



**TOOLS FOR CLIMATE GRIEF & ANXIETY:
COPING WITH THE EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF
CLIMATE CHANGE**



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
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WELCOME TO THE TOOLS FOR CLIMATE GRIEF & ANXIETY: COPING WITH THE EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE GUIDEBOOK.

This guidebook consists of a variety of reflective activities to support a deeper understanding of your climate emotions, discover what's under the surface and explore self and community care tools that work for you. This guidebook has been designed for you to do at your own pace and complete in any order that resonates and is helpful to you.



TERMS

- **Climate Emotions:** The spectrum of emotions one might feel in response to climate change.
- **Ecological grief, ecological anxiety, ecological despair:** all refer to emotional reactions of grief, anxiety and/or despair that come from the environmental loss of eco-systems.
- **Climate grief, climate anxiety, climate despair:** all refer to emotional reactions of grief, anxiety and/or despair as a result of climate change related losses.
- **Place Bereavement: Refers to the loss of a place.** Examples of this: refugees might feel place bereavement at having to leave their homes, equally a move or even something like the development of housing where there was once a park
- **Topocide:** the death of a place - examples: clear cutting event, landslide.
- **Solastalgia:** “homesickness while still in place”- the distress that is produced by environmental change impacting people while they are directly connected to their home environment.
- **A “radical” acceptance:** entails facing the truth about the climate situation, accepting our complex feelings on it, holding in our minds and our hearts the reality of the loss experienced and/or are are facing while at the same time remaining functional and engaged in the world.

Sources:

[IdentifyingTypesofEco-AnxietyEco-GuiltEco-GriefandEco-CopinginaClimate-SensitivePopulation
https://www.climateandmind.org/what-is-climate-grief](https://www.climateandmind.org/what-is-climate-grief)

SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF COMPASSION & PRACTICING CURIOSITY:



A common experience when feeling grief or anxiety is to feel self-critical or to express harsh thoughts towards yourself. Remind yourself that there is no timeline for grief and every person experiences it differently. Something that can help us extend gentleness to ourselves during the process and in our day to day lives is the practice of self-compassion. Use these practices below to cultivate self compassion and to practice extending curiosity towards your emotions.

> Choose one of the readings or poems at the end of this booklet. Spend some time reading it and meditating on it. What about this particular poem or reading speaks to you? Are there words or images that stand out? Why? Find a friend to share the poem with. Discuss what speaks to you and listen to their experience of it.

> We often hold our grief and tension within our bodies. Spend some time gently releasing your emotions. Take some time to bring awareness to your body. Notice where you are feeling grief, tightness or anxiety. Ask your body how it wants to move through or with those feelings. Notice what arises. If the urge to run, to stretch, to scream, to draw, arises, honour your body by following those inclinations.

> Go outside and find somewhere to sit for a few moments. Connect with a nonhuman near you. Observe it. Make its acquaintance in whatever way feels comfortable and respectful to you. Do this for a period of time, whether daily, once a week or monthly. Ask it what it has to teach you about loss, grief or interconnection. Listen or perhaps journal your observations. Thank it.

> Intuitive drawing: Using color, texture, or line, without stopping to plan or think about it, doodle:

Solastalgia	Care	Love
Loss	Fear	Anxiety
Disenfranchised	Paradox.	Wellness
Love.	Anxiety.	Interconnection

> Spend some time thinking about what language for eco/climate grief and anxiety resonate for you? How do you express your Climate Emotions? What communities hold and validate your grief? Where do you feel these emotions in your body? What actions would feel supportive to you in processing these emotions?

> Make a list of your strengths, skills and passions. Find 3-4 folks who know you well and ask them what they strengths, skills and passions they've observed within you. Notice where there is overlap and what themes arise. Spend some time noting where you are using those strengths, and skills and where you would like to use them in connection to Climate Action.

> Write a grief practice or ritual for yourself and then try to practice it consistently.



