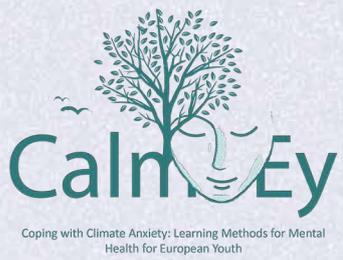


# Rooted in Hope

Navigating Climate Emotions  
& Cultivating Resilience



A Self-Help Workbook



# Colophon

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# Introduction

If you've picked up this book, you're likely experiencing a range of emotions about climate change and the environmental situation. Perhaps you feel worried, angry, sad, or even overwhelmed. First and foremost, we want you to know that you're not alone. Many young people around the world are experiencing similar feelings (Hickman et al., 2021; Hickman, 2024; Chou et al., 2023; Diffey et al., 2023), and it's **completely valid** to have this range of emotions.

This workbook has been created to provide a **safe, supportive space** for you to explore and navigate these feelings. It is a **self-paced** resource designed specifically for young individuals who are seeking ways to care for themselves, others, and nature in these climate-chaotic times.

This Self-Help Workbook for Climate Anxiety and Emotions offers practical techniques aimed at improving individual and social well-being. It can be used as a standalone resource or as part of a support group, making it a versatile tool for those wishing to better understand and process their emotions. Co-designed by affected youth, youth workers, and mental health professionals, this workbook is a collaborative effort that reflects the lived experiences and expert insights of those who are also directly facing the challenges of climate emotions.

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time, and it's no surprise that young people are feeling its weight. As the reality of the climate crisis becomes more apparent, emotions such as anxiety, grief, anger, and helplessness are increasingly common. These feelings are not only valid but also natural responses to an uncertain and rapidly changing world (Hickman et al., 2021). This workbook acknowledges the depth of young people's concerns while empowering you with tools to build resilience and find hope amidst uncertainty.

The goal of this workbook is not to erase or suppress your emotions, but to help you understand and process them with intention and care. By recognising and naming your feelings, allowing yourself to experience them fully, and working through them in healthy ways, you can cultivate a sense of clarity and meaning. The guided exercises and reflections in this workbook are designed to strengthen connections: to yourself, to others, and to the natural world. These connections are essential for building long-term resilience and achieving sustainable well-being.

## How to use the book

To make this journey accessible, the workbook is formatted for both print and digital use. A printed version allows for a tactile, screen-free experience, while the digital version offers flexibility. You can complete the exercises wherever and however works best for you—indoors, outdoors, alone, or with trusted friends or peers. Throughout, you'll find exercises tailored to different settings and moods, with icons to guide your choices and suggestions for modifying activities to suit your needs.

While this workbook is designed to support your emotional well-being, it is not a substitute for professional mental health care.

If you find yourself struggling with severe anxiety or depression that interferes with your daily life, please reach out to a mental health professional. Experiencing very strong emotions while or after conducting the exercises in this book is also possible. In this case, you may opt to do these exercises to ground yourself:

- TIPP (p.18)
- Here and Now Stone (p.13)
- Breathing (p.17)
- Body Scan and Muscle Relaxation (p.17)
- Earth Anchoring (p.18)
- Self-Care Ritual (p.23)
- Meditation in Nature (p.29)
- Gardening Meditation (p.29)
- Sit-Spot (p.31)
- Slow Mindful Walk (p.33)

Following these measures, you may feel a little calmer or more grounded, but it's also completely okay if the strong emotions don't go away right away. Sometimes, emotions can be like waves—they come and go, but some feel bigger and harder to ride out. If you find that the exercises don't help enough, or if your feelings feel too overwhelming to handle on your own and they start interfering in your day-to-day life, it might be time to reach out to a mental health professional.

Above all, remember that you are not alone in your journey. This workbook invites you to embrace your emotions, connect with others, and take meaningful steps toward a healthier, more hopeful and meaningful future for yourself and our planet.

# Before We Dive In

Personal wellbeing is an important factor within the climate change and environmental space. Feeling empowered and engaging with the ecological crisis, amidst its complexity, unpredictability and large-scale nature, requires us to feel personally nourished in terms of rest, movement, emotions, nutrition and socialisation.

## Mental Health Vitamins



Mental Health Vitamins are essential practices that nourish our psychological well-being. Just as physical vitamins support bodily health, these “vitamins” nurture our minds and emotions.

**Rest:** Resting is as important and unavoidable for us as breathing, drinking water and eating, as during rest, our vital bodily functions regenerate. This is why we feel unwell when our sleep is interrupted or we do not take enough small breaks and moments of rest during our days. Nourishing our mental health vitamin of ‘rest’ may involve adequate sleep, napping, designated time for daydreaming, mindfulness and concentrating on our breathing, spending time with animals, spending time in nature, reading...

**Move:** Physical activity is good for both your mental and physical health. Regular moderate physical activity (at least 150 minutes a week or 20 minutes a day) helps maintain a feeling of wellbeing and a friendlier self-image, while improving your mood and concentration, and reducing anxiety. Physical activity opens a door to seeking out new experiences. Every move counts! Getting the Move vitamin can involve walking, running, dancing, stretching, going to the gym, doing yoga, but also even smaller movements like taking few steps during the break, standing up, putting clothes to dry, watering the plants, picking up the litter, even hugging!

**Feel:** You could say that it’s largely the emotions that give our days their unique and memorable flavour. It’s undoubtedly best for our mental health to allow ourselves to feel and experience different emotions. However, sometimes it’s good to try and knowingly focus on experiencing more pleasant emotions to keep your mental health in balance. Pleasant emotions can include the following: happiness, gratitude, sincerity, interest, hope, amusement, inspiration, admiration, love, surprise, peace. You can create these by doing some good deeds and helping someone, planting, spending time in nature, reading poems, noticing things you are grateful for, noticing positive posts in social media etc.

**Eat:** Food not only gives us organic vitamins that allow proper bodily function, but also helps nourish our ‘eat’ mental health vitamin. This can be done by eating a variety of foods, listening to our hunger cues and body signals, planning our meals, taking time to properly smell and taste our food, drinking enough water, eating slow to savour every bite, having lunch with friends and family, and eating outside (weather permitting, of course) or trying to put on your plate more different colors. Eating is also a way to be mindful and connect with the world around you – acknowledging that water, sun and time that went into the food that becomes a part of us.

**Socialise:** Communication is a daily part of our lives at schools, at home, on the streets, in shops, at the park or on a hiking trail, face-to-face or online. Communication involves both verbal and non-verbal expression (e.g., smiles, expressions, body language). Healthy relationships are a basic necessity for humans. That’s why we feel so bad when we are lonely and have no one to share our thoughts with. Connecting with people is a great way to give yourself the ‘socialise’ mental health vitamin. Here are some ways this can be done: organising meet-ups with friends, reaching out to and rekindling with people you have lost touch with, doing a kind gesture for your loved ones, smiling, helping others, starting conversations with strangers, complimenting a colleague, and actively listening to people.

How you get your mental health vitamins is up to you. What is important is that no mental health vitamin is left behind!

The magic about mental health vitamins is that they have an effect when:

- you do them in small doses. You don’t have to do much, but you should do it regularly.
- you are feeling well. They protect your mental health and make you more resilient.
- you already are experiencing mental health struggles, small or big. They can be important small building blocks to restoring your balance.

## Why are mental health vitamins important when dealing with eco-emotions?

Getting these mental health vitamins is beneficial both when we are feeling good and when we are feeling bad. When we’re feeling good, they help to maintain our emotional equilibrium, build resilience, and fortify our ability to handle future stressors. They act as a preventative measure, much like physical exercise or a balanced diet, ensuring that our mental well-being remains strong and steady.

When we’re feeling bad, these mental health “vitamins” can provide the tools we need to cope with difficult emotions, alleviate overwhelming feelings, and gradually restore balance. Just as taking a vitamin boosts your body’s systems, investing in mental health practices—like connecting with loved ones, engaging in mindfulness, or seeking professional help—can nurture our minds back to a healthier state.

So, getting these mental health vitamins is beneficial for us when we are feeling good, so as to prevent experiencing unpleasant emotions, and when we are presently feeling these unpleasant emotions. Feeling nourished through rest, movement, positive emotions, variety in nutrition and socialisation can help us process and ‘bounce back’ from unpleasant emotions, and ‘move forward’ towards clarity and hope. This process in itself makes us more resilient!

## Exercise **Mental Health Vitamins Quiz**

This quiz is here to provide insights into your ‘mental health vitamin balance’, help you reflect on how you currently take care of your mental health, and give suggestions on how to provide yourself with the mental health vitamins. It’s a gentle way to explore how you’re doing and discover ways to strengthen your mental well-being even further.

With each question, choose one answer that describes you most. You can base your answers on the previous month of your life and think how things have mostly been. You can fill it in online here: <https://peaasi.ee/vitamiinitest/en/>, or scan the following QR code.



**Time investment: approx. 5 minutes (18 questions)**

*The test was compiled by peaasi.ee mental health specialists from Estonia in order to help you think through important areas of mental health for yourself. The test is not a basis for any diagnostic assessments. Additional resources and support offered on the quiz website are tailored to the Estonian context.*

## Exercise **Planning your Mental Health Vitamins Intake**

**Time investment: approx. 5 minutes**

Think of the upcoming week. What do you wish to do to ensure an ‘adequate intake’ of each of the mental health vitamins?

You can refer to the different suggestions offered further above on how to nurture each of the mental health vitamins. You can also choose to focus on one or two mental health vitamins you wish to have more of, based on your quiz results.

The things you can do to ensure your mental health vitamin intake can be small. However, no matter how small they are, they are significant, especially if done regularly.

**Rest:**

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**Eat:**

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**Move:**

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**Socialise:**

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**Feel:**

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This self-help book contains exercises that target some of these mental health vitamins. The mental health vitamin targeted is shown near each exercise to guide you in finding and performing exercises that you feel are relevant to you at this moment.

If you feel you are lacking in a particular mental health vitamin that is not targeted enough in this self-help book, check out Peaasi's website here for more suggestions: <https://peaasi.ee/en/mental-health-vitamins/>

# Emotions – The What's, Why's, Where's, When's and How's

## What are emotions?

The word “emotion” has its roots in Latin and originally was written as ‘emovere’, from e- (variant of ex-), meaning ‘out’, and -movere, meaning ‘move’ (von Scheve & Slaby, 2018). In a literal sense, ‘emovere’ meant “to move out”. In fact, the nature of our emotions and feelings are sensations, felt and experienced in our bodies. Therefore, emotion is something that moves in us and from us – an energy that is in constant motion.

Although there is no clear-cut scientific consensus on the meaning of ‘emotion’, emotions can simply be described as natural response patterns that help us navigate life. They entail three main elements (American Psychological Association, 2018):

1. **Experiential:** Emotions arise from something we experience, like a conversation, event, or memory.
2. **Behavioural:** We express emotions through actions and behaviours, such as smiling when we're happy or raising our voice when we're angry.
3. **Physiological:** Emotions also trigger changes in our body, like a racing heart when we're scared or a relaxed feeling when we're calm.

These three elements make emotions multifaceted: consisting of various features that coexist and interlace to contribute to the emotional experience.

These features help us handle situations that matter to us personally. Our feelings are shaped by these emotional experiences, but they're also influenced by our beliefs, memories, and past experiences. These influencing factors make emotions subjective. For example, the same event could make one person feel angry and another person feel calm. This shows how emotions are subjective—each person experiences them differently.

Emotions act as messengers, giving us valuable information about our inner world and how we relate to and interpret what's happening around us. When triggered, emotions fire up systems within us, such as perception, attention, inference, learning, memory, goal choice, motivational priorities, motor behaviours and decision-making (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). Therefore, emotions not only guide how we react, but also can be used to motivate us to take action.

Emotions can be either **conscious** or **unconscious**. Unconscious emotions may be unconscious because of lack of awareness of what we are feeling, or because of suppression of unpleasant emotions. However, unconscious emotions may be guiding our behaviour without us realising. This points to the power of emotional awareness and regulation as skills to **connect with ourselves, with people** and **with nature**. Indeed, this self-help book acts as a guide to connecting with ourselves, with people and with nature through emotional awareness and regulation exercises in relation to the climate crisis and respective climate emotions.

It is important to remember that emotional experiences are **temporary**. Think of your emotions as clouds passing along a permanently clear blue sky that is our mind.

Nonetheless, we may realise that we experience certain emotions for longer durations, while others are more fleeting in nature. This gives us an inclination of our **temperament**, which includes our emotional tendencies (Thompson et al. 2011). These tendencies are not fixed, but can be changed and altered through conscious efforts.

Also, it is completely normal to experience various emotions **at the same time**, even contradictory ones; for example, feeling outraged and betrayed by a company who did not fulfil their promises of cutting down on their carbon emissions, but also feeling empowered, inspired by and grateful for the environmental activists holding this company accountable.

Emotions are **interlaced processes**. One emotion can lead to another, and we can have emotions about the emotions we are currently feeling. For example, feeling climate grief can be viewed as a sign of weakness, leading to shame for feeling grief.

Some emotions can feel **pleasant**, while others may be more **difficult** to handle (Cason, 1930). Both kinds are important, and learning to understand and manage them is key to navigating life with more ease and self-awareness.

What value can difficult emotions have?

- They make us aware of something that needs to be dealt with. If you are feeling despair due to the constant negative messages posted by a particular social media account, the despair is showing you that you may need to unfollow or unsubscribe to the account, or seek other sources.
- They make us aware of what we care about. If you are feeling anxious about the future of the planet, the anxiety is showing you that you care for the planet.
- They make us aware of our beliefs and values. If you are feeling angry at the injustice of the ecological crisis, the anger is showing you that you believe in and give value to the necessity of justice.
- They make us aware of our current needs. If you are feeling alone as you navigate the complexities of the ecological crisis, the loneliness is showing you your need for connection with others who understand and possibly share your concerns.

# The Climate Wheel of Emotions

The Climate Wheel of Emotions (Pihkala, 2022) is a visual tool that helps identify and articulate the nuanced feelings we experience about climate change and its impacts. While not exhaustive, it provides a good starting point to explore the complexity of what you might be feeling about climate change and its impacts.

The Climate Wheel of Emotions provides you with vocabulary to use to describe your emotional experiences. You can refer to the wheel and its vocabulary for the upcoming exercises.

As mentioned earlier, emotions are interconnected: we can experience multiple emotions simultaneously, one emotion can trigger others, and we can even have emotions about our emotions. This means that it's normal for more than one emotion to resonate at the same time, highlighting the intertwined nature of our emotional experiences.



This complexity can be explored in the following exercise, which uses guided prompt questions to encourage self-reflection and build emotional awareness.

## Exercise Climate Emotions Wheel Prompt Questions

**Time investment:** This depends on the number of emotions covered

**Materials needed:** Diary and pen, or a digital document

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

The following are descriptions of and prompt questions for the different emotions encompassing climate emotions in the Climate Wheel of Emotion.

You can go through each emotion, or else identify one or several emotions you are currently feeling, ones that stand out, or ones that tend to come up often for you, and answer the respective prompt questions.

Certain emotions, such as panic, anxiety, and depression, may require immediate self-care and might even call for stepping away from the issue temporarily. If you feel this is the best course of action for you right now, that's completely okay! Taking the time you need for self-care can help prevent becoming stuck in a cycle of distress. Remember, self-care is not avoidance - it's a valid and proactive form of engagement and action!

## **Anger is emotional energy aimed at protecting our boundaries.**

**Indignation** is linked to the injustices that are intertwined with climate change. We feel indignation when we are aware of these unjust situations and view them as injustices. Engaging constructively with indignation involves directing our actions towards those responsible for the injustices we perceive.

**Prompt question:** What climate injustices spark indignation in me, and how can I channel its energy for justice work?

**Outrage** occurs when we feel that boundaries have been crossed and harm has been done. It is different from rage or fury, as it is linked with profound injustices, and can be channelled to engage us in higher-purpose action.

**Prompt question:** How can I channel outrage into determined resistance?

**Frustration** shows us that we feel that something important should be happening, but it is not happening at all or as we think it should. Feeling frustrated can either prompt engagement or lead us to resign from the situation.

**Prompt question:** When can I exercise patience, and when is it important to articulate frustration?

**Betrayal** shows up when we feel that someone did not do what we think they should have done or when they did not keep to their promises. As young people, we may feel betrayed by older generations' climate inaction, by decision-makers and fossil fuel companies.

**Prompt question:** How can I recognise valid feelings of betrayal and use them to fuel my determination to speak the truth?

**Disappointment** stems when what we are perceiving does not align with our ideals.

**Prompt question:** How can I allow disappointment to inform my vision of what I would like to see in the world?

## **Sadness helps us to react to losses and to cherish what remains.**

**Despair** is linked to our desire for change. It is different to total hopelessness as it can be present with resilience as part of one's mood. If despair lingers on, it can lead to feeling hopelessness and may require psychological support.

