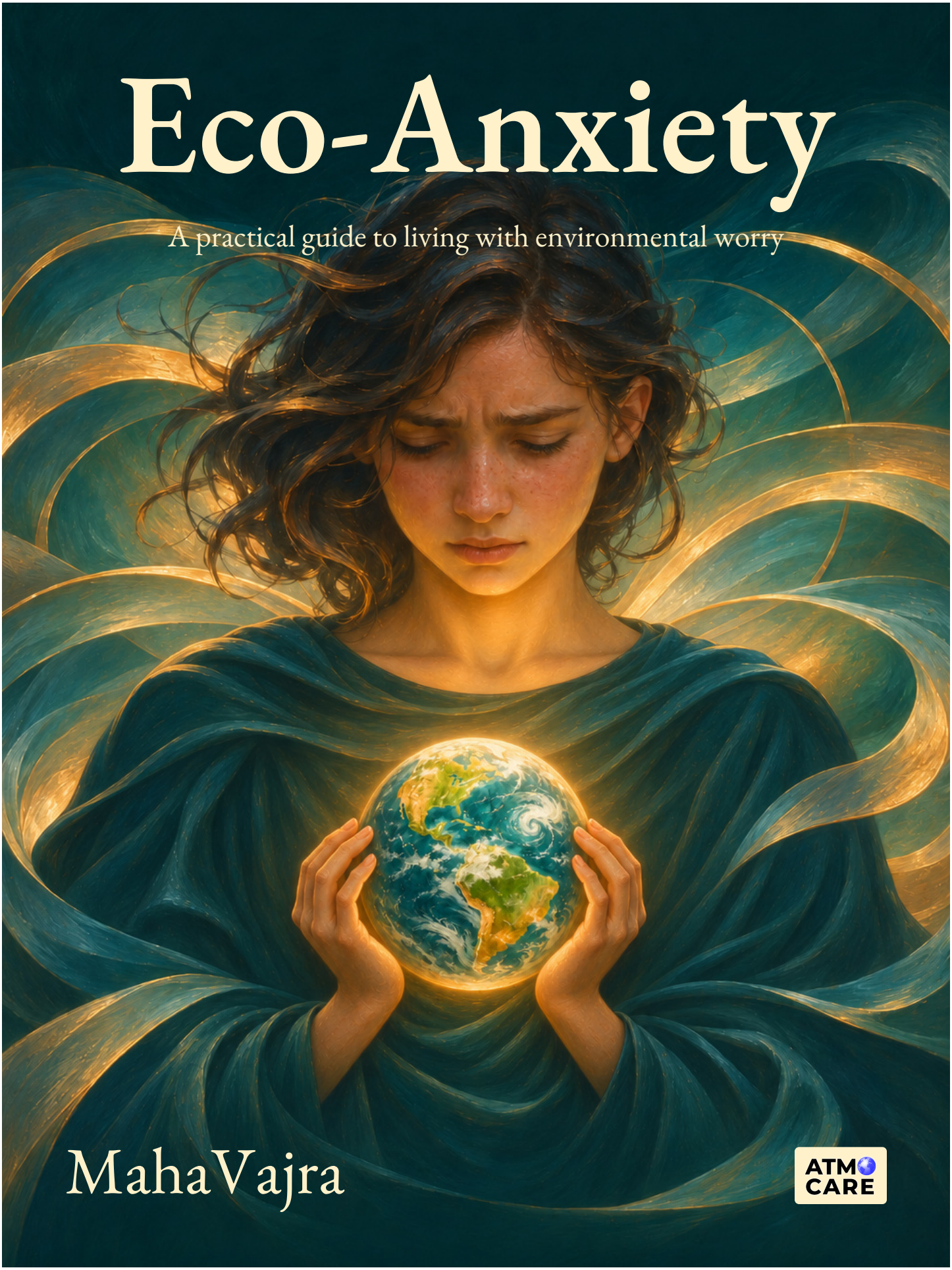
Eco-Anxiety

A practical guide to living with environmental worry



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ATM CARE

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Prologue

When Your Environment Is on Your Mind

Someone asks what you would like to be doing in twenty years. For a moment you can see it. You would like a kitchen big enough to have people over. You might go back to school. Perhaps there is a child in the picture. Then another question comes, one you keep to yourself. What will the world be like by then? The person across the table is waiting for an answer about your plans. You are trying to imagine the planet on which you would make them.

You may know climate change mainly from what you have seen and heard. A teacher showed your class what was happening to the oceans. Years later you heard a leader announce a target for a date that once seemed far away. Now that date is close, and you would like to know what has actually been done. Outside your window it may be a lovely day. You can enjoy the light coming through the leaves and still have a hard time picturing the future with confidence.

Some people remember the first time they heard the words “climate change.” Others have heard them for as long as they can remember. Think what it means to grow up hearing adults say this is one of the most important problems in the world. At eight, you take it for granted that somebody is working on it. At eighteen, you start asking who, where, and how far they have got. A promise sounds different the second or third time you hear it. When nobody can show you what changed, you may start to feel that your generation has been left with a job it never agreed to take on.

Eco-anxiety is a name for the worry or unease you feel about what is happening to the living world. It can concern the climate, the oceans, the disappearance of species, or what any of this will mean for people. You might care about an island you will never visit. You might be frightened for children who have yet to be born. You need no special history to care about any of them. Feeling this concern, by itself, tells us very little about how well or poorly you are doing in the rest of your life.

What part weighs on you? Give the question a little time. “The whole thing” may be the first answer. Then a detail comes back. It was the woman in an interview who said she wanted her grandchildren to know the names of the fish she grew up catching. You know what it is to want to pass something on. Suddenly an account of the ocean had a grandmother in it. You felt sad for her. You also thought of something you hope to share with someone you love. There can be grief in caring about a loss that happened far from you, and worry about a loss you hope will never come.

There is another experience that deserves a name in ordinary language. You ask what happened after a public promise and get another speech about how important the issue is. You had hoped for a date, a measurement, perhaps an honest account of what failed. You can feel angry at being given so little to go on. There are people doing tangible work. It is fair to ask to see that work and its results. It is also fair to admit how frightening the distance between the size of the problem and the response can feel.

In my book Emotional Integration, I teach a way to stay with the part of an experience you can feel for yourself. The practical guide in these pages draws on that teaching. I will ask you to begin with a small, real moment. It may have nothing to do with the environment. Someone you counted on forgot a plan you made together. You understood the reason, yet it hurt. That moment is enough to learn how to practise. Later you can use the same attention when a report about the planet leaves you frightened or discouraged.

Why begin there? Because “the future of life on Earth” is a very large thing to sit down and try to feel. The moment when you read a sentence and put your phone face down is small enough to remember. You can ask what you felt in those few seconds. You can also go back later and check the report or ask what became of a promise. Each deserves the kind of attention that helps you answer it.

If someone you love is worried, try asking which part has stayed with them. Then give them time. They may want to talk about having children, about a species they love, or about how lonely they feel when their friends laugh the subject off. A young person whose worry regularly interrupts sleep, school or time with friends can bring it to a trusted adult or a qualified health professional. Adults can seek that support too.

