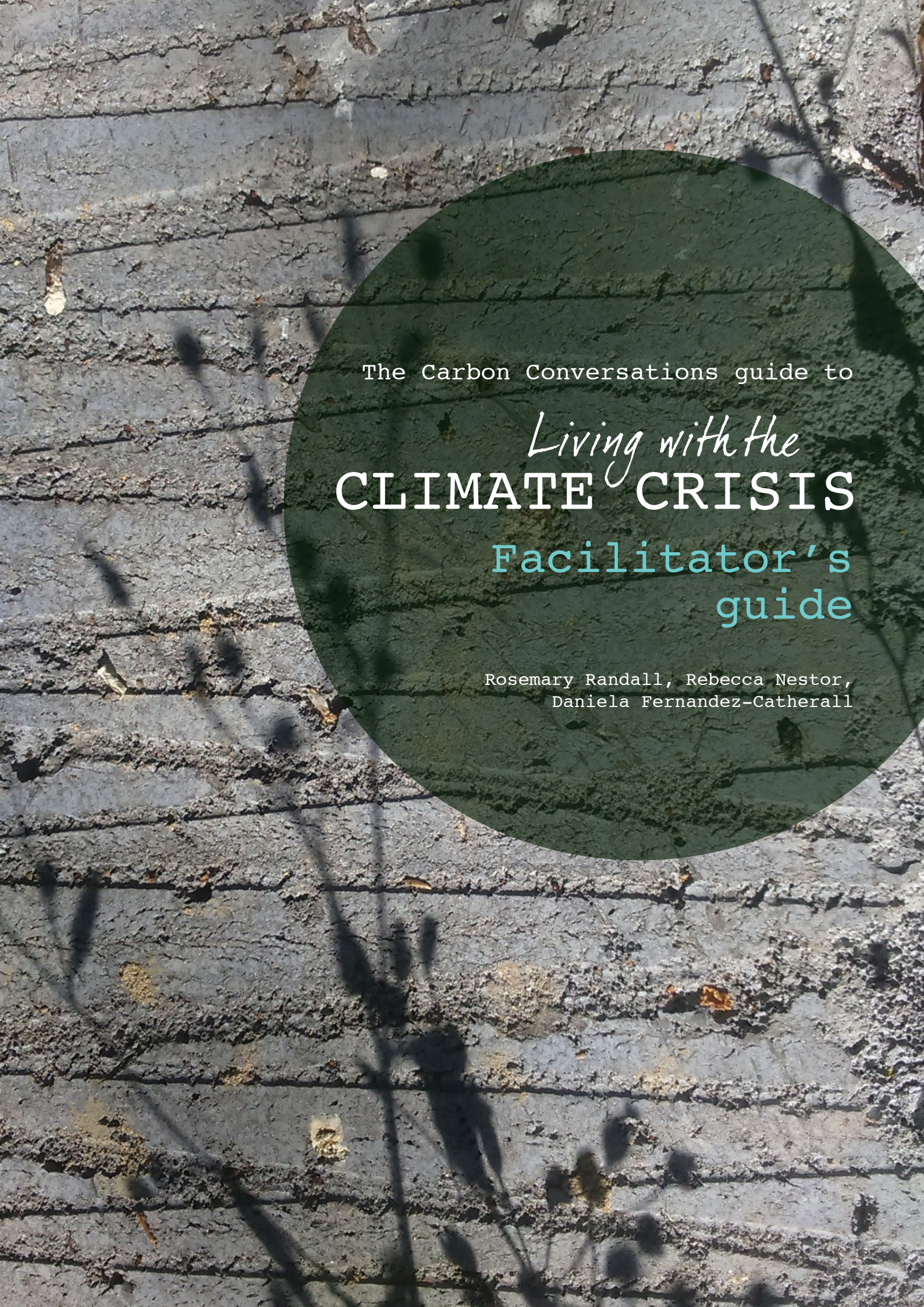


The Carbon Conversations guide to

Living with the CLIMATE CRISIS

Facilitator's guide

Rosemary Randall, Rebecca Nestor,
Daniela Fernandez-Catherall

CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY ALLIANCE
Facing difficult truths

First published in the UK 2023 by
The Climate Psychology Alliance
https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/
https://www.livingwiththeclimatecrisis.org
Contact: admin@climatepsychologyalliance.org

Acknowledgments

We are very grateful to David Denborough for permission to adapt instructions and to quote from his book *Collective narrative practice* (Denborough 2008) and to Marshall Ganz for permission to use his public narrative method (Ganz 2011).

Living with the climate crisis has been made possible through crowd funding by the Climate Psychology Alliance and through consultancy work done by members of the CPA and members of Cambridge Climate Therapists. We are very grateful to everyone who has contributed their money, time and volunteer effort to the project as well as to the people who took part in the pilot groups that were part of its development.

The authors

Rosemary Randall is a psychotherapist with a long history of involvement in the climate movement. She has written and published widely on the psychology of climate change. She is co-founder of the Carbon Conversations project, a founder member of the Climate Psychology Alliance and is currently active with Cambridge Climate Therapists. https://rorandall.org

Dr Rebecca Nestor is an organisational consultant, coach and professional facilitator whose focus is supporting those facing the climate crisis. Rebecca is currently a board member of the Climate Psychology Alliance and chair of Low Carbon Oxford North. https://rebeccanestor.co.uk

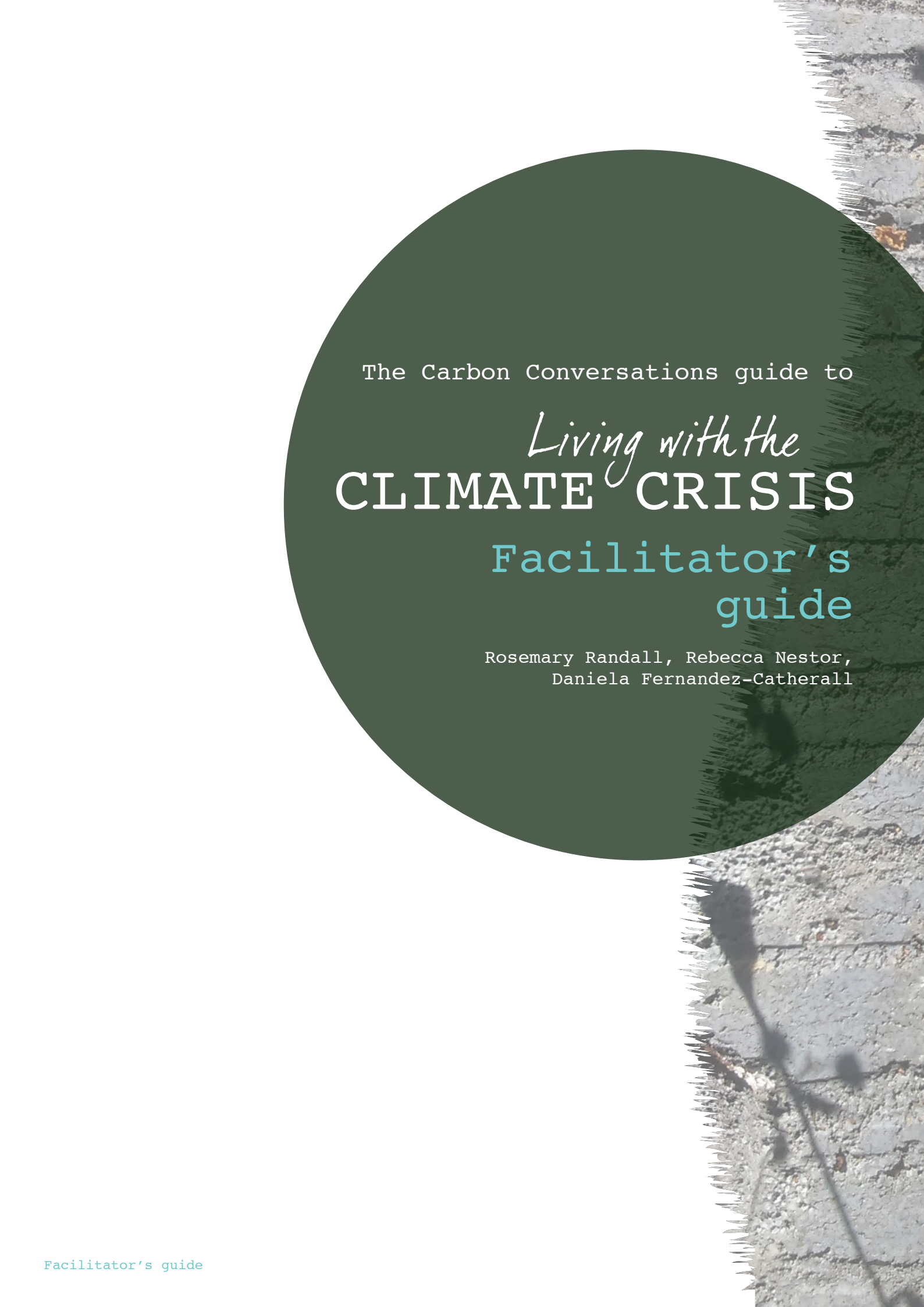
Dr Daniela Fernandez-Catherall is a Chartered Clinical Psychologist (British Psychological Society) with particular interests in narrative therapy and community psychology. She is currently working with Cambridge Climate Therapists on the development of community practices to support people experiencing difficulties related to the climate crisis. http://ourstorypsychology.com

The Carbon Conversations guide to

Living with the CLIMATE CRISIS

Facilitator's guide

Rosemary Randall, Rebecca Nestor,
Daniela Fernandez-Catherall



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Living with the climate crisis provides materials and guidance for a series of group meetings which aim to help people respond to the climate crisis, both personally and collectively. There are four elements to the materials:

- a *Facilitator's guide* to running the groups (this document);
- PowerPoint slides which provide information and instructions for some of the group activities;
- a *Participant's handbook* which contains instructions for some of the activities and summarises aspects of the meetings for participants;
- *Living lightly* – a guide to carbon reduction.