**Prompt question:** How can I make space for my despair, allow it to flow, and continue to work for a better world?

**Loneliness** involves feeling disconnected, alienated or misunderstood by others. Silence about climate change and related emotions may make a person experiencing climate emotions feel lonely. Conversely, speaking about these topics can be the antidote to this loneliness.

**Prompt question:** How and to whom can I speak aloud what I am feeling?

**Loss** emerges when something that was important no longer exists as it was. What is being perceived as lost can be tangible or intangible, visible or invisible, and certain or uncertain. It is important to honour what is lost and celebrate what is not yet lost.

**Prompt question:** How could I pay respect to my feelings of loss?

**Depression** can have many shades. Clinical depression involves long-term low moods and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, causing disruption to everyday life and warranting professional support.

**Prompt question:** What is an achievable action – whether outward directed, or self-care – I can take today to improve my state of mind?

**Grief** entails feeling for something that once existed or has changed, or that potentially will cease to exist or change in the future. When experiencing grief, connection to others is oftentimes comforting. It is important to keep in mind that accepting the reality of what ‘once was’, adjusting to a changing reality and engaging with grief takes time.

**Prompt question:** What am I grieving, and what would help me cope?

**Shame** emerges from negative self-evaluation, such as being part of humanity that is damaging the biosphere. Speaking about shame can redirect us to act in line with our values.

**Prompt question:** How can I transform climate shame into energy for more honourable ways of living?

**Guilt** comes from feeling a sense of responsibility, while viewing ourselves as not fulfilling these responsibilities. Guilt may not always be at scale with our range of influence. It is important both to carry one’s responsibility and to avoid being paralysed by guilt.

**Prompt question:** How can I behave more responsibly given my power and position in the world without losing too much energy to my feelings of guilt?

**Fear helps us to react to perceived threats.**

**Overwhelm** is the feeling of having too much incoming information and sensory stimuli, which makes it harder to understand what is happening. The vastness of the climate crisis makes it easy and normal to feel moderately overwhelmed. Strong overwhelm entails a high level of stress that may make it difficult to function due to the activation of our nervous system.

**Prompt question:** How do I slow down and take time to cope?

**Panic** is a strong fear reaction that emerges from something that is viewed as urgent.

**Prompt question:** How can I calm down and balance urgency with effective responses?

**Powerlessness** may stem from the realisation that the climate crisis needs structural solutions.

**Prompt question:** How can I receive support from others and act with purpose?

**Anxiety** involves the activation of energy in response to a threat or change. At moderate levels, it can be activated by encouraging a responding action. However, when present in its intense form, it can be paralysing. Anxiety may stem from viewing climate threats as large, unpredictable, and hard to understand and control.

**Prompt question:** How can I channel climate anxiety constructively?

**Worry**, at moderate levels, can be a rational response to potential threats, signalling care and the desire to make things better. However, it can become strong when it leads to rumination on negative outcomes.

**Prompt question:** What level of worry is constructive, and when do I slip into excessive rumination?

**Positivity and positive emotions are based on caring and motivation, and help us to bond to others, become engaged and self-compassionate, and enjoy the pleasures of life.**

**Interest** is derived from curiosity. Feeling and being interested in a topic, such as climate change, means that it is something we resonate with.

**Prompt question:** How can I continue to grow my curiosity about climate change, its impacts, and its solutions?

**Empowerment** is caused by feeling that we have agency over and choice relating to a situation. Climate change is the biggest challenge ever to face humanity and it will take all of us to be part of the solution. When people have their agency and choice honored in the collaborative process of working toward solutions, they are empowered. Climate empowerment is strengthened the more people can meaningfully participate in ways available to them.

**Prompt question:** When and where have I felt empowered in climate action and how can I recapture that feeling?

**Inspiration** can stem from seeing someone living out their ideals, leading us to recommit towards our own work. It can also stem from the beauty and power of nature. Inspiration can go both ways: we can be inspired by others, or others can be inspired by us.

**Prompt question:** What kind of things inspire you in relation to making the world better?

**Empathy** involves putting yourself in someone else's shoes, and seeing things from their perspective. Empathy is a powerful resource, but it can also be emotionally draining, leading to compassion fatigue. This does not mean that you care less; rather, it gives us a signal to recharge [refer to exercises on monitoring and replenishing energy levels]. Indeed eco-empathy is very much linked to eco-anxiety, as we feel anxious because we care.

**Prompt question:** How do I maintain and renew my capacity to care and empathise?

**Gratitude** is oriented towards appreciation. We can feel gratitude about our awareness of environmental issues, that can then remind us of our connection to the world and all that exists. Practicing gratitude regularly makes us more resilient in tough times, and can co-exist with other climate emotions, such as moral outrage.

**Prompt question:** What can I be grateful for right now, in this moment?

**Hope** has various meanings, and is indeed connected to meaning and vision for a better future. It can manifest in the form of agency, energy and efforts to turn this visioned future into fruition while giving us meaning and purpose.

**Prompt question:** How can I keep meaning and hope alive in difficult times?

Panu Pihkala, the author of the *Climate Wheel of Emotions*, elaborates on some more climate emotions that provide us with further vocabulary to use to describe our emotional experience in response to the climate crisis:

**Apathy:** This emerges when we feel overwhelmed and burnt out because we do not feel like we can do anything about climate change and environmental degradation. It may be our response to continuous exposure to bad climate news.

**Confusion:** Too much information, misinformation and disinformation about climate change may make us confused.

**Distress:** Many emotions may encompass this feeling of distress, such as stress and feeling burdened.

**Hopelessness:** This emotion is linked to meaninglessness amidst the climate crisis. It is feeling and thinking that nothing can be done to combat the climate crisis. However, it is important to delineate lack of optimisation and hopelessness, as some people may be actively pessimistic but still engaged in climate work.

**Horror/dread:** This stems from feeling like things are going wrong. Inadequacy. Given that the climate crisis is so vast in terms of causes and implications, we may feel unable to do what we would like to do or what we feel we need to do.

**Melancholia:** This feeling entails sadness towards what has been lost and what we feel is not being done, which can lead to stuckness.

**Pride:** This can emerge from feeling good about what we have done, or can be anticipatory in nature as we strive for feeling proud for what we are about to do.

**Relief:** When positive climate-related decisions are taken, we may feel glad and relieved due to the positive impacts or decreased/ absence of negative impacts related to the decision made. We can also feel relieved when we speak to others about the climate crisis.

**Solastalgia:** This refers to homesickness while still living at home, stemming from the realisation that our home environment is changing or has changed (Albrecht, 2011). It involves feelings of sadness, longing and nostalgia for what was lost or what has changed.

**Vengefulness:** Wanting to punish those who have harmed or are harming the environment stems from feeling vengeful. However, we must critically evaluate this emotion, and the respective thoughts and actions before deciding on how to proceed.



# Processing our Emotions

When we encounter an intense experience, such as a news article highlighting the threats climate change poses, or thoughts about the uncertainty of and our perceived powerlessness in the face of the environmental crisis, this may give signals to our body and mind that we are under threat at this very moment. In such states, we may:

- **overestimate threats**
- **underestimate opportunities**
- **underestimate our inner and outer resources.**

This is a form of negativity bias: the tendency for negative parts of a situation to impact us more than positive or neutral parts, even when they're equally balanced.

In times like these, fear kicks in. Joan Halifax, a Buddhist meditation teacher and writer, says that when we experience such fear, we tend to adopt a 'hard front' (e.g., "Humanity is failing") to hide a soft back (e.g., "I am unable to do anything about this"). When we have a 'hard front' and 'soft back', we act out of fear and as a form of defence.

She proposes that we turn this around when things get difficult, aiming instead to cultivate a '**strong back**' but a '**soft front**'. This means we're courageous and firm but also flexible and open-minded to possibilities, challenges and opportunities. This strength provides the safety, comfort, care and self-compassion needed to open to our pain rather than defend ourselves

## Exercise '**Here-and-Now Stone**' (adapted from Neff & Germer, 2018)

**Time investment:** approximately 5-10 minutes

**Materials needed:** a stone, and possibly a diary and pen for journaling your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

The Here & Now Stone offers a chance to be open to and connect with the present moment, with the intention of harnessing a 'soft front' and a 'strong back'. For this exercise, you can use any type of stone you can get your hands on. It could be a piece of rock found outside, or a stone necklace. As you explore the stone, intend to give this exploration your full attention, allowing yourself to become completely absorbed by the stone.

1. Hold the stone in your hands, holding it gently yet firmly. As you feel its presence, remind yourself that this moment is an opportunity to connect with both the world around you and the strength within you. Take a deep breath, letting it fill you with calm and focus.
2. Focus on the stone and observe what you notice through your senses:
  - **Sight:** Observe the stone's surface, colours, and textures, and how light interacts with its surface. Notice its patterns, angles, and imperfections. See the beauty in its uniqueness, just as there is beauty in your own individuality.
  - **Touch:** Feel its texture, weight and temperature. Imagine that its strength mirrors your own resilience. Just as the stone has endured natural forces to become what it is, think of the challenges you've overcome.
  - **Hearing:** If you tap or roll the stone, does it make a sound? Let it remind you of your adaptability—your ability to listen, adjust, and respond to life's rhythms.
  - **Smell:** Bring the stone close to your nose and notice if it carries an earthy or mineral scent.

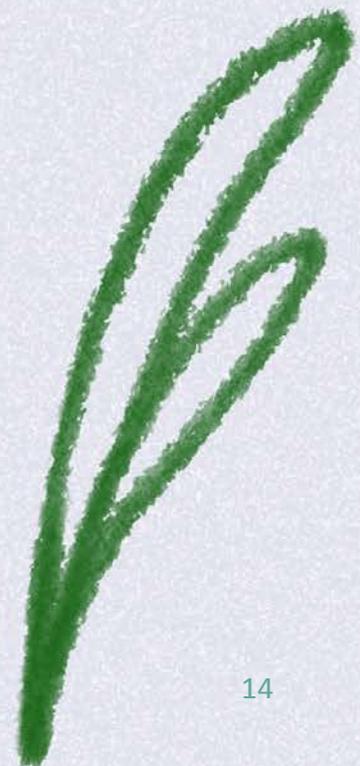
3. **Reflect** on the life of the stone, and compare it to your own life:
  - a. Just as the stone has weathered countless years to become what it is now, you have also faced and endured challenges, emerging stronger by adapting and changing as was needed. Whisper to yourself (or think): *“I am courageous. I am resilient.”* Let these affirmations fill you with confidence.
  - b. Turn the stone in your hand, exploring it from all angles. Each new view reveals something different—just as your open mind allows you to see new perspectives and embrace change. Think about how your flexibility has helped you grow and adapt in unexpected situations. Whisper to yourself (or think): *“I am open. I am flexible.”*
4. As the exercise concludes, take a moment to show gratitude to the stone for grounding you and reminding you of your inner strength. Just as importantly, express gratitude to yourself for taking this time to honour your courage, resilience, open-mindedness, and flexibility.

You might decide to keep the stone nearby as a reminder—whenever you feel overwhelmed. You can pick it up and bring yourself into the present.

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Opening up to our pain can be done in steps, or what is known as the stages of acceptance, starting off with resistance to the befriending of strong emotions. This is a gradual process done slowly to prevent further resistance while building our self-awareness and resilience in a self-compassionate way:

1. Resisting - wanting the painful emotions to go away
2. Exploring - curiously asking “What am I feeling?”
3. Tolerating - feeling our emotions but still wanting them to go away
4. Allowing - accepting our feelings
5. Befriending - seeing the value in our feelings



## Exercise **Befriending your Emotions**

**Time investment:** approximately 10-15 minutes

**Materials needed:** a diary and pen, or digital document

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

This exercise provides a guide that you can follow when you are feeling an emotion and would like to delve deeper into its roots. It can also be done while experiencing an intense emotion, as it allows us to approach the emotion in a gradual way while preventing further resistance and developing self-awareness, resilience and self-compassion.

You can either perform this exercise in your mind or by writing in a journal, on a piece of paper or on a digital document. The exercise also includes some practical components from which you can choose according to what you feel you need and have access to at this moment.

- 1. Give a label to your emotions.** This allows you to explore the emotion while gauging some distance from it and keeping you from getting lost in it. You can use the vocabulary offered in the Climate Wheel of Emotions to label your emotions.
- 2. Use 'I am feeling...'** Place the emotion in a sentence, but instead of saying "I am afraid", "I am disappointed", "I am anxious", "I am angry" or "I am ashamed", say "I am feeling afraid, disappointed, anxious, angry, ashamed..."(McGavin & Weiser Cornell, 2024)
- 3. Feel your emotions in your body.** This allows you to disentangle from your resisting thoughts by diverting your attention to the physical sensations the emotion brings.
- 4. Soften-soothe-allow.** While feeling your emotions in your body, soften any constriction felt, and soothe yourself through your senses. The safety offered through the softening and soothing provides a caring and compassionate space to allow your experience to be as it is. (taken from Eddins, 2020):
  - Touch: stretch, hug yourself or a loved one, take a bath or shower, pet an animal, change into comfortable clothes
  - Taste: drink your favourite herbal tea, eat a comforting meal, suck on hard candy
  - Smell: light a scented candle, smell flowers
  - Sight: look at the clouds, look through pictures of loved ones, look through pictures of a past vacation or places you visited that made you feel relaxed, read a book, watch a funny video
  - Sound: listen to relaxing music, sing, say soothing statements to yourself

As you are performing this exercise, you may keep the following in mind:

**Feeling cared for.** Recognise that it is kind to be caring to yourself and others, while bringing to mind 'caring moments' in your life when you felt cared for and looking for occasions to feel cared for and taking them in (Condon, 2022).

**Realising the impermanence of emotions.** As stated before, emotions are temporary, like passing clouds through our clear blue sky that is our mind.

**Sharing our emotions with people we trust.** This links with the section in this self-help book on connecting with others and its role in helping us with our climate emotions (see page 49).

## Exercise **Befriending your Emotions - A Deeper Practice**

**Time investment:** approximately 5- 15 minutes

**Materials needed:** a diary and pen, or digital document

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

If you would like to go deeper, you can investigate the emotion once we have labelled, felt, softened, soothed and allowed. You can ask yourself the following questions (adapted from Soulie, n.d.; The Gottman Institute, 2017):

### Prompt Questions

### Reflections

What triggered me?

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What is causing me to feel this way?

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What is the discomfort that I am experiencing, and where is it arising?

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What am I afraid might happen?

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What does it mean about me as a person to feel this way?

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What would happen if I let go of this?

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Why do I resist this feeling?

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What is the thing I judge myself for the most for feeling this way?

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What do I need from this situation?

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Is this a pattern?

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## Connect with Yourself

As we navigate through the complex emotions, it's essential to build a strong foundation of self-awareness and emotional resilience. Connecting with yourself is the first step in this journey. This chapter offers practical tools and exercises to help you cultivate mindfulness, and practice self-care. Audre Lorde said "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare".

Mindfulness is very useful in self-awareness since it helps us focus on the present moment, and also connects with ourselves and our immediate surroundings. It is the practice of being fully present in the moment without judgement. It can help us become more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations and how our emotions can also manifest in our bodies.

### Exercise **Breathing**

**Time investment:** this can last for as long as you want and need

**Materials needed:** a comfortable, quiet place

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Rest, Feel

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes and take deep, slow breaths. Focus on the sensation of the air entering and leaving your lungs. Imagine the rhythmic wind sweeping across the plains. Inhale slowly, counting to four, feeling the air fill your lungs. Hold for a moment, absorbing the energy, then exhale, releasing any tension. Repeat, syncing your breath with the natural cadence of the environment. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.

### Exercise **Body Scan - Muscle Relaxation**

**Time investment:** It depends on the length of the video/audio

**Materials needed:** a digital device to play the body scan and muscle relaxations videos or audios, a comfortable space

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Rest, Feel

There are plenty of videos and audio that you can stream online on Youtube, Spotify, or another service you use. You can experiment with the length, type and pace of voice, and background noise to see what works best for you at that particular moment.

Here are some suggestions for body scans and muscle relaxation videos, each lasting from 2 minutes to 15 minutes.



## Exercise **Earth Anchoring** (adapted from Harris, 2019)

**Time investment:** approximately 10-15 minutes

**Materials needed:** bare feet and ground

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest

This exercise helps to anchor awareness into the present moment. When experiencing difficult emotions or ruminating thoughts, we tend to get lost in our heads, so it is a good technique to fix your awareness into the farthest point possible from your head – your feet. This is a good alternative if breathing exercises are not for you. The best way to do this is while standing, but it can be adapted to a sitting position. Then, awareness should be focused on the points of your body that are touching the ground. This can be done with both eyes open or closed.