AtmoCare researches, tests and supports practical environmental work. The science chapters let you look at what researchers have learned about environmental worry, how they studied it, and what their findings mean. In The Solution I will speak to you more personally. Bring one concern you have about the planet and one ordinary moment from your own life that you can bear to revisit. We will begin with whichever is easier to hold in mind today.

— MahaVajra

The Solution

This section gives you practical exercises for dealing with the feelings that come up when you think about climate change. You'll start with a manageable experience from your own life, such as a disagreement or a disappointment. You'll recall what happened, notice what you felt and how you reacted, and give yourself time to understand what upset you. Then you'll use the same steps with a specific climate worry, such as a news report you keep thinking about or a concern about your future.

Begin with what actually happened

You hear someone your age ask a public official, "What has actually changed since I was in primary school?" You turn up the sound. The reply is about a target for the year 2050. By then you will be older than the person giving the answer is today. Long after the interview has finished, you are still thinking about the young person who had the courage to ask. What were you hoping to hear?

Perhaps you wanted one example. A place where someone could take you and show you the work. A number you could compare with last year's. You can look into those questions. There was also a moment when you realized the speaker was going to finish without answering the question you cared about. What happened in you just then? For one person it might be anger. For another it might be the sinking feeling of having trusted an adult to explain something important and being sent away with a few kind words.

Here is a distinction I use throughout Emotional Integration. The future described in an interview has yet to happen. Hearing those words happened this afternoon. You may never meet the person asking the question. You were there for the moment when your own interest rose and your hopes fell. If you want to work with the feeling, that is an experience you can actually recall. There is no need to imagine the worst things in the report happening to you.

Let us try an ordinary example. You and a friend arrange to meet on Sunday. You set out two cups. A message arrives to say that your friend has forgotten the plan and promised to be somewhere else. You understand how it happened. You even send a kind reply. Then you stand at the sink with the second cup in your hand. What does the explanation leave untouched? Perhaps you had been looking forward to telling this person something that mattered. You can forgive the mistake and still feel the disappointment.

Give the intellect the job it does well. It can remember the message, notice the cup and help you put the event into words. Then give it one small question. What did I feel when I put that cup away? Wait long enough to hear an answer other than an explanation for your friend's absence. Perhaps your eyes stung. Perhaps you found yourself putting everything away very quickly because you wanted to get on with something else. Any of those details can bring you back to the moment.

What has an empty cup to do with the planet? The two events have different causes and different consequences. What you can carry from one to the other is something you learned to do. When a speaker moves on from a question about the climate, notice the instant you reach to turn the interview off. What did you hope for? What did it feel like to hear the subject change? The answer may be quite different from what you felt on Sunday. You are learning how to find out.

Your first few minutes of practice

Pick something small that still bothers you a little. Perhaps a friend forgot an arrangement, or somebody interrupted you halfway through a story. Use a memory you can return to and set aside again with ordinary ease. There may be much more painful experiences in your life. For learning the movement of attention, a small disappointment will do.

Sit comfortably and let the chair take your weight. Keep your eyes open if you prefer. Breathe as you ordinarily breathe. In my teaching I sometimes speak of four planes of experience. Here is what that means while you are sitting in a chair. You can feel the weight of your body. You can notice the movement of breathing, a little warmth, the simple sense of being alive. You may notice a mood. And you can observe that your attention moves

from one of these things to another. If the names are unfamiliar, let the ordinary experience guide you.

Practice · Feeling without the story

Remember one moment in the event you chose. You were putting away the second cup. Or you had opened your mouth to finish your story and realized the conversation had moved on. Bring back just enough to recognize it. Now ask, “What did I feel?” You might say, “I felt they should have remembered.” That tells you what you think was fair. Try the question once more. What did it feel like to have been forgotten? You may notice a heaviness in the chest. Or you may simply hear yourself say, “I was lonely.” Give that answer a little time.

The mind likes to go back over the whole afternoon. You may begin rehearsing a message that would make your friend understand. Leave the message unfinished for now. You already have the feeling it came from. Let the scene grow less distinct and attend to whatever you can still feel. If your attention wanders, one detail can bring you back. The cup was still clean. You were putting it away. Stay for two or three minutes if that feels comfortable. You can end sooner.

When you finish, look around the room. Notice the chair and the floor. Move your fingers and return to what is in front of you. A feeling might ease. It might still be there. Perhaps the main thing you noticed was how quickly you went back to the imaginary conversation. That is something you know about yourself now. A useful note might be as short as “I wanted them to know I had looked forward to seeing them.”

Try the same attention with the planet in mind

On another occasion, choose one environmental story you have already encountered. You can work from memory. Pick the moment a speaker described a change in the ocean, for instance. What words stayed with you? What did you do next? “I paused the interview. I thought about how old my niece will be in 2050.” Stay with what it felt like to think of her. If the feeling is tenderness, that is your starting point. If the thought frightened you, let yourself notice what frightened you. You may find a different feeling from the one you discovered with the cup. This is a fresh experience. Give it its own hearing.

You can return to a smaller memory whenever a global question feels too large. There is no requirement to move from one exercise to the other in a single sitting. The environmental question can remain open while you learn to recognize a feeling.

For someone guiding this practice

Practise it privately first. Notice the time between hearing the question and finding your own words. When guiding someone, speak in your own voice. Ask one question, then leave room for the answer to come quietly. The person can choose an ordinary memory, keep its details private and stop when they wish. Counselors, teachers, guides and people leading an online group have different preparation. Guide emotional work only when you have the training and ability to support what may arise. You can always share the reading or demonstrate the practice using a modest example of your own.

Abandonment · What you miss

A girl asks her grandfather what he thought the future would be like when he was her age. He remembers wanting to live near the sea and learn to sail. He never did learn. What strikes her is how easily he could picture having time. When she tries to imagine the sea thirty years from now, the first things that come to mind are warming water and photographs of a pale reef. She misses a certain freedom in dreaming about the future. How do you miss something you feel you were never given?

In my method, abandonment includes the suffering we feel around an absence. It might be the absence of someone you hoped would stay. It might be a kind of reassurance you used to find in an adult who could answer a difficult question. Nobody has to have deliberately left you for that absence to hurt. It can take time to discover exactly what you miss.

Think of an ordinary example. A friend who moved away used to call on the walk home. One afternoon you hear something funny and reach for the phone, halfway into the story before you remember the difference in time zones. What you miss just then is specific. There was someone who knew the people in the story so well that you could begin in the

middle. Another friend can love you dearly and still have to ask who everyone is. Try letting yourself feel the loss of that small ease.

Practice · Stay with the absence

Choose an absence you can approach today. Recall the instant you noticed it. You reached for the phone. You had something to say and had already imagined the other person laughing. What do you miss? Take a breath before answering. “I miss having someone who knows why this is funny” may take you closer than “Everything has changed.” Give the feeling a few breaths. When you are ready, let the scene go and notice the room around you.