All are available to download from the *Living with the climate crisis* website.

The project draws on psychologically based work we've done in the community over several decades but in particular it's a response to issues we've met more recently while working with groups and individuals who are struggling with the enormity of the crisis.

We come from different backgrounds and specialisms. Ro is a psychotherapist with a background in psychoanalysis and group work. Rebecca is an organisational consultant, coach and professional facilitator. Daniela is a clinical psychologist with expertise in community

psychology. Andy, who co-authors *Living lightly* and has provided us with numbers and technical information for the project, is an engineer for the built environment. We have all been active in the community and political organisations that have for many years argued, campaigned and protested about the need for urgent action. We are united in our concern for the well-being of those who struggle to bring change, both those who have come recently to the climate movement and those who are veterans of years of struggle. We are aware however of the limitations that come from our backgrounds and we hope that *Living with the climate crisis* will develop a community of practitioners who will develop and adapt the project.

Three of us (Ro, Andy and Rebecca) were involved in an earlier initiative, Carbon Conversations, which brought psychological understanding and small group work to carbon reduction. This new project is in part our response to requests from users to update Carbon Conversations for the dilemmas of the 2020s. Questions about political action, systemic change, communication and the building of a movement are present with an urgency which is greater than that felt in 2007 when Carbon Conversations was launched. Central to *Living with the climate crisis* is our perception of the acute distress suffered by those who allow themselves to know fully what climate change is and what it may bring.

The groups are rooted in psychological understandings of our distress, of our difficulties in communication and of each person's need to find a place in action.

As climate disasters proliferate and negotiations stall, we meet young people whose trust in government is gone, couples who no longer feel it is ethical to have children and activists who are burnt out and traumatised. We talk with climate scientists on the edge of despair and ecologists overwhelmed by grief. Meanwhile, people in everyday encounters shudder and tell us, as we remark on the strange weather, that they would rather not think about it.

The groups we outline here are one possible response to these dilemmas. They provide a space for people to talk, to share, to express and to reflect. They offer tools, ideas and skills. They emphasise our shared humanity, our interdependence and the need for a collective response. They are rooted in psychological understandings of our distress, of our difficulties in communication and of each person's need to find a place in what is often a bewildering array of possibilities for

action. Throughout, we use the metaphor of an ecosystem to describe the complexity of the climate movement and the wider environment that it operates in. As Suzanne Simard points out in her book *Finding the mother tree:* 'Ecosystems are so similar to human societies – they're built on relationships.' (Simard 2021, p.189). In both it's the bonds and connections that help us to adapt, evolve, grow and thrive.

The groups aim to help people share ways to still find meaning, joy and satisfaction in the precarious world we all now find ourselves in.

Put briefly, the groups aim to help people:

- find support for the complexity and pain of their feelings;
- find their place in the collective project of responding to the climate crisis;
- explore ways to make that response personally sustainable;
- communicate with empathy and skill about the crisis;
- share ways to still find meaning, joy and satisfaction in the precarious world we all now find ourselves in.

These aims cannot all be met by a short group but we hope that the groups will give people enough to take them forward, and that members will remain nourished and connected once the group has ended.

Living with the climate crisis groups are a mix of psychologically based groupwork and experiential learning. Each of the three modules combines some specific, focused activities with less structured group time.

Module one 'Coming together and putting down roots' is about climate distress and building the collective strength to cope.

Module two 'Communication' takes a psychological look at how to talk about climate change, firstly in conversations with family and friends and secondly in more public settings.

Module three 'The ecosystem of change' explores the systems people are part of, the nature of carbon reduction and the possibilities for action, before focusing on the ending of the group and the role it has played for people.

Throughout, the emphasis is on the creation of the group as a source of collective strength and healing. A full group requires 20 hours of group time but the materials can be used flexibly in various combinations of evening and all day meetings. We also anticipate that facilitators may want to extract activities or ideas from the materials to use or adapt for other contexts.

The groups aim to help people find support for the complexity and pain of their feelings.

In chapter one we discuss the rapidly developing field of climate psychology and the ideas that have influenced us. Our focus is on the psycho-social approaches which connect personal experience to social and political structures. We explore climate distress, loss and grief, the idea of the climate journey and touch on other key concepts like burnout, disavowal and trauma.

In chapter two we outline our approach to working in groups and discuss some of the key issues in facilitating *Living with the climate crisis*. We discuss the skills facilitators will need, the shape and process of the groups and explore ideas of healing, experiential learning and acting sustainably for change. We imagine that people from a variety of backgrounds will want to facilitate these groups. Good facilitative skills are not the province of one profession and we discuss what people from different kinds of trainings are likely to bring to the group process. The Climate Psychology Alliance will be coordinating introductory sessions and mentoring for facilitators who would like to use the materials. This chapter also discusses questions of group recruitment and whether it is possible to run a group online.

In chapter three we look in more detail at the approaches and methods that we use in each module. We outline the background to the activities in various forms of psychotherapy, group work, experiential learning and systems thinking and suggest reading that may help facilitators who are unfamiliar with any of them.

In chapter four we provide step by step guidance for running each session. Here you will find outlines, timings and optional PowerPoint slides which can be downloaded from the website. There is information on the key content, discussion of the group issues that are likely to arise, and guidance on how to run each activity. In this chapter we also introduce the two documents for group members, the short *Participant's*

handbook and the *Living lightly* guide to carbon reduction. These are intended to be used by participants outside the meetings, in the buddy pairs which are formed part way through the group. Both documents are available to download on the *Living with the climate crisis* website.

We are making these materials freely available, under Creative Commons Licences, so that they can be used as widely as possible by people in the climate movement. The writing, testing and production of these materials have all been done voluntarily as part of our contribution to the movement. We hope that you will honour our intention that the groups should be free at the point of use and that no-one will use them to make money.

If you would like to translate them into another language, please contact us for a separate translation agreement.

Throughout the development of *Living with the climate crisis* we have been encouraged and supported by people from our own ecosystems of support and change. Central is the Climate Psychology Alliance whose members and board have encouraged us from the start and whose generous offer to host the project, to fund raise and manage it has been crucial. Daniela and Ro are also grateful to members of Cambridge Climate Therapists for their support and commitment.

We hope that those facilitating these groups and those who come to them as members will find similar sustenance and flourish in whatever part of the ecosystem of change which they inhabit.

The groups aim to help people find their place in the collective project of responding to the climate crisis.

One: Climate psychology

Our approach in *Living with the climate crisis* owes much to the new and rapidly developing field of climate psychology. We've drawn heavily on psycho-social writers – those who connect subjectivity to social and cultural life and who examine the systems and ideologies that sustain the status quo.

The questions such writers ask and the answers they provide have helped us think about how to work psychologically with people in our communities. How do people manage to ignore what we think is staring them in the face? How does society make us complicit in disaster? Does neoliberalism have something to do with people's refusal to care? How do scientists and activists cope with being up close to the truth? How do people in the fossil fuel industries get up and go to work each morning? What happens to unexpressed grief? We've found answers to these and many other questions in the work of researchers who've adopted a psycho-social approach. We've listed a few of these below and we'd encourage anyone who plans to facilitate a *Living with the climate crisis* group to delve into this literature for themselves.

Matthew Adams' *Ecological crisis, sustainability and the psychosocial subject* summarises how a psychosocial framework can help us think about the crisis (Adams 2016). Sally Weintrobe's *Psychological roots of the climate crisis* analyses the impact of neoliberalism and individualism (Weintrobe 2021). Renee Lertzman's *Environmental melancholia* explores what happens when people cannot socially process their climate grief (Lertzman 2015). Susan Long's *Turning a blind eye to climate change* looks at the perverse dynamics of the fossil-fuel industries (Long 2015). Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall examine the responses of scientists and activists to the crisis (Hoggett and Randall 2018). We are also indebted to the writers who have explored the dynamics of denial and disavowal (for example Norgaard 2011, Weintrobe 2013, Randall 2005), and the writers on climate distress, anxiety, grief and trauma (for example Randall 2020, Hickman et al 2021, Pihkala 2020, Bednarek 2021).

