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Climate Change & Mental Resiliency

What is climate change stress?

Climate change stress refers to a mix of emotions due to the impacts of human-caused climate change on people and the planet.



Who can feel climate change stress?

Everyone and anyone can feel climate change stress. Climate change will see more mental health impacts especially to those with existing conditions. Changes to food availability and economic stability, and increased climate migration will also impact mental health.

Why does coping with climate change stress matter?

There are many links between climate change and mental health. For example, when people learn more about climate change and/or have been impacted by severe weather, they can express various types of climate change related stress. Our experience of climate related mental health will depend on how society responds to the threats of climate change. Individually, mental health will vary between people with different experiences as well as different perceptions. People must remain engaged and mentally resilient in order to continue addressing climate change challenges. In order to continue reducing and adaptation to climate change, we need to address the wellbeing of local residents. We don't want to become overwhelmed, frustrated, burned out or decide to stop caring about climate change. We also want to be able to function in our daily lives.

What kind of emotions are people experiencing?



- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Dread
- Fear
- Depression
- Despair
- Lethargy
- Loneliness
- Sleeplessness

What kinds of feelings are people reporting because of climate change?

The severity of climate change stress can depend on a person's age, background, coping capacity, social support networks, socio-economic status, and susceptibility to anxiety in general.

- Worry about the next storm
- Worry about the dykes, sea level rise and storm surges
- Worry about intense rain storms and flooding
- Worry about how to teach children about climate change
- Feeling burnt-out from working on climate change issues and not seeing progress
- Feeling that your actions are not enough, you are only one person
- Feeling guilty that you cannot do more
- Feeling overwhelmed by too many negative environmental stories and facts
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair about the future in general and that there is not enough time to turn things around
- Stress from experiencing a major weather event
- Stress from the costs of clean up

Ways to Cope

For communities, for yourself and your family, and for teachers and mentors...

For Communities and Environmental Organizations

- Gather, understand and communicate about climate change in your region using facts and focusing on solutions and plans
- Develop a climate adaptation plan with your community (including a vulnerability assessment, climate impacts, priorities and a timeline)
- Investigate and help promote mental health resources in your region and
- Be aware of inequalities and populations at increased risk (such as the poor, less educated, youth, those with other health complication, those with other anxieties, etc.)
- Help establish functional public transportation so people can access mental health resources
- Obtain training for professionals who may encounter mental health concerns
- Door-to-door check-ins during storms, power outages, etc. when possible
- Conduct climate change impact monitoring (during and after intense storm events, etc.)
- Conduct local research into the prevalence of climate change stress in your region
- Partner with mental health professionals and offer workshops on ways to cope with climate stress in your community

For yourself and your family

Be Prepared

- Have a family flood plan and 72 hour emergency kit
- Reduce flood risks around your home (eg. elevate valuables, install a sump pump and/or backflow valve, ensure proper landscape grading, clear storm drains, plant a rain garden, etc.)
- When buying or building a new home stay away from low lying areas and flood risk zones
- Meet your neighbours, strong social connections are essential to coping with and rebuilding after major weather events and for resiliency in general

Take Action

- Take steps to be more sustainable such as saving energy, wasting less, using less plastic, shopping locally, using reusable containers, biking, etc.
- Collective action will make a difference, get together with others to have a bigger impact
- Join or support an environmental group like EOS Eco-Energy
- Help change the system and vote for a candidate that shares your values
- We need our governments, politicians and corporations to address climate change so write letters to your elected officials, start or sign petitions, join a march
- Contact EOS Eco-Energy with your ideas for events, programs, bulk purchases, etc.

Practice Self-care

- Appreciate your efforts and don't take responsibility for things outside your control
- Focus on only a few issues at a time
- Focus on positive changes and be hopeful
- Celebrate small victories and take time to reflect
- Take a break, take time for yourself
- Healthy living practices like eating well, exercising, sleeping enough
- Spend time in nature, practice mindfulness and focus on the present
- Take up yoga, dance or other things to help you relax
- Try art, reading, writing, etc.
- Turn off the TV, news and social media
- Take time to grieve and cry from time to time if that helps
- Be kind and have compassion for others
- Spend time with friends and family, have some fun
- When actions are not enough, seek out or start a discussion group with others who are feeling stressed, don't be afraid to talk about how you are feeling

For Parents, Teachers and Youth Mentors

- Investigate mental health services and resources in your area
- Seek out training in mental health and climate change
- Increase awareness about your own mental health, how it impacts yourself and others
- Be equipped to explain climate change issues to youth in a factual but not scary way and talk about solutions and plans
- Contact EOS Eco-Energy for resources and classroom materials or for classroom presentations and hands-on activities

What to do if you can no longer function?

Contact a professional:

Iris Community Counselling & Consulting

(based in Sackville) offers mental health services including individual, family and group counselling for youth living alongside a variety of mental health issues.

Contact

marie@iriscounselling or

krista@iriscounselling.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association of New Brunswick

22 Church Street, Suite T120

Moncton, NB E1C 0P7

Telephone : (506) 859-8114

Fax: (506) 859-9581

E-mail: info@cmhanb.ca

CHIMO provincial crisis helpline 1-800-667-5005 - Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 - Emergency 911

Disclaimer

The information presented has been collected from local research and EOS events, etc. EOS Eco-Energy is not a mental health agency but has had the content in this brochure reviewed by certified counsellors. Always contact a mental health professional for mental health needs.

EOS Contact Info

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Resources

<https://www.intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/After-The-Flood.pdf>

http://ecoamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ea_apa_mental_health_report_web.pdf

<https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/88ee1716-2604-44ce-b87a-ca0408dfaa12/Climate-change-empowerment-handbook.pdf>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2018/07/10/forest-bathing-really-may-be-good-for-health-study-finds/#110ae5b508eb>

<https://www.mother.ly/parenting/what-to-do-if-climate-change-flares-up-your-kids-anxiety-and-depression>

<https://burlingtonvt.citymomsblog.com/2017/10/29/eco-anxiety/>

<https://burlingtonvt.citymomsblog.com/2017/10/30/eco-anxiety-global-climate-change/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/climate-change-what-you-can-do-campaigning-installing-insulation-solar-panels>

<https://www.vogue.com/article/eco-anxiety-grief-mental-health-climate-change>

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf>

https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/cf076d33-4470-415d-8acc-75f375adf2f3/coping_with_climate_change.pdf.pdf

<https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13033-018-0210-6>