Now consider an environmental concern that carries a sense of absence. You might miss being able to talk about life in thirty years without someone adding “if there’s anything left.” Perhaps what you want is one adult who will stay with the question. Let yourself acknowledge that wish in its own words. Then ask what is still available to you. You may know someone you can invite to take a walk and talk. You can also give a younger person some of the patient attention you wished someone had given you.

In Emotional Integration I use the word self-containedness for a capacity that can grow here. The friend who moved away helped you discover your delight in telling a story. Some of that delight is yours to carry into another friendship. The grandfather’s pleasure in imagining the sea may give his granddaughter an idea of her own. She can ask him to go sailing with her this summer. The future of the ocean still matters to her. There is also a boat she would like to get into with someone she loves.

Rejection · When you expected to belong

Someone at supper mentions where everyone might be living in twenty years. You say you sometimes find it hard to think that far ahead because of the climate. An uncle gives a theatrical sigh. “Can we have one meal without the end of the world?” The others laugh, and a cousin asks somebody to pass the bread. You had meant to say something quite personal. Later you are angry with yourself for bringing it up. What happened at that table?

You expected a place in a conversation about the future. You were at the same table as everyone else. The invitation to imagine where you might live sounded as though it included you. When the answer became a joke, that place seemed to disappear. There is a particular hurt in offering something serious and finding that nobody is going to ask what you meant. The uncle may have intended to lighten the mood. You can leave his intention open while you attend to what you felt.

You might recognize the feeling from an occasion that had nothing to do with the environment. You told a friend you hoped to go back to school and they laughed because they thought you were joking. Say the rest of the sentence you never got to finish. “I had already sent for the application.” Notice what it feels like to hear yourself say it. You may discover how much it mattered to have that particular person take you seriously.

Practice · Find the place you expected to have

Choose a fairly mild recollection of this kind. Describe what you heard. Then complete the thought “I expected I could…” Perhaps you expected you could ask a question, be listened to for a minute or finish speaking before anyone decided whether to agree. What did you feel when that expectation met the response you received? Take a few breaths before trying to explain the other person. Let the sting have your attention.

Now return to the table in your mind. What were you trying to tell your family? Maybe it was “I would like to have children, and sometimes I’m scared to talk about what their lives might be like.” You can acknowledge that to yourself even if supper was the wrong moment to go into it. You might choose one cousin who listens well and ask for a walk tomorrow. You can also choose to keep the matter private today.

I call this autonomy. The people around the table can decide how they receive what you say. You still have a say in whom you trust and how you express what matters to you. A joke can hurt without becoming the measure of whether your question deserves an answer.

Guilt · What belongs to you to repair

A child asks why the family drives a car that runs on gasoline. She heard about emissions at school. Her father starts explaining the price of electric cars. Two minutes later she has wandered off, and he is still making his case to an empty kitchen. That evening he finds himself comparing prices again. What is he trying to settle?

Guilt begins with an impression that you have done wrong. The impression may follow a real mistake. It can also come from hearing about harm on a scale so large that almost everything you do seems to connect you to it. You eat food somebody transported. You live in a building you did not design. It can be hard to decide where a fair account of your responsibility begins and ends.

Take the father's day as it actually happened. The car works. Another car is beyond the household budget. What he regrets most is the way he spoke to his daughter. She asked how the engine works, and he answered as though she had put him on trial. The next morning he can say, "You asked me a fair question. I was worrying about money and I answered sharply. Would you like me to show you what happens when the motor is running?" Then he can hear what she really wanted to know.

Now imagine a different case. You passed along an alarming graph about emissions. Later you notice that you misread the two axes. Some of the people who saw your message are worried about a claim the graph never made. Here you can do something specific. Go back to the people who received it, explain the error in plain words and give them the correct information. You may still feel guilty after you do that. An evening of silently calling yourself careless would leave those same people with the wrong figure.

Practice · Look at the act and the impression

Begin with a small mistake you remember well. You forgot a birthday, for example. What did you do? What harm do you actually know about? What do you fear the other person concluded about you? Stay with the feeling that comes as you answer. A wish for their approval may be mixed in with genuine regret. You can feel both. Once you have given the explanations a rest, complete the sentence "My part is..." as precisely as you can.

Try that sentence with a worry about the planet. Give yourself the circumstances you would want someone else to consider. What choice did you actually have? If you know a repair you can make, name it. If your worry concerns a decision made across an entire industry, name who has the power to change it and which part, if any, you can influence. In my teaching the capacity we look for here is responsibility. Sometimes that means correcting a message today. Sometimes it means letting your child finish asking a question.

Pride · When being right becomes personal

You have spent a Saturday reading about an environmental project. For once you have found something that seems to be working, and you want to tell your brother. He listens, then asks, “Who measured the result?” You hear yourself answer, “You think I’d send you something without checking?” His question was about the project. Somewhere between hearing it and answering, you felt it become a question about you.

Pride is the first of three movements I call denials. Here is what I mean by that word. It can hurt to feel that your judgment has been doubted. Before you have had time to recognize the hurt, you may be ready with a list of the things you know. Pride helps keep a certain picture of yourself in view, especially when you have company. You can hear it doing its work when the list grows longer and the original question still has no answer.

There is also honest pleasure in learning something well. Think back to the hour before the conversation. You found the report, read the description of the work and looked up an unfamiliar word until you understood it. That pleasure was yours before your brother came into the room. You can keep it while you check who took the measurements. You may even enjoy discovering something together.

This is why I introduced the three emotions first. What had you just felt? You may have wanted the person you love to share your relief. Instead you heard doubt. There may be the hurt of rejection in that instant. Or you may already suspect that you skipped an important line, and wish you had checked it. Give yourself enough time to find your own answer. Sometimes a question about a measurement is simply interesting and you are quite happy to look it up.

Practice · Take the audience out of the room

Recall a small correction that was hard to hear. An ordinary example works well. Someone asked whether you had added the tip twice and you told them how long you had been doing accounts. What were you trying to get them to see about you? Feel the wish to prove it. If the words ring true, say privately, "That touched my pride." Then attend to the feeling before the speech about your qualifications began.

Imagine looking at the bill by yourself. What would you do? Now imagine returning to the question about the climate project. There may be real care behind your wish for good news. You wanted to give someone you love a reason for hope. You can tell your brother that, and still say "I'll check who counted." The hope means more when both of you know which part of the story you can rely on.

Shame · When you want to disappear

A young woman has been following a group conversation about the carbon cost of flying. Someone asks who is travelling over the holidays. She had been about to say that she saved all year to visit her mother. Now she turns the phone face down. No one in that conversation has mentioned her by name. Yet she has a feeling that if the others knew her plans, they would think they knew everything about her.

Guilt can bring a particular act to mind. Shame can make a whole person want to disappear. The young woman can examine the impact of a journey and consider her choices. What hurts in this moment is the imagined look on other people's faces. She can feel it in the impulse to hide the detail about her mother, the very detail that makes the decision understandable.

Perhaps you remember an ordinary moment like that. You were the only person at a restaurant who needed to ask how much the meal would cost. Somebody else could simply order. You wanted to know whether you could stay, yet admitting that felt almost unbearable. What did the others actually see? Someone asking the price. What did you fear they saw? If you can hear the difference, you have somewhere to begin.

