



Finding calm in the climate storm

Watching our natural world change, feeling personal guilt, witnessing climate indifference and elected powers failing to act, can evoke a variety of emotions – from anger and frustration to dread, powerlessness and hopelessness. It can range from uncomfortable to excruciating, overwhelming and paralysing.

This response is known as climate anxiety or eco-anxiety; often defined as a chronic fear of environmental doom, concerns about what might happen if humanity does not take action to avert climate disaster in time.

**THIS IS A RATIONAL AND MENTALLY HEALTHY RESPONSE TO
REALITY - AND YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

**Find some suggestions from local Climate Action Networks
below, then read on for links to further support.**

Switch Off

Sometimes, the first thing you need is a break from those whirling, swirling thoughts. While we cannot advocate for switching off to the problem entirely, there is certainly value in stopping to catch your breath and calm your mind.

Meditation: Research shows that consistent meditation practice reprograms neural pathways in the brain and improves our ability to regulate emotions. Through meditation, we familiarize ourselves with anxiety-inducing thoughts and storylines. We learn to see them, sit with them, and let them go. During this process we are able to gradually change our relationship with anxiety.



Yoga: Similar to meditative practice, yoga emphasises the connection between breath and movement which can help promote calmness. Certain movements within yoga help to release tension in the body, and regular practice can result in a decrease in psychological distress levels.

Walking: Physical activity releases endorphins and helps to lower levels of stress hormones. Walking can be another form of mindfulness practice, encouraging focus on breath, body and surroundings. It can be an opportunity to connect with the natural world, using all the senses to experience nature. Beneficial alone or with others, whatever suits you best.

Nature: The natural world is, in itself, restorative. You can experience the therapy it has to offer on a walk, by simply sitting in a park with a book, or by participating in group activities outdoors. Spending time in nature can reduce stress hormones, increase a sense of calm, enhance focus and improve sleep quality.



Pottering: An under-appreciated activity! Mostly associated with gardens, pottering can in fact be undertaken anywhere. Give yourself a break from intense or rushed 'doing', and instead allow yourself the freedom to potter around, doing whatever occurs to you at the time.

Hands-on

Many of us find that doing things with our hands, and focussing on a specific activity, can help to calm anxieties. The focus involved promotes relaxation and a sense of calm.

Making and crafting: There are many examples of therapeutic crafting activities you could try. These might include knitting, crocheting, working with clay, drawing, colouring, tracing, baking, wood carving, doing a puzzle – the list is endless! These can be beneficial either alone or in the company of others.



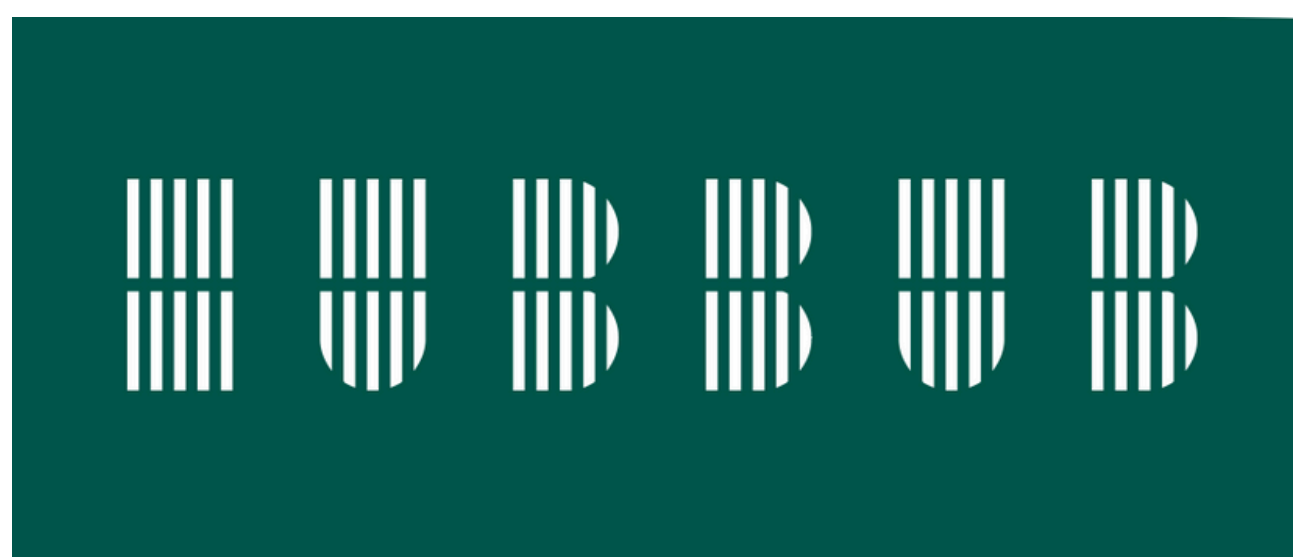
Gardening: This is a fantastic tool for coping with anxiety. It ticks both boxes of offering hands-on focus and connecting with the natural world. Gardening doesn't have to be in a garden, either. It can include sowing seeds on your windowsill, planting up a window box or caring for house plants, as well. If you don't have a garden but you would like to get your hands in the soil, look for a local community garden, allotment, or group growing initiative.

