommodation will be additional. For workshops that span multiple days, the final fee will be dependent on the event location.

For questions, contact Didi Pershouse at ecologyofcare@gmail.com. To book an event, contact Taylor Katz, Didi's Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, at hello@freeversestudio.com.