Practice · Describe what was visible

Recall one manageable embarrassment. Describe what someone standing nearby could have seen or heard. Then finish the words "I was afraid that if they knew, they would think..." Let the sentence tell you what you feared. Give yourself a few breaths with the shame. If you find that you have lowered your head or drawn your shoulders together, take a position in which you can sit comfortably. You can look up when you are ready.

In my teaching, respect is the healthier possibility within shame. Imagine speaking to the woman who wants to visit her mother. Could you ask what choices are open to her, listen to the answer, and allow her some privacy? Now try speaking to yourself with the same consideration. Perhaps you want to change something next time. Perhaps the circumstances were harder than anyone in the conversation knew. You can take the environmental question seriously while giving the person who has to make the decision enough dignity to answer honestly.

Fear · What needs protection today?

A student hears a marine scientist describe what different futures could mean for coral reefs. Later, when somebody asks about the course, the student says, "There won't be any reefs when I'm old." It is a sentence spoken with great certainty by someone who feels anything but certain. What stayed with this student? Was it a particular forecast? Was it the sight of a scientist who had spent a lifetime studying something she loved and looked close to tears as she spoke?

Fear can draw your attention to something precious while there is still time to care for it. It can also run ahead of the information you have. A speaker described several possibilities. By supper you find yourself living inside the worst one as though the outcome had already been decided. You may want to look at the original account to see what the scientist actually said. You can do that and still give yourself a chance to feel what it was like to hear her.

Why do I sometimes call fear a denial? Recall a night when somebody you loved was late getting home. You checked for messages several times after you knew there was nothing

new. Waiting quietly would have meant feeling how much this person mattered to you and how little you could control. Checking gave you something else to do. A person can spend an evening moving between climate forecasts in much the same way. Sometimes the fear is simply fear. Sometimes, when you put the phone down, what rises is sadness about something you already love.

Practice · From fear to prudence

Choose a worry you can explore at a time when you feel safe. Say what you heard as precisely as you can. Then say what you fear. “The speaker described a possible future. I pictured my niece asking why nobody protected the reef. I’m frightened that I wouldn’t know what to tell her.” Notice which sentence catches in your throat. Stay there for a few ordinary breaths. You can give fear attention without supplying it with more frightening pictures.

Now ask what prudence would look like. You might go back once to the speaker’s explanation and find out which outcome depends on which conditions. You might decide what you would like to learn about work already under way. If a child has asked you a question, you can admit what you know and what you would need to look up together. Prudence gives you a next step you can recognize as finished. Once you have taken it, you can put the phone down and eat your supper.

For someone guiding this practice

Let the participant choose the concern and describe it in their own words. There is no need to show distressing footage to make the exercise feel real. If the person is facing a danger right now, help them attend to their immediate needs first. In a quiet setting, leave time after each question and respect their decision to stop. A teacher can demonstrate the whole exercise with the ordinary experience of waiting for somebody to call.

When you can explain everything and feel very little

You may have read the last six chapters and thought, “I understand the words. When I sit down and try to feel something, I have very little to report.” Start there. There is no answer you owe this book. I would much rather hear “I mostly thought about tomorrow’s groceries” than have you settle on an impressive word for a feeling you never noticed.

Suppose someone asks why the condition of the oceans concerns you. You can tell them about fishing, warming water and the communities that depend on the sea. You can remember the titles of two books on the subject. Then someone you trust asks, “Which moment in all that reading stayed with you?” You remember a researcher describing a fish that makes a sound to find a mate. You played the recording twice. What was it like to sit at your desk and hear a living animal calling through the water? Perhaps you felt delight. Maybe the worry came later, because something that had been a word on a page had suddenly become dear to you.

The details you remember so well can help you begin. Choose one. If an environmental story remains too broad, go back to an ordinary moment. Someone returned a book you lent them with a handwritten note inside. You kept the note. If I asked you to define gratitude, you might spend ten minutes looking for the right words. If I asked why you kept that piece of paper, you might remember what you felt before you finished the first sentence.

Practice · Finish one sentence

In a private place, give a short account in your own words, aloud or on paper. You might say, “I listened to the recording twice. The second time I put the headphones on, and I felt…” Give the unfinished sentence a little time. An answer like “I felt like sending it to my sister” tells you what you wanted to do. What did you hope she would hear in it? “I wanted someone else to be as amazed as I was.” Pause there. Feel what the amazement is like for as long as it is present.

If you find very little, you can finish the exercise. You might discover later that what stayed with you was a moment quite different from the one you chose. This can happen with ordinary hurts too. You spend an evening trying to understand the disagreement and then, the next morning, remember a kindness that made you want to cry. Let the moment you remember be enough to work with.

In Emotional Integration I also teach an optional sound practice called IEOUAN. I use the sounds to give a busy mind a simple task. Sit comfortably and take an easy breath for each sound. Use a comfortable voice. Give I the sound of "ee" and bring your attention to clear thinking. Give E the sound in "hey" and attend to communication. With O, bring to mind something vast or marvellous. With U, turn toward feeling and experience. With A, notice simple presence. Close with a gentle N and feel the weight of your body.

If it is comfortable, join the sounds in order on one easy breath, I-E-O-U-A-N, ending softly. Let the voice fall silent. Notice how you feel sitting there. No particular sensation is required. If something is easier to feel now, you can return to the ordinary practice. If the sound feels uncomfortable, stop and let your breathing find its usual rhythm. Recalling a simple fact and finishing the sentence "I felt..." is always an available starting point.

What happened, and what did you add?

You watch a recording of a meeting about an international environmental commitment. A woman asks how much of the money promised has reached the projects it was meant to support. You are interested in the answer. The speaker talks about the number of countries that signed. The recording ends. As you put the phone down, a sentence comes to you. "They never intended to do anything." You may have serious reasons to doubt a promise. What did this particular recording let you know?

You heard a question about money and an answer about signatures. You can look for the full exchange or the published accounts. You also know what went through your mind while you were listening. Perhaps you felt a little flicker of hope when the woman asked exactly what you wanted to know. When the clip ended, your shoulders dropped. You had

wanted to hear about a piece of work someone could go and see. Stay with that for a moment. Wanting an answer matters even before you know what the accounts will show.

In Emotional Integration I call it projection when I take something I feel or imagine and experience it as knowledge of another person. I know what I thought when I heard the answer. I do not know what went through the speaker's mind. Evidence of an unfulfilled commitment deserves a public accounting. My disappointment deserves a private hearing too. Each has a question I can actually answer.

Practice · What did I know, and what did I feel?

Use something you encountered yourself. Hearing an interview counts. So does receiving a message from a friend saying they cannot come. There is no reason to take up a story about two other people. You are going to work privately with a moment you remember from the inside.

First describe what you saw or heard. "In the recording I watched, the woman asked how much had been paid. The speaker talked about the signatories. The clip ended there." Next write the sentence you said to yourself. "I told myself they never meant to keep the promise." Look at the two lines. One tells you what was in the recording. The other tells you what you thought at the time. You can be quite firm about the facts of the first line and quite honest about having thought the second.

