

DARE to CARE!

**Toolkit for Young People
Coping with Eco-Distress 2024**

**CLIMATE
PSYCHOLOGY
ALLIANCE**

**FORCE OF
NATURE**



**ONE
RESILIENT
EARTH**

Why this toolkit?

- Many young people report that they are dismissed in their eco-distress.
- To break taboos around climate mental health, this toolkit aims to inform young people about ways of coping with eco-distress.
- By clearly explaining scientific findings, such as the Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief, this document aims to bridge the gap between young people and research.
- The toolkit provides many concrete activities for three major dimensions of coping: Action, Grieving, and Distancing, as depicted in the process model.
- There is a special focus on different ways of seeking social support and coping together.
- The toolkit aims to support young people in coping. It does not place the main responsibility of coping on young people's shoulders. Adequate environments and urgent political action are incremental.
- It also invites adults to openly listen to young people's concerns and potentially carry out activities together.

Who is it for?

- While this toolkit is primarily targeted at young people, anyone who is seeking support in coping with their eco-distress or is interested in supporting others is welcome.
- The toolkit was developed based on many sources, focus group discussions, and interviews with young people.
- In creating the toolkit, the voices and experiences of people from the Global South have been underrepresented.
- Similarly, there is a lack of voices of people younger than 18.
- This guide might not apply to young people in frontline communities who have just experienced massive impacts from extreme weather events.
- For any adults who are reading this, there is a clear call to create supportive environments for coping for yourselves and in the lives of the young people around you. This also entails reflecting on your own eco-emotions. How does listening to young people's eco-distress make you feel?

How to use it?

- The toolkit is an open-source document that can be widely shared and used.
- It is easily adaptable to different contexts.
- It is strongly recommended to invite others to work on the toolkit in a group. There are many different ways to organize this.
- If you are looking for support in adapting this toolkit to your specific context, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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Welcome to the Toolkit!

Do you feel all kinds of emotions about the Climate and Ecological Emergency? Do you sometimes feel like you lack the space to express it and tend to it?

Then this guide might just be for you!
Regardless of whether you have been an activist for a long time or are just starting out to become aware of the immensity of the crisis.

In this toolkit we will cover

- The range of eco-emotions
- The importance of having supportive groups and how to find them
- The three dimensions of coping: Action, Distancing, and Grieving
- A whole range of inspirational activities for each dimension

How to read this guide

- Please be gentle and compassionate with yourself. Diving into your eco-emotion is brave, and you might feel vulnerable.
- Many topics and journal prompts might make you feel quite emotional. Who can you turn to for support?
- Having supportive relationships is key for coping, so this toolkit is most helpful if you work on it with trusted people in your life.
- If you do not feel like there are any people in your life that you can share your eco-distress with, there are many ideas on how to find them ;)
- Many of the exercises are designed for groups; you can have one group with which you go through the toolkit or different people for different activities.
- Take what resonates with you and leave the rest behind! Maybe some poems and quotes resonate with you, but maybe they don't. Feel free to ignore the offers that you don't vibe with.
- Use it as an inspiration to start your own journey of supporting yourself in coping with eco-distress.

Grounding in Gratitude

Before starting to read this toolkit, maybe you can take a moment to thank yourself. It might feel awkward or undeserved, but caring about our planet, its ecosystems, its animals, and humans, caring about yourself takes courage. Thank you for staying with the trouble! Maybe it is no choice in our current climate reality; maybe disaster has already struck you and your community. Thank yourself for seeking to cope in the face of devastation!

This guide aims to support you in all that you are experiencing by equipping you with knowledge and exercises that can help you to cope with eco-distress.

Before starting, maybe you can acknowledge what has brought you so far: your resilience, strength, and perseverance; your sense of humor, creativity, and chocolate bars; your faith, your friends and family; and your non-human relationships. Whatever it might be, there are many ways in which you are already resourceful and resourced. This [podcast](#) with Joanna Macy, founder of the Work that Reconnects, speaks to starting with gratitude.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency - Complex and Unjust

We come from many different walks of life, from many different countries and regions. The Climate and Ecological Emergency have been affecting us in different ways. As systems of violence and oppression have sown the seeds of the climate crisis, we reap profound inequality! The people who have contributed the least are most vulnerable to extreme weather and all its consequences.

It is crucial to acknowledge how colonialism, capitalism, and the patriarchy are the root causes of the Climate Crisis. There is no easy way of navigating this difficult truth. Working towards climate justice means tackling these root causes.

The climate crisis is dauntingly complex. The philosopher Timothy Morton describes it as a hyperobject (2013)—something too complex and spread out over time and space to be grasped by a human mind. It is gluey. It is sticky. It is attached to everything. The author Margaret Atwood speaks about Everything Change instead of Climate Change. If change can feel scary, a world of inescapable Everything Change sounds nothing short of terrifying. No wonder many of us feel eco-distress!

Let's plant our feet on the ground and take three deep breaths!
Let's come back to our feelings and sensations!

Let us dive into eco-emotions!

What are Eco-Emotions?

Climate emotions are triggered by the climate emergency, while eco-emotions are all feelings and sensations provoked by ecological issues. Sometimes, eco-emotions are considered to be triggered by all the poly-crises and uncertainties we are seeing in the world right now. Feeling fear, grief, fury, frustration, and other feelings is totally healthy and adequate given the crises we are experiencing right now, but without the right support, it can feel much more overwhelming and alienating than if you feel supported. Nevertheless, feeling eco-emotions can be really hard and painful. There might be some relief in knowing that you are not alone in your pain for the world. Feeling eco-emotions shows how much you care about our Earth. Even if it is not always apparent, your care for the world makes a difference!

Knowing terms and concepts around coping with eco-emotions can help you better understand your feelings and develop strategies for dealing with them. That is why this guide will illuminate some of the recent studies and insights on coping with eco-distress.

