



Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety, also known as eco-anxiety, refers to feelings of distress, worry, or fear related to the current and future impacts of climate change. It's important to note some level of concern or worry about climate change is normal; however, for individuals experiencing climate anxiety, this can be an overwhelming and distressing experience.

Individuals experiencing climate anxiety may feel overwhelmed by the scale of environmental issues, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity, and environmental degradation. This anxiety can stem from concerns about the future of the planet, ecosystems, wildlife, and human societies. People may also feel powerless or guilty about their contribution to climate change or their perceived lack of action from governments and corporations.

What are the Symptoms of Climate Anxiety?

Symptoms of climate anxiety can vary from person to person and not everyone will experience all of these, but some common signs may include:

- Persistent worry or preoccupation about climate change and its environmental impacts
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness about the future of the planet
- Difficulty sleeping or changes in sleep patterns due to thoughts about climate change
- Increased stress, anxiety, or overwhelm when exposed to information about the environment

- Physical symptoms, like headaches, muscle tension, or stomach discomfort
- Avoidance behaviours, such as avoiding discussions about climate change or avoiding places or activities that trigger anxiety
- Mood changes, including sadness, anger, or frustration about the lack of climate action
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies due to a sense of despair or apathy
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing on tasks due to intrusive thoughts or worries
- Social withdrawal or isolation as a coping mechanism to deal with climate-related stress

Who Might Experience Climate Anxiety?

Climate anxiety can impact anyone, regardless of background, age, location, or circumstances. Addressing climate change and its psychological impacts requires collective action at the individual, community, and societal levels. However, certain groups may be more likely to experience it.

This includes the younger generations, such as millennials and Generation Z, who are facing the long-term consequences of climate change. In addition, concerns about the children's future may contribute to climate anxiety among caregivers.

Individuals actively engaged in environmental activism or advocacy work or who work in climate science and related fields are also at heightened risk.



People living in marginalised or climate-vulnerable communities, including low-income communities and First Nations communities may experience disproportionate impacts from climate change, leading to increased anxiety about their safety.

Individuals with pre-existing anxiety disorders or other mental health conditions may be more vulnerable to experiencing climate anxiety, as environmental concerns may exacerbate their symptoms.

How to Manage Climate Anxiety

Limit Exposure:

Stay informed about climate change, but be mindful of how much news and information you consume, as constant exposure to negative stories can increase anxiety. Set boundaries for yourself and take breaks from media when needed.

Engage in Positive News and Solutions:

Seek out stories of environmental progress, innovative solutions, and examples of resilience in the face of climate change. Engaging with positive news can help counterbalance feelings of despair.

Take Action:

Engage in actions that contribute to positive change, such as supporting renewable energy initiatives, advocating for policies, and participating in community clean-up efforts. Acting can help empower you and alleviate feelings of helplessness.

76%

young people aged 16-25 are concerned about climate change.

Orygen, (2023), [New research shows the scale of climate distress among young Australians: we have 12 solutions.](#)

Connect with Others:

Seek support from friends, family, or support groups who share your concerns about climate change. Having conversations about your feelings and experiences can help normalise your emotions.

Practice Self-Care:

Incorporate self-care practices into your routine to help manage stress and anxiety. This could include activities such as mindfulness meditation, exercise, spending time in nature, practising deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies that bring you joy.

Focus on What You Can Control:

Instead of dwelling on things that are beyond your control, focus on taking action in areas where you can make a difference, whether it's through personal lifestyle changes or advocacy efforts.

Seek Professional Help:

If climate anxiety is significantly impacting your daily life or mental health, consider seeking support from a mental health professional, such as through Acacia EAP, who can provide coping strategies and support tailored to your individual needs.