We've also reached wider however. Always in the background are climate science and in particular the essentials of calculating and reducing carbon impacts. As we puzzled over how to build people's strength and challenge unhelpful narratives we found inspiration in the work of David Denborough and Naczelo Ncube-Mlilo (Denborough 2008, Ncube-Mlilo 2017). As we worked on how to help people communicate better we reached back to the basic therapeutic understandings of the unconscious and processes of defence, projection and resistance but we also engaged with the public narrative work of Marshall Ganz (Ganz 2011) and the findings of social psychology on messaging and audiences (Marshall 2015, Webster 2019). And as we looked at the dynamics of change we turned to systems theory and to the importance of reflective practice (Argyris and Schön 1983, Eraut 1994). We discuss these latter influences in detail in Chapter three: approaches and methods.

People will come to a Living with the climate crisis group from many different places.

Climate distress

We know that levels of what is often called climate anxiety are high, particularly amongst young people. (Hickman op. cit.). We prefer to use the term climate distress because it captures the range of feelings people describe and emphasises their normality. Helping people understand and cope with these feelings is a major part of a *Living with the climate crisis* group.

People will come to a *Living with the climate crisis* group from many different places. Some will be feeling the acute distress that comes from a recent awakening to the issue. Some will be returning to feelings they thought they had dealt with: new feelings of dread and despair may be emerging alongside rekindled anger and grief. Others may be struggling with feelings of failure, exhaustion and burnout. Older people who have a more distant baseline for how the natural world used to be can be overwhelmed by grief for what is lost. Seasoned campaigners can be gripped by feelings of failure and disappointment as they look at how emissions have continued to rise despite the campaigns they have worked so hard on.

Campaigners often say that action is the antidote to despair and there is truth in this. What it misses out is the process of getting there and the costs of involvement. Action which takes place in a turmoil of feeling is often misdirected and exhausting. Fuelled by unfocused anger, it often ends in collapse or burnout. The complex feelings need to be acknowledged, understood, supported and worked with. The feelings never completely go away but it is possible to arrive at a place where they are no longer unmanageable, where life can continue to have meaning and action feels sustainable.

The most acute experiences of distress seem to come from people who have recently become aware. The feelings they report are varied and complex but there seems to be a distinction between the feelings

that arrive at the moment when people first allow the significance of climate change to sink in and those that gradually come to dominate. At the beginning people typically describe shock, disbelief, fear, anger, feeling overwhelmed, feeling powerless and sometimes being poleaxed by despair. People talk of being unable to sleep, being unable to stop thinking about it, losing appetite and living in states of high alert. It is important to recognise that these are normal responses to receiving very bad news and not to pathologise them.

The feelings are similar to those which people experience on hearing other pieces of bad news that bring loss and grief in their wake. The death of someone close to you is the obvious example but other losses such as discovering that you have failed an important exam or are facing redundancy can have a similar if less profound effect. Fifteen or twenty years ago when we first started making these comparisons some people thought they were unfounded. In 2022 however we meet people who express a grief about the climate crisis which is greater and more unmanageable than these examples. The loss they feel is more like that of a child experiencing the loss of a parent: unexpected, impossible, unbelievable but nonetheless true and unavoidable. They are shattered and disorientated. They look around themselves and see the systems that support them collapsing. Everything that makes life feel safe and likely to continue feels as if it is vanishing. They can imagine no future and nothing that would make life feel worthwhile. This kind of experience can be hard to articulate and hard to respond to.

Not everyone feels this extreme and traumatic grief but grief is there in some form for most people who grapple with the climate crisis. It needs to be talked about, supported, understood and lived through if people are to take a useful place in the climate movement.

Most people gradually become able to talk about how these feelings are playing out in their lives. For some it's fear about what life holds for their children or grandchildren. For some it's the loss of an assumed future – whether that's a retirement filled with travel, a career in a high-polluting industry or a more general sense that life is broadly safe and secure. With this can come a loss of identity. People find themselves questioning their assumptions, values and past behaviour. Who am I if I have a job in the oil industry but now recognise it must end? Who am I if my life has been shaped by foreign travel that I no longer feel is valid? Why did I not react to this sooner?

Some people find themselves isolated from family and friends if those close to them do not share their concerns. Young people bridle when their parents try to offer reassurance. Parents fall out with grandparents over what to tell the children. Some describe catastrophic rows. Others recount how a quiet but devastating distance develops as they to refuse to share in the high carbon trips they used to enjoy.

Into this maelstrom of painful experience come anxiety, grief, guilt, shame and depression. Young people who are usually hearing about climate change for the first time are typically grappling with feelings of fear, anger and a sense of having been profoundly betrayed by governments and those they expected to care for them. Older people are often emerging from long-standing states of disavowal where they have known about the issue for years but managed to defend themselves against its implications, placing these in a separate part of the mind and carrying on with life as usual.[1]

Emerging from states of disavowal is extremely painful. The feelings of shame and guilt at having ignored the problem can be overwhelming and while these feelings can, with encouragement, be openly expressed it is just as common to find people erecting new defences. Some claim that they simply didn't know, asserting that there was no publicity for the issue in years past. Some emphasise the history of their concern, confusing knowledge with action. Others cope with the guilt by becoming masochistically preoccupied with scenarios of collapse and disaster.

Everyone comes to the group vulnerable. Everyone will at some point find their proximity to the crisis unbearable.

A focus on the feelings of those who are recently involved needs to be set alongside the experiences of those who have been active for decades. Action brings many positives. Comradeship and solidarity, organising skills and deep knowledge of the problems are a few. Action also has emotional costs however. Grief never completely goes away and can re-emerge painfully in response to repeated failure or new trauma. People can become depressed and self-critical at the lack of progress. They can be traumatised by experiences with the criminal justice system. Some become stuck in styles of action that are fruitless. Others become bitter or cynical towards those who have more hope. Exploring the feelings and the stories and celebrating the strengths of those who have given life-long commitment is important.

All these complex feelings and experiences are likely to emerge during a *Living with the climate crisis* group. Space is given to them explicitly in the first module in both pair and whole group discussions but they will also emerge at other times, sometimes directly but also in indirect ways. Difficult feelings, such as blame, failure, disappointment and fear may be expressed as projections, sometimes directed outside the group but also onto the group itself or its facilitators.

Everyone comes to the group vulnerable. Everyone will at some point find their proximity to the crisis unbearable. Anyone can give way to unfocused rage, disappointment or despair. Creating a space that is safe enough to contain these feelings and allow them to be accepted, examined and understood is one of the key tasks of the facilitators. We discuss this further in Chapter two, working in groups.

Background frameworks

We've found it helpful to hold in our minds some frameworks for understanding climate distress. We describe them here for facilitators and more briefly in the *Participant's handbook* for participants. Other practitioners may prefer to use other frameworks but we offer these as two that we have found useful. Some groups will welcome them as part of the sense-making part of the process. Others may be less interested or not ready to use them. The best time to use them is as the group is beginning to make sense of their experiences for themselves. This is hopefully somewhere in the course of the first module. Someone may mention the idea of being on a journey or refer to grief and the frameworks may help people to make deeper sense of this. As a facilitator, you should be able to sense whether the moment is right.

Loss, grief and mourning

The first framework we use is the one we have already mentioned: that of loss, grief and mourning. Focusing on grief captures the intensity of the feelings but also offers the idea that there might be a way through. Out of the sadness, the fury, the melancholy and despair, drops of hopefulness may begin to coalesce and you may begin the slow climb back to a changed but liveable life. Grief changes you: it turns the world upside down and how you cope with it can make the difference between emerging into a life which is changed but worth living and retreating into a life that is a shadow of what it once was. There are many different ways of understanding grief but the one we prefer is that of William Worden (Worden 1983) as it translates readily to the dilemmas of those struggling with climate issues. Worden conceives of the process of grief as a series of tasks that can either be faced into or turned away from.

The tasks of grief

Facing into the tasks	Turning away from the tasks
Accepting the reality of the loss, first intellectually and then emotionally.	Denial of the: • facts of the loss; • meaning of the loss; • irreversibility of the loss.
Working through the painful emotions of grief (despair, fear, guilt, anger, shame, sadness, yearning, disorganisation).	Shutting off all emotion, idealising what is lost, bargaining, numbing the pain through alcohol, drugs or manic activity.
Adjusting to the new environment, acquiring new skills, developing a new sense of self.	Not adapting, becoming helpless, bitter, angry, depressed, withdrawing.
Reinvesting emotional energy.	Refusing to love, turning away from life.

Adapted from Worden, W. (1983) Grief counselling and grief therapy. London, Tavistock.

In the early stages of climate grief, the grief is often unfocused and resists exploration. There is simply a feeling that everything is over, nothing can

be done, all is irretrievably lost. With space, support and encouragement people gradually become able to focus and articulate their grief, to see what is actually lost and what remains to live for and fight for.

Some people's grief is focused on the losses to the rest of the natural world: the birds that are no longer heard, the flowers that are no longer seen, the much loved habitats that are struggling to survive. Others focus, often with guilt and shame, on the losses being experienced by people whose communities are being torn apart by drought, flood, fire and storm. For many people though the most difficult loss is the loss of a life to which they have become accustomed. For those in the over-developed world this is usually a life of plenty, comfort and enjoyment. People see that it cannot continue but struggle to give it up. This means facing your complicity in systems you did not create, accepting responsibilities you didn't imagine would come your way and making major shifts in the direction and purpose of your life.