1. Stand with your feet firmly on the ground.
2. Feel the ground under your feet. Feel the gravity pulling you towards the earth.
3. Sense the tension in your feet and legs as you hold yourself upright.
4. Sense how your feet are holding the weight of your whole body. This feeling of heaviness flows from your head, through your spine into your legs and feet.
5. Now broaden your awareness. Take a note of what you hear and see. Where are you?
6. Now, slowly open your eyes and reorient yourself to your present surroundings, while appreciating your senses for helping you feel and experience this present reality in a fuller and more embodied way.

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*Sometimes, feeling anxious may prevent us from remembering these tools to connect with ourselves on the spot. An easy way to remember some of these tools is through the acronym TIPP.*

## Exercise **TIPP**

**Time investment:** approximately 30 seconds-10 minutes

**Materials needed:** cold water, ice cubes/pack, a digital device to play the body scan and muscle relaxations videos or audios, a comfortable space

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move

**TIPP** stands for:

- T** - Temperature
- I** - Intense Exercise
- P** - Paced Breathing
- P** - Progressive Muscle Relaxation

TIPP (Linehan, 2014) is especially useful when experiencing overwhelming emotions that may require regulation.

### **T - Temperature change**

- Splash cold water on your face, hold an ice pack to your neck, or submerge your hands in cold water.
- If possible, step outside in cooler air.
- This activates the **dive reflex**, slowing your heart rate and reducing emotional intensity.
- Please do NOT use the Temperature skill without talking to your doctor if you have heart problems, bulimia or anorexia nervosa.

## I - Intense Exercise

- Engage in brief but vigorous exercise (jumping jacks, running, push-ups, or dancing).
- Just 30 seconds to a few minutes of intense movement can reduce distress.
- This helps bring emotional levels back to baseline.

## P - Paced Breathing

- Breathe out slower and longer than when you breathe in. You can start with a 1-second difference and work your way up. For example; breathing in for 4 seconds and out for 5 seconds. Once you are comfortable with this you can increase the breath in for 5 seconds and out for 7 seconds.
- Focus on extending your exhale, as this signals safety to your nervous system.

## P - Paced Breathing

- Systematically tense and release different muscle groups, starting from your feet up to your head, or vice-versa.
- You can also pick body parts in which you notice present tension.
- As you are tensing the muscle, breathe in, then, as you breathe out, you can say the word 'relax' in your mind.
- Hold each tension for 5-10 seconds, then release.
- This reduces physical tension, which in turn calms emotional distress.
- You can refer to the video links given for the exercise 'Body Scan and Muscle Relaxation', or find your own! You can also perform progressive muscle relaxation without any video or audio.

## Exercise **Nurturing our Bodies and Mindful Cooking**

**Time investment:** approximately 5 minutes -1 hour

**Materials needed:** a garden or area containing edible plants that can be picked, cooking resources (according to the recipe)

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Eat, Move

We can also combine cooking and nurturing our bodies with connecting with nature (see from page 38). The Connect with Nature section of this book explores various exercises designed to foster this connection, including mindful gardening and foraging walks.

Engaging in mindful gardening allows us to cultivate a sense of patience, appreciation, and care for the food we grow. Similarly, a foraging walk encourages us to observe, identify, and gather edible plants from our natural surroundings, fostering a deeper understanding of local ecosystems and seasonal cycles.

The ingredients we grow or forage can then be incorporated into mindful cooking practices, where we focus on each step of preparation with awareness—from washing and chopping to smelling, tasting, and appreciating the meal. This approach not only nourishes our bodies but also enhances our relationship with food, reinforcing a sense of gratitude for the natural world that sustains us.

What you cook is up to you and your preferences. There are various recipes online and in cookbooks that you can use.



## Garlic Soup with Borage

### Ingredients

3 cloves garlic finely chopped  
 1 onion finely chopped  
 3 tbsp tomato paste  
 200g tomato passata  
 1.5 litres vegetable stock  
 500g borage leaves  
 200g cooked red kidney beans  
 150g long-grain brown rice  
 1 tbsp red wine  
 1 tsp sea salt  
 Lemon juice  
 Olive oil  
 Fresh mint, marjoram & parsley

Try out this recipe created by Daniel at Marrow Health.  
[www.marrowhealth.com](http://www.marrowhealth.com)

### Method

1. Prepare a pan with boiling, salted water and a bowl with cold iced water.
2. Boil the borage for 3 mins then transfer to the cold water. Drain and set aside.
3. In a pan sauté onion and garlic in oil on medium heat.
4. Add the tomato paste, herbs and salt. Stir continuously. Add water or stock if needed.
6. Add the red wine. Stir.
7. Add tomato passata. Stir.
8. Add stock and bring to boil.
9. Stir in the brown rice. Cook on medium heat for 30 mins or until the rice has fully cooked.
10. Stir in the red kidney beans and the borage and pinch of bicarbonate of soda.
11. Serve with a lemon wedge for squeezing onto the soup.



## Borage Fidloqqom

*Borago officinalis*



## Nettle Furrieq

*Urtica spp.*



## Nettle Cupcakes

### Ingredients

2 handfuls of fresh nettles  
 90g softened butter or vegetable-based substitute  
 110g sugar (choose fair-trade options)  
 2 large free-range eggs or a vegan alternative  
 ½ tsp vanilla extract (choose fair-trade options)  
 110g self-raising flour

### Method

1. Heat the oven to 180°C and fill a 12 cupcake tray with cupcake cases.
2. Beat the butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy then whisk in 2 large eggs, one at a time.
3. Take the leaves of the nettle and boil for 4 mins. Let them cool. Squeeze out the excess water and then blitz in a food processor until a smooth paste is made. Stir this into the wet ingredients.
4. Add the vanilla extract, self-raising flour and a pinch of salt. Mix until combined and spread between the cupcake cases.
5. Bake for 15 mins until golden brown and a skewer inserted into the middle of each cake comes out clean.

## Cultivating Gratitude

Gratitude is a very powerful feeling. It shifts our focus from the things that are lacking to what is currently at our fingertips, like blooming flowers, or what we have been given, including life itself, or the environmental values instilled within us by a particular person. In this way, it changes our perspective of the world, and makes us aware of the goodness of life. We also feel grateful to those around us or the forces that have given us what we are experiencing gratitude towards.

Gratitude is both an **emotional state** we feel in response to something, such as a gift or a lovely scenery encountered on a walk, and a **trait** that is more long-lasting and ingrained without our psyche (Jans-Beken et al., 2020). The latter involves intentional gratitude awareness and practice.

### Why be grateful?

Gratitude has tremendous positive impacts on our lives. It helps us become more resilient and hopeful in the face of crises, such as the climate crisis and environmental degradation, along with increased life satisfaction and general wellbeing ((Jans-Beken et al., 2020; Passmore & Oades, 2016). Gratitude also leads to a domino effect, as feeling grateful for what you have and what has been given to you motivates you to give to others something to be grateful for (Wood et al., 2010).

### What can we be grateful for?

The Iceberg of Gratitude is a visual tool that can help us to delve beyond the surface of ‘life circumstances, profound events and experiences’ that we feel grateful for, to tap into the ‘simple everyday pleasures that often go unnoticed’.



Picture source: PositivePsychology (2017)

**Exercise The Gratitude Grid** (taken from Taking the Escalator, 2021)

**Time investment:** approximately 20-30 minutes

**Materials needed:** the gratitude grid, a diary and pen, or a plain digital document

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

This gratitude grid is a perfect way of thinking about what you are grateful for in a visual manner. Below the grid are some prompt questions that will help you delve deeper into what makes you grateful, why these things make you feel gratitude, and the link between different things you feel gratitude towards.

The order in which you insert the things you feel gratitude towards is up to you; their positioning can be done at random.

You can use the following reflective questions to help you build your grid:

- What everyday activities or occurrences bring you pleasure?
- What are some recent experiences that left you in awe?
- Who do you appreciate?
- What do you appreciate in others?

|   | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |   |   |   |   |
| 2 |   |   |   |   |
| 3 |   |   |   |   |
| 4 |   |   |   |   |

1. What do you like best about what you wrote in box A1?
2. What would you think and feel if what you wrote in box B2 was lost?
3. If you had money to spend to help or improve what you wrote in box D4 what would that be like for you?
4. Look at what you wrote in box A2 – What is one of the first things that comes to mind?
5. Which would be harder to live without, what you wrote in box A3 or B3
6. If what you wrote in box A4 became the primary focus of your life for the next month, what would your life be like?
7. How would you protect what is in box B1 if there was danger or risk involved?
8. What do you see in the future for what you wrote in box B4?
9. Is there any relationship between what you wrote in box C1 and box C2? If so, what?
10. How would you describe box C4 to someone who you never met?
11. Look at box D1, D2 and D3 – Which one of those means the most to you of the three and why?
12. If you got to choose to improve or enhance or help what is on any box, which would you pick and what would that improvement be?
13. What is one thing in your grid that you need to give more attention to in your life?
14. Are there one or two things in your grid that stand out as the most important of all?
15. What is one thing in your grid that you need more of in your life?
16. What is something from your grid that you could show even more appreciation for?

## Self-Care Rituals

(taken from NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark's Compass for Climate Chaos, 2024)

A self care ritual can look very different from person to person. For some it might be cooking one's favourite meal or walking barefoot in the grass. For others it might be a full night of raving, of moving one's body expressively and intuitively - or curling up in a ball, becoming a stone and allowing oneself not to move at all. Here is an example of a self-care ritual which you can try.

### Exercise Example Self-Care Ritual - Foot Massage

A foot massage is almost always a good idea for self care. The feet are usually an easy place to pay attention to yourself. They are often forgotten as they spend most of their time shoved away in footwear, but they do important work. Take your time to look at and recognise them.

If you can reach your feet, give them a gentle rub. Pull each toe, spread them out and gently massage each spot in between them. Draw firm circles on the soles of your feet with your thumb. Stretch the top foot by pulling the foot downwards in an arch. Rotate your ankles.

### Exercise What are my self-care rituals?

What are self-care rituals you can do whenever you feel like you need moments to show yourself some compassion and gratitude?

Here are some prompt questions you can use to guide you to finding your self-care rituals. The prompt questions may also help you identify when these self-care rituals can be practiced.



Based on the reflections to these prompt questions, list down some self-care rituals that come to mind:

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## Self-Compassion

### Let it RAIN (Brach, 2019)

The acronym RAIN is an easy-to-remember tool of mindfulness and compassion, developed by Tara Brach. It stands for:

- R** – Recognise what is going on.
- A** – Allow the experience to be there, just as it is, without trying to fix or avoid it
- I** – Investigate with interest and care
- N** – Nurture with self-compassion

This acronym can be used as a stand-alone meditation or as a step-by-step guide when challenging emotions, limiting beliefs or conflicts arise. Following the RAIN steps allows us to take a ‘U-turn’ and give power to self-compassion that prevents us from giving in to our limiting beliefs, and letting challenging emotions and conflicts take control.

**R** - Recognising what is going on: This can be in the form of a mental whisper, or intentionally drawing your attention and focus on what is going on.

**A** - Allowing the experience to be there, just as it is: This involves giving yourself the freedom to be with the situation without trying to fix or avoid it. It is important to remember that allowing the experience to be there as it is does not mean that you agree with what is going on, the emotions we are feeling, the behaviours we are seeing in ourselves or others, and the thoughts we are thinking. It simply involves becoming aware and staying with the current situation, and telling yourself ‘Yes, this is currently happening’, or ‘It’s OK’.

**I** - Investigate with interest and care: We can then deepen our attention and call on our curiosity by asking: What most wants attention? How am I experiencing this in my body? What am I believing? What does this vulnerable place want from me? What does it most need? Such questions are to be answered in a non-judgemental manner to provide a sense of safety that allows us to honestly connect with our challenging emotions.

**N** - Nurture with self-compassion: Self-compassion will naturally arise when we recognise what is going on, allow the experience to be there as it is and investigate with interest and care through a non-judgemental, matter-of-fact approach. To know what you can do to nurture yourself at that moment, take active steps that you feel your inner wounded self needs. This can be a mantra to yourself, like ‘I love you and I’m listening’. It can be reimagining and embodying love that you received from family, friends, animals...

At the heart of RAIN is the practice of self-compassion, a crucial element in how we relate to ourselves in moments of struggle. Sometimes, we can be our own harshest critics. We may extend

understanding and kindness to others when they make mistakes, yet when we find ourselves in the same situation, we respond with harsh self-judgement.

Practicing self-compassion allows us to break this cycle by treating ourselves with the same warmth and care that we would offer a close friend. Rather than berating ourselves for our imperfections, we can learn to embrace them with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity.

One effective way to cultivate self-compassion is through an exercise called “*How Would You Treat a Friend?*” This practice invites us to step outside of our self-critical mindset and consider how we would respond to a loved one facing the same struggles. By shifting our perspective, we can develop a more balanced and compassionate relationship with ourselves.

## Exercise **How would you treat a friend?**

**Time investment:** 5 – 10 minutes

**Materials needed:** a diary and pen

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Rest, Feel

1. Before delving into how you would treat a friend, think about how you would like to be treated by a friend when you are feeling bad or when you are struggling:
  - a. What kind of support do you hope for from a friend?
  - b. What words or gestures make you feel valued and understood?
  - c. How do you feel about receiving advice versus simply being listened to when you share your struggles? Which feels more helpful?
  - d. Do you prefer a friend to check in on you often, or do you need space to process your feelings? Why?
  - e. What kinds of actions (e.g., sending a text, showing up in person, or planning something fun) make you feel cared for?
  - f. Are there things friends have done for you in the past when you were struggling that made a big difference? What were they?
  - g. How important is it for a friend to validate your feelings, even if they don't fully understand them? Why?
  - h. Are there things you prefer friends not say or do when you're feeling low? What are they, and why?
2. Now, think about times when a close friend feels really bad about him or herself or is really struggling in some way.
  - a. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)?
  - b. What would you do, what would you say, and how would your tone be?
3. Think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling.
  - a. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations?
  - b. What do you typically do and say, and how would your tone be?
4. Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why.
  - a. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
  - b. Write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering.

Why not try treating yourself like a good friend and see what happens?

## Connect with Nature

Throughout human's history, we have turned to nature for inspiration, peace, and renewal. This evolutionary drive and preference for beautiful natural settings may stem from the fact that these environments historically offered essential resources like food, shelter, and comfort.

Indeed, spending time in natural surroundings has been found to offer significant psychological, emotional, and physical benefits. Numerous studies have highlighted how being in nature can boost mental health, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being. As people connect with the natural environment, many find comfort, strength, and a renewed sense of purpose, especially in the face of increasing anxiety about climate change (Westoby et al., 2022).

This still holds true when challenges, including climate change-induced or exacerbated natural disasters, economic disadvantage, trauma and racism, negatively impact individuals - actually, especially so, with studies finding that nature's benefits are relatively greater for individuals facing such challenges (Alderton, 2019).

One of the most effective ways to manage environmental anxiety is by spending time outdoors. Whether in forests, parks, or along the coastline, being in nature helps individuals detach from overwhelming news cycles and reconnect with a larger, more stable force. Activities in nature help us feel anchored in the present and remind us of Earth's beauty and resilience. Even as little as 10-20 minutes in nature daily may prevent stress and mental health strain in young people (Meredith et al., 2020).

Another pathway through which nature connectedness eases eco-anxiety is hands-on engagement with nature. Gardening, for example, provides a meaningful way to interact with the environment. Watching seeds grow into thriving plants fosters a sense of purpose and optimism. Gardening also offers opportunities to learn about ecosystems and sustainable practices, reinforcing the interconnectedness of life. By participating in the cycle of growth, we may feel empowered, knowing they're contributing to something positive.

Learning about and understanding nature serves as another approach to managing eco-anxiety. Gaining insight into how ecosystems function, the consequences of human activity, and the efforts underway to address environmental issues can inspire us to take action. Staying informed and educated fosters a sense of hope, especially as global efforts towards sustainability and environmental protection continue to gain momentum.

However, it is important to note that studies have also found climate anxiety and nature connectedness to be associated, which presents a paradox. This, however, can be said to stem from high risk perception - being the perception of climate change as being a threat, and thoughts about actual or anticipated nature loss when being in nature (Curll et al., 2022). This calls for a shift in the narrative to focusing on the beauty and resilience of nature, which the following exercises aim to create and strengthen.

These exercises can be done just about anywhere, even the gardening meditation exercise. Whether it is in a 10 acre crop field, or a small pot on your windowsill, your connection with nature is ever-so-present and ever-so-enriching.