Now ask what you felt. "I felt let down" may be the first answer. What did that feel like to you? Perhaps you remember being ten years old and hearing a similar promise. At ten you thought that by the time you were grown, there would be something to show for it. The hurt today might be the memory of having trusted those words as a child. Or it might be a quite immediate frustration that a good question went unanswered. Use maybe when you are trying to find the right words for your own experience. "Maybe I wanted someone to tell me that my trust had meant something." See whether it fits. Set it aside if it does not.

If an ordinary example is easier, recall the friend who cancelled. What was in the message? What did you tell yourself it meant? What did it feel like to put the second cup away? Then consider a public promise again. The same questions can help you find your footing, even when the stakes are quite different.

Finish with the question whose answer would help you now. “Is there an account of the money that has actually been paid?” is a question you can investigate. If the figures show that a commitment has been missed, you can say so and show where you found them. You can also tell someone close to you, “It hurt to realize how much I had been counting on this.” Both are accurate things to say, and you know how you came to know each of them.

Anger · The moment before you press Send

A friend posts a headline about another year of disappointing climate action. Under it someone has written, “Well, there goes our future.” You start a reply. In the first line you are answering the comment. By the third, you are addressing every adult who ever came to your school to tell you it would be your generation’s job to save the planet. The person who posted the headline has no idea how many people you are talking to.

Take those few seconds slowly. What did you expect when you opened the story? Perhaps you hoped this would be the year there was something substantial to show. What did you hope for when you opened the comments? You may have wanted the company of somebody your age who cared and still wanted a future. A careless remark can hit a sore place when you arrive carrying both those wishes.

You may recognize the movement from a different part of your life. You worked hard on a birthday dinner and someone joked that you could have ordered pizza. You had an angry answer before you understood what hurt. You wanted the person you cooked for to know you had remembered the way their mother made the dish. The joke passed over the part that meant something to you. Anger arrived quickly enough to speak first.

Practice · Trace one reaction

Choose a recent irritation modest enough to examine. What were you hoping would happen? Say it in ordinary words. Now say what actually happened. In the space between those answers, look for a disappointment you can feel. “I wanted to see my friend taste the dish and recognize it. I heard the joke and began clearing plates.” Give that a moment. What was lost to you in the exchange? Perhaps when you next speak, what you want to tell your friend is why you made that particular meal.

Try the movement again with a headline or a public statement that bothered you. Which part is the news itself? Which part is somebody’s comment? Which part reaches back to a promise you heard long ago? The report may call for a serious objection. You can decide whom it makes sense to address. A stranger in a comment thread has little ability to account for an international commitment. A journalist may be able to point you to the figures they used. A friend may understand why the comment about your future hurt.

Feel the pressure to send a reply while your hand is still. You may still choose to write, and what you write may be quite firm. “The article gives a spending target. Where are the figures for what was actually spent?” is a useful question when that is the information missing. On another evening what you may want is to call somebody and say, “I’m tired of hearing that our future is already gone. Do you ever get tired of it too?” You can choose a person who is able to hear the question you really want to ask.

Speaking plainly and keeping a boundary

You are watching a film with someone you love. During a quiet scene, your phone lights up with another clip about the climate. A friend has been sending them almost every evening. You know why. There are very few people with whom this friend feels able to talk about the planet. You also know that if you watch this one now, you will spend the rest of the film half in the room and half in another conversation. What can you do that takes both people seriously?

Vulnerability, as I teach it, begins with allowing yourself to know what you feel. You care about the friend. You also feel dread when the phone lights up. You may be afraid that

admitting this will sound like a change in what you believe about the planet. Let those feelings have their few breaths. Then you might say, “I want to talk about this with you. When clips come late at night, I carry them to bed with me. Could we choose one thing to talk about on Saturday morning?” A person who cares may be relieved to learn how to reach you.

You can use a disagreement that has nothing to do with climate as a rehearsal. Perhaps your cousin calls while you are putting a child to bed. You listen because you love your cousin, then resent the call for taking so long. Try saying out loud, while nobody is waiting, “I’d like to hear the rest. I can give you my attention after eight.” What was hard about saying that? Perhaps a voice inside said that a generous person would simply stay on the phone. Give yourself a moment to feel how much you want your cousin to think well of you. You can love someone and tell them when you can listen.

Practice · Two sentences you can stand behind

Choose a manageable exchange. In the first sentence name something true about your experience. “When I get several clips in an evening, I start to feel overwhelmed.” Pause long enough to hear your own words. In the second, say what you are asking or what you will do. “I’m going to leave the phone in the kitchen at night, and I’d like to hear from you during the day.” Find a version you would be able to keep even if the other person were disappointed.

Now let the imagined conversation go a little further. The friend replies, “Must be nice to be able to switch it off.” How does that land? Perhaps you want to send a list of everything you have done for the environment. Take a breath and remember what your limit concerns. You may choose to answer, “I hear how worried you are. I can talk tomorrow.” In a conversation where someone is insulting you, you can end the exchange. You decide who hears your private experience.

For someone guiding a conversation

Let people rehearse with an invented example. Give them a minute between the first sentence and the second. There is often a real feeling about asking for a limit, even when the conversation is imaginary. If you demonstrate with your own example, show what waiting looks like. A participant can listen quietly or take a pass. Someone who shares two sentences has decided to share those sentences. Leave the rest of their family life or history in their hands.

When tomorrow brings another headline

You may practise with a feeling on Saturday and wake on Monday to news that frightens you. It is easy to think you are back where you began. Before you judge the weekend's practice, ask what actually happened this morning. Is this a different story? Did you hear something new? Did it touch the same worry in a different way? Taking the planet seriously means you will continue to encounter things that matter to you.

An ordinary disappointment can help you notice what changes with practice. The friend who forgot your Sunday visit calls again. This time you are able to say, "I understood why you couldn't come. I had been looking forward to seeing you." That sentence might have been beyond you a week ago. The change is small enough that nobody else would notice. Yet it has made an honest conversation possible between two people who care about each other.

Look for a change that size in the way you face environmental news. Perhaps you used to forward a frightening headline to your daughter the instant you read it. One morning you notice the wish to have somebody carry the fear with you. You read the article first. Later you call and ask if she has time to talk. Perhaps she wants to talk about something entirely different. You find you can listen and still come back to your question when the two of you are ready. The news is just as serious. You have given each other a little more freedom.

Keep giving practice a beginning and an end. Choose one real moment. Recall enough to find the feeling. Stay for as long as you can do so comfortably. Let the memory recede, look around the room and return to the day. Sometimes what follows is a practical question.

You may want to know whether an environmental project publishes measurements, or write to ask how a result was obtained. Sometimes what follows is an invitation to have lunch with a person you have missed. You can take either step for the reason it deserves.

I want to return to the question we began with. What would you like to be doing in twenty years? You may still find that difficult to answer. Try giving the wish a little time before you ask it to predict the future. A kitchen big enough to have people over. A place to learn. A day on the water with someone you love. Why that particular thing? Perhaps because feeding people has always made you happy. You can feel how precious that is and how frightening it is to want a future you cannot guarantee.