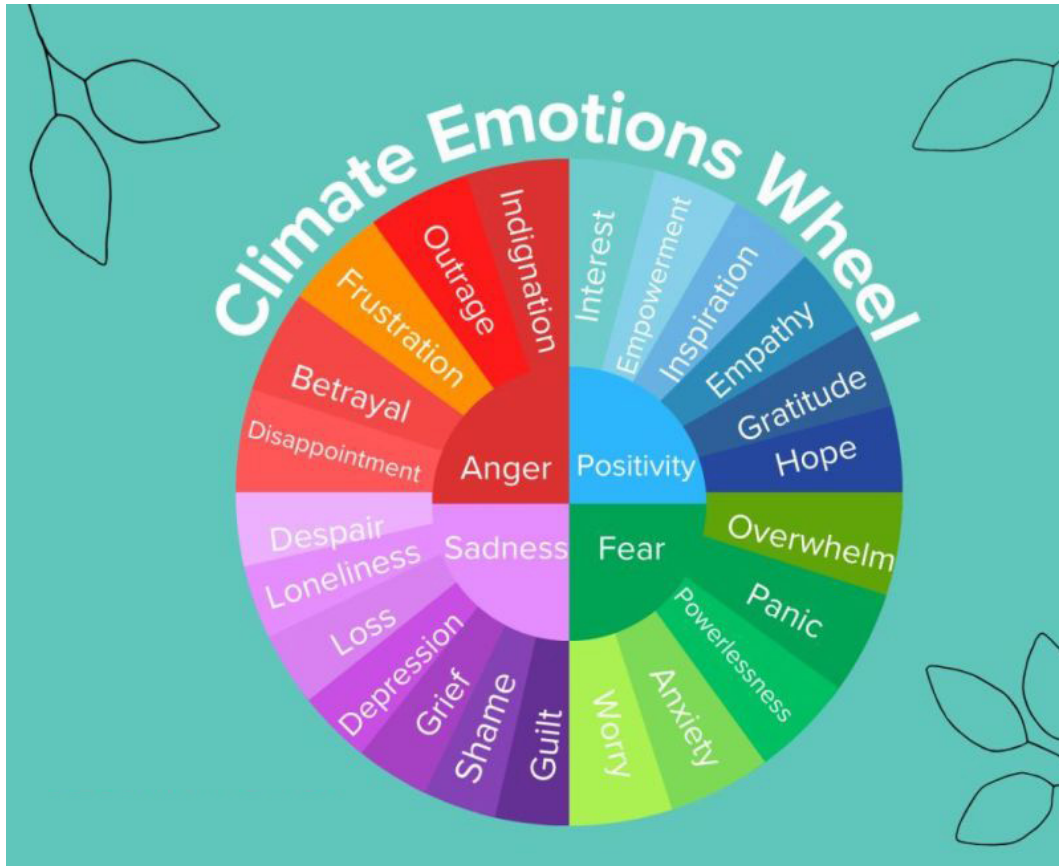
Biodiversity of Eco-Emotions

According to psychologist Caroline Hickman, we all feel a variety of emotions, from fury to hope. She calls that a biodiversity of emotions (Hickman, 2021; Anderson et al., 2024). It can help to view contrasting and competing emotions as part of an ecosystem. They all co-exist and interact with each other. Sometimes, different feelings come more clearly to the surface of our experiences. What feelings are most present often changes periodically. It can be helpful to remember that all feelings, no matter how strong or uncomfortable, pass. You are not alone; you can share what you are feeling with others. There are so many of us experiencing similar things.



Climate Emotions Wheel

Based on the work of researcher Panu Pikhala (2020), the Climate Mental Health Network has created this Climate Emotions Wheel, which shows how many climate emotions we can experience. The range of different eco-emotions is even wider. If you are curious, you can find more information in the [Climate Emotion Guide](#).



Note. From „A guide to climate emotions“ by P. Pikhala and A. Kamenetz, 2024, Climate Mental Health Network. CC-BY-SA.

Journal prompts

You are the expert and wisest guide of your own experience. In this section, you are invited to journal, reflect, and share, by yourself and with others, about the following prompts. You can type in this interactive PDF and save it or use a paper journal.

What eco-emotions are at the forefront of your experience right now?

»

How does this feel in your body?

»

What helps you to allow more gentleness and kindness when encountering your eco-emotions?

»

Are there feelings you would like to add to the wheel? Maybe in your native language?

»

Words of Wisdom

Some of the words of wisdom can also be used as a positive affirmation – phrases that you can repeat to yourself.

- All feelings, no matter how strong or uncomfortable, will ebb and flow
- You can seek support when it feels overwhelming to hold them by yourself!
- It can be very painful to feel so strongly about the state of our world. It also means that you care really deeply! Your care is profoundly appreciated!

“My emotions are always fluctuating; sometimes I feel angry and have more energy to act, and at other times I just feel hopeless and sad. What I started recently is to send out emails when I have energy and ideas for a project, and then I get a response when I am feeling out of energy, but then have already started a project.” (Jakob, 22)

“I feel like the term eco-emotions has something alienating. It implies that our relationship with the more than human world is one-directional, but we are nature, too. When our planet is well, we are well.” (Lila, 24)

Artist’s contribution

800 years ago, the poet Rumi wrote already about the everchanging emotions that humans experience. He saw them all as valuable visitors that might be difficult to endure. Similarly, eco-emotions might be really difficult to be with, but they can help us come to terms with the current climate reality so we can feel more intimately connected with life as it is at this moment.

By Rumi (1207 – 1273)

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning, a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

OTHER PEOPLE’S INSIGHTS

“I think I don’t channel anger into action, but for me, anger is a shield to shield me against sadness and hopelessness.” (Luisa, 21)

Encountering Eco-Emotions in Others

According to a 2021 study that surveyed 10,000 young people from 10 countries worldwide, 48 %—almost half of them—said that they had been dismissed when voicing their eco-distress (Hickman et al., 2021). When you trust in your friends or parents because your partner just broke up, your heartbreak is much more likely to be acknowledged. Why is it so hard for others (and maybe particularly older generations) to acknowledge eco-emotions?

There are some helpful terms to introduce. At the current stage of the climate crisis, it might have gotten challenging to deny its existence. The psychoanalyst Rosemary Randall (Randall 2020) describes disavowal related to the climate crisis as minimizing a truth that is too difficult and painful to take in fully. It is a way of knowing and not knowing at the same time. This allows individuals to make a split between being aware of the climate crisis and still deflecting a sense of responsibility to act. It is as if one compartment of your mind knows about the severity and urgency of the climate crisis, and another one just lets life continue as it has. This is echoed on a societal level through greenwashing promises by polluting industries, making it even harder for an individual to align their awareness and action.