> Practice Box Breathing. Take a minute to sit or lay down, putting one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Watch your stomach fill with air as you slowly inhale while counting to 4. Hold your breath for 4 seconds, gently exhale for 4 seconds, and hold once again for 4 seconds once you've finished exhaling your breath. Repeat as needed.

PRACTICING BOUNDARIES

Ways We Violate Our Own Boundaries

Created by @silvykhocasian

Spending time with people to the point of emotional exhaustion

Not speaking up about something that is important to us

Overgiving without asking to have our needs reciprocated back

Not making our opinions or our emotions a priority

Not letting people know when we hit our emotional or physical "limits"

Source: @silvykhocasian

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do you define boundaries?
2. What are your boundaries?
3. How have you held them this season?
4. What feels challenging about setting boundaries?
5. What does practicing boundary setting look like for you?



my boundaries

@crazyheadcomics



Source: @crazyheadcomics



COMMUNITY CARE

*recognizes that we live in systems that are interdependent and that our ability to be well intersects with our communities' ability to be well.



*"Collective care refers to seeing (a community) members' well-being - particularly their emotional health - as a shared responsibility of the group rather than the lone task of an individual."

*Mehreen, R., & Gray-Donald, D. (2018, August 29). Be careful with each other. Briarpatch Magazine. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/be-careful-with-each-other>

WAYS TO PRACTICE SELF & COMMUNITY CARE

- Group Checkins
 - normalize conversations about sadness, anxiety and mental health without rushing to fix things.
- Have people take turns bringing a poem or meditative activity to open your group. Give people time to share or journal about it.
- Plan retreat/mental wellness moments or activities and incorporate this into your communities, using nature as a guide or mentor.
- Honour boundaries. Give people permission to say no & help them practice it.
- Share a meal or potluck together.
- Start a book club together using a book from the resource list at the end of this package.
- Connecting with other people around conversations of Climate Change & Mental health

What communities are you part of? What are some ways that you already practice community care with them? What are some ways that you would like to:



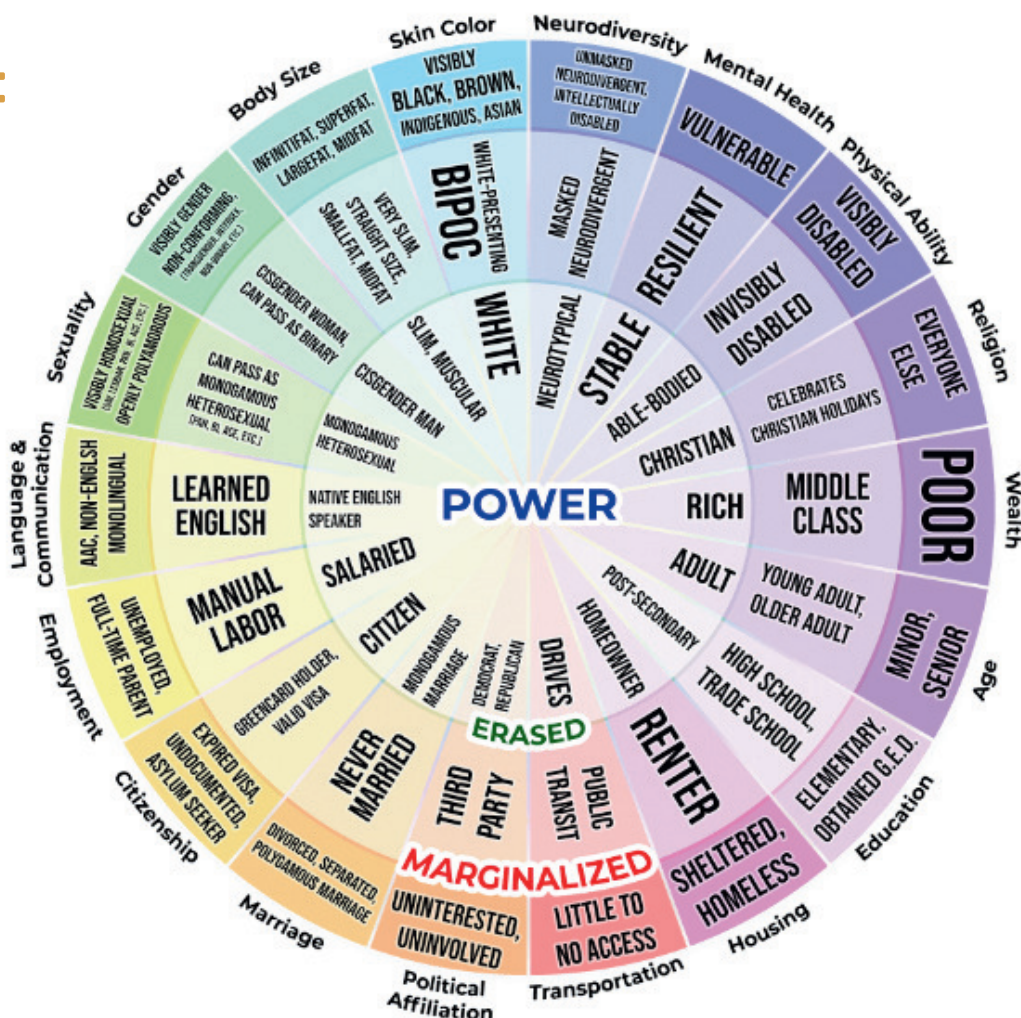


INTERSECTIONALITY WHEEL OF PRIVILEGE

As Observed in the USA

REFLECTING ON SOCIAL LOCATION:

- Where do you see yourself on this wheel?
- Where do you carry power?
- Where have you experienced oppression or harm?
- What healing still needs to happen in your life?
- What, if anything, makes you feel uncomfortable or challenged by this wheel?
- How can practices of cultivating relationship and belonging to Earth help you move through this?
- How do you acknowledge your positionality?
- Where does this show up in your relationships?



TessaWatkins.com/wheel-of-privilege

Adapted from Sylvia Duckworth, Canadian Council for Refugees, and Olena Hankiv

Source:

<https://just1voice.com/advocacy/wheel-of-privilege/>



art: Dori Midnight

Gratitude

- Where did you experience joy, connection, or wonder today?
- How did those moments connect you to yourself? to others? to Earth?

Honouring Pain

- Where do you feel sadness, grief or pain in your body today?
- Where does that grief or pain intersect with grief in the larger body of the human, more than human world and the Earth?
- Write a lament/letter or poem expressing it. Ask yourself, how can you acknowledge or honour those feelings?
- What do those feelings tell you about your interconnection? What do they tell you about what matters to you?

Seeing with new eyes

- Engage your curiosity. What new perspectives have your gratitude and grief been inviting you into about yourself, your interconnection with others, the more than human community, the Earth?
- What are you learning about other's stories? Where are you feeling challenged or at your edges? How can you engage your curiosity around those?

Going Forth

- How are you integrating what you are learning into the way you live?
- How does belonging to Earth help you engage your curiosity and see the interconnections between yourself and others?
- What does moving forward look like for you right now?

LAND

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Find out what land you reside on here: www.Native-land.ca

- Who were the first people in relationship with the land you live on?
- What are the harms that it and the people who were first living there and/or enslaved upon it have undergone?
- How are these harms connected?
- How does living on this land bring you into an experience of belonging? What responsibilities come with this?
- What does belonging to land and its inhabitants ask of you?

How do I behave under sustained stress? Physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally?

What physical activities are supportive to my wellbeing?

Who are my clinical supports?

What books, podcasts, music or other media helps me feel connected to myself & supported?

YOUR WELLNESS SUPPORTS

What spiritual or grounding activities support me in my work?

What creative pursuits help me to process difficult things?