Grief is a messy process. It's not a straightforward journey where one stage seamlessly gives way to the next and Worden's model captures this. He describes how people will slip from task to task, retreat or turn away, re-emerge and struggle again. Grief about climate is complicated by the fact that it is largely unrecognised by the wider culture. There are no rituals and conventions for how it should be dealt with. When you face the loss of someone dear to you, however inadequate these conventions feel, they are there. People express their sorrow, write cards, bring food, leave flowers, help organise the funeral. They expect you to be shattered and needy. If you're lucky, they will listen, support you and tolerate your erratic feelings and outbursts of distress. You can take time off work and as time passes it may help to visit the grave and mark the anniversary. None of these rituals and conventions exist for people's grief about climate. There is no accepted way of dealing with the losses and changes that knowledge of the crisis brings. Some people experience it in isolation. Others find themselves amongst groups of people who are as distressed as themselves. Unable to offer each other support they pull each other into spirals of hopelessness or catastrophising.

Turning away from the tasks of grief can take many forms. Some people experience a crisis of identity and instead of exploring their values and life path, retreat. Some people rediscover their capacity for disavowal. Sometimes this is a straightforward retreat into old patterns of ignoring what is known. More often it involves emphasising one's powerlessness and using this as a reason to do little. 'I can't make a difference,' or 'It's not up to me,' people say. Emphasising the strength of more powerful players can be a way of minimising your own responsibility. Pointing only to the need for systemic or infrastructure change can negate the strength of collective action.

Moments of depression are inevitable when dealing with loss but some people become stuck there, mired in a mix of inaction, guilt, anger and shame. Guilt and shame are often strong in people whose defence of disavowal

has collapsed. If these feelings are too difficult to face, the reflection and self-criticism that might otherwise lead to reparation turn instead into masochism. One of the interesting things about the activists in Hoggett and Randall's study (Hoggett and Randall op. cit.) was that once they had properly understood the climate crisis, they left the climate news to one side. They did not repetitively revisit it. People who are struggling with the process of climate grief often get caught in echo-chambers of bad news, tweeting and retweeting about disaster, terrifying themselves and then projecting the terror out by terrifying others. Often they confuse knowledge with action. In the painful logic of masochism, if you are suffering then you are doing something. If you feel dreadful, it must be having an effect.

Catastrophising is a close cousin of this self-punishment. The threat of climate breakdown is real but a constant preoccupation with it often takes destructive forms. Rather than focusing on the problems faced by people in places where climate breakdown is already happening, people in the overdeveloped countries often focus on catastrophe happening very soon and to them personally. Dystopian imaginings connect with inner fears of one's own vulnerability, resonating with early experiences of abandonment or betrayal in ways that are rarely conscious.

One of the less obvious forms of turning away from the tasks is that of manic activity. In normal bereavement it's clear that manic activity is defending against the feelings of loss, blocking out reflection and annihilating pain with a frenzy of busyness. In the midst of the climate crisis this is less obvious. To be consumed by the need for action can seem appropriate but burnout is common and a collapse into the repressed, depressive feelings can be severe.

You are never completely free of the sadness but you can come to value life and to live its possibilities despite the uncertain and difficult future.

Working through grief is a repetitive, continuing process with steps which feel like progress and steps which feel like retreat. It distresses you. It changes you. It takes time and it requires support. But people do manage it and they often describe a life that feels richer on the other side. The dark days do return. You are never completely free of the sadness. You never feel comfortable in the way you did before. But you can come to value life and to live its possibilities despite the reality of an uncertain and difficult future.

Climate journeys

The second framework is that of the climate journey and comes from research by Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall into the experiences of climate activists (Hoggett and Randall op. cit.). It seems most applicable to the experiences of young people like those who featured in the research. The activists all described a similar experience of moving from extreme distress to what the researchers came to call sustainable activism. There were four phases: epiphany or awakening, immersion, action, crisis and resolution.

Epiphany or awakening describes the moment of waking up to issue and the feelings of shock, fear, anger and betrayal that ensue.

Immersion describes the intense preoccupation that usually follows. The activists described a process of immersing oneself in the science, struggling with overwhelming feelings of fear and distress, facing challenges to their identity and expectations, re-evaluating what their lives were likely to hold and searching for a commensurate response. This phase often overlapped with the next one, where people became deeply involved in activism.

Action describes a phase where people threw themselves into everything they could possibly do, from reducing the impact of their own lives to getting involved in direct action. Action brought respite from the overwhelming feelings and restored a sense of agency. Comradeship, solidarity and purpose were fundamental in restoring a basic level of mental health.

The experience of failure can be particularly difficult for young people who are new to politics...

Crisis and resolution. Over-commitment frequently brought burnout. New traumas from confrontations with police or opposition from the public were piled onto the earlier one of waking up to the crisis. At the time of interview, all the young people interviewed had reached the position the researchers called sustainable activism where a continuing deep commitment was balanced with the capacity to engage with other aspects of life as well. It was a calmer and more mature place.

In the phases of both epiphany and immersion understanding and support are critical. If support is absent and if friends or family are hostile, it can be a time of isolation and loneliness where people reach for psychological defences to protect themselves from the pain.

What helps people is usually the development of a commensurate response. This means finding a place in the networks of personal, community and political action and restoring a sense of agency. This is not an easy process. It requires support to deal with the complex feelings and the change of life direction that is usually needed.

The action phase also has problems however. If fear is dealt with through manic activity it can lead to burnout. When actions fail or don't produce the expected response hopelessness and confusion can return. The experience of failure can be particularly difficult for young people who are new to politics and for whom the clarity and urgency of the situation are stark. This is not a new problem. Back in 2008 a young activist assured one of us that the Beijing Olympics would be the last. 2012 would not happen, he said, because no government that understood climate change could possibly consent to flying that number of people around the world or expending that amount of CO_2 in the construction of new stadiums and facilities. More recently I've met young people shocked and confused by the cynicism of a government that declares a climate emergency but does nothing to act on that.

What helps with climate distress?

In the helping professions we know how to listen, support and help people work through painful experiences. These skills are important in dealing with climate distress but we need to reach beyond these skills to the wider context and causes of that distress. We need to move out of the consulting room and into the community, applying these skills in new ways and in different environments, using them to help people find ways of acting collectively in the service of change.

The personal experiences matter and need to be taken seriously. For some people, family and friends provide the necessary support and understanding. For others it's new friends in the climate movement who make the difference. Grief cannot be faced alone, and finding the people who can take the time to listen, empathise and understand is sometimes hard for activists who are burnt up with urgency. Knowing someone who is further ahead in their climate journey who can see that there is life beyond the acute distress is often useful, as is making sure that the information people are absorbed in is reliable. In *Living with the climate crisis* groups we encourage people to let go of the climate news and to see their knowledge as necessary but not something to be preoccupied with. 'Once you know, you know,' a young activist said to one of us, 'there's no point in torturing yourself. You need to do something.' Occasionally someone's distress is so acute that professional help is advisable. As a facilitator of *Living with the climate crisis* it's important to know what the local and national resources are.

Action is crucial because it restores a sense of agency and the sense that it's possible to make a difference.

Connecting with others who share the concerns is important in gaining wider support, in reflecting on one's values, in developing courage and new skills. Solidarity and shared purpose reduce the feelings of helplessness. People often describe a sense of finding a new home and of discovering capacities in themselves that they hadn't known were there.

Connecting with others is also the first step towards taking action. Action is crucial because it restores a sense of agency and the sense that it's possible to make a difference. It's important to interpret action as widely as possible and to encourage people to find their particular place in the ecosystem of the climate movement. While some feel able to take part in direct action, some need to find more conventional routes to political involvement, through broader campaigns or political parties. Some may direct their energy into community projects that restore nature. Others may opt for putting pressure on their workplace or other organisations they are involved with such as a faith group or sports club. Taking steps to reduce your own impact is crucial for everyone, not just because the carbon savings matter. Carbon reduction also restores congruity with one's values, offers an example to others and normalises change.

In the groups we encourage people to look for everything they can do rather than to imagine that they can choose one thing amongst many or that a small act will suffice. Alongside this we talk about the need to find balance and enjoyment in life and to balance the kinds of activities you are involved in. Political struggle with its many setbacks and failures is essential but can be draining. Balancing this with restorative activities outdoors in nature often helps people to manage the long commitment needed. The other aspect of balance is the need to still place value on the rest of life. For some people this might be a wild night out. For others it could be exercise, meditation or time with family.

The commonality of the feelings experienced in response to the climate crisis makes a group one of the best places to find support and understanding. A good group facilitator can encourage broad expression of the complexity and difficulty of the experiences. This is particularly true for those who lack other support. One of the most common pieces of feedback we've received is how helpful it is to see that your feelings are shared and that they are normal. A group can provide a contained and empathic space, help people to stay with the painful feelings and support them to move out of the anxious, depressive and persecutory states. It is very powerful when someone hears the edge of disappointment in your explosion of rage, senses the vulnerability in your display of defiance or gently suggests that your burning commitment may also be protecting against a fear of collapse. The next chapter, on working in groups, discusses how a *Living with the climate crisis* group can provide this space in a helpful way.