Disavowal can act as a helpful defense mechanism, protecting us from the constant shocks of living in a climate crisis. It becomes problematic when disavowal constantly takes the upper hand, preventing us from engaging in much-needed climate action or facing our feelings.

The researcher Kenneth Doka (2008) coined the term disenfranchised grief to refer to all grief that cannot be mourned adequately in public because it is not included in society's definition of loss. A society in which the norm is in disavowal of the climate crisis does not provide much space for eco-emotions.

When taking climate action, speaking out on the topic, or living a more sustainable lifestyle, you might have come across people's defensive behavior, such as deriding and making fun of climate action, justifying one's own lack of engagement, or making excuses. This can be challenging to react to, especially if it is coming from people that you are close with.



Sally Weintrobe (2021) argues that neoliberalism is keeping us stuck in systems that are destructive to life. It does so by asserting that humans are entitled to destroy other life forms for their own benefit. When coming to terms with how much oil we have been adding to the flames, we feel the moral injury of not having acted according to our values. Oftentimes, it is challenging to assess how much responsibility is precisely on our shoulders. These dilemmas can be disavowed. It can feel much more comforting to avoid moral conflict by turning away or buying oneself deeper into the harmful narratives that we live in. Therefore, any triggers that act as reminders of this moral injury must be avoided and minimized, resulting in defensiveness towards those who take action.

It can be difficult to be with one's own eco-emotions, especially when encountering a lot of defensiveness. In the next chapter, we will look at the three dimensions of coping to understand what can be helpful in dealing with eco-distress.

If people react very defensively, it often means that you are further ahead in your climate journey. If you are looking for a sense of being held and supported in the conversation, it might be helpful to find individuals who are at least at the same stage of coming to terms with the climate crisis and coping, if not further.

Journal prompts:

Have you ever been dismissed when expressing your eco-emotions?
If so, what did it feel like?

»

Who/ What is your safe space when feeling eco-distress? This can be a person or a group of people, but it can also be animals or a physical space...

»

Do you feel like you carry or regulate anyone else's eco-emotions?

»

Have you tried voicing your emotions outdoors, in the more-than-human world?"

»

Words of Wisdom

- You are supported, and your work and struggle are so appreciated!
- You are allowed to take breaks, to rest, to spend time doing the things you love.
- Even when you rest, you are doing enough.

OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE

"What is even worse is how my parents react when I do something that is polluting. They will almost mock me for taking the car. I am also a human who wants comfort sometimes. This whole applying higher standards to someone who is outspoken frustrates and hurts me a lot." (Grace, 19)

"Sometimes, when I say that I am vegan, people will just start pulling arguments out of their ass. It feels so mean to me. I mean, I have been vegan for ten years now. Do you really think you can convince me to eat meat?" (Fabian, 22)

Artist's contribution:

Climate anxiety, you ask?

A little girl on a swing

*Below Linden trees, her red dress is
swirling through the air*

She is swinging back and forth

Like millions of girls have done before her

*Yet there is a fundamental difference in
which she approaches her world*

*There is no carefreeness in her growing
legs as her feet start touching the ground*

*There is no stability in the ground below
her feet, no certainty that it will continue
providing for her through heatwaves and
flooding*

Instead, she keeps swinging

*Between excruciatingly hot summers and
chilly winters*

*Her awareness of collapse and her
investment in daily routines*

*Between all-consuming fear of losing
what she treasures the most*

and moments of relaxation and joy

Between grief too grand to grapple with

*Cause her home planet seems to be home
for too many*

*And gratitude for the fleeting beauty of
the moment*

*And while she is swinging trying with all
her force to not be consumed*

*By the grief, the anxiety, the anger, and
pain*

*Adults around her keep glossing over the
cracks in the ground*

Pretending everything will be alright

*Instead of bravely helping her to swing in
balance*

Embracing her inconsolable heartache

*Treasuring the fleeting beauty of the
wonders of this world*

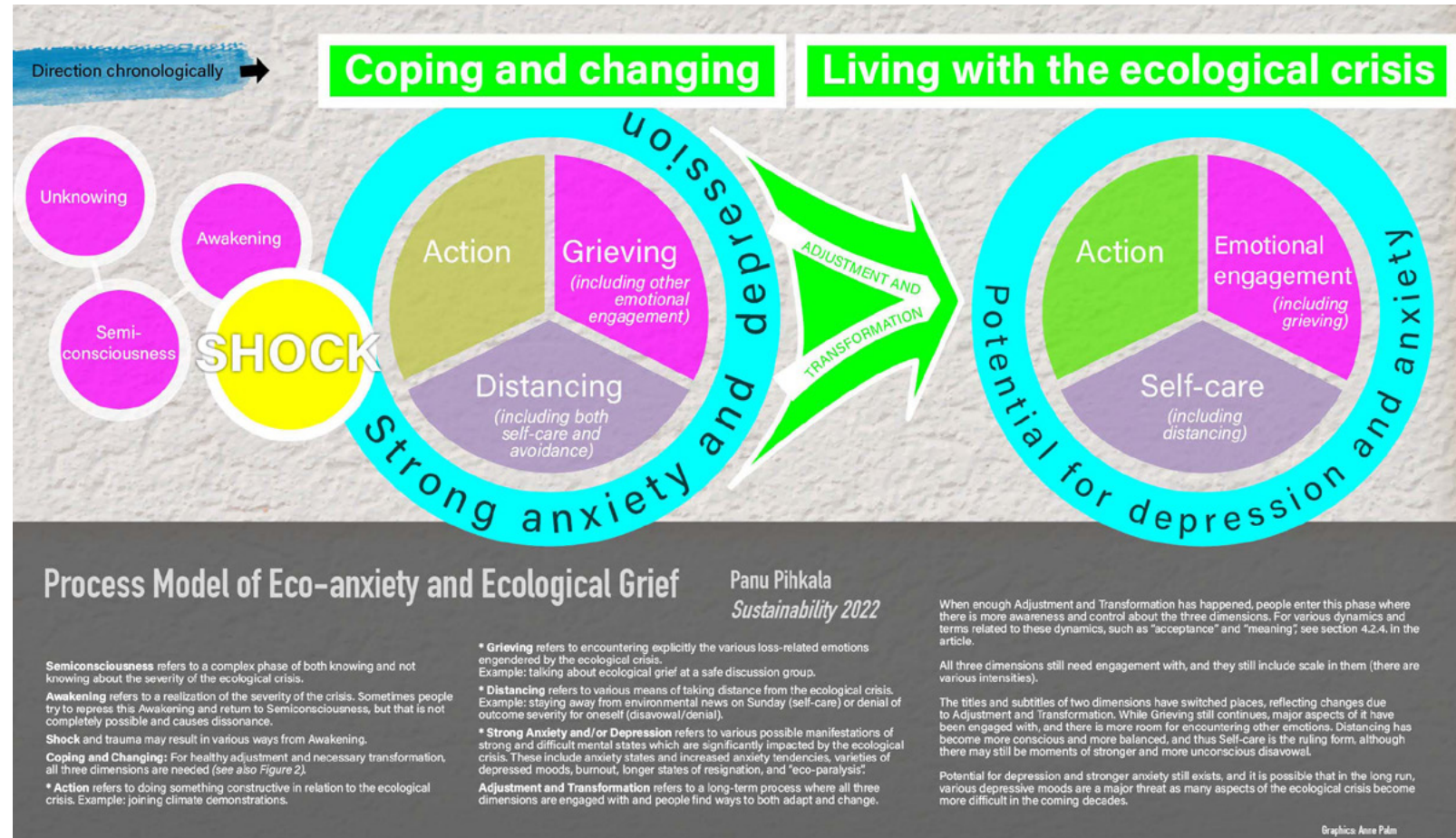
*What they see, I suppose, is merely a little
girl in a red dress below Linden trees*



