

CLIMATE ANXIETY TOOLKIT

Practical tools to help you stay
calm, strong, and engaged

WHY THIS MATTERS.

Let's face it. Climate change is scary.

As world-renowned naturalist Sir David Attenborough said: *"If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon."*

If you're ever overcome by feelings of stress, sadness or frustration when thinking or hearing about the state of our world, then you're far from alone. In fact, research shows more than three quarters of Australians are worried about climate change.¹ Further, a global study found more than half of young people are feeling sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty about climate change.²

We're right to be worried.

Experts stress that climate anxiety—sometimes called eco-anxiety or climate distress—is not a mental health condition, but a rational response to the reality we're all facing. Like all emotions, climate anxiety can be experienced at varying levels of intensity, from mild concern to extreme distress. For some, these feelings can significantly impact their daily lives and mental well-being.

Staff, Councillors and Fellows at the Climate Council regularly experience these feelings working on climate day in and day out.

As experts we often get asked: Where do you find hope? How do you go on?

As Councillor Professor Lesley Hughes puts it: hope is a strategy, not a feeling. While it's completely understandable to feel distressed about the climate crisis, how we respond to these feelings matters. If left unchecked, climate anxiety can lead to unhelpful coping strategies, like tuning out entirely from climate news, defeatism, or even climate denial - rejecting the science because it's too overwhelming. These reactions don't just harm our mental health—they're a handbrake to climate action.

Active hope: the space between denial and despair

Instead, we need 'active hope'—a mindset that acknowledges the reality of the climate crisis but keeps us moving forward. Described variously as 'grounded hope', 'authentic hope' or 'mature hope' by psychologists and climate activists, active hope isn't about blind optimism. It's about recognising the problem, imagining a better future, and taking the steps we're capable of taking to make it happen. Active hope gives us the foundation to adopt positive coping strategies that both improve our mental health and help cut climate pollution.

This guide gives you practical tools for grounding your life in active hope—because looking after ourselves (and each other) and taking climate action go hand in hand.

Let's get started!

Grant and Kate



[Associate Professor Grant Blashki](#) is a grandfather, GP, mental health expert and a Climate Council Fellow.



[Dr Kate Charlesworth](#) is a mum, doctor and Councillor at the Climate Council.

“To take care of the planet, I must take care of myself.”

What is this guide all about?



This guide is for you if...

You feel overwhelmed, stressed, or anxious about climate change and its impacts.



This guide does not cover...

Climate trauma—experienced by those directly affected by extreme climate disasters (such as bushfires, floods, or displacement). If you or someone you know is living through climate-related trauma, professional mental health support is recommended.

WHAT IS CLIMATE ANXIETY?

Climate anxiety is a term for feelings of worry, stress, or sadness about climate change and its impacts. It isn't a single feeling, but rather a mix of emotions, thoughts, and actions that can show up in different ways for different people.

Signs of climate anxiety may include:



The good news? There are ways to manage climate anxiety and turn these feelings into something constructive. Let's dive in.

FIVE TOOLS FOR MANAGING CLIMATE ANXIETY

There are different ways we can respond to stress and anxiety, and psychologists group them into three major coping strategies:³



Problem-focused coping:

Tackling the root of the problem by taking action—like learning more, advocating for change, or making climate-friendly choices.



Emotion-focused coping:

Managing the emotions that come with climate distress, such as talking to a friend, practising mindfulness, or spending time in nature.



Meaning-focused coping:

Reflect on what matters most to you—such as family, or a love of nature—to reinforce your commitment to helping solve the climate crisis.

The five practical tools below are a mix of all three strategies. They are designed to help you channel climate anxiety into action, find emotional balance, and maintain a sense of purpose.

1. TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION



2. FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS



3. TAKE A BREAK



4. LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY AND MIND

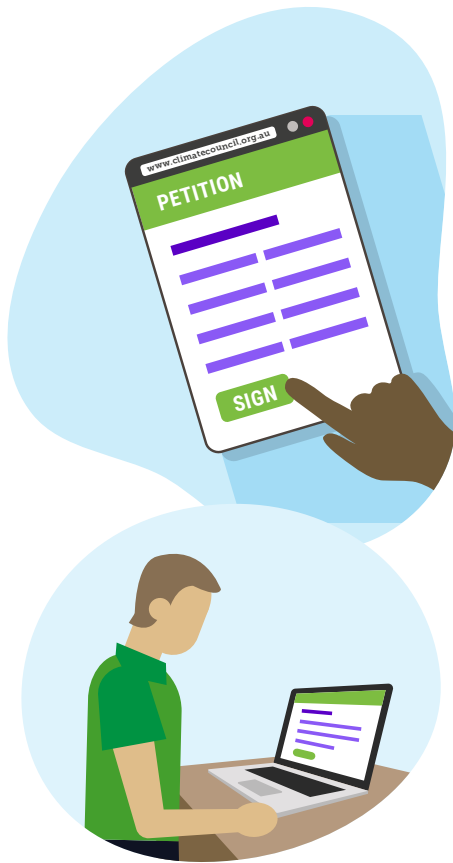


5. TALK IT OUT



1. TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION

Psychologists have found that taking action is one of the best ways to ease anxiety. Studies have shown that people who take steps to reduce climate pollution—by doing things like installing solar to reduce their energy use, using public or active transport, pushing for policy change that cuts climate pollution further, or joining climate groups with likeminded people—feel more in control and less anxious.⁴



These are the actions most popular among Climate Council's community:



Signing petitions

A quick, easy way to show decision-makers that Australians demand action. **(93% of supporters have done this!)**



Speaking up

Talking about climate change with friends, family, and colleagues keeps the issue on the agenda with 'family and friends' among the most trusted sources of news for most Australians. **(92%)**



Voting with climate in mind

Elections shape our future. Supporting parties/candidates with strong climate policies is a powerful step in influencing our country. **(89%)**



Donating to climate organisations

Funding expert advocacy and climate campaigns turns research into real-world impact. **(79%)**



Joining an environmental organisation

Being part of a group strengthens our collective voice. **(67%)**



Reaching out to MPs

Writing to or meeting with politicians puts pressure on leaders to act. **(66%)**



Using social media for change

Posting about climate action spreads awareness and builds momentum. **(60%)**



Attending rallies

Showing up in person sends a powerful message that can't be ignored. **(57%)**



Holding corporations accountable

Writing to companies about their environmental impact demonstrates that acting on climate change is good for business and pushes them to do better. **(54%)**



Taking part in non-violent direct action

Peaceful protests and civil disobedience have sparked some of the biggest changes in history. **(39%)**

[Sign-up for Climate Council's newsletter](#) for the latest climate news, research and ways you can take action to slash climate pollution.



2. FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS

We already have many of the solutions we need to get on with solving the climate crisis. Focussing on these can give us a renewed sense of hope, optimism and remind us that there are solutions. For example, Australia's clean energy revolution is happening all around us and we're making genuine progress towards a cleaner, safer future for our kids. Renewables already power around 40% of the electricity in our main grid, and by supercharging solar, wind and energy storage, research shows Australia can reach 94% clean energy in our grid by the end of the decade.⁵

TRY THIS:



Follow organisations and news sources that share climate progress.



Remind yourself that big changes are under way—we just need to accelerate the momentum.



Check out the Climate Council's [Momentum Monitor](#), and as well as our [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) pages, where every Friday we share some of the best climate solutions and good news stories from the week.

3. TAKE A BREAK

Staying informed is important, but too much bad news can make us feel helpless. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) recommends setting limits on news consumption to prevent us from feeling overwhelmed.⁶

TRY THIS:



Have "news-free" days where you take a break from the news.



Follow social media accounts that highlight climate wins and progress.



Unfollow social media accounts that cause you stress or are counterproductive.



Balance bad news with good—seek out stories about climate victories and solutions.



4. LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY AND MIND

Your physical and mental wellbeing are linked. Exercise, sleep, and spending time outdoors can all reduce stress. Studies show that just 20 minutes spent in nature lowers people's stress hormones and boosts their mood.⁷

TRY THIS:



If you are able to, move your body every day - go for a walk, garden, swim, do yoga, or play a sport.