Somebody may be sitting across the table waiting for your answer. You can tell them about the fear if you choose. You can also tell them about the kitchen. They might have a wish of their own that they have been waiting for someone to ask about.

— MahaVajra

The Science

Why an uncertain future can stay with you

Panu Pihkala (2020) · Research review · Sustainability

Suppose the river near you is rising. You know what you would do if the town ordered an evacuation. What occupies your mind tonight is the stretch between knowing that a flood is possible and finding out whether it will reach your street.

Panu Pihkala looked across fields that use the words eco-anxiety and climate anxiety. Researchers were often describing different parts of an experience. Some wrote about fear of a particular outcome. Others wrote about living with uncertainty, having little control over a decision, or feeling responsible without knowing what to do. His review explains why a person can feel uneasy even on a day when there is no immediate emergency.

The paper gives readers words for these differences. It did not count how many people experienced them or follow people through a disaster. If someone says they feel eco-anxiety, you still have to hear their story to know which part of it is weighing on them.

Original source

Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis: An Analysis of Eco-Anxiety and Climate Anxiety

DOI 10.3390/su12197836

What you lose when a familiar place changes

Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis (2018) · Perspective informed by field research · Nature Climate Change

Think of something you learned outdoors from a person you love. The place may be part of the memory. Returning to it lets you renew a relationship or pass on a skill. When that place changes, the loss can reach into family and community life.

Cunsolo and Ellis drew on work with Inuit in northern Canada and farming communities in the Australian Wheatbelt. The settings differ. In both, people described losses tied to land, ways of living and knowledge built over generations. The authors distinguished grief over damage already visible, grief when familiar knowledge becomes harder to use, and grief for losses people anticipate. A traveller who can no longer rely on familiar ice conditions may face all three at once.

The accounts explain why replacing a physical resource may leave a loss untouched. They also show the value of listening to people who know a place. The paper gives examples from particular communities. It cannot tell us how every Inuit family or Australian farmer feels.

Original source

Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss

DOI 10.1038/s41558-018-0092-2

What 10,000 young people told researchers

Caroline Hickman and colleagues (2021) · Online survey in ten countries · The Lancet Planetary Health

When adults ask young people about climate change, they often ask how worried they are. Hickman and colleagues also asked how young people felt about the adults making decisions. They surveyed 1,000 people aged 16 to 25 in each of ten countries, including Brazil, India, Nigeria and the Philippines.

Across the 10,000 respondents, 59% said they were very or extremely worried. More than 45% said their feelings about climate change had hurt their daily life or ability to function. These questions asked different things. Someone can worry intensely about a danger and still get through school or work.

Young people who judged their governments' responses more negatively also tended to report greater distress. That finding gives a parent or teacher a reason to listen when a conversation turns to broken promises. The researchers asked people about worry and government response at the same time. They could see that the answers travelled together. They could not establish which feeling came first. Giving every country equal space also means the total is no estimate for all the world's young people.

Original source

Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey

DOI 10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00278-3

Across the United States, the question changes the answer

R. Eric Lewandowski and colleagues (2024) · US online survey · The Lancet Planetary Health

If you saw a headline saying that 85% of young Americans were worried, what would you picture? Some readers might imagine that nearly everyone was losing sleep. The study behind that figure lets us be more precise.

In 2023, a research team heard from 15,793 people aged 16 to 25 in all 50 states and Washington, DC. In the weighted results, 85.0% were at least moderately worried about climate change. When the researchers counted only the two strongest answers, very worried and extremely worried, the figure was 57.9%. On another question, 38.3% said their climate feelings had a negative effect on daily life.

The participants also described severe weather they had experienced and decisions they were considering for the future. Those reports tell us what people recalled and planned when they answered online. A plan to vote a certain way is different from a ballot cast. A report of daily difficulty deserves attention, and a clinician would need more information to assess the individual.

Original source

Climate emotions, thoughts, and plans among US adolescents and young adults: a cross-sectional descriptive survey and analysis by political party identification and self-reported exposure to severe weather events

DOI 10.1016/S2542-5196(24)00229-8

How Québec students described their own experience

Institut de la statistique du Québec (2024 release) · Québec secondary-school survey, 2022–2023

Think of four students in the same school. One thinks about climate change on the bus every morning. Another feels anxious when the news shows a flood. A third rarely gives the subject a thought. They can live on the same street and give quite different answers.

The Québec survey asked secondary students how much they experienced eco-anxiety. About 34% answered that they never felt it, 41% felt it sometimes, 17% often, and 8% always or almost always. Girls more frequently reported feeling it often or almost all the time. The institute found no statistically clear difference by school grade on this indicator.

The question measures how often students recognized the feeling. It does not tell us how long each episode lasted or whether it kept them from attending school. The survey covered French- and English-language public and private schools in 16 health regions. Its exclusions included Nunavik, the Cree Territories of James Bay and schools teaching in an Indigenous language. Those communities need to be heard in their own right.

Original source

Écoanxiété

https://statistique.quebec.ca/vitrine/15-29-ans/theme/environnement/ecoanxiete

Why worry looks different in different communities

Claire L. Niedzwiedz, S. M. Kankawale and S. V. Katikireddi (2025) · Systematic review · Nature Mental Health

A child can learn about a flood from a news alert, a neighbour or the water at their own door. A phone can bring frightening images into the house. It can also be where a young

person goes looking for information because they are already worried. Knowing that worry and news use occur together leaves both possibilities open.

Niedzwiedz and colleagues gathered 69 studies about young people. The researchers found links with direct exposure to hazards, relationships between generations, news coverage, and young people's judgments about government action. The results varied by setting. In some studies rural young people reported more worry. In others the pattern went the other way.

Many researchers recruited online. Young people with limited internet access could easily be missed. The review also found much more work from some parts of the world than from others. If you are trying to understand a particular school or town, these studies give you questions worth asking. The people who live there have answers that a distant average cannot supply.

Original source

A systematic review of social, political and geographic factors associated with eco-anxiety in children and young people

DOI 10.1038/s44220-025-00550-z

Can worry help you notice what needs attention?

Charlie Kurth and Panu Pihkala (2022) · Conceptual analysis · Frontiers in Psychology

Imagine hearing that several wells near your town have run dry. You feel uneasy, then find yourself asking where the town gets its water. That moment between feeling uneasy and asking a concrete question is what interested Kurth and Pihkala.

The authors describe a kind of anxiety that can draw your attention to an uncertain decision and prompt you to look for information. They call it practical eco-anxiety. They also explain why the same broad word can describe very different experiences. Someone who keeps going over a danger and cannot rest may have little attention left to investigate it.

The paper offers an interpretation of how a feeling can work. The authors did not assign people to feel more worry or measure what they did afterward. Their idea helps explain why a person might want an answer without wanting every trace of concern to disappear. Whether worry helped in any particular case depends on what happened next.

Original source

Eco-anxiety: What it is and why it matters

DOI 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.981814

After the fire in Fort McMurray

Matthew R. G. Brown and colleagues (2021) · Repeated school surveys · Frontiers in Psychiatry

The return home after an evacuation is a date on a calendar. For a student, the experience can continue long past that date. Friends may have moved away. Smoke in the air the following summer may recall the day everyone had to leave.