Two: Working in groups

There are many different ways of looking at what happens in a group. The phases of group life, the creation of group norms, the web of relationships, and styles of facilitation are common starting points. Others include the factors involved in learning or healing, the dynamics of power and the potential for creativity and destructiveness in group life. As a facilitator you are likely to have your own favourite authors and approaches. In this chapter we describe the key elements of *Living with the climate crisis* groups and discuss some of the issues involved in facilitating them. We hope you won't feel bound by what we say and will bring your own unique style and skills to the groups you facilitate.

Using groups to help people

One way of describing *Living with the climate crisis* groups is through Dorothy Stock Whitaker's phrase 'using groups to help people' (Whitaker 1985). Whitaker's groups brought people together round a shared problem, such as being the parent of a troubled teenager or facing a life-limiting illness. These groups were not therapy groups but drew on Whitaker's deep experience of group work and group dynamics. Group process was the medium in which help would flourish.

Climate change is the quintessential shared problem of our times. It is felt at a deeply personal level but can only be solved collectively. It requires high-level action by government but also requires individuals to make changes in their personal lives. Transforming the fossil fuel economy is a systemic, structural project which brings questions of power, inequality and justice clearly into play and asks people in the over-developed world to question many of the assumptions they have grown up with. *Living with the climate crisis* groups are one possible form of group intervention that can help.

The groups are neither therapy, nor education, nor action but have elements of all three. They walk a delicate line between them, offering possibilities of healing, of learning and of working together. Broadly stated, the purpose of the groups is to help people live their lives well in the precarity that the climate crisis brings. Healing, learning and becoming able to act effectively in the world are three equally important goals.

Healing

Many people will come to *Living with the climate crisis* groups overwhelmed by emotion. Most will have fears about the future – for themselves, for their children and for all those they care about. Some will feel traumatised, some bewildered and anxious. Some will feel hopeless and despairing, cruelly aware of their smallness in the face of the problems. Some will be consumed by rage. Some will be exhausted by long involvement in the climate struggle and a sense of failure. Grief – acknowledged and unacknowledged – will be powerfully present for many. Guilt and shame are likely to be a painful bass note too. Panu Pihkala (Pihkala 2021) has a useful exploration of the huge variety of emotional responses to the crisis.

Providing space for people to share and explore some of these feelings is one part of the group's purpose. In chapter one we suggested that an adaptation of Worden's tasks of grief was a useful framework for thinking about this. Another approach we have found helpful, is Irvin Yalom's list of therapeutic factors in group work (Yalom 1995). Not all of them apply to a *Living with the climate crisis* group but many do and it can be helpful to keep them in mind, noticing how and when you make space for them and how the group develops through their presence. Yalom emphasises that there are overlaps between his categories and that some are more important than others. Group cohesiveness is a precondition for all the rest.

Cohesiveness. The sense of the group as a warm, non-judgmental, accepting place allows people to feel that they belong and are valued for who they are. The bonds that develop between people, the sense of a collective story and collective purpose can also provide a model for group experiences outside the short life of the *Living with the climate crisis* group.

Universality. Recognising that other members share what you feel helps people feel less alone. A sense of isolation is often mentioned by people struggling with the climate crisis. The relief of feeling that you're not crazy and not alone shouldn't be underestimated.

Altruism. Realising that you have something to offer others and seeing that they are helped by you can be very healing. It restores a sense of agency and helps you feel you can make a difference in life. This applies as much in a *Living with the climate crisis* group as it does in a therapy group.

Catharsis. Yalom used this term for the strong expression of feeling that can take place in a group. Expressing feelings, getting something off your chest and feeling heard by others can all be important in a *Living with the climate crisis* group. Yalom also emphasises the need for processing and reflection however. There needs to be a cognitive, making sense of things for the expression of feeling to be effective and produce change.

Instillation of hope. Seeing that others have survived and moved on from the darkest places offers hope that you can too. In one of his early talks on climate change Al Gore talked about the need to find a place between denial and despair: a place where neither false optimism nor catastrophising ruled.

This remains necessary work for those facing the current crisis. The group facilitator's confidence in the healing potential of the group is important here. The presence of people at different stages of their journey is also helpful.

Interpersonal learning. In a *Living with the climate crisis* group this is most likely to come from sharing stories, witnessing others' experiences and giving and receiving feedback in the sessions which focus on practical skills.

Information sharing. Good information can place difficult feelings in context, provide a framework for making sense of them and be empowering.

Existential factors. This is Yalom's term for the fundamental questions about the meaning of life that can come up in a group. For most people, the climate crisis is also an existential crisis, raising questions of identity, meaning, responsibility and values. Allowing space for this and encouraging this type of reflection can be an important part of a *Living with the climate crisis* group.

Yalom's other factors - corrective recapitulation of the primary family experience, learning socialising techniques and imitative behaviour belong more clearly in therapeutic groups and are less likely to be critical in a *Living with the climate crisis* group.

Living with the climate crisis groups are shorter term, more practical and more focused than most therapy groups. They aim to be supportive and accepting of people's emotional experiences but they are also learning groups and it's important not to treat them as therapy or as a substitute for therapy. Nonetheless, keeping a sense of what is likely to be healing is a useful part of the facilitator's role.

Learning

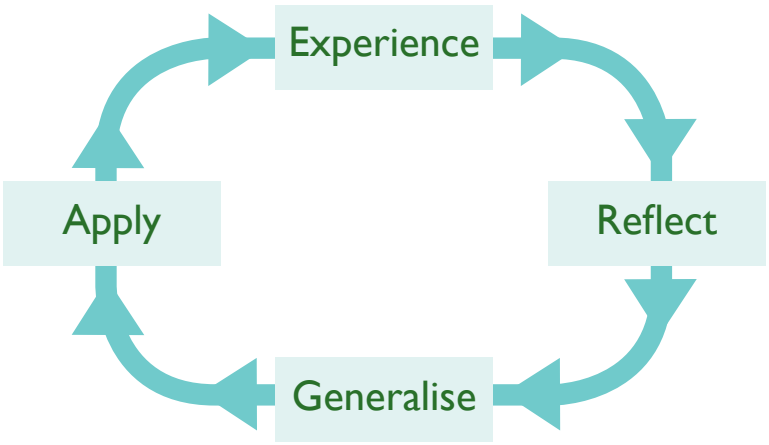
Another key aspect of the groups is learning: new skills, new understandings and new confidence. The framework we suggest is that of experiential learning. The writer we recommend for anyone unfamiliar with this is George Lakey (Lakey 2010). Lakey emphasises the transformational power of experiential learning, the way it can unfreeze people's blocks, raise their self-esteem and help them to be more effective. His background in justice and diversity work means that his work is also helpful in thinking about the issues of power and equality which all climate work needs to take account of.

Experiential learning shares with group therapy an emphasis on the group as a safe, cohesive place. George Lakey calls this the container and emphasises the need to build this at the start of a learning group. His suggestions are practical: pair work, positive reinforcement, setting ground rules, encouraging appropriate self-disclosure. These are all ways of helping people deal with the questions that everyone faces at the start of a group: who am I in this group? Is there a place for me? What is being asked of me? Do I want to be here?

A strong container allows people to take risks and move outside their comfort zones. In Lakey's view building the container often involves bringing hidden feelings that may inhibit learning to the surface. Are the

group ambivalent about the subject matter? Find a way to speak about it. Are there individuals or sub-groups who are pushed to the margins? Acknowledge this and work out how to bring them in. Are people blocked by self-beliefs that limit what they can do? Create space to explore these.

Lakey uses David Kolb's classic depiction of the cycle of learning (Kolb 1984). Its four steps go from experience to reflection to generalisation to application. The cycle then repeats as each application becomes a new experience, needing reflection, generalisation and re-application in turn.



The experiences offered in *Living with the climate crisis* meetings are varied. People are asked to share stories, brainstorm solutions, map key experiences from their lives, practise unfamiliar skills and use roleplay. Other experiences will arise in the course of the group itself as the web of group relationships develops. The groups also build in opportunities for reflection, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in small groups, sometimes in the whole group. In these reflective times, people may begin to generalise as they start to make sense of the experiences. These generalisations can be supported by the frameworks that we suggest as part of the meetings but it is important to let the group come to their own conclusions as much as possible. Generalisation makes applying knowledge easier. The generalisation might be to see the inchoate feelings you've been suffering from as part of a pattern of grief. It might be to recognise that you've always limited yourself by deferring to others. It might be to see that there is a shared pattern of fearing conflict that the group can tackle together.

The brevity of the groups means that much of the application phase of the experiential learning cycle will go on after the group has ended. If the pairings formed as part of the group carry on beyond its end, these can be helpful in supporting this phase.

Acting in the world

The third goal of a *Living with the climate crisis* group is that people should feel more confident about acting in the world. The idea that people can move from personal distress to action about its social and political causes is explored in the work of Sue Holland (Holland 1991) and of community psychologists (Holmes 2010, Kagan et al 2011). Amongst education theorists the work of Paulo Freire (Freire 1972) occupies a similar place

The climate movement is a complex ecosystem which needs diversity in order to flourish.

and has been inspirational for many who want to use learning as a route to transforming the structures of oppression.

