

# REDUCING ECO- ANXIETY

*Through Nature  
Connection*

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# WELCOME MESSAGE



Eco-anxiety, a growing psychological response to the environmental crisis, is becoming increasingly common. This handbook aims to offer solace, understanding, and practical tools for individuals seeking to reduce eco-anxiety through meaningful connections with nature.

As environmental challenges intensify, many people feel overwhelmed, helpless, or emotionally paralyzed. These emotions, while valid, do not have to define our relationship with the Earth. By reconnecting with the natural world, we can rediscover a sense of peace, purpose, and empowerment. Nature reminds us that change is constant, that healing is possible, and that even small actions can ripple outward in meaningful ways.

*In this project we came together with motivated youth workers to learn new practices to tackle eco-anxiety.*

# ABOUT THIS PROJECT



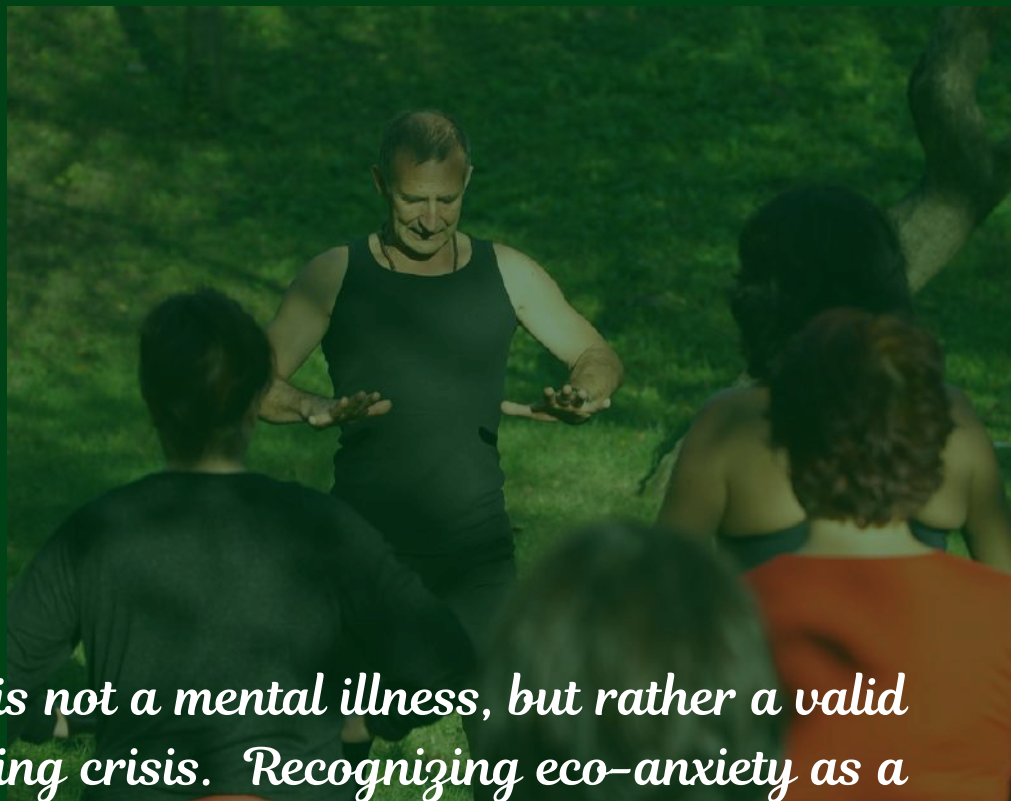
The primary goal of the Erasmus+ project, “Reducing Eco-Anxiety Through Nature Connection,” was to tackle the rising mental health challenges that young people experience as a result of climate change, especially the growing issue of eco-anxiety. Through this initiative, we aimed to raise awareness, foster greater understanding, and provide youth workers with practical tools and strategies to support young individuals dealing with climate-related emotional distress. This handbook was developed as part of the project, with valuable input and contributions from the participants who played an active role in shaping its booklet.

# UNDERSTANDING ECO-ANXIETY



Eco-anxiety refers to chronic fear of environmental doom. It's rooted in concern for the future of the planet and feelings of powerlessness in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. While it is a rational response to real issues, unmanaged eco-anxiety can lead to burnout, depression, or withdrawal.