After the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire, the city's public and Catholic school systems surveyed students in grades 7 to 12. There were 3,070 responses in 2017, 3,265 in 2018 and 3,041 in 2019. Across those surveys, measures of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression worsened. The pattern challenged an easy assumption that time alone would bring steady improvement.

The surveys were anonymous. Researchers could compare the groups answering each year, but could not trace one student's recovery across all three surveys or assign every change to the fire. They measured several kinds of distress after a disaster. Counting those scores as cases of eco-anxiety would erase the difference between fearing a future loss and living through an actual one.

Original source

Mental Health Symptoms Unexpectedly Increased in Students Aged 11–19 Years During the 3.5 Years After the 2016 Fort McMurray Wildfire: Findings From 9,376 Survey Responses

DOI 10.3389/fpsyt.2021.676256

When grief comes and goes

Panu Pihkala (2022) · Narrative review and proposed model · Sustainability

You may spend a Saturday helping restore a riverbank and feel good about the work. On Sunday an old photograph of the river can bring the sadness back. It is easy to wonder whether one of those feelings means you have misunderstood the other.

Pihkala gathered earlier writing on ecological distress and grief and proposed a way to describe this movement. His model makes room for taking action, feeling loss and sometimes putting the subject aside so the rest of life can continue. These experiences may return or overlap. A person can care about the same place on the days they talk about it and on the days they need distance.

This is a proposed map of experience. The paper did not follow a representative group to see whether everyone moved through the same steps. It gives a reader language for a changing experience. It offers no timetable for grieving a landscape or recovering from a loss.

Original source

The Process of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief: A Narrative Review and a New Proposal

DOI 10.3390/su142416628

Anger, sadness and worry can lead in different directions

Samantha K. Stanley, Teaghan L. Hogg, Zoe Leviston and Iain Walker (2021) · Australian survey analysis · The Journal of Climate Change and Health

If you have ever attended a public meeting, you may remember one neighbour who sounded angry and another who sounded discouraged. Both may have cared just as much about the issue. Combining their answers under one label would lose something.

Stanley and colleagues examined Australian survey data on climate-related anger, anxiety and depressed feelings. People reporting more anger also tended to report more collective action and personal environmental behaviour, alongside better mental health on the measures used. Climate-related anxiety and depressed feelings were associated with poorer well-being. The collective-action pattern differed again. People reporting more climate-related depressed feelings were more likely to report taking part, while those reporting more climate anxiety were less likely.

These are comparisons between respondents. They do not show that making someone angry will improve their health. The phrase “depressed feelings” also describes what people reported in a survey. A diagnosis of depression requires an individual assessment. Asking which feeling someone means can change the whole conversation.

Original source

From anger to action: Differential impacts of eco-anxiety, eco-depression, and eco-anger on climate action and wellbeing

DOI 10.1016/j.joclim.2021.100003

How researchers measure interference with daily life

Susan Clayton and Bryan T. Karazsia (2020) · Three measurement studies · Journal of Environmental Psychology

There is a difference between thinking about climate change during a conversation and having so much trouble concentrating that you lose track of what a friend is saying. A good questionnaire needs to pick up that difference.

Clayton and Karazsia began with 197 online participants. They examined which answers tended to go together. A second group of 199 helped them check whether the pattern appeared again. A third study with 217 participants examined responses to climate messages and how people adapted. Two parts of the measure concerned difficulties with thoughts and feelings, and difficulties carrying on daily activities such as work or study.

Researchers can use these questions to learn more than a single rating of concern would tell them. But a score has a limited meaning on its own. Two people may reach the same total through very different answers. A questionnaire developed in online samples also needs further checking before anyone uses it to draw conclusions about another community.

Original source

Development and validation of a measure of climate change anxiety

DOI 10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101434

Four ways the same worry can show up

Teaghan L. Hogg, Samantha K. Stanley and Léan V. O'Brien (2024) · Questionnaire validation · Climatic Change

One reader feels nervous when the climate comes up. Another lies awake replaying the same thought. A third spends the trip to work wondering about the impact of the fuel they use. Asking only "Are you anxious?" gives all three much the same place to put their answer.

Hogg and colleagues adapted an earlier questionnaire about environmental problems to focus specifically on climate change. They tested it with 501 participants in the United Kingdom and 508 in the United States. The answers supported four groups of experiences. In everyday terms, these were anxious feelings, changes in ordinary activities, thoughts that keep circling back and worry about one's own contribution. The 13 questions allowed these patterns to be examined separately.

A translation has to do more than replace the words. People need to understand the questions in comparable ways. Agreement in these two samples gives researchers a starting point. It leaves open how the questions will work for a child, for a French-speaking class in Québec or for someone living through displacement.

Original source

Validation of the Hogg Climate Anxiety Scale

DOI 10.1007/s10584-024-03726-1

Why studies use different rulers

Sashka K. Samarawickrama and colleagues (2025) · Systematic review of questionnaires · The Journal of Climate Change and Health

Before comparing two studies, it helps to know what the researchers put in front of people. One questionnaire might ask how often someone thinks about pollution. Another might ask whether thoughts about climate change interrupt their sleep. The questions can both be worth asking and produce quite different numbers.

Samarawickrama and colleagues examined 67 articles about the development or testing of questionnaires. They identified 12 scales. Four addressed eco-anxiety broadly and eight focused on climate anxiety. Half had been developed for adults. Most were developed in Western or European settings. The team also found gaps in how researchers tested the scales across different groups.

Of the tools reviewed, they judged the Hogg Eco-Anxiety Scale and the climate-anxiety part of the Inventory of Climate Emotions strongest for their respective purposes. One measures a broad environmental response and the other a climate-specific one. When you read a study, look for the actual question, the age of the people answering, and what time period they were asked to remember.

Original source

Assessing eco-anxiety across the lifespan: A systematic review of current global scales

DOI 10.1016/j.joclim.2025.100595

What a score of 35 out of 100 means

Francesca Gallè and colleagues (2025) · Systematic review and statistical synthesis · Healthcare

Imagine ten people each given a ruler from zero to one hundred to describe an experience. If each person marks 35, the average is 35. Would that mean 35% of the people had the experience? The marks tell you nothing of the sort. Nobody has even drawn a line saying what would count as a case.

Gallè and colleagues reviewed 69 articles. They could combine results from 60 studies, covering more than 65,000 participants. After putting scores on a common scale, they estimated an average of 34.8 out of 100. Their 95% confidence interval for that pooled average ran from 29.6 to 39.9. This interval describes uncertainty around the average. It is not the range of individual scores.

The questionnaire and the country were both associated with differences in scores. Converting several rulers to the same length makes arithmetic possible. It cannot make a question about anxious thoughts identical to one about interrupted sleep. A headline that turns 34.8 into a percentage of people gives readers a different claim from the one the study supports.