TREASURING THE
FLEETING BEAUTY
OF THE WONDERS
OF THIS WORLD

The Three Dimensions Of Coping Following Panu Pihkala

The Finnish researcher Panu Pihkala (2022) reviewed many sources in bereavement studies and climate psychology and synthesized his findings into a framework. He describes that an individual who awakens to the severity of the climate and ecological crises, initially enters a stage that is called “coping and changing” where there might be a strong risk for the individual to experience strong anxiety or depression. Striking a balance between the three dimensions of coping, Action, Grieving, and Distancing minimizes this risk. Through repeatedly searching for this balance, an individual may undergo “adjustment and transformation,” guiding them into what he names “living with the ecological crisis”. People’s journeys always happen in relation to others, humans and more-than-humans, and social factors have a profound role. The process model is not just individualistic.



Note. Graphic representing the Process Model of Eco-anxiety and Ecological Grief. From “The process of eco-anxiety and ecological grief: A narrative review and a new proposal” by P. Pihkala, 2022, Sustainability, 14(24), 16628, Conceptual framework section, Figure 1 (doi.org/10.3390/su142416628). CC BY.



Action



Grieving



Distancing

The core of this model, the part that this toolkit is based on, are the three dimensions of coping.

What do the three dimensions of coping cover?

Action might mean individual lifestyle choices such as stopping to take flights or going vegan. Collective action such as protests, demonstrations, campaigning, or building a community garden can be even more helpful to cope.

Distancing can encompass acts of self-care such as resting, pointless joy, sports, or other hobbies not linked with the climate crisis. On the other hand, it can also mean retreating from activism, not watching the news anymore, and avoiding contact with the topic. The Process Model describes that over time, Distancing becomes Self-Care and Community Care as it is less needed to shield oneself from the climate crisis. The need to look after oneself and one's community, rest, and restore remains in place.

Grieving means all types of emotional engagement, such as having emotional conversations, processing one's feelings artistically, crying about wildfires, and raging at political inaction. This can happen alone but also in groups by, for example, creating rituals and participating in climate cafés. Over time, grieving turns into emotional engagement. A place where emotions are felt and processed but might have gotten less intense and threatening than in the beginning.

Grieving **Action** Distancing

According to the model, the different dimensions oscillate. This means that your coping strategies fluctuate and change over time. Striking a balance between the three dimensions will be different from individual to individual. Self-knowledge is important, and wise companions can help you reflect your needs.



Journal prompts:

Does this model resonate with you?

»

What dimension of coping feels like your “home base”?

»

What dimension is the hardest for you to access? Why?

»

What do you need to feel balanced in your coping?

»

"DARE to SHARE"

Many researchers and therapists have placed social support at the center of coping. The Swedish Project Terra-Pi has built on this model by creating the Ice Cream Model, which places community and social support at the center and embraces all the other dimensions of coping.

Community can fulfill multiple crucial roles that can be helpful in finding balance in coping with eco-distress.

Safe Space

One important function of social support is creating a safe space where you can feel like you are part of the norm. Sometimes, climate-conscious people or climate activists can experience chronic stress that can be compared to minority distress. Constantly meeting other people's defensiveness and prejudices about what it means to be an activist can be exhausting. Having a group of people that can strengthen your back can be essential.