Action will already be centre stage for many of those who come to a *Living with the climate crisis* group. You may have members who are part of direct action groups or community projects, members who are promoting climate issues in political parties, faith groups, social groups and educational settings, members who are part of a workplace sustainability team and members who already live very low impact lives. For these people the key issues are likely to concern the sustainability of their commitment. Burnout is common amongst activists. You are likely to hear stories of exhaustion, despair and internal strife as people have struggled to contain their anxiety and hold on to creativity. Some may have withdrawn from involvement in despair, feeling that it is all too late. You will also hear stories of trauma from people involved in direct action. Encounters with the police and the courts may have rocked their faith in justice and fractured relationships with family and friends who struggle or refuse to support them. The key task for these people is to find ways of recovering and adjusting their lives so they can be involved for the long term.

You may also have members who are new to the idea of action. They may want to be involved but not know how. They may fear commitment, doubt their skills, worry about rejection, or imagine nothing but the extremes of either gluing yourself to the pavement or living with the lights and heating permanently turned off. The key task for these people is to appreciate the breadth and diversity of the climate movement and think about where their skills could best be used.

Throughout the group we use the metaphor of an ecosystem to express the complexity of the systems involved in change and the idea that there is no one right thing to do. Just like the forest that people create in the first module of the group and the landscape they map in the third, the climate movement needs diversity if it is to flourish. This interconnected web changes and grows all the time. It needs people from different backgrounds, developing different practices, transforming themselves from tiny seed to strong plant, from hungry caterpillar to beautiful butterfly, from cuddly chick to fearsome predator or from fallen tree to nurturing soil. Each person needs to find the places where they can grow and contribute.

This web has both specialisms and interdependence woven into it. People are good at different things - but only when supported. We have particular niches but we can also outgrow them and expand into new skills. Growth happens comfortably with the right nurturing and support. It can also happen too fast, making people weak and sappy. And we can do it too slowly, becoming gnarled and inflexible, trapping others in our calcified roots. Some people need to find a place that challenges them and apply new skills. Others need to step down from a situation that has stretched them too thinly. Some people need to expand their sense of what is possible for them. Others need to accept their limits. Some need more time to process the pain and difficulty of knowing about the crisis before they are ready to act.

It's important to keep a sense of the world outside the group as you facilitate. For the most part this is not hard. The crisis is present in the urgency that people feel, in the news items that they talk about and in the actions they are already taking. Try to hold on to your sense of the complex, interlocking systems we are part of and focus on helping people find a more comfortable place in them. As you facilitate it may help to keep in mind two things. The first is your knowledge of local organisations that are acting on environmental issues and local issues (like planning, land use, housing) that have climate and bio-diversity implications. This will help you support people in finding the right niche for themselves. The second is the list of skills that we use in module three. As the group progresses you may be able to see developing strengths in people and support them in finding a role that plays to these strengths or helps them develop new skills.

The life of the group

The skills of the facilitators, the phases of group life, the unconscious dynamics, the style of facilitation and the psyches, motivations and behaviour of members all have an influence on the life of the group.

Facilitator background

People mean many different things when they talk about being a facilitator. A range of skills are covered by the term, from chairing a good meeting to running a therapy group. There is also no agreement on what constitutes training in facilitation. At one end are the trainings of the Institute for Group Analysis, which take several years and prepare people to run therapy groups. At the other are one or two day training courses in participatory techniques for managers.

We imagine that facilitators will be approaching *Living with the climate crisis* groups from many different perspectives and also that some may have no formal training at all but have strong, intuitive people skills, honed through long life experience of being amongst people in groups and running or taking part in self-help groups. As a facilitator your experience and skills may come from:

- long-term therapy groups with an emphasis on slow exploration and interpretation of the dynamics between people;
- therapeutic groups focused on specific problems and the development of new skills;
- individual therapy or coaching;
- experiential learning where the focus is on individual development;
- self-help groups where the role of facilitator may pass from person to person and people move between the roles of helper and helped;
- workplace training sessions where objectives and outcomes shape what happens and anxiety about hierarchy and performance may be strong;
- facilitation of meetings – in the workplace, the voluntary sector or politics - to be more inclusive and responsive;
- consultancy work exploring the roles and relationships of an organisation;
- educational settings where group dynamics have been important, for example in running a drama group.

Depending on what your experience of facilitation is, you will have some skills that will be strengths in *Living with the climate crisis* groups and some skills that you will need to keep in the background.

People coming from a background in individual therapy or coaching will have a strong sense of people's need to tell their stories and make sense of their experiences. Therapists will have a good feel for unconscious processes and be skilled in using everyday language to comment on the hidden levels of experience, while coaches will have strengths in helping people remove obstacles and achieve goals. Both may need to refocus on the group, the wider social system and the interlocking web of relationships, turning away from individual needs towards trusting the group to find collective solutions.

Some therapists may also need to rethink how they maintain appropriate boundaries in this more flexible setting. In this type of group it's often helpful to offer examples from your own experience in a way that you wouldn't in therapy. You will also participate in some activities alongside group members, particularly in things like the check-ins and check-outs at the beginning and end of sessions. This requires you to be honest without burdening the group.

People who come from a teaching, training, experiential learning or coaching background will have skills in focusing on objectives, outcomes and solutions. They may be skilled in supporting diverse learners but over keen to instruct. They may need to soften their positivism and allow space for less focused work whose outcomes are more affective and harder to describe.

Facilitators will be approaching Living with the climate crisis *groups from many different perspectives.*

People coming from a group analytic perspective will have strengths in observing and interpreting what is happening in the group and like other therapists be skilled in expressing this in ordinary ways. They will find however that they do not have the option of waiting for the group to slowly find its way. They will need to make space for the structured learning experiences and need to be more proactive and personally present than is customary to them.

Phases of group life

Tuckman (Tuckman 1965, Tuckman and Jensen 1977) saw groups as passing through five phases, forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. Schutz talked about the basic human needs for inclusion, control and affection which often appear in a group as a sequence (Schutz 1967). These can be seen as a creative mirror of Bion's destructive basic assumption groups – the dependency, fight-flight and pairing groups (Bion 1961). We prefer Guy Holmes' way of cutting through the many different models and theories (Holmes 2010). He talks straightforwardly about beginnings, middles and ends and his book is a good guide to many of the issues that may arise in a *Living with the climate crisis* group.

Beginning

At the beginning of a group people are pre-occupied with questions of inclusion. Is this the right group for me? Will people like me? Will I get what I need? Some will express anxiety directly, others may manifest it through talking too much, wisecracking, aloofness, caution or silence.

Living with the climate crisis groups are short lived so you need to actively create a space that feels welcoming and safe to people of diverse character and background. Where you hold the group matters. Is it culturally familiar for everyone? Accessible? Easy to find? The first sessions are also crucial in building the strong web of communication and relationship that Foulkes (Foulkes 1964) referred to as the group matrix. Greeting people as they arrive, making sure they are comfortable, allowing plenty of time for the initial go-rounds and pair work will all help. It's common in an initial go-round of introductions and expectations for people to model their contribution on whatever the first person says, mistaking this as the norm for what is acceptable. It can help to ask your co-facilitator to speak first and offer a model of openness and of how long you want people to speak for. If all the contributions are following a similar pattern, inviting people to express differing points of view (while affirming those already expressed) can also help. These early sessions are also the time to model the norms you hope the group will observe – listening to others, accepting and being curious about difference, showing respect and consideration. Invite disagreement and accept criticism graciously. Watch out for people who are getting relegated to the margins and invite them in.

Make sure that you support interactions between group members rather than allowing everything to be directed through you and your co-facilitator. Encouraging collective responsibility not only helps build an effective and satisfying group but also offers a model for collective action beyond the short life of this particular group. Pair and small group work help people build direct relationships. The tree of life activity in module one actively encourages people to see relationships between the group as a whole and to imagine the group as a living entity in its own right.

Living with the climate crisis groups are unusual in that they also encourage relationships outside the group through the buddy pairs that are formed at the end of module one. In a therapy group this might be seen as taking matters that belong within the group outside it but our experience is that these pairs are important for support, for applying learning and helping people see the group itself as part of a wider ecosystem for change.

The middle

The middle sessions of the group are where group norms and culture begin to feel established. The group starts to take responsibility for itself. There is more interaction between group members and less reliance on you. This can be a very satisfying moment for facilitators but it's also the point where group defences can emerge and you need to be on the look-out for this. Concentrate on the group process as much as you can. Observe what is happening. Reflect on it. If the group seems to be going off course, gently steer it back. Guy Holmes has a useful checklist of reflective questions for facilitators at this stage of a group (Holmes op. cit. p.119) that it may be helpful to consult.

Remember too that your own feelings can act as a barometer for the state of the group. The group's rising anxiety may be echoed in your own sense

of discomfort, their low mood echoed in your sense of underachievement or disappointment.

Whitaker discusses these kinds of difficulties in terms of the group focal conflict – the conflict between a shared wish and a shared fear. In a *Living with the climate crisis* group the key focal conflict is likely to be between the shared wish to act and the shared fear that this will not be effective. Subsidiary fears may be that the personal cost of action will be too high or that the group's efforts will feel puny.