Original source

Assessing the Presence of Eco-Anxiety in the General Population: A Systematic Review, Meta-Analysis and Meta-Regression

DOI 10.3390/healthcare13212716

What 32 countries tell us about action

Charles A. Ogunbode and colleagues (2022) · International survey · Journal of Environmental Psychology

Does someone who worries about climate change usually act on that worry? It matters what action you have in mind. Changing a household habit, speaking at a meeting and attending a demonstration require different things from a person.

Ogunbode and colleagues compared answers from 12,246 people across 32 countries. Greater climate anxiety was linked to poorer mental well-being in 31 of the 32 country samples. The team found a statistical link with everyday environmental behaviour in 24 countries and with activism in 12. These counts refer to countries where the researchers detected a relationship. They say nothing about what fraction of each country's people were activists.

Many participants were students or volunteers. The survey captured a moment in their lives. It could not show that attending a demonstration relieved a person's distress. Money, time, safety and an opportunity to participate can all change what a person is able to do. A reader's level of public activity is a poor guide to how deeply they care.

Original source

Climate anxiety, wellbeing and pro-environmental action: correlates of negative emotional responses to climate change in 32 countries

DOI 10.1016/j.jenvp.2022.101887

What emerges across 94 adult studies

Clara Kühner, Corinna Gemmecke, Joachim Hüffmeier and Hannes Zacher (2025) · Meta-analysis · Global Environmental Change

One survey might find that worried people take more action. Another might find that they feel worse. Can both findings hold? Kühner and colleagues brought together 94 studies involving 170,747 adults in 27 countries. This kind of research combines results from earlier studies to see which patterns recur.

Across the evidence, people reporting greater climate anxiety tended to report lower well-being. They also tended to report more climate action. Those two findings can sit side by side. A person can help protect a wetland and still feel anxious about its future. The researchers also examined links with attention to climate information and perceptions of climate risks.

A large combined sample helps describe recurring patterns. It cannot turn one-time surveys into experiments. These results do not tell us whether one more hour of volunteering would leave you feeling better that evening. They also concern adults. A ten-year-old finding out about climate change at school faces a different set of choices.

Original source

Climate change anxiety: A meta-analysis

DOI 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2025.103015

What happened when researchers followed the same teenagers

Salla Veijonaho, Lauri Hietajärvi, Maria Ojala and Katariina Salmela-Aro (2025) · Three-wave study in Finland · Journal of Environmental Psychology

A photograph of a classroom can tell you who is taller today. To find out who is growing, you need another measurement of the same people later. The same idea matters when researchers ask whether climate distress leads to action.

Veijonaho and colleagues studied 684 Finnish adolescents aged 12 to 17. Students in 14 schools were invited to answer questions across three springs, from 2021 to 2023. The analysis included young people who answered at least twice. Researchers asked whether a change from a teenager's own expected level of behaviour predicted a later change in that same person's distress.

Doing more than expected in one year was associated with greater distress the next. Greater distress was also linked to less later environmental behaviour than expected. This differs from asking whether the most active people in a group are also the most concerned. Following the same individuals clarifies the order of events. School, family or community changes during the year could still have influenced both experiences.

Original source

From distress to action? – A three-wave longitudinal study of climate change distress, pro-environmental behavior, and coping strategies among Finnish adolescents

DOI 10.1016/j.jenvp.2025.102676

What a small treatment trial can tell us

Nike Lindhe and colleagues (2023) · Randomized pilot trial with adults · Behaviour Research and Therapy

When someone says a program helped, the next question is what might have happened to that person over the same weeks without it. One way to learn more is to assign people by chance to start now or wait. Comparing the two groups gives researchers more to work with than testimonials alone.

Lindhe and colleagues recruited 60 adults aged 23 to 73. Thirty were assigned to eight weeks of online cognitive behavioural therapy with therapist support. Thirty went on a waiting list. At the end, the treatment group did better on measures of depression, stress, quality of life and climate-related distress. The team found no statistically clear difference between groups on several other measures, including general anxiety and insomnia.

This was a small first trial. People on the waiting list received less professional attention, so the study could not isolate which part of the program helped. It tested a particular therapist-supported intervention. Its findings do not establish the effects of a self-guided book, a school workshop or AtmoCare's future guide.

Original source

Tailored internet-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy for individuals experiencing psychological distress associated with climate change: A pilot randomized controlled trial

DOI 10.1016/j.brat.2023.104438

What if both groups feel better?

Terra Léger-Goodes and colleagues (2026) · Randomized classroom pilot · Chronic Stress

Picture a teacher looking at a class's survey scores before and after a series of workshops. The children report less worry at the end. It would be easy to credit the workshops. Now suppose children in the next classroom improved by about the same amount while waiting for their turn.

Léger-Goodes and colleagues studied 87 elementary pupils in four classrooms. The 46 children in the intervention group took part in a seven-week program using art and philosophical discussion. The other 41 were on a waiting list. Some measures of eco-anxiety fell over time across the groups. The team found no statistically clear advantage for the program on the outcomes measured, including coping.

Four classrooms provide limited evidence about what might work elsewhere. The result still teaches an important lesson. A change between September and November can have many explanations. If we want to know whether a particular activity helped, we need to hear from children who went through those same weeks without it too.

Original source

Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Creative Arts and Philosophical Inquiry Intervention Rooted in Self-Determination Theory to Promote Adaptive Coping with Eco-Anxiety among Elementary School Children: A Pilot Randomized Cluster Trial

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42016021/

When a young person could use more support

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (March 2024) · Facts for Families, no. 137

A teenager says, “I keep thinking about what will happen here.” Before looking for a reassuring answer, it helps to hear the rest of the sentence. Is there a particular event they fear? Did something already happen? Is the thought with them even when they want to sleep or be with friends?

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry advises adults to listen and take young people’s concerns seriously. Fear can make sense in the face of a real danger. The academy also describes situations that call for professional help, including distress that interferes with sleep, ordinary activities or quality of life. A parent or caregiver can bring those specific changes to a health professional. A young reader can begin by telling a trusted adult what has become difficult.

This source is professional guidance for families. It gives people a way to recognize when more support is appropriate. It does not offer a questionnaire score that a reader must reach before asking for help.

Original source

Climate Change and Climate Distress in Youth

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Climate_Change_Climate_Distress_Youth-137.aspx

What people mean when they talk about hope

Panu Pihkala (2018) · Conceptual paper · Zygon

When someone says they have hope for a damaged forest, what do they mean? They might expect it to recover. They might also know that some losses will last and still want to protect the part that survives. Those two meanings matter when people are trying to speak honestly to one another.

Pihkala examined how people and communities make sense of ecological loss, uncertainty and hope. He drew on psychological and spiritual writing and considered what happens when people feel unable to speak about environmental grief. His argument leaves room for hope that does not require a prediction of success. A person can value the chance to repair something without knowing how much can be saved.

This paper explores meaning. It did not test a treatment or compare people with different beliefs. Readers can ask the question in their own terms. When you say you have hope for a place you love, are you describing what you expect to happen, or what you still consider worth doing?

Original source

Eco-anxiety, tragedy, and hope: Psychological and spiritual dimensions of climate change

DOI 10.1111/zygo.12407

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