Find Out

News feeds and social media content can often exacerbate our climate anxieties, but TV and the internet can also be helpful sources of information and even reassurance. It is essential to verify the sources of information you are consuming to ensure that you are not being needlessly stressed. Try to balance information about the climate crisis with positive stories about climate action and solutions.

Documentaries: Short documentaries are available on free streaming platforms, such as WaterBear, who encourage their community to switch from mindless scrolling and engage with films that cover a breadth of environmental and humanitarian topics. Original content that entertains people into action, by making it easy.

Websites: There are various websites offering positive stories on climate, tangible solutions, and inspiration for action. One example is Hubbub – an award-winning environmental charity focused on inspiring action that is good for the planet. Everyday solutions that do good, feel good and show how much change is possible when people come together. Positive News and Imagine5 might also help.



Reading: There are countless inspiring books written by climate experts and activists. One recommendation is the recently published *No Straight Road Takes You There* by Rebecca Solnit. From a meditation on an antique violin as a symbol of sustainability, to reminding us that radical ideas move from the fringes to the mainstream, this essay collection offers an antidote to political paralysis and despondency. You might find more inspiration [here](#).



Live feeds: Nature webcams can be a wonderful source of joy and learning, particularly if you are unable to readily access nature or you want to see something in particular, in real time. There are a variety of sources including [Springwatch](#), the [National Trust](#), the [Wildlife Trusts](#) – or [Explore.org](#) which offers live streams from across the world, including elephants in Africa, bald eagles in Iowa, and orcas in Canada.

Take Part

It is important to recognize the role of friendships, connecting with others, and working together.

Friendships: Never underestimate the power of friends and family, and their love and support, to help you through difficult moments. A good friend will be able to offer a listening ear and acknowledge your anxiety, even if they don't experience it themselves. A like-minded friend will also be able to empathise.

Climate action groups: It is really important that you do not face climate anxiety alone. Find a local community group, or a climate cafe, where you will find validation and support. Becoming part of a group can also offer various opportunities for action. Taking ownership of the issue, your role, and your anxieties, can open the door to climate action and, through that action, radical hope – which can become a longer-term way to cope.

Children and young people: The young people in our lives can offer us both inspiration and purpose. Whether you are a parent, a grandparent – or not – the clarity of youthful vision can be reassuring, and the obligation we feel towards younger generations can be motivational. Different generations can help each other to imagine a possible future, and the process of helping children to navigate their feelings can help you to process your own.

We are made to feel that anxiety indicates something is wrong with us, that it is something to be ashamed of. In fact, and particularly in the case of climate breakdown, it is a completely natural and healthy reaction – and it demonstrates that you care. The reality is that almost everyone experiences climate anxiety, it is only the response to that feeling that varies.

Although we experience eco-anxiety negatively, it serves to connect us with those people on the frontlines of the climate crisis, particularly indigenous communities.

Societal norms suggest that anxiety is something to be either resolved or shut away, but there is great benefit in acknowledging emotional biodiversity – there is a place for every feeling. Sometimes it can help to give yourself permission to feel the full range of emotions – and to accept that despair and optimism are two sides of the same coin.

It is important now, more than ever, that we accept our anxieties and allow them to connect us rather than isolate or divide us. We are all in this together.

For more information and support, please join PeCAN if you can at Petersfield Eco Cafe every Tuesday morning 10am until midday in the Courtyard Room at Winton House Centre. You can find alternative sources of support via the Climate Psychology Alliance, Force of Nature and the Good Grief Network.