

CLIMATE WELLBEING SERIES

Climate Anxiety



Illustration by Quentin Monge

What is climate anxiety?



- A state of ongoing fear, stress, or worry stemming from a sense of impending climate change impacts and processes.
- A sense of threat and uncertainty about environmental doom.
- Though one may not have experienced direct climate related disasters, we may fear we will soon experience it.
- Climate anxiety can be mental, emotional and physical.
- Climate work and organizing can also generate climate anxiety via grief, frustration, helplessness stemming from a lack of political action and significant changes needed.

How might climate anxiety impact our health and wellbeing?



Mentally

- Anxious
- Stressed
- Worried
- Overwhelmed



Emotionally

- Fearful
- Lonely
- Helpless
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Guilty



Physically

- Muscle tensions or ache
- Sleeplessness
- Chest tightness
- Upset stomach or digestion issues
- Restlessness
- Tension headaches

And yes! Experiencing climate anxiety is normal.

Climate anxiety is a valid response to experiencing or witnessing difficult or traumatic climate change issues.

“Negative” or “non-positive” mental and emotional responses to climate change are not innately pathological or unhealthy.

Validation and acknowledgement of such feelings is an important step in helping to process and move through these feelings, rather than getting stuck in them.

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We cannot control climate anxiety from happening but we can learn strategies and coping skills to redirected and manage climate anxiety.

Flipping the script from doom and gloom to narratives of care, compassion, hope, agency, and collective power to change systems, can help build momentum and motivation for expanding needed climate action.

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Though climate change impacts everyone, everyone is not equally impacted by climate change, which can generate different and disproportionate experiences of climate anxiety and impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

In Canada and globally, community systems, institutions, and infrastructure must recognize and address historical & ongoing injustices that continue to generate inequitable mental health and climate anxiety burdens and community experiences.



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How do inequitable systems generate disproportionate experiences?

Legacies of these systems have and continue to direct a disproportionate share of adverse climate impacts and vulnerabilities on Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, LGBTQ2+ communities, the disabled, women, girls, elderly, and the unhoused.

Yet, narratives often tend to prioritize and center privileged voices and perspectives and stories rather than those most impacted and at risk of climate harms. Climate anxiety, mental health and wellbeing discourse needs to be inclusive and equitable.

Start here

Videos are linked in our bio!



THIS IS KATHERINE'S STORY.

Katherine, an Indigenous (Nimiipuu, Liksiyu, Numu) young person from Oregon, is raising awareness around the protection of First Foods and Indigenous lands from the impacts of climate change.








THIS IS NAZARETH'S STORY.

Eight Torres Strait Islanders are making a complaint against the Australian government, alleging that its failure to act on climate change is violating their fundamental human rights.






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**What are some
strategies you have
built for yourself and
your communities
to manage climate
anxiety?**



Watch out for our next guide on
moving through and beyond climate anxiety!



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References + Resources

Coping With Climate Change Distress
Australian Psychological Society

A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety
Sarah Jaquette Ray

What is Climate Anxiety and What Can We Do About It?
Climate Reality Project

Climate Change and Mental Health: A Systemic Approach to Action in Post-Secondary Education
Jenalee Kluttz

Community Resilience and Wellbeing Amid Climate Crisis
Meghan Wise

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Moving through and beyond Climate Anxiety



Illustration by Thoka Maer

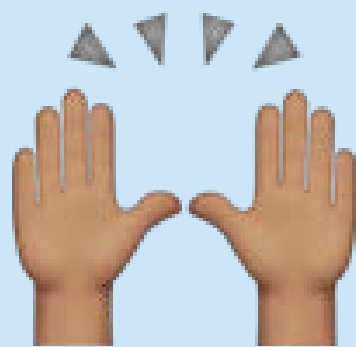
Strategies for addressing climate anxiety

There are many ways we can move through and beyond climate anxiety so we do not feel consumed by it.

There are different points of leverage we can engage to help manage the mental health and wellbeing impacts of climate change. This guide offers three leverage points:



Self Care



Activism and
Advocacy



Systems Change

But! Coping strategies are not one-way suits all.

When discussing coping strategies, we must recognize and acknowledge how systems of inequity, racism, and discrimination can intersect with coping strategies.

Systems of inequity, vulnerabilities, location, or differing world views can all influence the ways in which coping mechanisms are engaged or mobilized.

Some folks might find certain strategies more useful or important depending on individual experiences and context.

Use this guide as a starting point to find out what works for you!



Self Care Approach

💖 Take care of your mental health and wellbeing. Nourishing your mind, body, and wellness can offer more sustainable capacity for long-term climate advocacy and activism.


💡 Step back from doom scrolling. Prioritize stories highlighting climate momentum!

💬 Reach out and share your feelings with folks you trust.


🌻 Maintain or take up practices that make room for hope, joy, meaning and purpose in building climate momentum.


👏 Connect with family, place, culture, community, and nature.

Activism and Advocacy Approach


 Be a leader in educating about the mental health and wellbeing impacts of climate change and coping strategies in your networks.


 Join local or global climate movements or groups working towards climate justice, sustainability, divestment, or community resilience.


 Join campaigns and lobby political, business, and industry leaders to implement policies that align with climate science and climate justice.


 Volunteer with local groups organizing in your community.

Systems Change Approach

 Call for institutions to prioritize climate mental health and wellbeing issues.

 Prioritize addressing inequities such as poverty, racism, homelessness that lead to disproportionate climate burdens and impacts on equity-seeking communities (often low-income and racialized).

 Vote to empower community leaders committed to addressing mental health and wellbeing impacts of climate change.

 Call for a just transition to renewable energy systems to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and creating meaningful new jobs.

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Remember: this is a collective effort!

Here are some gentle reminders to take away for yourself:

We all have different capacities, resources, and challenges. Do what you can, when you can, as you can.

Find room to foster community, hope and joy. No act is too small to make a difference.

Build community trust and cohesion through acts of community care and collaboration.

You're not alone in feeling climate anxiety, grief, or frustration. Reach out, share your emotions and process them with folks you trust.