Validation and Understanding

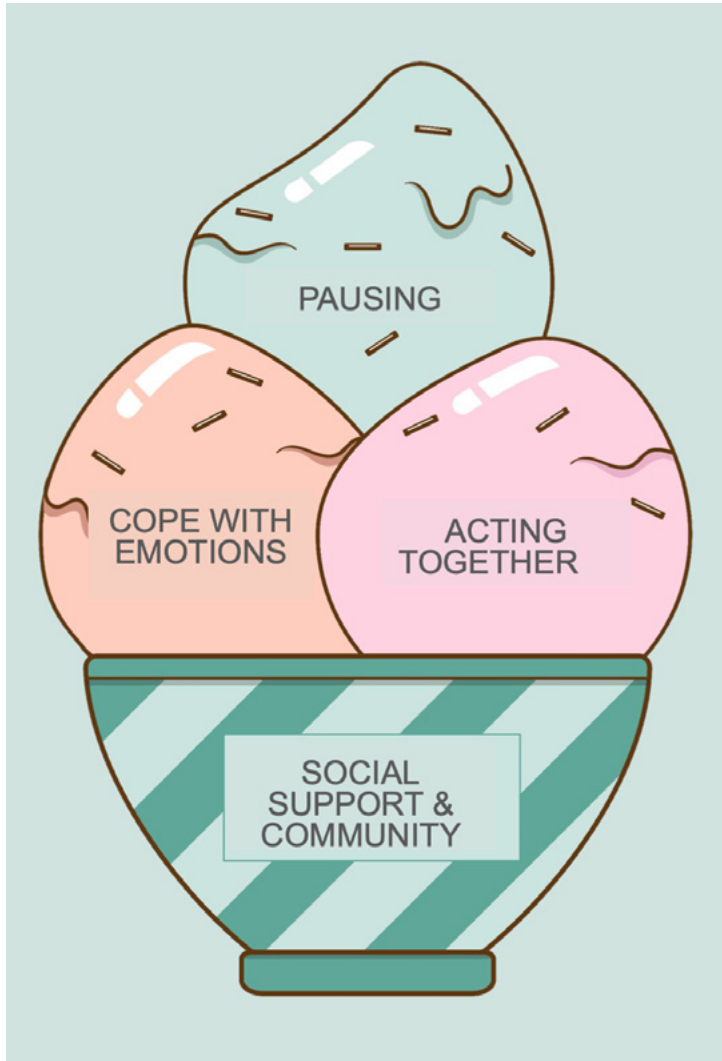
Another important part of groups can be to experience validation when feeling eco-emotions. This can be similar to a safe space but refers more explicitly to feeling understood when expressing eco-distress. With others, you can search for embodied ways to engage with emotions, such as arts or rituals.

Courage and Inspiration to Act

Also, in the dimension of action, groups can have really positive effects. They can help people feel more courageous and ready to take action. Within groups, it is easier to find inspiration and perseverance to work towards climate action, whatever the details might look like.

Shared responsibility

On the third dimension of distancing, feeling social support can also be crucial. This can help one gain a sense of shared responsibility and thereby make it easier to rest.



Note. The importance of social support as described in the Ice Cream Model. From "The Ice Cream Model" by F. Hylander, K. Andersson, P. Richter, I. Tholfsson, A. Bartfai, 2023, unpublished graph. Reprinted with permission.

Importance of Group and Context

Our feelings for the state of the world are nothing that we have to or should encounter by ourselves. To encounter these feelings, we can join or build settings and communities where we can share what we experience. The next chapter is dedicated to the process of building groups, creating safe spaces where you can share the following practices. If you don't currently feel fully supported, you can build or join a supportive setting. The smallest form of social support could be just a trusting friend. There is no one-size-fits-all solution here. The most important part is seeking an environment where you can feel comfortable and balanced. Maybe there are different groups or relationships that help you in different aspects of coping. The friend whose shoulder you can cry on, your activist group that gets you in the mood for the next demonstration, the group of people that you go on a good old rant with about SUVs and Elon Musk.



Journal prompts

» **What kind of social support have you felt in relation to aspects of coping?"**

»

» **How does seeking support feel to you?**

Often, we value "strength" and independence highly, especially in activist spaces it can be difficult to ask for help and show vulnerability. But did you know more and more researchers point out that authenticity and vulnerability are signs of great leadership? (Brown, 2018)

»

» **What aspect/ what dimension of coping could benefit from a more supportive social setting?**

»

Practicalities of Organizing Groupst

After having identified which aspects of your coping could benefit from more support, the question of how to access these supportive relationships arises. There are three strategies you can apply. Feel free to experiment, mix, and match to find what works for you. Sometimes, it can be difficult to find people whom you can share your eco-distress with. Don't let that discourage you! It might simply mean that you are further along on your journey of processing eco-emotions.

Identify the hidden superheroes!

Task

Take a look at the people who are currently in your life. Is there anyone who you could turn to for support, who you could act with, who helps you take your mind off the climate crisis? You can start by identifying people in your life who care about you and the planet. People who have an open heart and capacity to co-regulate with you.

Find your Pack!

Task

There are many already existing groups that are waiting for you to join them. You can search both in the region where you live and online for groups to join.

Recruit Dumbledore's Army

Task

You can recruit and organize a group of people yourself. You can find potential members anywhere. Think about your group of friends, your class, your sports club, etc. You can start out by sharing this document with them and choosing an activity that you would like to carry out together.

Toolkit of Activities

In the following section, there are many ideas and inspirations of activities that can support you when engaging in each dimension of coping. There are many ideas but remember that you are the steward of your own experience. You can mix and match, choose anything that might be helpful to you, and leave the rest behind. One idea of working with this toolkit is also to look at the activities together with your group of people. Most activities can be done in a group setting as well as individually.

This list provides inspiration for a balanced approach to coping with eco-distress. As there are many different activities represented, it might be crucial to stress the importance of rest. You don't have to do everything, and there is nothing that you need to achieve on your own.

Please connect to what you care for! Try to kindly look at yourself and your own needs! All activities and dimensions are interconnected and overlapping. Ask yourself, what effect does the activity have on me?

Does organizing a vegan picnic feel more like **ACTION** or **SELF-CARE**?

Does going into nature help you more with **GRIEVING** or **DISTANCING**?

You can ask yourself: Is any activity inspiring me to feel more balanced?

And remember, it is all about the balance!



Action

Collective action is powerful. There are endless ways to take action. This list is just naming many different ideas, but the details are up to you. People often have one certain understanding of climate action, but there are a million things we can do. The bad news is that the climate crisis is an everything crisis, spanning all aspects of our lives. The good news is that there are just as many places to put your energy for a better world.

You can protest oil one day and collect money for a communal food forest the other. Don't be afraid to switch it up and try something new. Maybe you have already established an impactful way of acting that works really well! Thank you for everything you do! Feel free to skip to the next section!

It is not all on your shoulders; choose your tribe! Find people to become active with!

Ask yourselves, what do I want to reach?

Sometimes, standing up for your values and showing what you care about doesn't have to fulfill one certain goal. Think about Rosa Parks, whose sit-in created a butterfly effect in the civil rights movement in the US.