Before delving into ways to connect with nature, here is a list of online websites and applications that you may compliment your developing connection with nature:

1. earth.fm - This non-profit, free resource provides immersive soundscapes from around the world, available as an app and a website. Based on studies that show the positive effects of mindful natural soundscapes on wellbeing, this resource aims to provide global natural sound experiences through our devices, while encouraging people to go out in nature to experience the soundscapes in their area first hand.
2. Inaturalist - Consider this the social media of nature-lovers and researchers. This website and app transforms nature enthusiasts to citizen scientists by recording observations and sharing these observations with interested scientists, starting or contributing to discussions. It also serves as an online storage space for yourself to record your encounters with nature.
3. ecochallenge.org - This website encourages small, meaningful environmental actions that are supported by communal action.
4. Merlin Bird ID - This app helps in identifying bird species encountered based on their physical characteristics and sound.
5. PlantNet or LeafSnap - Merlin Bird ID but for plants.
6. Nature Dose - Just like medicine is given in doses, nature is beneficial irrespective of the time spent within and the quality of nature be prescribed

## Earth Consciousness: We are the Earth and the Earth is Us

We are part of the Earth. We interact with our environment in various ways. And the Earth is part of us through the water we drink, the food we eat and all the elements that are part of our body. With every breath, we are breathing in the various gases found in the Earth's atmosphere.

Adopting an Earth Consciousness mindset helps us feel a sense of belonging to and with the Earth.



## Exercise **Gardening Meditation**

**Time investment:** approximately 5 – 10 minutes

**Materials needed:** a comfortable space in nature

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest

This exercise can be done in a natural space, urban garden, park, field, or simply in your backyard or balcony. You can start this exercise by setting an intention, such as the intention of nourishing your Earth Consciousness.

1. Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down.
2. Take a few deep breaths, filling your belly with air to help you relax and become aware of the present moment.
3. Close your eyes and focus on what you feel with them closed.
4. Notice the sensations in your body, as well as the activity in your mind and emotions.
5. Simply observe whatever is happening without resisting or trying to change anything. Stay with this for about a minute.
6. Shift your awareness to your surroundings. You can open your eyes to take in the visual stimuli, or keep them closed to focus more on the other senses. Feel the temperature of the air on your skin, the sensation of the breeze, and the warmth of the sun. Listen to the sounds around you — birds, bees, crickets, or flowing water. Let yourself hear nature's symphony. Throughout the meditation, continue to tune into these sensations and sounds. If your mind wanders, gently guide it back to your experience of nature.
7. During the meditation, notice where your attention naturally goes or intentionally explore different sensations. You can also focus on one particular experience and observe it more closely. If it's a bird's song, pay attention to the quality of the sound as if you're going deeper into it. (You might even sense a shape or texture to the sound.) Avoid analysing or labelling it; just notice its essence.
8. If you realise your mind has drifted into thoughts, gently bring it back to the sounds and sensations of nature. Sometimes both your awareness of nature and your thoughts will be present at the same time, and that's okay. Simply continue to give more attention to your experience of nature.

## Exercise **Meditation in Nature**

**Time investment:** approximately 5 – 10 minutes

**Materials needed:** a garden, gardening tools, water for the plants

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

Meditative gardening is a great way to tune into the present moment, connect with nature using all your senses and foster Earth Consciousness. Just like the plants need you to provide an adequate environment for them to grow, we also need plants to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen and provide us delicious fruits and vegetables, or simply flowers and leaves of different colours and shapes.

To fully tune into the gardening process, it is best to eliminate distractions. Silence your phone and other electronics to be able to tap into the natural sounds around you.

1. **Start with a clear intention.** Focus on simple goals, like getting absorbed in the flow, noticing every sensation, listening to nature’s sounds, feeling the sun’s warmth, and enjoying the fresh air with each deep breath.
2. **Recognize your plants as living beings.** Plants communicate in various ways, so pay close attention. Are they standing tall or drooping? Have they changed since your last check? What can you do to improve their condition? Touch the soil — does it need water, or is it just right? Consider the light they receive. If it’s time to plant, fertilise, or prune, view it as a vital step in their growth and transformation.
3. **Savour the sensory experience of gardening.** As you care for your garden or plants, focus on the physical sensations, smells, and sounds. Feel the soil in your hands, the firmness of the watering can, and the sound of water flowing. Listen to the mist or spray. Take in the scent of the earth and flowers. Feel the weight of your tools. After tending to each plant, wish it well: “May you grow strong and healthy”.
4. **Embrace being present in nature.** Notice how your body feels — are there any sore spots, or do you feel energised? Observe the sensations in your body without judgement.

#### **Variation: Gardening with Others**

By gardening with others, not only are we coming into contact with nature, but we are also fostering contact with other individuals through a collective activity. This can help us foster interpersonal connection and provides a lived example of the interconnectivity of interpersonal action, while cultivating a sense of belonging to others, our community and the earth through Earth Consciousness.

#### **Variation: Finding a Community Garden**

Community gardens are where people of a community are empowered to design, build, and maintain spaces in their community. They usually involve shared leadership and transparent decision-making processes hosted on spaces within the community aiming to build social connections and more resilient communities.

Community Gardens are great spots to practise mindful gardening and gardening with others.



## Exercise **Sit-spot** (taken from NOAH, 2024)

**Time investment:** approximately 5 – 30 minutes

**Materials needed:** your sit-spot

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move

A sit-spot is a place you go regularly, to connect inwardly, to yourself, and outwardly, to nature. Time spent in your sit-spot is a form of active meditation. It is a mindfulness practice that will help you be calm, happy and healthy in mind and body, while fostering your Earth Consciousness. Let the practice become part of your daily routine of self-care; a way to slow down, connect deeply with nature and with yourself.

- 1. Where to find your sit-spot** Ideally your sit-spot will be close to home, in your backyard, if you have one, or in a nearby park or green space. It needs to be a place that is easily accessible, somewhere you can go regularly. To find a sit-spot, take a short walk around your yard or neighbourhood. While you're walking, look for a place that speaks to you. Keep your mind and your senses open. If sitting on the ground is difficult for you, look for a park bench, or a fallen log or large rock that could support you. Once you have found your sit-spot, go there as often as you can to reap the many benefits of this beautiful practice.
- 2. How to use your sit-spot** Your aim is to tune in as much as you can. Your time here should be distraction free. Turn your phone on silent and put it in your bag or away from view.
  - a. Begin by noticing your body and your breathing. How does the air feel as it enters and leaves your nostrils? Is it warm or cool? How does your body feel in the place where your legs rest against the earth?
  - b. When thoughts come into your mind, don't push them away but also don't follow them. Let them drift past you like clouds in the sky and gently bring your mind back to your senses and the things you can see, hear and feel around you.

Sit quietly in your sit-spot as often as you can. Daily is best. Try for 10 minutes at first and work towards 20-30 minutes, if you can. This gives nature time to accept your presence. You will notice that after you have been sitting quietly in your sit-spot for a while, the animals begin to behave in their natural way. You will begin to feel yourself to be part of nature, not separate, like we can so often feel.



## Exercise **Five Senses Exploration**

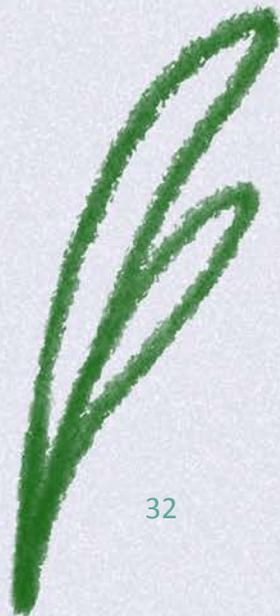
**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 20 minutes

**Materials needed:** a comfortable place in nature, a journal or piece of paper if you wish to take note of your observations

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move

Our five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) work together with the brain and nervous system to gather information about the world around us. These senses allow us to interact with our environment.

1. **Choose a Spot in Nature.** Find a place in nature that captures your interest. It could be a park, a garden, a beach, or even your backyard. Get comfortable in this spot and take a moment to channel your senses.
2. **Engage Your Senses.** Settle into a comfortable position and spend 15-20 minutes observing your surroundings. Use the guidelines below to explore each of your senses.
  - a. **Sight:** Notice five things you can see. Look around you and observe the colours, shapes, and movements in your environment. What stands out to you visually?
  - b. **Touch:** Notice four things you can physically feel. Tune into your sense of touch. What textures are present? How does the ground feel beneath you? What is the sensation of the breeze on your skin?
  - c. **Hearing:** Notice three things you can hear. Listen carefully to the sounds near and far. Can you hear birds chirping, leaves rustling, or distant traffic? Try to diagram the sounds around you, noting their direction and distance.
  - d. **Smell:** Notice two things you can smell. Take a deep breath and identify the scents in the air. Are there flowers nearby? Do you smell the earth, the trees, or the sea?
  - e. **Taste:** Notice one thing you can taste. You might take a sip or bite of something, or simply observe the taste in your mouth. What flavours are present?
3. **Take notes or make sketches of your observations.** Describe what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. How do these senses interact to create your overall experience of this environment?
4. **Reflections.** Take a moment to reflect on how you feel after this exercise. Did you notice anything you hadn't before? How did engaging all your senses change your perception of the environment? Journal your thoughts and feelings about this sensory exploration.



## **Exercise** **Slow Mindful Walk** (adapted from Willard, 2023)

**Time investment:** approximately 5 – 20 minutes

**Materials needed:** a place to walk

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move

Mindful walking provides space for us to pause our daily activities and engage in a practice that incorporates mental exercise with physical movement. It is a great practice to do if you prefer movement-based mindfulness exercises over those that are solitary and involve sitting still.

This practice brings our attention to our interaction with the environment around us, fostering Earth Consciousness.

There are variations to how you can adopt this practice, but the main commonality is the focus on the senses.

### **Variation 1: Focusing on the Walk**

1. Notice yourself walking as you walk, and ask yourself “How do I know I am walking?” while checking in with your senses.
2. You may bring your awareness to certain aspects of your walking, such as the sensation of your feet as they hit the ground, the movement of your muscles, your breathing, changes in body temperature, your weight shifting from one leg to the other.

### **Variation 2: Adding Words/Phrases to the Walk**

1. With each step, you can count in rhythm with your steps. If your mind wanders off and you lose count, you can return to the count of one again, without judgement.

### **Variation 3: Sensory Walking**

1. Start by walking and keeping your eyes still focused forward, and notice the view change as the shapes and objects in front of you shift within your line of vision.
2. Then, focus on the soles of your feet, noting the different sensations felt as the surface changes with every step.
3. Focus on the sounds: of your own footsteps against the ground and of your surroundings.
4. Focus on the smells and tastes in the air, and how they change as you walk.

### **Variation 4: Body Awareness Walking**

1. Start with focusing your attention on the soles of your feet. After a number of steps, walking a block or after an amount of time passes, shift your awareness to your ankles and calves, such as the muscle and joint movements.
2. Then, rest your attention on the bending of your knees with every step.
3. Do this followed by a shift in your awareness to the sensations and movements of your hips, followed by the natural swinging of your hands and arms.
4. Shift your attention to your torso, including your breath going in and out of your lungs and your heart rate.
5. Then, turn your attention to the neck and shoulders, followed by your head.
6. Notice how the sensations change over the course of your walk.

### Variation 5: Observational Walking

1. This variation of mindful walking involves tapping into our emotional reactions as we are walking, alongside how they change as the walk progresses and our surroundings change.
2. You can focus your attention on the emotions that come up when faced with different stimuli, such as people or things getting closer to you, the sun coming out from behind the clouds or rain falling on your skin and clothes.
3. You can also explore how the emotions you are feeling affect your walking. How do the different emotions that come up change the speed and rhythm of your walking?
4. You can also experiment with walking as though you are experiencing certain emotions, such as walking like you are anxious, ashamed, disappointed... followed by walking confidently and shifting back to your own rhythm. Reflect on how the emotion you emulated through your walking affected how you walked and perceived the environment around you. Maybe walking while emulating shame involved your eye gaze being directed to your feet, and walking confidently opened your shoulders and chest, and made breathing easier.

### Variation 6: Appreciative Walking

This variation incorporates thinking and feeling gratitude with movement, intention, observation and our senses.

Appreciative walking can be incorporated with other variations, such as variations 1, 2 and

3. While performing other mindful walk variations, you may **set the intention** to identify one thing that caught your eye and wish to **show appreciation** towards.

This exercise can also be done on its own by noticing the different elements of your surroundings, such as trees, flowers, roots, the sun, a nicely-painted house or a rock, and showing gratitude towards them. You can also reflect on the importance of the elements' existence, or appreciate where they came from.



# The Gift of Strawberries

*Summary of Chapter 3 from 'Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants' by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2015).*

If the best way of interacting with the natural world is through a lens of reciprocity, as the author of Braiding Sweetgrass asserts, then this is best exhibited through the way that Kimmerer thinks about gifts, gratitude for those gifts, and the responsibilities and relationships that accompany the giving and receiving of gifts.

Kimmerer explains how the earth gifts people with food, shelter, and beauty, and each individual being offers its own gifts as part of this. Our gifts to give as human beings, Kimmerer suggests, include offering gratitude and the ability to take responsibility for the care of all the other beings who are so generous to us. This makes the web of reciprocity not just about an equal exchange of commodities, but about a relationship of generosity and gratitude.

In “The Gift of Strawberries,” Kimmerer describes how picking wild strawberries in her childhood instilled her with the idea of the world as a generous place—she thinks of the strawberries as being like personal gifts given to people from the land itself. She then compares this gift economy to the market economy of capitalism, which requires the idea of constant scarcity and attempts to make everything into a saleable commodity. Seeing something as a gift rather than a commodity changes one’s worldview, Kimmerer claims, as gifts create a relationship between the giver and receiver—the kind of relationship that she believes people should have with the land.

To carry a gift is to carry a responsibility to give back and to pass on one’s own gifts, which itself creates the web of reciprocity that is essential to a healthy community. These ideas are also distilled in the traditional Haudenosaunee “Thanksgiving Address,” \* which lists all the beings and gifts of the world and gives thanks for them. The Address thus not only presents the world as a place of plenty, but also makes us take stock of all these gifts and consider our responsibilities to them.

\*The Thanksgiving Address is a traditional prayer of gratitude of the Haudenosaunee, which is an alliance of Indigenous nations in North America. The Thanksgiving Address is a way of expressing respect, gratitude, and interconnectedness with the natural world. It recognises that humans are part of a larger system and honors the contributions of all living beings and natural forces that sustain life.

## Exercise **The Gifts of Nature**

**Time investment:** approximately 5 – 10 minutes

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

What gifts does nature give you that you are grateful for?

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## Exercise Foraging Walk and Gratitude towards Nature

**Time investment:** approximately 50 – 60 minutes

**Materials needed:** a bag or container for collecting items, optional: a plant identification book or app, journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move, Eat

Nature offers us so much—from the air we breathe to the food we eat, and even small gifts like herbs, flowers, twigs and animals that can inspire creativity. This exercise invites you to take a mindful walk in nature, connecting with the seasons and practicing gratitude for the abundance around you.

- 1. Choose a Safe Foraging Spot.** Find a place where foraging is allowed, such as a park, trail, or even your backyard. Make sure to avoid private property or areas where plants might be treated with chemicals.
- 2. Walk Slowly and Engage Your Senses.** Take slow, deliberate steps, letting yourself notice the world around you. Use your senses to observe:
  - a. Sight:** What colors, shapes, and textures do you see?
  - b. Sound:** Can you hear the rustling of leaves, birdsong, or wind?
  - c. Touch:** Run your fingers gently over leaves or bark. What do they feel like?
  - d. Smell:** Are there any scents in the air—flowers, earth, or herbs?
- 3. Gather Mindfully.** Look for edible plants (if you know they're safe), flowers or twigs. If you're picking something, take only what you need, and always leave enough for wildlife and the plant to thrive. Each time you gather an item, pause to thank the plant or tree. Whisper or think, "Thank you for this gift."
- 4. Reflect on the Seasons.** As you walk, notice how the season influences the landscape. Are there budding plants in spring, vibrant flowers in summer, colourful leaves in autumn, or bare branches in winter? Reflect on how nature's cycles mirror your own life's changes and growth.
- 5. Gratitude Pause.** Find a quiet spot to sit with your gathered items. Hold one in your hand and reflect on what it offers—perhaps a soothing scent, nourishment, or the potential to become part of a craft project. Express gratitude for the interconnectedness between you and the natural world.
- 6. Create or Display Your Finds.** Twigs or other items can be used for a craft project, like a small wreath. They can also be arranged in a small display at home as a reminder of your connection to nature. If you collected edible plants and herbs, consider using them to make a simple recipe. Here are some examples from Friends of the Earth Malta's Foraging Guide, which you can access through this QR code:



# Connect with People

Just as trees in a forest support each other through interconnected root systems, we too can find strength and resilience through our connections with others. This chapter explores exercises to do with others and to foster collective resilience as we navigate through the range of emotions we experience in our lives.

Humans are social creatures. After physiological satiation and safety, social connection is next in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which maps the needs we need to have met (pun intended) before being able to fully satisfy our need for esteem, including strength and confidence, and our need for self-growth, or what Maslow called 'self-actualisation'.

## Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Social connection builds personal and collective resilience. Various research points towards the universal benefits of social connection, including that of buffering against anxiety (Wang et al., 2018; Tunçgenç et al., 2023), and increasing life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011), long-term happiness and health (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023). Social connection has also been found to increase our life expectancy (Liu et al., 2017)!

Conversely, social isolation and loneliness have been found to be linked to increased mortality rates, particularly in older adults (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Anxiety may lead to social withdrawal and isolation from social situations, while loneliness can enhance feelings of anxiety (Park et al., 2020; Mann et al., 2022).

On this note, the climate crisis is unfolding alongside and is intertwined with social isolation. Clayton Aldern, a neuroscientist and author of the book "The Weight of Nature: How a Changing Climate Changes Our Brains" (2024), stated the following:

“...climate change is profoundly good at spurring disconnect. It ruptures place bonds; it corrupts language; through secondary vectors, it prompts sociopolitical division. These are all manners in which a changing environment can separate people from one another.”

Collective action is one way in which we can connect with people, more specifically like-minded people, through the sense of community and purposes created. Also, feeling more connected with others may motivate us to act both individually and collectively, with studies finding a positive link between social connection and pro-environmental behaviours.

Tying in with climate anxiety, which may entail feelings of inefficacy and powerlessness, and fear of an unknown and uncontrollable future, connecting with like-minded people may help us feel more empowered to act, and may lessen the fear that climate anxiety rests upon.

Connecting with others provides us with the opportunity to verbalise our feelings regarding the climate crisis. Speaking about our climate anxiety helps us through emotional awareness, clarity, processing, reframing and regulation, while also reducing emotional intensity and enhancing our emotional intelligence. We may just find out that we are not the only ones pondering over the climate crisis and feeling emotions towards it, which in itself offers further social connection.

**Warning:** It is possible that other people may not fully understand the depth of your concerns. Acknowledging their viewpoint while sharing your personal reasons for your anxiety can open up dialogue without escalating the situation. However, it is also important to set boundaries for our emotional wellbeing, especially when the experience of climate anxiety continues to be dismissed.

## Collective Emotions and Emotions affected by the Collective

The climate crisis is a global and social phenomenon, characterised by shared events and impacts, including emotional experiences. Social movements are oftentimes driven by such collective emotions, with the environmental movement not being any exception. Emotions are also contagious, even unconsciously through other people’s non-verbal behaviours, meaning that collective events and emotions have an impact on our own personal emotions.

Having this awareness helps us to feel less alone as we feel overwhelmed, worried and anxious. It also positions climate anxiety as a reasonable response to the global challenges our planet is facing. Realising that climate anxiety is shared encourages empathy toward others experiencing the same feelings. This shared emotion can help foster a sense of solidarity and community, motivating people to come together to discuss concerns, provide mutual support, and work collectively toward solutions. The collective nature of this anxiety can be a catalyst for collective action, where shared emotions inspire communities to engage in activism, environmental advocacy, or sustainable practices.

Being aware of the collective nature of climate anxiety can help us manage emotional overload. Since collective emotions can sometimes be overwhelming, acknowledging their influence allows us to find balance by not only connecting with those who share our concerns, but by also seeking out communities or information that offer hope and solutions. Through such social connection, we become more resilient when adapting to the challenges posed by the climate crisis.

Social contagion of emotions also explains why our climate anxiety may get intensified by constant exposure to collective worry via social networks and the media. Being aware of this effect provides us with foresight on when we need management of our emotional environment, such as by limiting exposure to distressing media or surrounding ourselves with more balanced discussions. In fact, emotional contagion also works the other way: collective hope and empowerment are also contagious.

## Climate Citizenship

Kate Knuth's chapter in the book *'All We Can Save: Truth, Courage and Solutions for the Climate Crisis'* (2020) highlights the concept of Climate Citizenship. She states that "citizenship, at its core, is a sacred trust between the individual and collective". She continues by adding that:

"Only through the collective can an individual enjoy goods such as a healthy environment and certain kinds of support and security. At the same time, as a citizen, the individual has both the right and the responsibility to hold the collective accountable and to participate in it.

In other words, citizenship is a dynamic process of consent and dissent of individuals as part of a larger whole. It's how an individual can most fully satisfy fundamental human desires to be part of a community and to have agency in determining a shared future."

It is important to note that the term 'citizenship' is "fraught in today's political climate", in Knuth's words. "Some factions use the legal status of citizenship—and, in particular, the lack of it—in horrifying ways that sow fear, mistrust, and civil and human rights abuses." But viewing climate citizenship as a "sacred trust between the individual and collective" fosters a sense of belonging with the collective, brings forth the interdependence of individuals within the collective, and emphasises the strength that an individual can have amongst the collective.

This dynamic connection between the individual and the "larger whole" can be linked to the dynamic process between the individual and the earth that forms the basis of Earth Consciousness.



## How can we connect with people?

This self-help book has mentioned the words 'connect' or 'connection' very often. So, let us unpack what connection is when speaking about it in relation to other people:

Connection can entail:

- Identification with social groups
- Empathy and emotional bonding
- Proximity
- Common goals and motives
- Provision of resources and support
- Collective identity and shared narratives
- Vulnerability and trust
- Attachment

Below are some simple ways in which we can connect further with people we are already connected to. Feel free to choose one or a few that resonate with you and give them a try.

- Make a list of friends and family members that you are close to and make an effort to connect with them regularly.
- Aim for one emotional connection (e.g. call, text, email) a day but be gentle with yourself if you don't do that.
- Remember to keep in touch with friends when things are going well and not only when you are struggling.
- Look for opportunities to practice listening to, supporting, and encouraging your friends.
- Make a list of potential friends including people you know peripherally or just met and invite them to do an activity.

If you feel the need to build further connections, you can choose one or a few that resonate with you:

- Look for opportunities to meet friends of current friends.
- Brainstorm activities and hobbies you enjoy and look for opportunities to do them in your community (e.g. sports teams, coaching, outdoor activities, cooking). You can easily find such opportunities on social media.
- Find something you are passionate about and volunteer for that cause. The Climate Action Venn Diagram can help you to derive what you are passionate about, what you enjoy, what you feel you are good at and what you feel needs to be addressed, with your Climate Action Plan possibly leading you towards causes that would bring you satisfaction, joy, self-esteem and empowerment. You can find the Climate Action Venn Diagram and an exercise about it on page 72.
- Join a gym or take exercise classes. There are various types of exercise you can opt for, from CrossFit to yoga. Usually, booking a class can be done online and only takes a few clicks.
- Take courses at continuing education programs, including courses on essential skills, language learning, improving education and career prospects, healthy living and creative expression
- Volunteer at an animal sanctuary, or adopt an animal if possible in your household, and connect with fellow animal lovers. Animals are also beneficial for your health!
- Go to social places, such as coffee shops, parks, etc. where you have a higher probability of meeting people.

## Exercise **Web of Interdependence** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 30 minutes

**Materials needed:** a sheet of paper/journal and a pen/pencil, or an online Mind Map tool

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Socialise

This exercise will help you recognise and become aware of our interdependence with others by visualising how your life is connected to people, places, and things around you.

- 1. Create Your Circle:** In the centre of your paper, draw a circle and write your name inside it. This represents you.
- 2. Draw Connections:** Around your circle, draw other smaller circles representing the people, places, and things that are part of your life. Include family members, friends, teachers, your school, your community, nature (like trees, water, and animals), and even the things that help you in everyday life, such as food, water, and technology.
- 3. Label Each Circle:** Write down how each circle is connected to you. For example, a circle for a friend might be labelled “emotional support,” while one for trees might be labelled “clean air and shade.” Think about how these connections affect you and how you, in turn, affect them.
- 4. Connect the Web:** Draw lines connecting your circle to all the other circles. Then, think deeper and start connecting those circles to each other. For instance:
  - a. How is your friend connected to nature?
  - b. How is your school connected to the local community?
  - c. How is your family connected to the food you eat?
- 5. Reflect on Your Web:** Once you’ve completed your web, take a few moments to look at it. Notice how interconnected everything is. Think about how your actions impact those around you and how others’ actions impact you. Reflect on the idea that we all rely on each other and the world around us.
- 6. Journal Your Thoughts:** Write a few sentences about what you discovered from creating your web.
  - a. How does recognizing this interdependence make you feel?
  - b. How might you act differently now that you’re aware of these connections?

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In the book *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*, Favianna Rodriguez (2020) in her chapter ‘Harnessing Cultural Power’, emphasises the power of culture and the importance of human stories, stating that “human stories are more powerful for inciting action than counting carbon or detailing melting glaciers.”

## Exercise **My Cultural Story** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 20 – 30 minutes

**Materials needed:** a pen and paper, or your journal to note your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Socialise

This exercise helps you connect with the power of your own cultural story, exploring how your background, traditions, and experiences shape who you are and connect you to the larger human story.

- 1. Settle into Reflection:** Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. Take a few deep breaths to centre yourself and focus on the present moment.
- 2. Explore Your Cultural Story:** Begin by reflecting on your own cultural background. Think about the traditions, values, and stories that have been passed down to you through your family, community, or culture. Ask yourself:
  - What are some important traditions or rituals in my family or culture?
  - Are there any stories or teachings that have shaped who I am?
  - What values or beliefs have been emphasised in my upbringing?
- 3. Write Your Story:** Spend some time writing about your cultural story. It could be a specific memory, a tradition that holds meaning for you, or a lesson you've learned from your background. Write freely, letting your thoughts flow without worrying about structure or perfection.
- 4. Reflect on Your Connection to Others:** After writing, take a moment to reflect on how your cultural story connects you to others. Consider:
  - How does your story relate to the experiences of others in your community or family?
  - How might your story resonate with people from different backgrounds or cultures?
  - What does this story teach you about the human experience and our shared connections?
- 5. Identify Shared Themes:** Look for themes in your story that might be common across cultures, such as resilience, love for nature, community, or overcoming challenges. Recognising these shared themes can help you see the universal threads that connect us all.
- 6. Journal Your Insights:** You may also note down any insights or feelings that came up during the exercise. Consider how recognising the power of your own cultural story helps you feel more connected to others and the world around you.

Every person carries a cultural story that is rich with meaning and connections to others. By exploring your own story, you can gain a deeper understanding of your roots and how they link you to the broader human experience. This reflection helps you appreciate the diversity of stories in the world and strengthens your sense of connection with others.

## Exercise **Our Cultural Story - Group Edition** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 45 – 60 minutes

**Materials needed:** a group of people you trust

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Socialise

The Cultural Story exercise can also be done with others. You will not only be sharing your story, but also listening to the stories of others.

- 1. Gather in a Circle:** Arrange a group of people in a circle (either physically or virtually) and create a comfortable, open atmosphere where everyone feels safe to share and listen.
- 2. Pick a Theme:** Choose a theme that resonates with the group, such as “Connection with Nature,” “Resilience in Hard Times,” or “Cultural Traditions.” This will guide the stories that people share.
- 3. Share Your Story:** Take turns sharing a personal or cultural story related to the chosen theme. This could be a story passed down in your family, a personal experience, or a story from your community. If you feel comfortable, share what makes this story meaningful to you and how it connects to the world around you.
- 4. Practise Deep Listening:** As each person shares, everyone else in the circle practises deep listening. This means being fully present, without interrupting or thinking about how to respond. Just listen to the story and let it impact you. Pay attention to the emotions, values, and lessons within the story.
- 5. Reflect and Discuss:** After everyone has shared their stories, take time to reflect as a group. Discuss questions like:
  - How did these stories make you feel?
  - What did you learn about each other’s cultures, values, or experiences?
  - How can these stories help us understand and connect more deeply with each other and the world around us?
- 6. Journal Your Thoughts:** After the circle, you may take a moment to write down any reflections or feelings that surfaced during the exercise. Consider how these stories have influenced your perspective on your own life, culture, and connection to others.

## Exercise Open Sentences - Personal and Group Exercise

**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 20 minutes

**Materials needed:** a pen and paper, or your journal to note your thoughts; a group of people you trust if being done in a group

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Socialise

(adapted from *The Work that Reconnects*, Macy & Brown, 2014)

You can do this exercise alone, with a friend or in small groups of 3-4 people. Take turns completing the following open sentences. Each person should spend about 2 minutes on each sentence and then the next person takes their turn. Listen attentively when others are speaking. Once everyone takes their turn you can move on to the other sentence. The open sentences below are suggestions to get started. You may want to invent your own open sentences.

- Some things I love about being alive on Earth are...
- A place that was magical (or wonderful) to me as a child was...
- A person who helped me believe in myself is or was...
- Some things I enjoy doing and making are...
- Some things I appreciate about myself are...

Once everyone has shared all their sentences, or once you have written down your answers to these own sentences, take a moment to reflect together

1. What common themes did you notice in your responses?
2. How did it feel to write about/share these positive reflections?
3. Did you learn anything new about yourself or others?

Conclude by expressing gratitude to yourself or to each other for listening and sharing.



# Building Long Term Resilience

## What is resilience?

Resilience is “the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences” (American Psychological Association, 2018). More specifically, it is done through “mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands”.

Resilience is key in times of stress, uncertainty, volatility, resistance, chaos and disorder. Given the uncertain nature of the ecological crisis and the emotions that it brings up, resilience is a great tool to practise and strengthen so that we are better equipped to face unpredictable challenges and emotional responses.

A proactive way of viewing resilience is by describing it as a muscle. This means that, rather than being an innate trait we are born with, it is a practice that requires training. We have the ability to proactively strengthen our resilience muscle, which Dr. Linda Hoopes (2017) calls ‘**prosilience**’.

Just like muscles strengthen when subjected to new and ‘stressful’ situations, such as a good yoga session or weight-lifting, so can we. Resilience doesn’t only involve bouncing back from disturbances caused by challenges or changes to your original, previous state. It can also involve us undergoing transformation in response to challenges and changes by ‘bouncing forward’ to a new state that will enable us to be more prepared to face challenges that come our way.

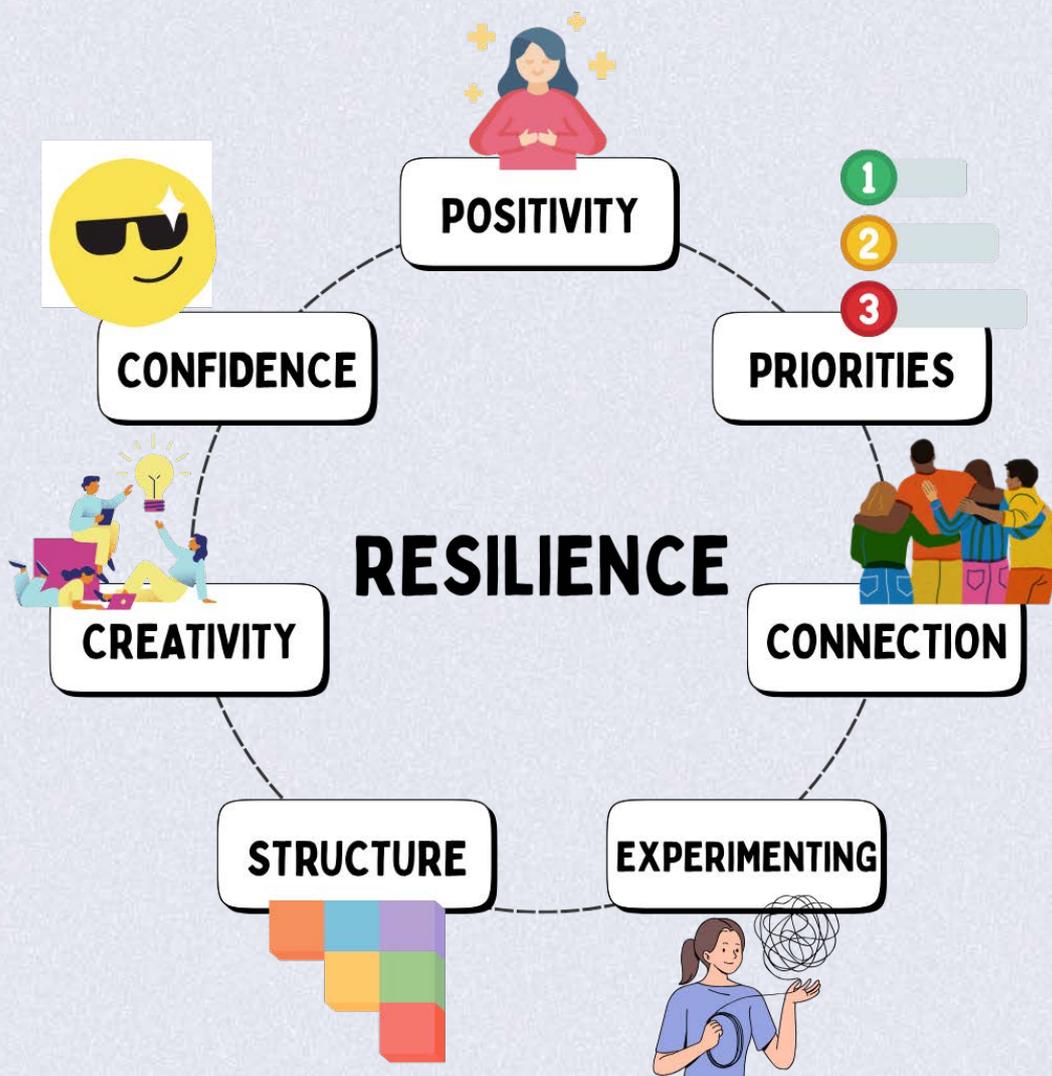
## Resilience Muscles

Continuing with the ‘muscles’ analogy, we have several ‘change’ muscles that we exercise at different times and at varying degrees. Dr. Linda Hoopes put forward seven resilience muscles, being:

- **Positivity** - identifying opportunities and possibilities, and being hopeful in times of turbulence.
- **Confidence** - believing that you can succeed in the face of uncertainty and recognising the value you can bring to the challenging situation
- **Priorities** - having a clear vision of what you would like to achieve
- **Creativity** - coming up with a wide range of possibilities and approaches to respond to the challenging situation.
- **Connection** - building and nourishing relationships for extra assistance when faced with a challenging situation.
- **Structure** - planning, coordinating and using your energy efficiently to face a challenge.
- **Experimentation** - getting out of your comfort zone by initiating action despite uncertainty and taking calculated risks.