Symptoms of eco-anxiety may include restlessness, difficulty sleeping, obsessive thoughts about environmental issues, and a sense of grief or mourning for the natural world. It often coexists with a deep sense of empathy, particularly for vulnerable species and ecosystems.



*This emotional state is not a mental illness, but rather a valid reaction to an unfolding crisis. Recognizing eco-anxiety as a sign of care is the first step in transforming it into motivation for healing and change.*





# THE POWER OF NATURE CONNECTION



## CONNECTING WITH NATURE

*Nature connection fosters a sense of belonging and reinforces the intrinsic value of the natural world, helping individuals cope more constructively with environmental concerns.*



# PRACTICES FOR REDUCING ECO-ANXIETY

## MINDFUL NATURE WALKS



One of the most effective ways to reduce eco-anxiety is by engaging in nature-based practices that foster mindfulness, creativity, and a sense of agency. Mindful nature walks can help ground us in the present moment. By walking slowly and attentively through a natural setting, and focusing on sights, sounds, textures, and smells, we begin to cultivate awareness and calm.

Taking a digital detox in nature is also highly beneficial. By intentionally disconnecting from technology during time spent outdoors, you create space to be fully present and engaged with your environment. We also talked about how this digital detox is even more important for younger generations.

## WALKING, JOURNALING

Another helpful activity is nature journaling which we also practiced during our program. Journaling involves recording your observations of the natural world—whether it be plants, animals, or the weather—and reflecting on your emotions and thoughts during these moments. It is a practice that blends mindfulness with expression and helps nurture a relationship with the Earth.







# A DAY OF WALKING AND TALKING





# ECO-ART



Eco-art and creativity offer powerful outlets for processing and expressing ecological emotions. Creating art using natural materials, writing poems, or composing music inspired by nature can be deeply healing and motivating.

We also discussed gardening and permaculture connect us to the rhythms of the Earth in practical and nourishing ways. Whether planting flowers, growing food, or composting, these activities foster resilience, sustainability, and a tangible sense of contribution.

This is something all of us agreed on, that older generations kept their mental well being with lots of outdoor activities especially gardening.

*With the help of our youth workers we created a small check list that you can follow along! (page 12-13.)*







**PICTURES FROM OUR SEMINARS**



# DAILY AND SEASONAL NATURE-BASED PRACTICES

## DAILY:



- Start your day with a few minutes outside
- Observe the sky, weather, or a single plant
- Practice deep breathing while listening to morning birdsong
- Take short barefoot walks on grass or natural surfaces

## WEEKLY



- Schedule longer outings to natural parks or forests
- Create a nature sit-spot to return to each week for reflection
- Spend time tending to a garden or houseplants

## SEASONAL



- Celebrate solstices and equinoxes
- Engage in seasonal crafts or conservation activities
- Mark the beginning of each season with a nature-inspired ritual or journal entry
- Participate in seasonal community events like tree planting or local harvest festivals



# MORNING STRECHES





# INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS INTO OUR PROJECT



## *Empathising mindfulness:*

Mindfulness and nature are natural companions. When combined, they offer a powerful path to calm the nervous system and reconnect with the present moment. The goal was for the participants to maintain good communication and empathise with each other, trying to reach a common view in the end, rather than quickly finding a solution and fixing the problem. Unlike passive distraction, mindfulness encourages full attention and conscious awareness—qualities that align beautifully with being in nature. This was one of the key elements of our project to tackle with the participants.

## *Slow down and breathe! our day three lessons:*

Breathwork, when practiced outdoors, allows you to synchronize your body's rhythm with the natural world. Whether seated by a tree or lying on grass, mindful breathing in nature creates a deep sense of grounding and connection.

These practices foster presence, gratitude, and acceptance. They remind us that we are part of nature, not separate from it—and in that recognition lies a source of healing and hope.



# EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD: YOUTH WORKERS SHARE THEIR JOURNEYS

Throughout this project, youth workers from across Europe came together not only to explore methods to reduce eco-anxiety but also to experience firsthand the healing power of nature connection. Their stories reflect growth, vulnerability, creativity, and a deepening relationship with the Earth.