Get enough sleep and create a healthy bedtime routine.



Spend time in nature—whether it's the beach, the bush, or your local park.

5. TALK IT OUT

Having conversations about climate change can help ease feelings of isolation. Another study found that people who talk about climate issues feel more empowered.⁸

TRY THIS:



Join an online or local climate discussion group.

If you're looking for a supportive space to explore your feelings, consider joining a [Climate Café](#), run by Psychology for a Safe Climate.



Share your feelings with friends or family who are understanding.

If you need extra support, consider seeing a psychologist who specialises in climate distress.



HELPING KIDS WITH CLIMATE ANXIETY

Young people are feeling the weight of climate change. As a parent or caregiver, you can help them manage their worries and stay engaged.



How to Support Your Kids:

- Acknowledge their feelings:**
Let them know it's okay to feel worried. Avoid brushing off their concerns.
- Focus on action:**
Show them examples of climate progress and what people are doing to fix the problem.
- Give them ways to get involved:**
Encourage them to write to politicians, start or join a school climate club, or lobby their school to install solar power.
- Be a role model:**
Show them how taking action makes a difference and is the best way to respond to climate worry.
- Limit doom-scrolling:**
When seeking out news, or spending time on social media, encourage a balance between keeping up-to-date with climate news including worsening extremes and politics, and hopeful stories.



For more advice, the Australian Psychological Society has a [great guide for parents about the climate crisis](#).

WHERE TO GET MORE HELP

Climate Anxiety Resources & Services

› Headspace

Resources and support for young people experiencing climate anxiety.

headspace.org.au

› Psychology for a Safe Climate

Provides community awareness, training and group interventions for climate emotions and distress.

psychologyforasafeclimate.org

› Australian Psychological Society (APS)

Offers *The Climate Change Empowerment Handbook* and tip sheets on coping with climate distress.

psychology.org.au

› Beyond Blue

Information and support for managing mental health impacts of climate disasters.

beyondblue.org.au

› Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

Guidance for dealing with mental health impacts of bushfires and climate-related trauma.

phoenixaustralia.org

Community Climate Support

› Local Climate Action Groups

Groups like, Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, Yarra Climate Action Now, and other examples across the country provide a sense of community and empowerment through advocacy.

› Garden & Regeneration Groups

Landcare Australia and community garden groups help connect people with nature while making a tangible impact.

landcareaustralia.org.au

› Parent Networks

Talking with like-minded parents in groups like [Parents for Climate](#) can help process emotions and find constructive ways to raise resilient kids.

Professional Support

› Find a Climate-Aware Psychologist

Psychology for a Safe Climate has a directory of mental health professionals who are committed to being climate aware and provide therapeutic and group support.

psychologyforasafeclimate.org

› General Practitioners (GPs)

Your local GP can provide referrals for mental health support, including subsidised sessions through the Medicare Mental Health Care Plan.

Helplines for Immediate Support

› Lifeline

Call 13 11 14 – 24/7 crisis support.

› Kids Helpline

Call 1800 55 1800 – Free counselling for young people.

› Beyond Blue

Call 1300 22 4636 – Support for anxiety, stress, and mental health concerns.

› 13YARN

Call 13 92 76 – A dedicated crisis support service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



ABOUT THE CLIMATE COUNCIL

More than 10 years of shaping the national conversation on climate.

Just days after the Abbott Government abolished the Climate Commission, the Climate Council rose from the ashes in the biggest crowdfunding campaign of its time in Australia. More than a decade on, together with our growing team of experts and our supporters, we've successfully shifted national attitudes and catalysed climate action at every level of government.

And we're not stopping there. With your backing, we're working harder than ever to ramp up climate action, pushing for meaningful policies that cut climate pollution across every sector, and build a clean energy future for Australia.

100% independent and community funded.

The Climate Council's impact is powered by caring supporters, who are passionate about scaling up climate action in Australia.

Our independence is vital to our mission - it means we can speak truth to power, and hold decision-makers in government and industry accountable to what the science demands.

You can find out more and support our work at climatecouncil.org.au



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