The list below is an incomplete, imperfect template, inviting you to think further.

Journal prompts:



Do you want to stop destructive systems?



Have you found a way of acting that is satisfying and fulfilling?

If not, what could it be?



What is stoking your flame?

Your desire for a better world.

Find your jam.

Protest and Block

You can join a movement or set up your own protest, mobilize people to demonstrate with you, or organize civil disobedience actions such as blockade or a die-in. As this is often quite labor intensive and might involve certain risks, it can help to work alongside an experienced group such as Fridays for Future, Greenpeace or Extinction Rebellion.

Artivism & Creative Protest

There are so many different ways in which you can do creative Actions. You can write songs or choreograph a flash mob. You can make guerilla art in the streets; you can do a performance action. Anything is possible.

Food System Change

You can learn about permaculture, community-supported agriculture, and soil health. You can start growing your own food forest, dumpster dive, or follow or guide foraging expeditions. You can research and campaign against the use of chemicals in agriculture. You can lobby for animal well-being.

Conservation Action

Picking trash, planting trees, cleaning rivers. The tasks can be as practical or theoretical as you like. You can also learn more about your surroundings by following walks led by ecological guides and counting birds and insects. Remind people how epic life's interconnectedness is.

Mapping Change

You can create a map of all the different environmental organizations active in your city or region. This can be on paper or in the form of a directory. You can also outline the change that has already been done to motivate people. By doing so, you can connect people, which can have a host of positive ripple effects.

Experiment with Alternative Ways of Living

What would a truly regenerative lifestyle look like? Many people are asking these questions. They are innovating on all fronts, from compost toilets to sociocracy. You can connect and explore, maybe by seeking local communes or connecting with the Ecovillage Network.

Research and Advocacy

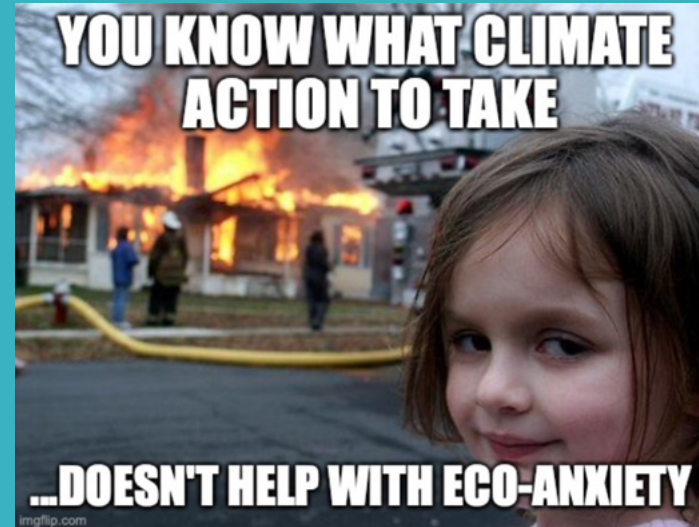
You can investigate a certain topic, such as fast fashion, the conservation of polar bears, or microplastics, and look for leverage points that impact these systems. What would need to happen to create a positive impact? What laws or regulations could be helpful? How can you raise awareness towards the change you would like to see? Maybe you can look for historically successful environmental campaigns or follow free online courses provided by organizations such as Force of Nature. You could, for example, send emails or letters to politicians. Seeing change happen can be quite a lengthy and uncertain process; find yourself a group of allies!

Grieving

What if you come from activism and you feel more eco-anxiety than ever before? What if you know what you should do but feel too paralyzed to act?

Grieving and emotional engagement can be really important for staying connected to yourself and the world around you. This, in turn, can give you the energy and clarity to find meaningful action. In our society, grieving is often marginalized, especially if we are talking about environmental grief. Therefore, engaging with this dimension might feel challenging, and you might encounter feelings of resistance both within yourself and in your surroundings. We can grieve by ourselves and in groups. The psychologist and author Francis Weller (2015) sees communal grieving and grieving rituals as something that can be extremely helpful but have largely been forgotten in Western culture. Especially since the grief for our world concerns everyone, it can feel beautiful to share it with others.

There are several organizations that offer guided work. Of course, you can also set up your own circle or grief ritual, but there are certain safeguarding concerns to pay attention to, especially if you plan to share your offering more widely.



POV:
You already know exactly what climate action you can take, but that doesn't help with your climate anxiety.

Journal prompts:

➔ **What does grieving mean to you?**

»

➔ **What helps you when you feel overwhelmed by your emotions?**

»

➔ **How resourced do you feel in my own grieving?**

Only when you feel resourced enough, you are able to hold other people in their grief. Seek support for yourself before supporting others!

»

Organized Activities

Climate Circles and cafés

Climate Cafés Listening Circles

The Climate Psychology Alliance offers free resources on engaging with eco-emotions. Climate Cafés Listening Circles, which are organized monthly online, provide a space for sharing eco-emotions in a safe group setting. You can find more information [here](#).

Climate Circles

Similarly, One Resilient Earth offers support through weekly online Climate Circles. You can learn more about their offerings [here](#).

Work that Reconnects

Joanna Macy founded The Work that Reconnects. She has created various practices and rituals that help with grieving as part of a spiral approach to coping with eco-distress. Their website offers [many resources](#) to dive deeper, as well as webinars and conversation cafés.



Organizing Activities

If you'd like to organize an activity, please consider that holding space for others while you are experiencing eco-distress yourself might be overwhelming. It is a good idea to co-facilitate and carefully think about how you can make participants feel safe. These activities might serve as inspirations.

Work that Reconnects

Task

On the website of the Work that Reconnects, there are several group activities that you can carry out in your local surroundings, such as the Bowl of Tears and the Truth Mandala. These exercises are described in-depth on the website.

Standing with the Earth

Task

This practice has emerged in Germany and is placed at the intersection of emotional engagement and activism. It is simple and only asks you to stand alone or in a group in silence for a while, symbolically standing with the Earth in public, in nature, or in your own home.

Radical Joy

Task

Radical Joy for Hard Times provides inspiration for different place-based practices, such as making offerings for a wounded place. There are many inspirational stories and ideas on their website.