## A DEEPER CONNECTION

*“I realized I had never really ‘seen’ the trees I walked past every day,” shared Lindaa youth worker from Hungary “It sounds so simple, but in that moment it reminded me of my own need for stillness.”*



## ART AS EXPRESSION AND RELEASE



*“I had no idea how calming yet exciting it would be to shape something out of some leaves,” (Csaba from Romania) “It gave form to the sadness I often push aside. And seeing everyone else’s creations showed me how much we all have in common when it comes to mental well-being.”*





## RE-LEARNING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

One of the most impactful elements of the project was how quickly a sense of community formed among the youth workers. Participants cooked meals together, shared cultural traditions, and took turns leading nature meditations or rituals.



*"I felt supported" said by multiple participants throughout the journey.*





# INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS AND NATURE

Transform eco-anxiety into empowered lifestyle changes:

- Choose sustainable transport options
- Reduce plastic and waste
- Support ethical brands and local economies
- Participate in citizen science projects
- Prioritize rest and balance to prevent burnout

Building eco-habits is not about achieving perfection, but about aligning daily choices with your values. Begin with small, manageable actions that feel meaningful to you, such as switching to reusable items or choosing plant-based meals a few times a week. Over time, these small steps can build momentum and inspire others in your community.

It is also important to allow space for imperfection and growth. Environmental challenges are complex, and every effort counts, even when it feels insignificant. By practicing self-compassion and celebrating progress, we build the emotional resilience needed to stay engaged for the long haul.

Resilience grows through consistent, values-aligned actions that are both personal and planetary in benefit.