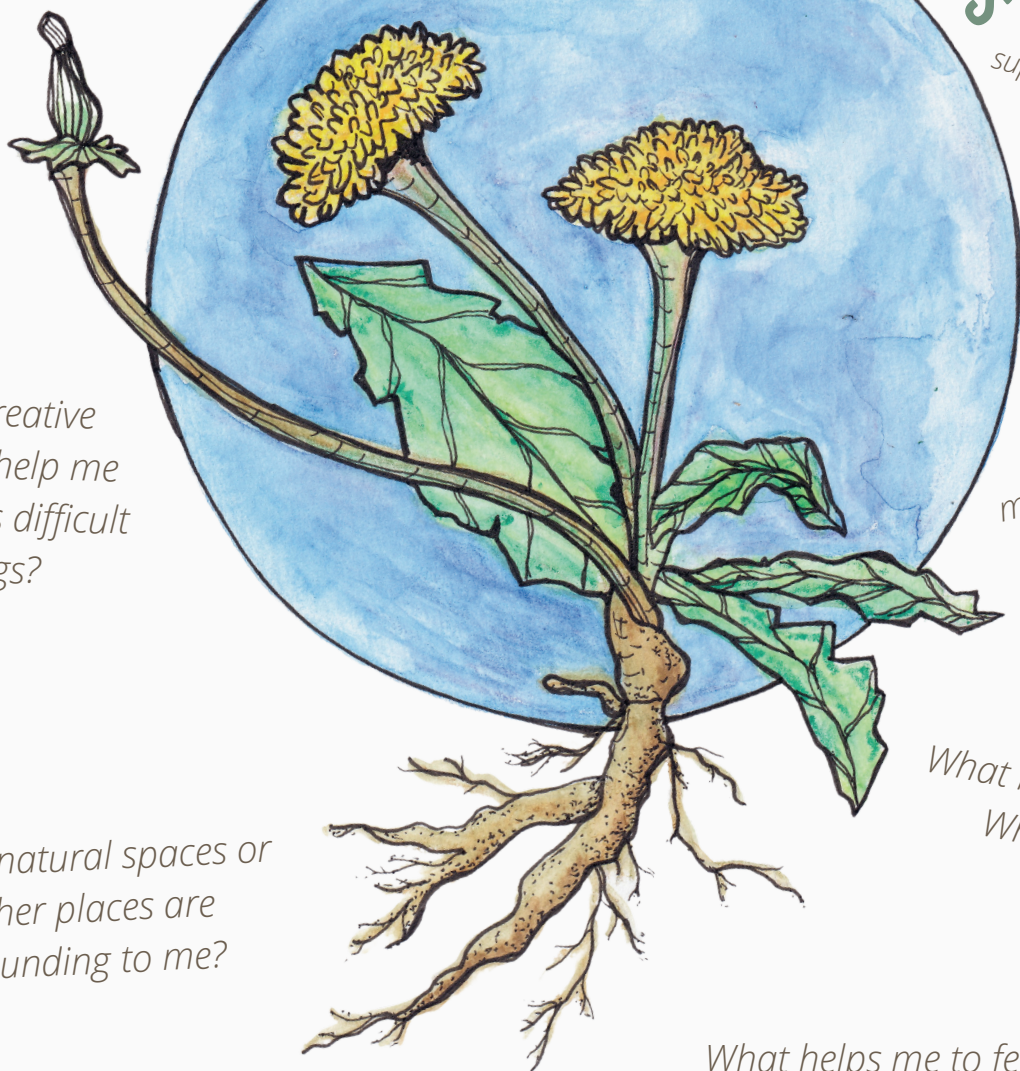
How can I track and make shifts when I notice my energy being depleted?

What natural spaces or other places are grounding to me?

What makes me energized?
What depletes me?

Which friends, family members or community connections can I go to when I need a supportive ear?

What helps me to feel rested? Are there rhythms, routines or practices that help me feel well and connected?





POETRY

The Struggle Continues

Israel Buffardi

The road that lies ahead of us is a long one,
and the pace of progress will sometimes feel
glacially slow.

Never forget that glaciers over time can
carve out grand canyons and great lakes.

Moving tectonic plates can rise up mountains
over millennia, or they can explode awe-
inspiring volcanoes in milliseconds.