Tips for hosting a ritual/ circle

- **If possible, follow training!**

One Resilient Earth, the Work that Reconnects, and the Climate Psychology Alliance regularly offer useful online training for hosting climate cafés. Visit their websites for further information.

- **Co-facilitate!** Having another person hold the space can be really helpful. You can prepare, reflect, and debrief together. This can ease the responsibility of holding space and help safeguard.
- **Have a clear beginning and ending!** Whether you facilitate a climate circle, hold a truth mandala, or plan your own ritual, these boundaries can help you step in and out of the safe space.
- **Make agreements in the beginning.** During your time together, finding joint ways of being can help participants and yourself feel safe. Agreements like confidentiality, active listening, and nonjudgment can help everyone open up and relate to each other.
- **Recharge and supervise!** After providing space for others, make sure that you feel supported. Think about ways in which you can recharge! Also, consider who you can turn to when you have questions about holding space.

Individual Resources

Sometimes, it might also be nice to focus on yourself when grieving. Especially since trauma and loss in your personal biography might be triggered by ecological grief. These are a list of support offers that focus more on the individual.

- If you wish to engage in a longer program, The Good Grief Network regularly offers a group program based on 10 steps for processing climate grief.
- The Climate Psychology Alliance offers three free therapy sessions with climate-aware therapists for anyone over the age of 18.
- Force of Nature's volunteers have gathered a list of therapeutical support and help hotlines.
- Journalling or writing letters to yourself can be a really helpful way of processing your feelings.

DISTANCING

The ways in which we can distance ourselves depend on our privilege. In this section, we will explore different ways of Self-Care. How can you be kind and compassionate with yourself in this difficult time? A hyper-object that can permeate all areas of our lives can be a trigger that is hard to distance from.

Distancing and pausing might sometimes be associated with a sense of guilt. Guilt and shame are uncomfortable feelings, so we might turn away from the source of these feelings. This can lead us to feel paralyzed and numb. This section outlines different types of distancing that you can do alone or with others. Despite our shared responsibility to act, despite all the heaviness you might be feeling, can you invite the possibility of pleasure and joy in your life? After all, what is the point of a revolution if we can't dance?

“Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift

Robin Wall Kimmerer



Journal prompts

» **Do you experience guilt or shame when you take a break? If you do, where do you think the reasons come from?”**

» **What do you do to avoid these feelings?**

» **What can help you be more compassionate toward pausing?**

Self-care by yourself

- Meditating and Mindfulness
- Intuitive movement and dancing
- Journaling
- Acts of pointless joy
- Physical exercise and movement
- Trying out a new form of sport: kayaking, hiking or kickboxing
- Time in Nature (Trigger Warning: This can also increase eco-emotions and might help you in your grieving process rather than with pausing. This might depend on person to person and day to day).
- Cooking and baking
- Practicing pointless joy, a hobby that is totally unrelated to the climate crisis
- Anything else that helps you to relax and take your mind off the climate crisis

Caring with loved ones

- Doing a picnic together
- Second-hand shopping/ Clothing swap
- Making a joint artwork together
- Organize a dancing night moving to your favorite music/ ecstatic dance.
- Sharing food and drinks is a low-threshold way of pausing.
- Exchange compliments and tell each other what you appreciate about your friends.

Final thought:

If it becomes difficult or impossible to take your mind off the climate crisis or you experience very heavy eco-emotions for several weeks, please consider seeking professional help from a climate-aware counselor or therapist.

Going forward

Thank you for engaging! Hopefully, this toolkit will help you cope with your eco-distress further! You can repeatedly refer to it and observe how your eco-emotions and social settings are shifting and changing. There are plenty of ideas available, so it can help to focus on one step at a time.



Journal prompts

How do you feel right now?
What could help you to feel more balanced?

»

What is one practice that you want to do next week?

»

What is one thing that helps you feel more supported?

»

Acknowledgement

I am profoundly grateful for our Earth's generosity and my privilege of safety and education.

I'd like to give thanks to the Climate Psychology Alliance and, in particular, my mentor Rebecca Nestor, who have taught me so much about facing difficult truths with compassion. Thank you to Panu Pihkala, who has immensely supported my work through his outstanding academic work and by helping me improve on the toolkit. I would like to express a heartfelt thank you to the different organizations I have worked with and who generously shared their time and experience, notably Dirk Henn, and the Climate Psychology Alliance in North America with their wonderful Cassie Whiteside. I am also deeply grateful to all the young people who participated in this project and have been a source of profound inspiration. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Yvonne Bouwmeester, without whose experienced eye for design and patient help, the toolkit would have remained a rather ugly and uninteresting Word document, Lynn, whose enthusiasm, insights, and practical support have been invaluable, and Luuk, who has been my emotional support human in all circumstances.

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Reflection - Professional Product

Based on the data collected from CRR, the biggest findings integrated into this report are the importance of social support and the benefits of engaging with Action, Grieving, and Distancing. I included quotes from research participants and made sure to cater to different individuals by using diverse content such as poetry and journal prompts. I further added the literature, framework, and graphs useful for explaining eco-emotions and coping strategies. Once I had gathered most of the content, I worked with a professional designer who helped me give a playful and artistic spin to the topic to balance its content that invites young people to the challenging work of taking climate action and being with their eco-emotions. I considered this in itself as an important act of oscillating. To hear from the target group about their thoughts on content and design, I shared the toolkit with my focus group participants, who appreciated the design and suggested the title "Dare to Care" which was embraced by the Climate Psychology Alliance.

On the 22nd of May, I organized a launch of the draft version, which was attended by eight participants from six different countries and four different organizations. This event was crucial in gathering feedback on the draft, which was instrumental in refining the toolkit. This was not only valuable in gaining the insights of my network but also to ensure that the toolkit will be put to use. I also received extensive feedback from Panu Pihkala, the creator of the Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief, on which much of my work is based.