The strength of each resilience muscle differs according to how often it is used. Weaker resilience muscles require more energy and effort to be used, while the stronger muscles are used with relative ease.

This provides us an opportunity: to assess the strength of each resilience muscle to be able to strengthen the weaker ones while continuing to nourish our stronger ones.



## Exercise Evaluating your Resilience Muscles (taken from Hoopes, 2019)

**Time investment:** approximately 10 minutes

**Materials needed:** a pen/pencil

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

This exercise will involve you evaluating the strength of your change muscles, identifying the one or two change muscles you would like to work on, and coming up with ways in which you can strengthen weaker resilience muscles while nourishing your stronger ones.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Reflect on how you think and feel when something unexpected happens that presents a challenge. You may approach this exercise by thinking about a recent challenging situation you encountered, or provide ratings based on your overall patterns.

You might want to ask some friends or family members how they would rate you. They can sometimes provide you with insights about yourself that are not as clear to you.

### Positivity:

- Statement A: I tend to worry and focus on the things that have gone wrong.
- Statement B: I tend to be more hopeful and look at the bright side.

### Confidence:

- Statement A: I tend to doubt my ability to cope with the situation.
- Statement B: I tend to believe that I can deal with a challenge effectively.

### Priorities:

- Statement A: I tend to try to take care of everything at once.
- Statement B: I tend to identify the most important thing to focus my attention on.

### Creativity:

- Statement A: I tend to stick to familiar approaches and solutions.
- Statement B: I tend to come up with several new ideas on how to approach a challenge.

### Connection:

- Statement A: I tend to try to address the challenge alone.
- Statement B: I tend to reach out to others who can help me.

### Structure:

- Statement A: I tend to do whatever seems easiest at the moment.
- Statement B: I tend to create a plan and stick with it even when it is hard.

### Experimenting:

- Statement A: I tend to play it safe and try to avoid taking risks.
- Statement B: I tend to try things even though they might not succeed.

For which resilience muscles did you mark 'Statement B'?

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For which resilience muscle/s did you rate 'Statement A'?

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Which of these resilience muscle/s would you like to focus on and strengthen?

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There are various exercises that you can do to build your resilience muscles. Which exercises you practise is up to you. The good news is that there are endless possible approaches to take!

Here are some examples that you can practise on a daily basis to strengthen each of the seven resilience muscles. These examples can be done spontaneously on the spot, intentionally when planning your day, or used as journal prompts.

#### **Positivity resilience muscle:**

- Appreciation/Gratitude:** At the end of each day, take time to think of one thing you appreciate or are grateful for that day. If you like, you can even keep a journal to write down the positives for each day. You can also use the ‘Gratitude Grid’ framework for this, found on Page 31.
- Reflection:** Think of something that happened in the past that seemed negative at the time, and identify a positive thing that came out of it.

#### **Confidence resilience muscle:**

- Strength-Finding:** Think back over the day and identify one thing that went well. Identify one personal strength that contributed to success in this situation. If you find this challenging, get a friend or family member to help you.
- Learning Opportunities:** Think of a challenge you are currently facing. Identify ways this challenge could provide you with the opportunity to learn something new.

#### **Priorities resilience muscle:**

- Saying No:** Each day, identify one thing that is less important than other things you can say ‘no’ to.
- Visible Priorities:** Each morning, take a few minutes to identify your highest priorities for the day. It can just be one priority. Keep them in mind as you go through the day, and at the end of the day consider how well you stayed focused on them.

#### **Creativity resilience muscle:**

- Yes-And:** When you hear an idea you disagree with, substitute the word “but” for the word “and” in your response. This can help you create new options rather than getting stuck in opposition.
- Idea Generation:** Think of something you want to do, and identify at least three different ways you might approach it, rather than just coming up with one idea.

#### **Connection resilience muscle:**

- Asking for Help:** Think of something you want to do, and ask someone else for assistance, advice, ideas, or some other form of support.
- Building Connections:** Initiate contact with someone else– send a message, make a phone call, introduce yourself to someone; express appreciation, ask a question, or just say hello.

**Structure resilience muscle:**

- Dedicated Time:** Set aside 10-15 minutes for something that’s important to you. First thing in the morning is often a good time. Block the time in your schedule and do it as planned.
- Accountability:** Find another person to support you—it can be someone else who wants to develop this muscle or someone who wants to help you. Pick an activity that you are committed to doing regularly, and report to them regularly about how you are doing.

**Experimentation resilience muscle:**

- Small Steps:** Do something new or unfamiliar. For example, you might try a new food, go a different way to get someplace or do an activity you haven’t done before.
- Balanced Perspective:** When you notice that something feels uncomfortable or risky, take time to think about possible benefits (the outcomes that you will gain if things go as planned) as well as possible costs (the problems that could occur if things don’t go as planned).

**Exercise How will I Strengthen my Resilience Muscles?** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 5 minutes

**Materials needed:** a pen/pencil

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

Based on the one or two resilience muscle/s you chose to focus on in the previous exercise, which approaches and exercises do you wish to practise to strengthen your target muscles?

Target Resilience Muscle 1:

Exercise to practise Resilience Muscle 1:

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Target Resilience Muscle 2:

Exercise to practise Resilience Muscle 1:

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**IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:** When using our resilience muscles, we are using our energy, be it our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy supplies. When practising our resilience muscles, we can also incorporate energy monitoring and management techniques. This will help us stay in tune with our current needs and energy levels, and act accordingly, be it through muscle-practising or self-care to replenish our energy levels.

'Weaker' resilience muscles require more energy to be practised. Focusing on one or two resilience muscles will prevent burnout and feeling overwhelmed and discouraged.

Practising our 'weaker' resilience muscles will strengthen them, eventually leading to the need for less energy to use them. It could also be that practising our resilience muscles gives us energy and makes us feel more refreshed and ready to face challenges that come our way!

## Exercise **Tracking Energy Levels** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 10 – 15 minutes

**Materials needed:** a pen/pencil

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move

Some activities require more energy than others. Other activities give us energy. Usually, activities that we find meaningful or that involve some sort of rest replenish our energy levels. Meanwhile, conducting activities that require energy that is not replenished through rest or meaningful tasks may lead to burnout.

This exercise will tap into the activities that you do on a daily basis that drain your energy, require little energy consumption, and that make you feel energised.

What activities drain your energy?

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What activities require little energy?

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What activities give you energy and make you feel energised?

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Now that you have categorised your daily activities, you have more awareness of how such activities affect your energy levels in different ways. This knowledge is powerful as it allows you to plan your day according to your current energy levels and needs, provides you with a list of tasks that make you feel energised and reminds you to perform these tasks to maintain the energy level that allows you to practise resilience and prosilience, self-compassion and mindfulness.

## The Matsutake Mushroom

*“The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins”* is a 2015 book by the Chinese American anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. The book describes and analyses the globalised commodity chains of matsutake mushrooms in a context of economic instability and ecological degradation.

The matsutake is considered a delicacy and thrives in human-disturbed forests. In the book, Tsing follows foragers as they search for matsutakes, the traders who buy and sell them, and the Japanese consumers who especially prize them, largely as gifts.

Tsing highlights both the resilience of the matsutake, which humans have found cannot be cultivated, and the entanglements between and co-dependency of various species — or multi-species “assemblages” — in not only surviving disturbed environments, but in creating new environments. On such assemblages, Tsing writes:

*“...one could say that pines, matsutake, and humans all cultivate each other unintentionally. They make each other’s world-making projects possible. This idiom has allowed me to consider how landscapes more generally are products of unintentional design, that is, the overlapping world-making activities of many agents, human and not human. The design is clear in the landscape’s ecosystem. But none of the agents have planned this effect. Humans join others in making land-scapes of unintentional design. As sites for more-than-human dramas, landscapes are radical tools for decentering human hubris. Landscapes are not backdrops for historical action: they are themselves active. Watching landscapes in formation shows humans joining other living beings in shaping worlds.”*

The author draws on these themes not only to critique capitalism, but also to emphasise the interdependence of “agents” and the impacts one agent’s actions have on other agents, be it intentional or unintentional. The book is also about resilience in a dynamic world and how we can be resilient together.



## Exercise **Me as the Matsutake Mushroom**

**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 60 minutes

**Materials needed:** a journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest, Move, Eat

Just like the matsutake mushroom thrives in human-disturbed forests, we too find strength and opportunities amidst challenges.

This exercise encourages us to recognise our capacity to thrive in difficult circumstances by reminding ourselves of previous situations in which we were resilient.

1. Think about a time in your life when you faced a challenge or when your environment felt “disturbed” or unstable (e.g., a personal hardship, social upheaval, or an environmental crisis).
2. Reflect on how you managed to adapt, survive, or even grow during that time.
  - a. What qualities within you helped you endure? Were there unexpected opportunities that emerged as a result of that disturbance?
  - b. In what ways am I like the matsutake mushroom, finding resilience and growth in a disturbed environment?

## **Becoming Resilient in the face of Climate Anxiety from the Media**

Katherine Hayhoe, a scientist and science communication expert, publishes a weekly newsletter called ‘Talking Climate’. She combines updated climate ‘bad news’ with climate ‘good news’, and tangible actions that can be taken to prevent the ‘bad news’ from getting worse and to keep the momentum of the ‘good news’ going.

This is done intentionally to provide a balance between information and action:

1. information that may categorically induce climate anxiety, alongside information that may soothe climate anxiety and bring about climate hope;
2. factual information about the ‘bad’, alongside tips on what we can do to feel empowered amidst the ‘bad’;
3. factual information about the ‘good’, alongside tips on what we can do as individuals to feel empowered to contribute to the ‘good’

The last point is important, as some scholars in climate change communication criticise fully ‘positive’ messages of progress being done in relation to climate change, which they believe may lead to complacency and the possible narrative that we no longer need to engage in personal action (Hornsey & Fieldling, 2020). By combining ‘positive’ messages with concrete ways in which we ourselves can keep the momentum going emphasises that we can and have the power to play a role in this to prevent more ‘bad’ events from occurring and ‘bad’ news from cropping up. It also bridges the gap between hopefulness and engagement in pro-environmental action and mitigation that in itself makes us feel more hopeful and more willing to act (Geiger et al., 2023).

On this note, public health experts have suggested that news outlets are to report one good news for every three bad news stories (VanderWeele & Brooks, 2023).

However, this is more often than not the case.

Other issues that pervade the media landscape are misinformation (getting the facts wrong), disinformation (spreading false information deliberately) and a false balance (presenting two sides of the story, such as giving space to both those who believe, usually scientists, and deny, usually non-experts, the fact that climate change is human-caused) (van der Linden, 2017; Ding et al., 2011). These media reporting issues have been found to make us less likely to act (Imundo & Rapp, 2022).

In short, the mainstream media often fails to support us in managing climate anxiety or offering hope.

However, newsletters like Katherine Hayhoe's are examples of what we can turn to when seeking reliable, empowering climate information. By offering a mix of the reality we need to face and the solutions we can contribute to, such sources can help ease climate anxiety, instill hope and inspire action.

## Exercise **Challenging Narratives** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 20 minutes

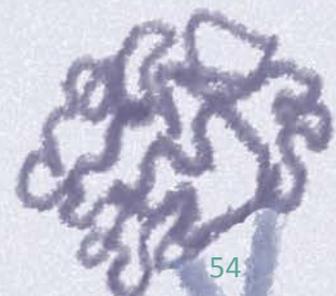
**Materials needed:** a journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

This exercise helps you reflect on and challenge the social narratives that influence your thinking and behaviours. It encourages you to consider how these stories shape your relationship with others and the environment, and how you can create new, healthier narratives.

By challenging harmful or limiting stories and rewriting them in ways that foster connection, empowerment, and sustainability, we can create a positive ripple effect in our lives and communities. Remember, the stories we tell ourselves and each other have power — and you have the power to change them.

- 1. Identify a Social Narrative:** Begin by thinking about a common story or message you often hear in society. This could be related to climate change, success, beauty, social status, or how people are “supposed” to behave. Choose one narrative that stands out to you and write it down. For example:
  - “Success is measured by material wealth.”
  - “One person can't make a difference in the fight against climate change.”
  - “Nature is separate from human life.”



- 
2. **Reflect on Its Impact:** Take a few minutes to reflect on how this narrative has influenced you. Ask yourself:
    - How does this narrative make me feel?
    - Does it empower me, or does it limit me?
    - How does it affect the way I interact with others and the environment?
    - Do I see this narrative reinforced by the media, my peers, or my community?
  3. **Challenge the Narrative:** Now, think critically about the narrative. Ask yourself:
    - Is this narrative true? Who benefits from this story being told?
    - Are there alternative stories or perspectives that challenge this narrative?
    - How might changing this narrative impact my life and my relationships with others and the planet? Write down your thoughts and begin to challenge the assumptions behind the narrative.
  4. **Rewrite Your Narrative:** Imagine you have the power to rewrite this story in a way that reflects your values, beliefs, and vision for a better world. Write down a new narrative that challenges the old one. For example:
    - Instead of “One person can’t make a difference in the fight against climate change,” you could write, “Every action I take can inspire change and contribute to a healthier planet.”
    - Instead of “Success is measured by material wealth,” you might write, “Success is living in harmony with myself, others, and nature.” Focus on creating a narrative that empowers you and promotes connection, both with others and the environment.
  5. **Reflect on Your New Story:** After rewriting the narrative, take a few moments to reflect on how this new story makes you feel. How might living by this new narrative change your actions and relationships? How could it impact your connection with the world around you?
  5. **Put It into Action:** Finally, think about one small action you can take in your daily life to live out this new narrative. It could be something simple, like starting conversations with others about challenging social norms, being mindful of your impact on the environment, or making choices that align with your values.

## Exercise **Media ‘Diet’ for Climate Resilience** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** 15 minutes, followed by a week of self-reflection

**Materials needed:** a journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel, Rest

This exercise encourages us to be mindful of the media we consume, balancing exposure to negative news with stories that offer hope and constructive paths forward.

Start by reviewing the climate-related media (articles, news reports, documentaries, social media) you regularly consume. Write down the sources that increase your anxiety and those that offer hope, solutions, or balanced perspectives.

Create two lists:

1. Sources that negatively affect your climate anxiety (e.g., constant doom-and-gloom news, sensationalist headlines).
2. Sources that inspire positive action or hope (e.g., solutions-based journalism, stories of successful climate initiatives).

For the next week, reduce your consumption of media from the first list and increase your engagement with media from the second list.

Reflect on how this shift in your media consumption affects your emotions. Write a short journal entry about how your anxiety levels have changed, and note any emotional benefits of engaging with more solution-oriented media.

You may also use this exercise to simply become more actively mindful of the media you consume, and to mindfully be critical of the media you face on a daily basis.



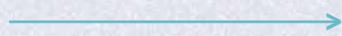
# Changing the Narrative: The Mind as a Victim of Climate Change to the Mind as an Accountable Ally

Growing evidence suggests that climate change and other sustainability issues are actually problems with how we relate to each other (Meissner & Smith, 2024; Jennings, 2023; Wamsler, 2022). The current and well-versed narrative portrays our minds as victims of the ecological crisis, as barriers for adequate climate action and as the root cause of climate change. This stems from our disconnection from ourselves, others and nature.

However, this narrative can be shifted: our minds and ourselves can become accountable allies through the rebuilding of our connections with ourselves, others and nature to foster personal, collective and planetary health and wellbeing (Wamsler and Bristow, 2022).

## Current Narrative

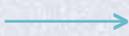
We are victims.



## Changed Narrative

We are accountable allies.