Our commitment to love and justice can do
the same.



Radical Gratitude Spell

adrienne maree brown

a spell to cast upon meeting a stranger,
comrade or friend working for social
and/or environmental justice and
liberation:

you are a miracle walking

i greet you with wonder

in a world which seeks to own

your joy and your imagination

you have chosen to be free,

every day, as a practice.

i can never know

the struggles you went through to get

here,

but i know you have swum upstream

and at times it has been lonely

i want you to know

i honor the choices you made in solitude

and i honor the work you have done to

belong

i honor your commitment to that which is

larger than yourself

and your journey

to love the particular container of life

that is you

you are enough

your work is enough

you are needed

your work is sacred

you are here

and i am grateful



The Thing Is

Ellen Bass

to love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you've held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical
heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you down like your
own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, How can a body withstand
this?
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.

Psalm

Anita Barrows

And I would travel with you
to the places of our shame
To hills stripped of trees, the marsh grasses
oil-slicked, steeped in sewage;
The blackened shoreline, the chemical-
poisoned water;
I would stand with you in the desolate places,
the charred places,
soil where nothing will ever grow, pitted
desert;
Fields that burn slowly for months; roots of
cholla and chaparral
writhing with underground explosions
I would put my hand
there with yours, I would take your hand, I
would walk with you
Through carefully planted fields, rows of leafy
vegetables
drifting with radioactive dust; through the
dark
of uranium mines hidden in the sacred gold
red mountains;
I would listen to you in drafty hospital
corridors
as the miner cried out in the first language
Of pain; as he cried out
the forgotten names of his mother
I would stand
next to you in the forest's
Final hour, in the wind
of helicopter blades, police
Sirens shrieking, the delicate
tremor of light between
Leaves for the last
time. Oh I would touch with this love each
Wounded place.



INDIVIDUAL ONE ON ONE SUPPORT &/OR PEER SUPPORT:

Climate Psychology Alliance: www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/

Eco-spiritual Direction & Work that Reconnects YYC Practice group: info@refugiaretreats.com : www.refugiaretreats.com

The Good Grief Network: www.thegoodgriefnetwork.com

Mind and Life Institute: www.mindandlife.org

Yoga for Ecological Grief Online Course: <https://a-restful-space.teachable.com/>

Land Back Manifesto: <https://landback.org/manifesto/>

Decolonize Workbooks: <https://nahaneecreative.com/ta7taliyas-shop>

Honor the Earth: <https://honorearth.org/>

The Work that Reconnects: www.workthatreconnects.org

WEBSITES:



BOOKS

- **Coming Back to Life** - Joanna Macy & Molly Brown
- **Active Hope** - Joanna Macy & Chris Johnstone
- **Hospicing Modernity** - Vanessa Machado de Oliveira
- **Generation Dread** - Britt Wray
- **A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety** - Saray Ray Jaquette
- **How to Live in a Chaotic Climate** - [Laura Schmidt](#), [Aimee Lewis Reau](#), [Chelsie Rivera](#)
- **It's Not Just You: How to Navigate Eco-Anxiety and the Climate Crisis** - Tori Tsui
- **I Want a Better Catastrophe** - Andrew Boyd
- **Relational Mindfulness: A Handbook for Deepening Our Connections with Ourselves, Each Other, and the Planet** - Deborah Eden Tull
- **The Wild Edge of Sorrow** - Francis Weller
- **Earth Grief: The Journey Into & Through Ecological Loss** - Stephen Harrod Buhner
- **Kinship: Vols. 1-5** - eds: Gavin Van Horn, Robin Wall Kimmer, John Hausdoeffer
- **Finding Refuge: Heart Work for Healing Collective Grief** - Michelle Cassandra Johnson
- **We Were Made for These Times** - Kaira Jewel Lingo
- **Erosion: Essays of Undoing** - Terry Tempest Williams
- **The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save Our Earth** - The Red Nation
- **As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance** - Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

RESOURCES



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