MENTAL  
HEALTH







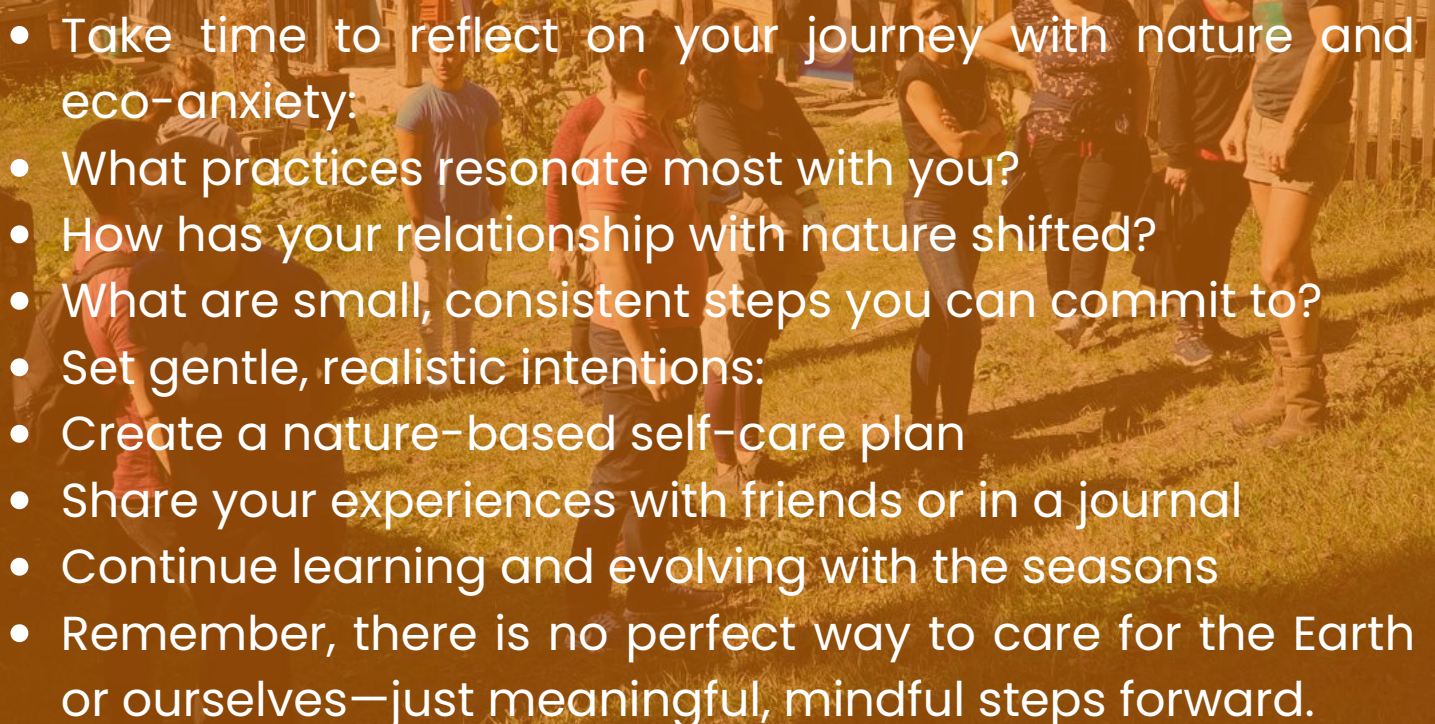
**ON THE MOVE**





# SOME HELPFUL NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This reflective question list was co-created by the youth workers during the final days of the project. Drawing from their personal experiences, group discussions, and the practices explored throughout the program, they identified the key questions that helped them process their journey with nature and eco-anxiety. The goal was to create a gentle, supportive framework that they could use in their day to day work, as well as connect with the natural world and sustain meaningful personal growth beyond the project.

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- A group of young people, mostly teenagers, are standing in a grassy field. In the background, there is a wooden building with a porch and some trees. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a camp or a community center. The lighting is bright, suggesting it's daytime.
- Take time to reflect on your journey with nature and eco-anxiety:
  - What practices resonate most with you?
  - How has your relationship with nature shifted?
  - What are small, consistent steps you can commit to?
  - Set gentle, realistic intentions:
  - Create a nature-based self-care plan
  - Share your experiences with friends or in a journal
  - Continue learning and evolving with the seasons
  - Remember, there is no perfect way to care for the Earth or ourselves—just meaningful, mindful steps forward.



# OUR PROGRAM THROUGH PICTURES





# LUNCHTIME





# VISIT TO AN ECO FARM









# BBQ ON THE LAST DAY





# BBQ ON THE LAST DAY





# MORNING YOGA







## MENTAL HEALTHCARE SELF CHECKLIST *Eco-anxiety edition*

☒ EXERCISE

☐ WRITING-  
JOURNAL

☐ GARDENING



☐ RECYCLING

☐ READING A BOOK  
IN THE PARK

☐ HIKING



## Eco-Anxiety Pause, breathe and reflect.



Eco-anxiety is a challenging emotional response to climate change and other environmental issues. Climate change is an ongoing global threat that is largely characterized by uncertainty and lack of understanding. For this reason, anxiety and grief in humans is a natural and rational response for those feeling fear or a lack of control.

## MENTAL HEALTH

## TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR EVERYDAY  
WELL-BEING



MENTAL HEALTH IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS PHYSICAL HEALTH. IT AFFECTS HOW WE THINK, FEEL, AND ACT. TAKING CARE OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL FOR OVERALL WELL-BEING. HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU MAINTAIN GOOD MENTAL HEALTH.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE. TAKE TIME TO DO THINGS THAT YOU ENJOY, SUCH AS READING A BOOK, TAKING A WALK, OR HAVING A RELAXING BATH. PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE CAN HELP REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE MOOD.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS. HAVING A SUPPORT SYSTEM IS CRUCIAL FOR GOOD MENTAL HEALTH. REACH OUT TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL IF YOU NEED TO TALK OR RECEIVE GUIDANCE.



# SNAPSHOTS FROM OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER



# CLOSING REMARKS

As we come to the end of this handbook, we are reminded that caring for the Earth begins with caring for ourselves. Through this project and with the help of our youth workers, we explored how nature connection, creativity, mindfulness, and community can serve as powerful tools for easing eco-anxiety and building emotional resilience.

The journey doesn't end here. The reflections, practices, and stories shared within these pages are meant to inspire ongoing exploration. Whether you are a youth worker, educator, or simply someone seeking to reconnect with the natural world, we hope this resource serves as a companion on your path.

We are grateful to the dedicated youth workers who brought their full presence, vulnerability, and creativity to this experience. Their insights shaped not only this handbook but a growing movement of hope and healing in the face of environmental uncertainty. Together, we can continue to nurture a generation that approaches the planet not with fear, but with love, curiosity, and courage.

Let us walk gently, breathe deeply, and remember—we are not alone in this work. Nature walks with us.



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