We are barriers for climate action.



We are facilitators for climate action.

We are the root cause of climate change.



We are influential in shaping the course of climate change.

## How can we change the narrative?

If the current narrative supports the idea that climate change is a relational issue, and that what one individual does has an effect on other aspects (e.g., interpersonal relationships, the economy, policy...), then this proves that we can be accountable allies that facilitate climate action and influence the course of climate change.

## Exercise Challenging Narratives

**Time investment:** approximately 15 – 20 minutes

**Materials needed:** a journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

This exercise helps you reflect on and challenge the social narratives that influence your thinking and behaviours. It encourages you to consider how these stories shape your relationship with others and the environment, and how you can create new, healthier narratives.

## Exercise **My Mind is an Ally** (an author-designed exercise)

**Time investment:** 10 –15 minutes

**Materials needed:** a journal and pen to note down your thoughts

**Mental Health Vitamin targeted:** Feel

Affirmations help rewire our thought patterns, promoting a proactive mindset that emphasises accountability and empowerment in the climate crisis.

For this exercise, start by writing a series of affirmations that align with the changed narrative.

Examples:

- “My thoughts and feelings are valid.”
- “I am allowed to ask for support.”
- “Listening to our needs is an act of love.”
- “I am an ally of the Earth, and my actions make a difference.”
- “I contribute to positive change by being mindful of my impact.”
- “Together, we can shape a sustainable future.”

Say these affirmations out loud each morning or when you start feeling overwhelmed by climate anxiety.

As you repeat these affirmations, visualise yourself taking climate-positive actions and feeling empowered to make a difference.



## Positive Examples of Hope and Resilience

### Malta: Friends of the Earth Community Garden

<https://foemalta.org/>

Though located in an urban area, Friends of the Earth Malta organizes community gardening sessions, providing a shared space where a group of people collaboratively grow fruits, vegetables, and other plants while tending to the garden in the NGOs premises. The gardens are tended to by volunteers who come to help out in water plants, planting seedlings, clearing dried vegetation, composting organic waste, fixing garden infrastructure, and pick out fruit and vegetables, which is then enjoyed by all participants through meals made by the volunteers, providing access to fresh, nutritious food without relying on supermarkets. Beyond growing food, these gardens foster social connections, promote sustainable practices, and create a place of serenity even in a city location.

### Estonia: TERRA Low-Technology Theme Park

<https://terrapark.ee/>

TERRA is an experimental project that aims to discover, revive and test various low-tech and self-networking tools and techniques. Low-tech is a durable, understandable, locally repairable, fully recyclable and affordable solution that offers an empowering alternative to high-tech visions of the future.

TERRA aims to test different heritage and DIY technologies, typical off-grid and natural engineering solutions. How do they work and withstand the Estonian climate and context? In collaboration with amateurs, experts and scientists, all projects initiated in the theme park will be documented in order to make these experiences and knowledge more widely public.

TERRA is a place to explore and experiment, to educate and to introduce. But above all, TERRA is a place to have fun.

### Germany: Community Energy Cooperative

(taken from Centre for Public Impact, 2021)

Founded in 1994 in Schönau, Germany, ElektrizitätsWerke Schönau (EWS) is a community-owned energy cooperative that emerged from local activism against nuclear energy, spurred by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Following extensive community mobilisation and two referendums, residents successfully took control of the local electricity grid, shifting towards clean energy production and distribution. Initially focused on abolishing nuclear power, EWS gradually expanded its mission to champion renewable energy, energy justice, and sustainability. Through ongoing campaigns and awards, EWS continues to connect the technical, social, and cultural dimensions of clean energy transitions.

As of 2021, EWS supplies renewable energy to over 185,000 people across Germany, owning wind and solar parks, as well as gas and electricity grids.  
is a place to have fun.

## Denmark: Makværket

<https://makvaerket.org/>

Makværket is a cultural and environmental collective in progress: a growing, self-organised, voluntary community of people working practically and theoretically for the increasingly necessary cultural, social, environmental and economic transformation of society.

Since 2008, the Makværket association has been engaged in developing 2,000m<sup>2</sup> of the former Knabstrup Teglværk, an old ceramics factory in Knabstrup, 70km west of Copenhagen, into a centre for culture and ecology.

The aim is to create a place for sustainable development and ecological awareness, artistic and cultural events, educational and environmental outreach programs, art and music production, information and media networking, community service projects, activist group meetings and much more.



# Emotions and Action

Emotions and actions are linked. Together with our thoughts, emotions about a situation act as a springboard towards behaviour in response to the situation. In terms of climate anxiety, which stems from thoughts about the current state of our planet and its uncertain future, studies have found that climate anxiety is related to willingness towards pro-environmental action, such as using public transport or saving electricity (Xie et al., 2019; van Valkengoed & Steg, 2019), and more support for climate policies (Wang et al., 2018).

It is important to note that the link between thoughts, emotions and behaviour is affected by other factors, such as our personality, previous experiences, personal and social norms, our beliefs about our ability to reach the aim we would like to reach through our behaviour, and others. Nonetheless, it seems that moderate levels of climate anxiety have the potential of instigating pro-environmental action.

N.B. Experiencing significant and severe climate anxiety may stem from overwhelming thoughts about and experiences of climate change and its effects. Significant and severe climate anxiety may also itself be overwhelming. Being and feeling overwhelmed oftentimes hinders us from acting as it leaves us paralysed or trapped in feelings and thoughts of helplessness and despair.

When we experience such intense emotions, it's important to acknowledge that the feeling is valid. Climate anxiety is a natural response to the very real and pressing issues we face globally. But it's equally important to find ways to manage and cope with these emotions in a healthy way, so they don't consume us or prevent us from living a fulfilling life. In fact, this self-help book is filled with exercises that aim to guide us in sitting with our emotions to then be able to manage and cope with them. Self-care is also a great and essential component of emotional self-regulation.

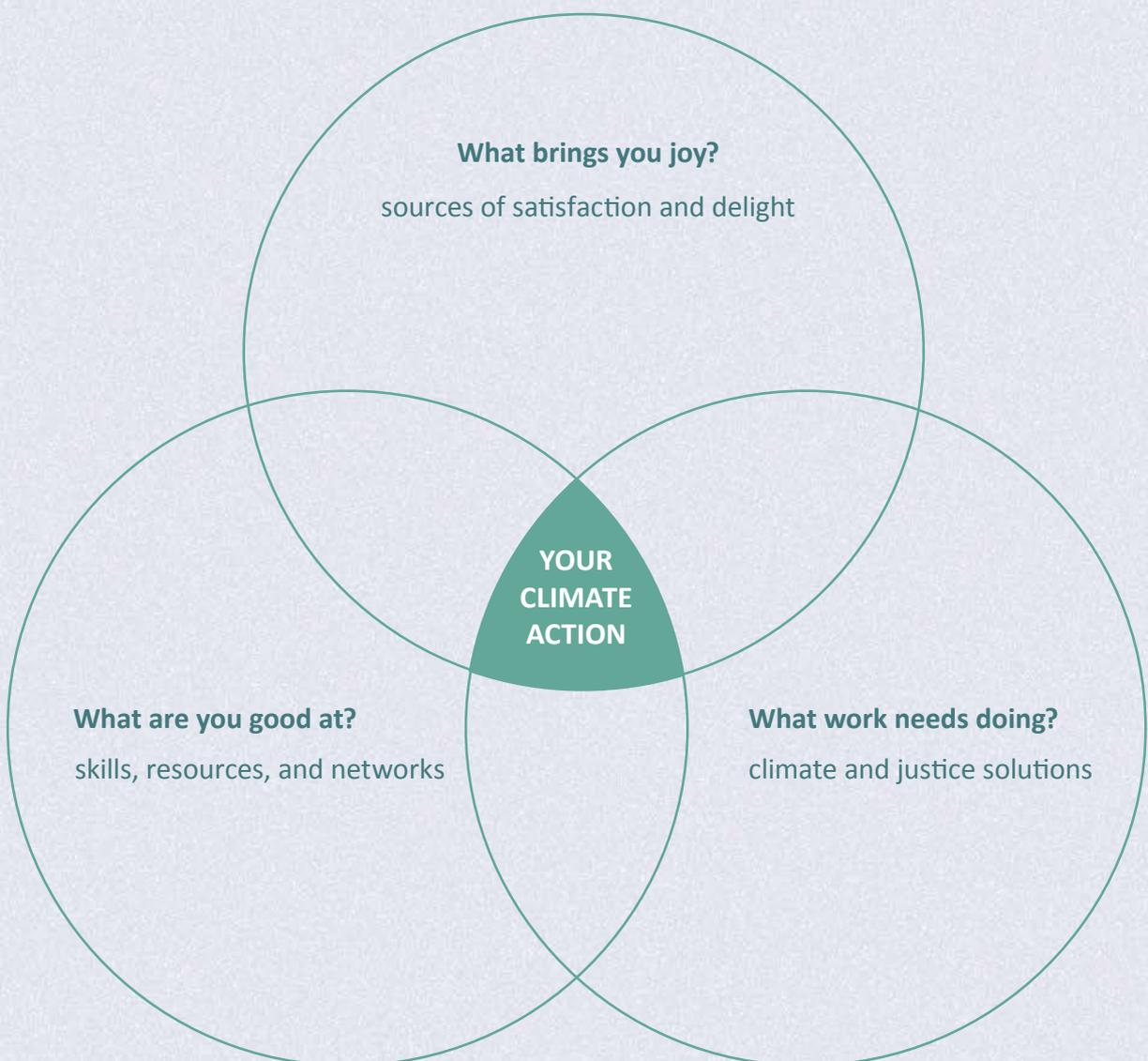
Also, this is not a one-size-fits-all sort of thing. It might be better for you right now to fully focus on and tap into your emotions for now, leaving the 'action' part out - and that is OK too! In fact, focusing on our emotions and engaging in self-care are in themselves actions we can take in relation to climate change for ourselves and ways to prevent burnout.



## What can you do?

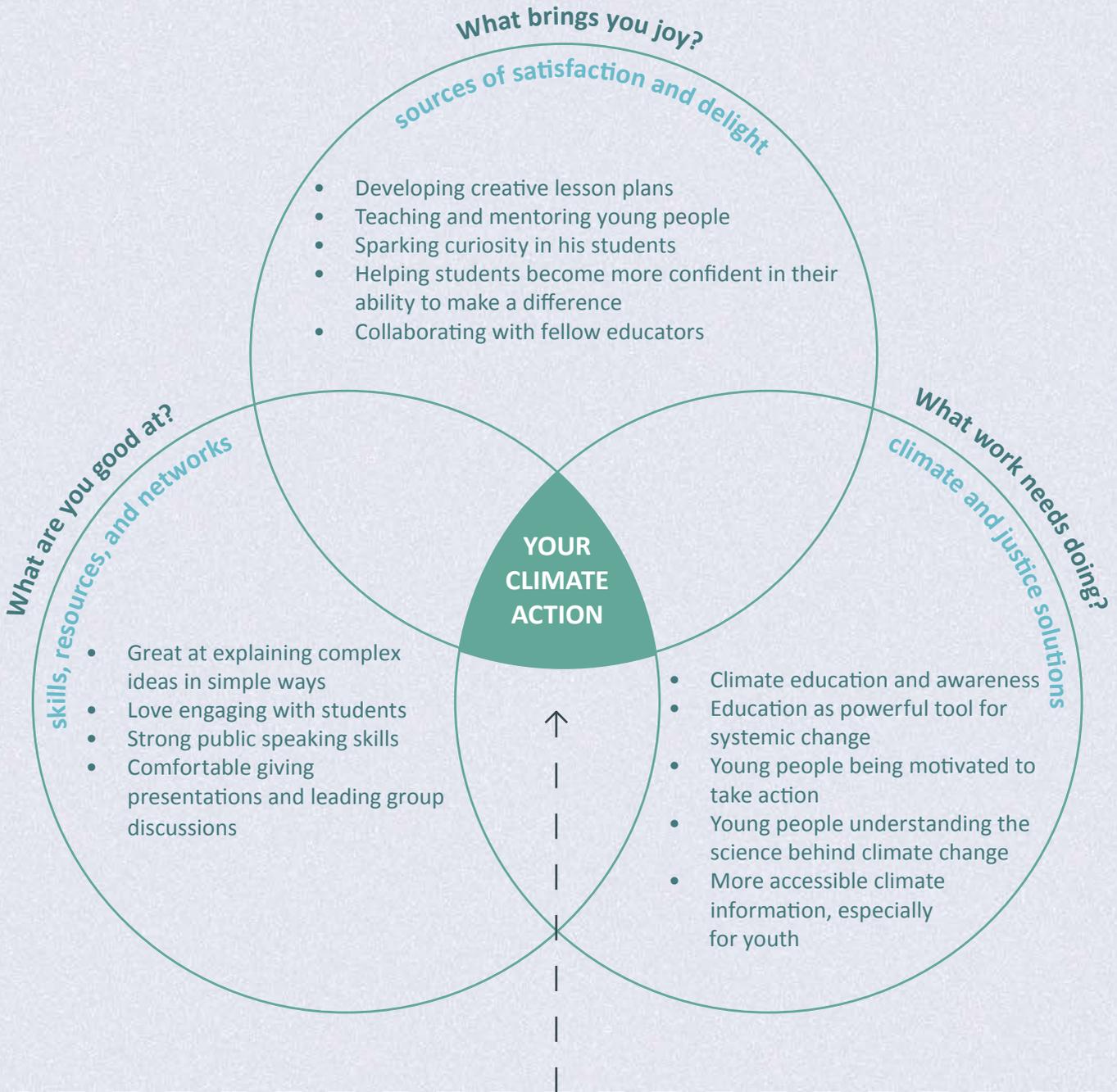
Climate action comes in many forms and is unique to each person. We all find meaning, purpose, and joy in different things—and that’s a strength. The versatility of climate action is key to addressing the wide-ranging impacts of climate change.

Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson has created a Climate Action Venn Diagram to help individuals uncover what sort of climate action would bring them joy, meaning and confidence. The beauty of it is that two people may arrive at very different conclusions, while also providing a reflective personal exercise for us to ‘narrow down’ what we can do based on our answers so that we do not feel like we are obligated to be doing everything. This in itself may make us feel helpless and powerless. Instead, it is a tool that we can use to find out what it is we can do based on our skills and aptitudes, what makes us satisfied and fulfilled, and what currently needs addressing.



A clear way of understanding the versatility of climate action is through an example of a fictional individual, Sam.

# Sam's Climate Action Venn Diagram



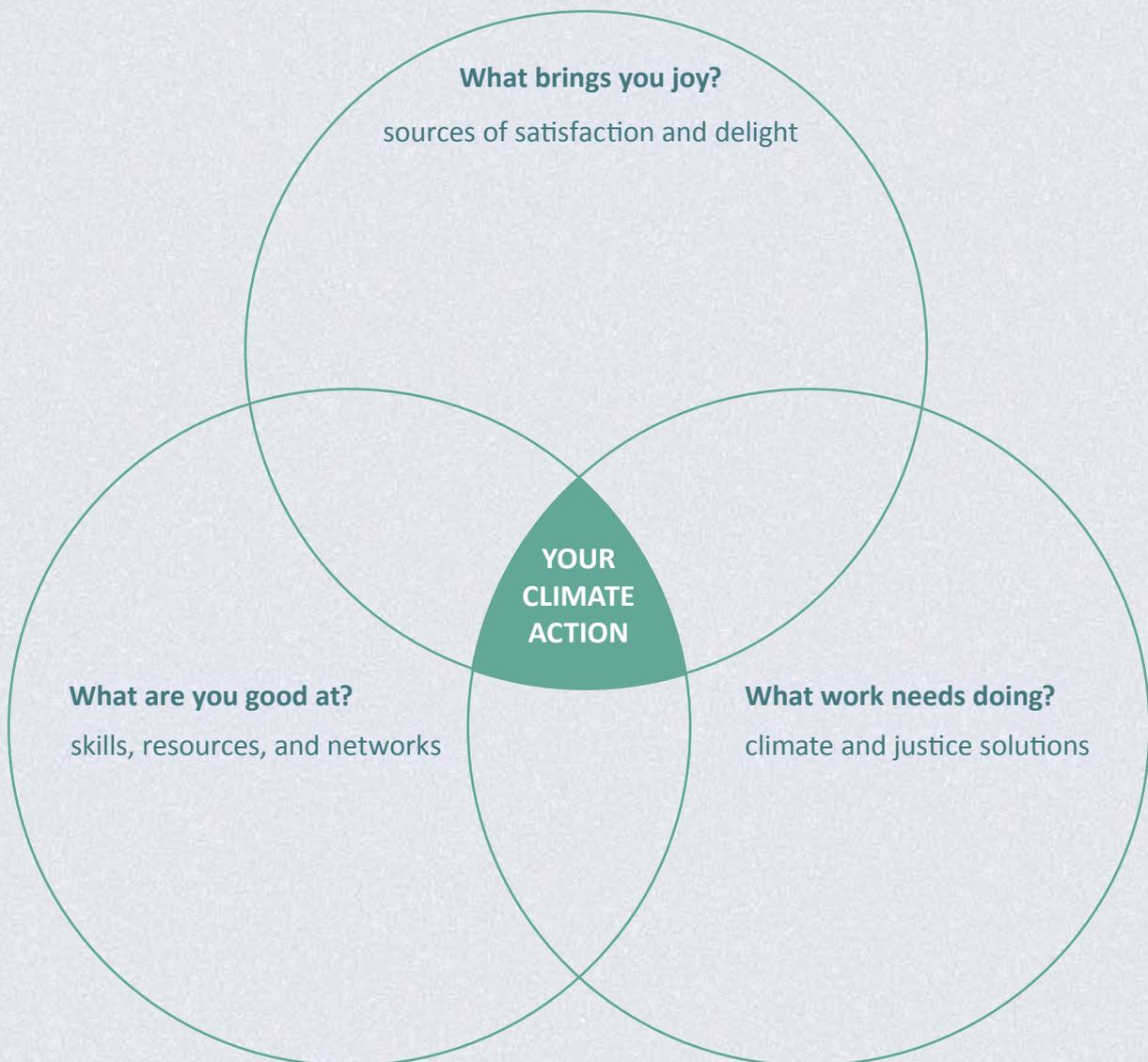
**CLIMATE ACTION:**

Sam decides to focus his efforts on creating a climate curriculum for schools that blends scientific knowledge with practical action steps students can take. He also plans to host workshops for other teachers to help them integrate climate education into their classrooms. By leveraging his teaching expertise and love for student engagement, Sam feels fulfilled and empowered to make a difference through education.