I will present the toolkit at the Climate Psychology Alliance's member day in Oxford on the 8th of June and at the SDG festival at Windesheim University of Applied Science on the 25th of June. So far, five organizations want to use the toolkit: the Climate Psychology Alliance in the UK and its sister organization in North America, Force of Nature, Haven in Germany, and the Resiliency Labs hosted by GPCM at Windesheim. I am expecting more individuals and organizations to voice their interest in the future.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful that I could co-create the piece of advice I desperately sought five years ago as a young climate activist, feeling confused and alone in my eco-distress. It feels like coming full circle to put my personal experience (and a poem) into the professional work I have been doing alongside many wonderful people.

Letters of support

RK Rachel Keane <rachel@forceofnature.xyz>
To: Klara Wrusch (student) Wed 29 May 2024 12:00

Hi Klara,

Thanks so much for sharing the toolkit! I've just had a read through and I think it looks excellent. I love the journaling prompts and think this would be great for helping people process their emotions and provide the opportunity for us to check in with how we're feeling!

The resources are great too. I love the tangible ideas and examples of things people can do, as well as the awareness of the nuance around people's different experiences of the climate crisis and how we will all respond differently.

Letter of Support:

It was a joy to work with Klara on the Toolkit for Young People Coping with Eco-Distress. She was sure to create an environment where I felt comfortable to share about difficult topics, and was careful to provide me with any information I might need before our time working together. She was extremely kind and warm in her approach, and her passion on the topic shined through at all times! The resulting toolkit is an extremely valuable piece of work that pulls on a variety of learning points that are relevant to young people facing a multitude of eco-emotions. Klara is sure to capture the nuance of eco-emotions and is sensitive to cultural differences throughout. The toolkit is well-presented too, making it accessible and engaging to explore. The ideas presented in the toolkit, and the toolkit itself, would be of great use to Force of Nature's community as it demonstrates complex ideas in a simple form, and is well-informed in the way it discusses climate emotions.

Thanks again for this Klara, it's been great to be a small part of this! Do let me know if there is anything else I can do to support you.

Best wishes,
Rachel

PP Pihkala, Panu P <panu.pihkala@helsinki.fi>
To: Klara Wrusch (student) Wed 22 May 2024 09:32

Dear Klara,

thanks! Here's some comments. I'm sorry that I have to write in haste, and please consider these friendly comments.

2
"each" is repeated twice in relation to Action etc. They could be introduced, too. "concrete activities for three major dimensions of coping – Action, G, D, -- as depicted in the Process Model"

consider replacing "aggressive" with another word, to emphasize urgency but not give possible impressions of "violence"

What is missing?
Adults: "supportive environments for coping in the lives of the young people – and also for yourself"

3 perhaps adding a simple, somatic grounding activity here? Expanding the words in red on page 4 into one? I would remove some of the !-marks.

4 I would clarify the terms.
"Eco-emotions are... provoked by the ecological crisis [or: ecological issues]. Climate emotions are triggered by the climate emergency."
[I think that it's important to make this distinction, for many reasons. Some important eco-emotions are otherwise left in the shade.]

Good to have the Emotional biod. here.

4 or 5 would be places to cite the Climate Emotion Guide (Pihkala 2024, CMHN) if you wish to do that

5
Mentioning that there is an emoji version also available?

14 Instead of a closed question, I would reformulate:
"What kind of social support have you felt in relation to aspects of coping?"

24 Experiencing g / s. Perhaps adding: "If you do, where do you think the reasons come from?" (who says one must feel guilt or shame when distancing? What's the role of "internal voices"?)

27 If you utilize these comments, it would be nice to be joined to the Acknowledgements list 😊

Finally, applauds! I think you are doing very good and important work here. As you see above, I had time to read carefully especially up to page 14. Next time, it would be good to have a bit more time to comment... it's rare to get feedback from experts in such a short timeframe, you know, but I appreciate your work and was able to find time for this. Let us stay in touch,

Panu

Letter of support

Letter of Support - Klara Wrusch
Student - Global Project and Change Management
Windesheim University of Applied Sciences

Audrey Martin, Psychotherapist & Executive Committee Member
Cassie Whiteside, Psychotherapist & Social Justice & Climate Group Hub Committee Member
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May 29, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

Klara Wrusch is a student in your program who has shown exceptional initiative, capacity, and skills in her work with the Climate Psychology Alliance. The toolkit she has developed to help youth navigate the emotions of the climate crisis is a unique document - one that we see many uses for across North America and through climate spaces in the EU/UK.

In the North American chapter of the Climate Psychology Alliance we are deeply appreciative of Klara's work. The guidebook she created for facilitators of Climate Listening Circles ("Climate Cafes") includes many important considerations for group facilitators - and integrates a broad, deep pedagogy that builds a frame around this newer area of clinical work in the climate psychology sphere. We have found the guides and documents that Klara has created to be a wonderful way to structure some of our support conversations with new facilitators, and we've shared the documents with our 400+ members across the continent. We also plan on bringing the documents into our "Group Facilitators' Hub" as climate-group specific resources available to our members.

Many many people are fearful and deeply concerned about the climate crisis. It is a much smaller group that will use their concerns to spur them to action. Klara is one of those people - a true activist - sensitive, smart, able, and motivated to do what she can. Her efforts have direct impact on our training and support model, and will be offered to many people in the months and years ahead. She has made a real difference.

And, Klara has been a delight to work with interpersonally. She is warm, gracious, responsible and an excellent communicator. As she is being evaluated within her academic program, we want to offer our support, deep respect and gratitude for her outstanding work. She is a rare and powerful student, and one who is sure to be an ongoing change-maker in her work and her life.

If you have any questions regarding Klara's work or our support, feel free to reach out for more information.

Warm regards,

Audrey Martin & Cassie Whiteside

Letter of support



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Freiburg, den 3. Juni 2024

Letter of Support

We met Klara Wrusch within the Climate Psychology Alliance some month ago and had the pleasure of engaging with her work since. Like Klara, we have dedicated our commitment to creating support formats for mental health in times of climate catastrophe, especially for young people.

Klara's work and enormous commitment is of great benefit. She courageously breaks new ground and manages to bring together the complex issues and initial concepts for supporting people in a coherent and dense way.

We wish her all the best on her journey and would be delighted to continue working with her in the future.

Dirk Henn
(Head of Board „Klimaaktionsbündnis Freiburg e.V.“)