Sam contributes to climate solutions in ways that align with their unique skills, passions, and expertise. By doing the Climate Action Venn Diagram exercise, they have found a meaningful, personal path to addressing the climate crisis and the emotions that it stirs up—in this example, through education.

This self-help book contains exercises that help to discover what brings us joy, what we are good at, and what we feel needs to be addressed. Therefore, the Climate Action Venn Diagram is a great next-step after completing some exercises on how to connect with ourselves, with others and the planet, alongside the resilience-building exercises.

## My Climate Action Venn Diagram



## What else can you do?

Coping with climate and eco-anxiety is not just about managing emotions—it's about honouring them as valid responses to a world in crisis while finding ways to move forward with resilience and purpose. Connecting with ourselves, others and nature, alongside self-care rituals help sustain our well-being in this climate-changing world, prevent burnout and foster long-term resilience. We can also channel our emotions into action, using them as fuel for personal, communal and systemic change and wellbeing.

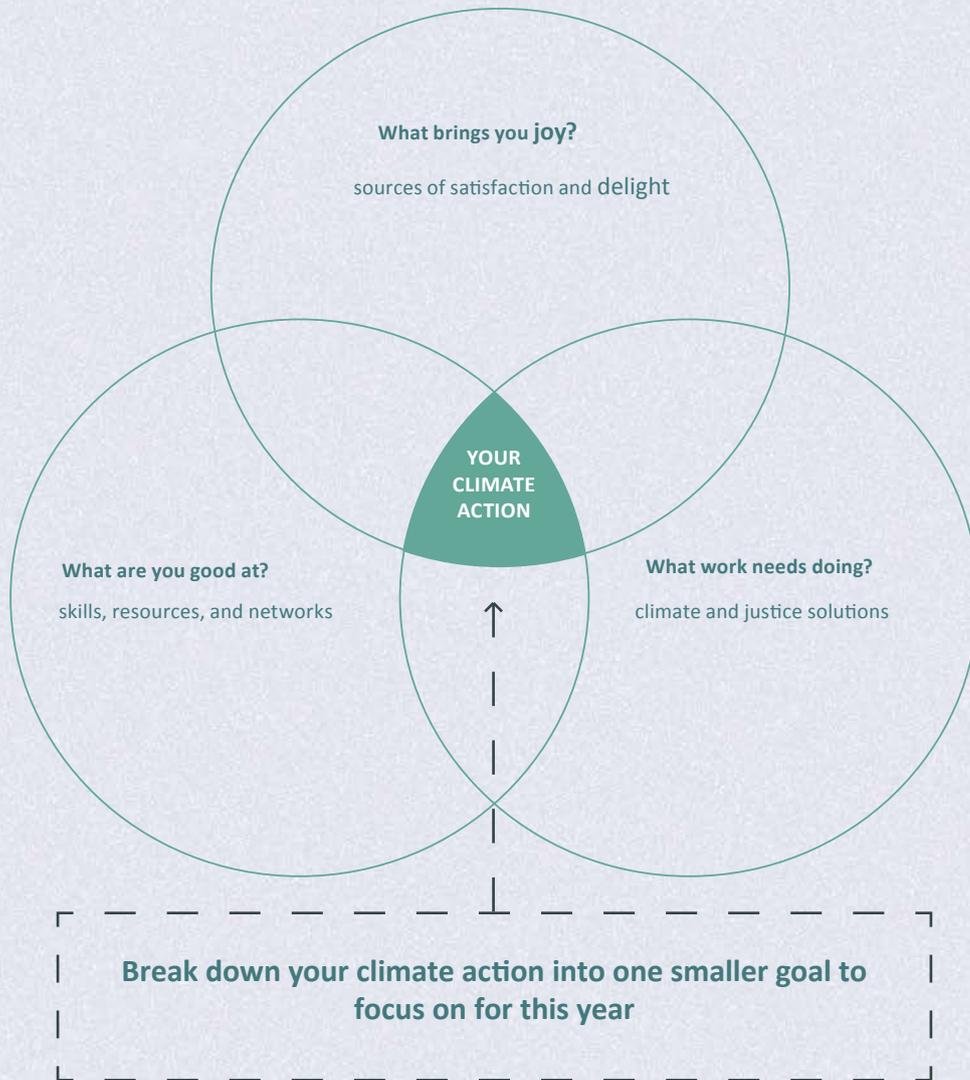
Aligning daily choices with our values and ensuring our personal wellbeing along the way enable us to take meaningful steps, no matter how small, that in turn create more energy within us that fuels long-term engagement. To help structure and sustain long-term engagement, consider using the Climate Action Venn Diagram to create your Annual Climate Action Plan and Weekly Climate Action Plan. These tools help identify actions at the intersection of what you're good at, what brings you joy, and what the world needs, ensuring your efforts are impactful and sustainable, and meaningful to you.

Here are templates for an Annual Climate Action Plan and a Weekly Climate Action Plan that can be used together or individually. You can also make your own, or edit these templates on Canva.



# My Climate Action Annual Planner (an author-designed exercise)

Year: \_\_\_\_\_



## My Climate Goals this Year:

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# My Climate Action Annual Planner

## JANUARY

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- My self-care ritual:

## FEBRUARY

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- My self-care ritual:

## MARCH

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- My self-care ritual:

## APRIL

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- My self-care ritual:

## MAY

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- My self-care ritual:

## JUNE

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- My self-care ritual:

## JULY

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- My self-care ritual:

## AUGUST

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- My self-care ritual:

## SEPTEMBER

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- My self-care ritual:

## OCTOBER

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- My self-care ritual:

## NOVEMBER

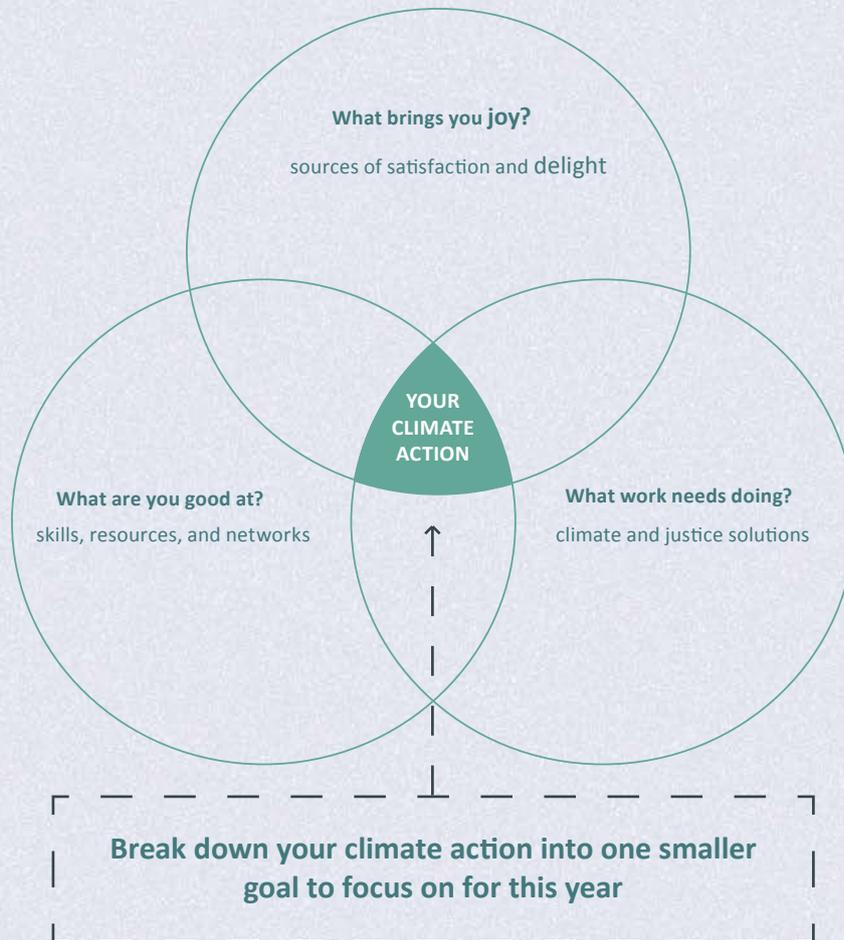
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- My self-care ritual:

## DECEMBER

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- My self-care ritual:

# My Climate Action Weekly Planner (an author-designed exercise)

Week: \_\_\_\_\_



## My Climate Goal this Week:

Small, everyday steps to achieve this goal

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Here are some small, actionable daily or weekly steps/goals for inspiration. However, the list is endless!**

**Transport:**

- Use your bike and advocate for pedestrian and cyclist safe zones
- Travel far by train (if possible)

**Fashion:**

- Learn to sew
- Visit a thrift store
- Repair your hole-y socks
- Swap clothes with someone

**Utility Consumption:**

- Save water
- Sort out your rubbish
- Suggest to your loved ones to skip the Christmas gift rush this year
- Buy a rainwater tank
- Switch off your computer
- Think for at least a month before you buy new things
- Turn down the heat and wear a cosy sweater

**Food:**

- Grow herbs on your windowsill, like parsley or mint
- Make your own compost heap
- Plant a vegetable garden
- Explore the possibility of buying your groceries from small producers
- Visit a local small-scale farm
- Pickle your food
- Bake something vegan
- Make a tea from herbs you find in the outdoors
- Use apps and websites like SuperCook or MyFridgeFood

**Connection to Nature:**

- Look out for butterflies, bees and other small creatures
- Take a walk in the woods or countryside
- Make friends with a plant
- Visit a place you've never experienced before
- Go for a swim
- Visit a protected nature area
- Go for a walk and listen to the birds
- Walk barefoot in the grass

- Write a nature diary
- Look at the stars
- Make a tea from herbs you find in the outdoors

**Social/Communication:**

- Talk to an activist
- Seek out new perspectives
- Call someone who could use a good chat
- Go to a community kitchen
- Experience people rather than things
- Write a letter to someone
- Invite your neighbour for a cup of tea
- Talk to a stranger on the bus
- Send a long text to an old friend
- Say thank you
- Become a visiting friend at a nursing home
- Talk to someone you disagree with
- Start a climate care group

**Culture:**

- Watch films and listen to music from around the world
- Make a friend who isn't from your home country
- Speak to an older person to talk about the political struggles of their youth
- Visit a museum

**Hobbies:**

- Start a book club
- Visit your local library and ask for a book recommendation
- Write a poem
- Take a break
- Do something you love (e.g., singing)

**Advocacy:**

- Go to a demonstration
- Ask a local politician a question
- Sign a petition
- Go to an activist community meeting

**Finances:**

- Change your bank to one that does not invest in fossil fuels
- Donate some money to an important cause



# Going forward

## About our Project

The CALM-EY website contains information on climate and eco-anxiety, information for youths and youth workers, and resources, including this self-help book.

Other resources that have been compiled by the project partners of the CALM-EY project include:

- A training programme called How to Support Young People with Climate Anxiety, which features a curriculum that provides step-by-step instructions on facilitating replicable training for specialists working with youth;
- A Climate Anxiety Handbook for youth workers and mental health professionals (work in progress), featuring a comprehensive collection of essential information, resources, and strategies to understand and identify climate anxiety in young individuals while providing effective support to manage and alleviate its impact;
- Support Methodology Guidelines (work in progress), which are simple and easily applicable guidelines for people working with youth to facilitate regular meetings for young people experiencing climate anxiety to offer safe space to share their thoughts and feelings related to the climate crisis without being alienated or dismissed. These support methodology guidelines were piloted in the project partner countries with youths;
- A 'Compass for Climate Chaos', a booklet that offers methods, practices, and ideas to help youths care for themselves, others, and nature in these chaotic times, including readings, meditations, recipes, and projects that foster hope and empowerment. This booklet draws on Alice Walker's 'Anxiety Soup' and Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects (WTR), and was created for and implemented in a Climate Care Summer Camp organised in 2024 as part of the CALM-EY Project.
- Anxiety Relief Methods for Youths, which offers a variety of methods based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy principles that young people can use, either with guidance or on their own, to healthily process and relieve climate-change-induced emotions.

## Resources for Further Support and Recommended Reading/Watching

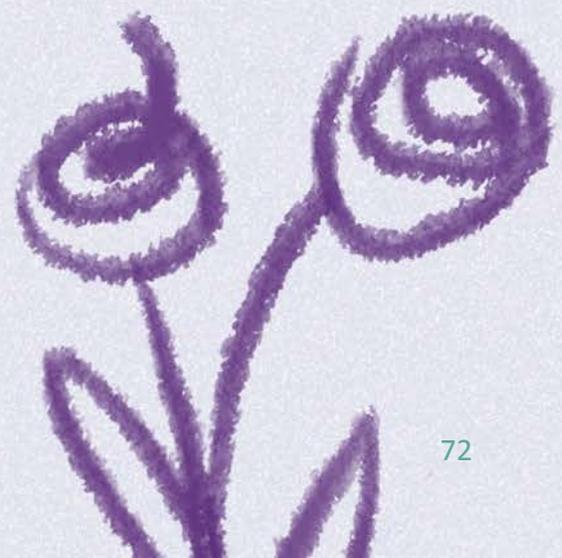
The Climate Psychology Alliance North America has a list of resources on climate and mental health on their website, with topics ranging from environmental justice to somaticisation of climate emotions within our body: <https://www.climatepsychology.us/essentialreading>

Climate & Mind also have several of these lists containing academic, organisational and literary resources: <https://www.climateandmind.org/books>.

The CALM-EY website also features a webpage including external resources, which can be accessed here: <https://calm-ey.eu/external-recources/>

## Crisis Helplines and Professional Support Options

For location-specific information when further mental health is needed, visit: <https://calm-ey.eu/mental-health-emergency-contacts/>



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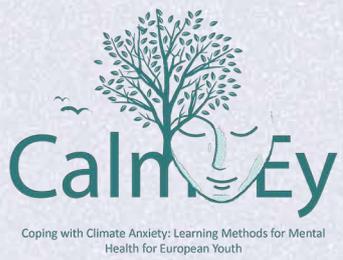
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The Calm-Ey project is an international partnership between environmental protection and mental health NGOs in Estonia, Denmark, Malta and Germany.

Partners: Estonian Green Movement (ERL), Friends of the Earth Malta, Friends of the Earth Denmark (NOAH), Jugend- und Kulturprojekt e.V., MTÜ Peaasjad.



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Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time, and it's no surprise that young people are feeling emotions such as anxiety, grief, anger, and helplessness. These feelings are not only valid, but also natural responses to an uncertain and rapidly changing world. This workbook provides a supportive space for youth to explore and navigate these feelings, and offers empowering tools to find hope amidst uncertainty. It is a self-paced resource designed specifically for young individuals who are seeking ways to care for themselves, others, and nature in these climate-chaotic times.

Co-designed by affected youth, youth workers, and mental health professionals, this workbook reflects the lived experiences and expert insights of those who are also directly facing the challenges of climate emotions.

This self-help workbook for climate anxiety and emotions, **Rooted in Hope**, offers practical techniques aimed at improving well-being – The guided exercises and reflections in this workbook are designed to strengthen connections to yourself, to others, and to the natural world. These connections are essential for building long-term resilience and cultivating a sense of clarity and meaning.