The key focal conflict is likely to be between the shared wish to act and the shared fear that this will not be effective.

Whitaker (Whitaker 1985) describes how groups can defensively settle on what she calls a restrictive solution to this conflict rather than an enabling one. In conversations about the climate crisis restrictive solutions often take the form of settling into a comfortable agreement that there is little anyone in the group can do or falling into a 'Yes, but…' pattern of response to each other's suggestions. You may recognise some of these:

- There's not much more any of us can do: we've all got tiny footprints/my job means I can't do direct action/caring responsibilities leave me no time.
- We can't have much effect while government/fossil fuel industries/other countries fail to step up.
- I'd love to join you on that but… Yes, but I think it's too late for that… Yes, but it won't stop other people… Yes, but previous protests like that haven't had an effect…

A mood where intellectualising, cracking inappropriate jokes or being relentlessly optimistic dominates the group can also be a sign of group defences. In a long term group you can wait for the group to find its own way out of these fearful, anxious or depressed states. In a short-term group like a *Living with the climate crisis* group that is also focused on learning, you need to act more quickly. Interventions that focus on the group process and help people reflect on what is going on are likely to be the most helpful and help people move towards exploring an enabling solution. Simply remarking that the group seem to be finding the subject matter overwhelming may be all that is needed.

Ending

Issues about ending arrive quickly in a *Living with the climate crisis* group. If you remark, part way through module two, that you are passing the half-way mark of your time together this will offer permission for issues about ending to surface. Some of the sting of separation may be avoided by buddy pairs who continue to meet or by common involvement in campaigns outside the group. This can also obscure feelings that need to be addressed however. Some people may not be able to take part in community or political activities that are open to others. Some pairs may not continue to meet leaving some members isolated. Issues of exclusion and inclusion may need to be spoken about, alongside feelings of sadness, regret and the need to reflect on opportunities that weren't taken and matters that remain unfinished. The final meeting is left relatively unstructured in order to allow time for the group to talk about the ending but look out for issues about ending to arise any time from the half-way mark onwards.

Difficult behaviour and destructive processes

Most groups have members who others find difficult – at any rate for some of the time. People who are boring, are silent, who complain, who demand special consideration, 'make nice', rescue, distract, make power plays, are sarcastic, start side conversations or talk too much can all make your task as facilitator hard. These behaviours are usually defensive and they can be a group phenomenon as much as a personal one.

At the personal level they are how particular people have learned to protect their vulnerabilities. George Lakey notes how such defences also function as self-limiting beliefs and block learning. People talk too much to persuade themselves they matter. They crack jokes for the appreciative laughter. They stay silent or 'make nice' for fear of attack. Lakey has some examples in his chapter on transformational learning of how he intervenes to shift the block and release someone's creativity (Lakey op. cit.). In a *Living with the climate crisis* group you may not have the time to deal so directly with an individual difficulty. It may be more appropriate to respect the long-standing defence and look at how to contain it. Most difficult behaviour is more difficult when someone is stressed and anxious. It will help to reflect on the nature of the threat that the 'difficult' person is feeling and think about how to reduce the anxiety level in the group as a whole.

At the group level difficult behaviour is often expressing something for the group as a whole. Groups often unconsciously encourage difficult behaviour in one person as a way of avoiding it in themselves. The person who constantly complains may be doing so for the whole group. The person who cracks endless jokes may be responding to the group's difficulty in approaching painful subjects. Try tuning in to the underlying feelings in the group. Commenting on the process can help to open up a more reflective conversation about what is being protected against in the group as a whole.

Occasionally the whole group gets stuck in a defensive space which is more acute than the ordinary defences which Whitaker describes around the focal conflict. If you have managed to build a strong container at the start, this is unlikely but it can happen. The group mood feels ugly and destructive. The group, or the idea of the group, may be attacked. There is often lots of repetition and generalisation in what people say, often along the lines of 'People will never…', 'People ought to…' and 'It's human nature…' The emotional tone may be high – in fact people may be quite impassioned – but they aren't really speaking personally. Ideas are not coming from the heart and there is no reflection. You may sense that people are seeking alternative leadership or projecting qualities and expectations onto you that are unrealistic. Scapegoating, looking for a fight, and looking for a saviour are all common phenomena in a group that has turned away from its primary task. This is the territory of Bion's basic assumption groups (Bion 1961) and Morris Nitsun's anti-group (Nitsun 1996). In a short-lived *Living with the climate crisis* group you do not have time to let this run its course, allow the group to recover and learn from the destructive experience. You need to intervene. The best approach is to focus on rebuilding the strong container. Reflect on what might be causing the upset. Make gentle process comments such as 'We

seem to be stuck in blaming others' or 'We seem to be looking for someone to rescue us'. Step back from any activities that seem too challenging.

Power

There are always issues of power in a group and you need to be aware of them. Some are the ordinary stuff of group process and are typical of Tuckman's storming phase of the group when people disagree and argue about the direction of the group. Others, which derive from inequalities in society, can feed into this in destructive ways. Inequalities of gender, race, class, disability, sexual orientation, health, education and achievement are present throughout society and relate in complex ways to the climate crisis itself. These inequalities will appear in your group too and you need to take steps to confront them and minimise their effect.

You need to be careful that norms are established that include everyone. Language, jokes, gestures and body language can all make some people feel that they are 'in' and others that they are 'out'. Unconscious assumptions about the books that people have read, the holidays they take or the restaurants they visit can make for conversations that exclude some members. Power can be exercised unconsciously as well as consciously. People who are privileged can be unaware of the fact. They may not realise that they speak too much, are casually dismissive or have stepped into a position of influence unasked. These difficulties can apply to facilitators as well as group members, and it will be important for you to be open to noticing and receiving feedback on your own relationship to privilege.

Power can be exercised unconsciously as well as consciously.

At the start of your group it can help to make a statement about your expectations for inclusion when you talk about ground rules. At this stage simply say that you are aware that people come from different backgrounds and that you hope the group will make space for and be curious about the variety of life experiences in the group. You can also include an agreed way for the group to notice and draw attention to manifestations of inequality and we have suggested one in chapter four. As the group progresses stay alert to issues of power and be ready to comment or intervene if you need to. The content of some of the group sessions can also be helpful. In modules one and two people are asked to tell stories about their lives, providing opportunities for other group members to see them in more complex ways. In module two the group examine the process of conversations, focusing (amongst other things) on the assumptions that people make about each other and the biases that creep into their views of each other.

You may also be able to draw on the metaphor of the climate movement as an ecosystem which runs through *Living with the climate crisis*. A healthy ecosystem is diverse and full of difference. An unhealthy one is dominated by a few species which crowd out the rest.

Facilitator style and practice

We've written these materials on the assumption that you will be co-facilitating, a practice that is more common in therapy groups than in learning groups. In a therapy group paired leadership offers a model of

the parental couple that is felt to be useful. In a *Living with the climate crisis* group it's simply that the twin tasks of attending to both input and group process are eased when there are two of you. Other advantages are the sharing of responsibility in a busy programme, the creative spark of two minds and the modelling of different ways of relating.

Kurt Lewin analysed group leadership styles as authoritative, democratic and laissez-faire and his research found that the most effective was a democratic style (Gold 1999). It's easy to assume that a democratic style of leadership is the most appropriate for a *Living with the climate crisis* group. This is largely true but by offering a structured programme you are not consulting and building consensus on every issue. In the structured parts of the meetings you will be more authoritative and will be experienced as such. Members whose democratic instincts are finely tuned may chafe at this and challenge you, so you need to be prepared for this. In the activities that take place in the buddy pairs outside the meeting, the opposite is true. You have little influence. At these points your leadership may be felt by some as a welcome, laissez-faire absence but by others as an abandonment.

Reflective practice, mentoring and supervision

Most facilitators do not need to be told that reflective practice is at the heart of a successful group. Meeting with your co-facilitator to plan and review each meeting is crucial. Taking advantage of the Climate Psychology Alliance's mentoring and supervision scheme, or setting up supervision with an experienced group worker is important too. Some of the areas it will help to think about between the meetings are:

1) What kind of experience did each member have? How comfortable were they? How open or defensive? How easy did they find it to contribute? What were your feelings and responses to each person? Is there anyone you need to pay special attention to next time?
2) What did you observe about the dynamics of the group? How is the web of relationships developing? How safe and cohesive does the group feel? What was the mood of the group? Are members adopting or being pushed into particular roles? Are there any problematic issues you need to deal with?
3) How did you work with your co-facilitator? Did your division of tasks and responsibilities go to plan? How did the communication between you work during the meeting? How are you feeling towards each other? How are you each seen by group members?

Practical considerations

Recruiting your group, finding an appropriate venue, choosing the pattern of meetings, planning how to deliver the activities and deciding whether to meet face-to-face or online all need attention.

Recruiting your group

A *Living with the climate crisis* group will not be right for everyone. We suggest that you have a short phone conversation with each person who

applies before confirming their place in the group. Ask them what they are looking for, tell them what to expect, confirm that they are able and willing to attend all the sessions. If you feel that the group won't be right for them or won't be right for them at this point in their journey, point them to other possibilities. We've found that people welcome this opportunity and that it increases their confidence and commitment to the group.

The Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA)'s three sessions of therapeutic support may be a more appropriate first step for people who need more individual attention than the group can provide. The CPA's increasing network of climate cafes and climate circles where people can come on a one-off basis to discuss climate issues and their feelings may suit people who can't manage the commitment to regular meetings. Climate cafes tend to leave the topic for conversation open while climate circles often focus on a particular theme or a group, such as parents. For some the Buddhist influenced practices of a Work That Reconnects group or an Active Hope group will feel more appropriate.

As the networks of people involved in psychological approaches to the climate crisis develops there may also be further local initiatives that you can direct people to. In Cambridge for example, Jacqui Davis and Anne Murray of Cambridge Climate Therapists have offered a nine-session group 'What Now? What Next?' which is an unstructured group focused on the climate crisis. Cambridge Climate Therapists also offers a Climate Listening Bench project and a Walk and Talk group.

Living with the climate crisis groups are one part of an interconnected web and recognising who they are most appropriate for is an important part of their success.

The venue

You may be restricted in your options but as far as possible look for a venue that:

- is physically accessible;
- is culturally familiar;
- is easy to get to by public transport;
- has a quiet room with comfortable chairs you can arrange in a circle;
- has space to move around and natural light;
- allows you to attach pictures temporarily to the walls or windows.

If there is a natural environment outside that would be a bonus.

Running an online group

Since the pandemic many activities that used to be done face-to-face have moved online and you may find that there is demand or expectation for an online *Living with the climate crisis* group. The meetings are designed to be done face to face, amongst people who live in the same community, so we suggest that you make every effort to achieve this. Nonetheless there are people who cannot manage to meet face to face and might benefit from a group. Parents who struggle to get out in the evenings, people in scattered

communities in rural areas and people with disabilities for whom travel is difficult come to mind. In the following chapter, the detailed notes for each module have suggestions for how to adapt it for online work.

Many of the supports and cues that we use when facilitating are absent in online work. The neutrality of a quiet, consistent, shared space is lost as each person joins from their home, one person perched on their bed, another trying to connect against the background noise of their children. A shared, familiar, comfortable physical space supports the containment we provide, helping us to stay focused and the group to feel safe. Online we have to work harder to provide this. Group members are more likely to feel isolated. Facilitators are more likely to feel exhausted as they overuse the senses that are available.

When a group moves into pairs or small groups online you lose any sense of the buzz (or lack of it) that you would feel in the room. You can't see whether people are showing reluctance or enthusiasm physically. The usual body language that you pick up on and react to unconsciously is limited. You don't know who is looking at whom. It's harder to read emotional reactions. Building the web of group relationships can take longer. You have no built-in opportunities for people to meet physical needs such as stretching or moving about together. Having a quick word after the group with someone who has found a session difficult cannot be done casually and discreetly. The lack of physical connection can also make people under-share or over-share. Relative anonymity seems to make some people unburden themselves as they might to a stranger they will never meet again. Others clam up and become ultra-cautious. This has an effect on the group dynamic. These difficulties all place an additional burden on the facilitator. You have to work harder to understand what is happening.

Thinking about how to overcome these disadvantages is critical. Allowing a slower start and more meetings will help people get to know each other and build a stronger web of relationships. This will help with problems of under and over-sharing and provide a firmer basis for riskier activities. Building in moments to stretch and move around can help people reconnect with their physical selves. Encouraging the buddy pairs to meet regularly can help substitute for the casual conversations that group members might have while walking to the bus stop or congregating before the meeting begins. Being alert to someone who might need extra attention and offering a phone call in between can help you address individual difficulties. Using images and metaphors of connection in check-ins and close-outs can offer a people a sense of community. It may also be possible to use a mix of online and face-to-face meetings, perhaps meeting face-to-face halfway through and for the last meeting.

We'd encourage you to be flexible. If you keep your attention on the group and how to meet the group's needs in the online world you should be able to achieve a good outcome.

Three: Approaches and methods

In chapter one we discussed the background ideas from climate psychology which run through *Living with the climate crisis*. In this chapter we focus on the approaches that you will need for each module.

- For module one, 'Coming together and putting down roots', the central issues are climate distress, loss and grief, covered in chapter one, and a method from collective narrative practice which we describe below.
- In module two, 'Communication', we draw on ideas from psychotherapy about content and process, on Marshall Ganz's public narrative method and on insights from social psychology about messaging. This module also uses roleplay.
- In module three, 'The ecosystem of change', we use ideas from systems thinking, from reflective practice and from the science of carbon reduction.

Module one

People usually come to a *Living with the climate crisis* group because they are struggling with anxiety and other painful feelings induced by the crisis. It's important that you have a framework in mind for understanding and talking about these, alongside a clear picture of what helps. Ideas about loss and grief, climate journeys and what helps are covered in chapter one. You can refer to these ideas explicitly but you can also use a lighter touch, using the frameworks to confirm and consolidate what group members offer in the discussions.

Psychotherapeutic ideas are not enough however. Too often, psychotherapy sets the social and political origins of distress to one side. Collective narrative practice addresses the interconnectedness and works to build collective strength. In module one we use the *Tree of life* method developed by collective narrative practitioners David Denborough and Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo (Denborough 2008, Ncube-Mlilo 2017).

Collective narrative practice and the tree of life

Collective narrative practice was developed by the Dulwich Centre in Australia for use with individuals, groups and communities experiencing trauma and other difficulties. It has roots in narrative therapy but its emphasis is collective. It foregrounds the collective nature of many problems, the importance of telling stories in ways that help people feel stronger, the value of helping people make a contribution to others and the necessity of making collective responses to collective problems. David Denborough's book *Collective Narrative Practice* (Denborough 2008) is an excellent guide and we suggest that facilitators read it if they possibly can.

Our identities are shaped through the stories we tell and which others tell about us.

We were drawn to the approach through a specific practice, the tree of life, which was developed by David Denborough and Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and which we have adapted for use in the early meetings of *Living with the climate crisis*. We describe the method in detail in chapter four. At its heart is the drawing of a tree whose roots, ground, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits symbolise different aspects of people's lives: their origins, values, skills, dreams and hopes; the people who are important to them, the gifts they have been given and the gifts they bring to others. This framework is used to help people tell the stories of their lives, exploring the collective as well as the individual experiences. The trees are then brought together to form a forest of strength, and the capacity of the forest to face storms and hazards is explored.

Ncube-Mlilo and Denborough developed the tree of life in 2006 while working with traumatised children in Southern and Eastern Africa. Western methods of counselling, based on the idea of revisiting the trauma in order to find resolution, were re-traumatising for many of the children Ncube-Mlilo worked with. She began to focus instead on ways of building the children's strength, using the metaphor of the tree of life as a way of helping them create a strong sense of identity before speaking about more difficult aspects of their lives. The tree of life method had been used before in educational settings but Ncube-Mlilo adapted it to the particular experiences of the children she was working with. In *Living with the climate crisis* groups, we use the tree of life to help people explore strengths and connect with each other. Our use is possibly closer to the earlier educational uses of the method but Ncube-Mlilo and Denborough are good guides to the method's power and purpose. Ncube-Mlilo also provides training in the method which can be done online.[2]

The method is useful in relation to the climate crisis, partly because its metaphor of the forest resonates strongly with environmental concerns but mainly because it provides a way of speaking about psychological distress in a safe way. The focus on skills, resources and collective strength places the distress in context.

Thin and thick narratives

Some of the background ideas in narrative therapy are useful to keep in mind. The idea that our lives are storied is central: we describe ourselves, think about ourselves and shape our identities through the stories we tell and the stories others tell about us. We are also multi-storied: we have many different stories to tell about ourselves and our lives, each with its own plot, and inflexion. Some stories are privileged – in our own minds, by our families and by the wider culture. Others are subjugated. Growing up in the 1950s for example, stories which showed my (RR) brothers as strong, practical and smart dominated our family conversations. The approved stories about me (a girl) were ones that showed me as helpful, polite and kind. The subjugated stories – of a brother in tears or of me as a winner – were felt as shameful or unrealistic. Narrative practice questions dominant stories and explores how certain incidents have been linked together to create them. It asks how the story could be told differently, bringing in other incidents, characters and memories and linking them together in ways which offer broader possibilities and a more expansive sense of identity.

Power can be exercised by encouraging certain stories and ignoring others. This is all too apparent in media stories which portray working class people as lazy, migrants as threatening or climate activists as selfish. These stories can invade the identity of people in these groups, sapping strength and undermining confidence. Challenging dominant narratives and surfacing the subjugated stories is very important in building collective strength. There is a strong connection here to ideology.

If we see ideology as the stories that appear as givens and run through society, largely unquestioned, we can begin to use techniques from narrative therapy to challenge them and build alternative stories. George Monbiot's recent book *Regenesis* (Monbiot 2022) offers an interesting climate related example. He examines the stories adults tell children about farming and the way these myths of benign and careful food production continue to influence our adult thinking, obscuring the stranglehold of industrial agriculture by diverting attention from what it actually does. Children's stories often feature just one cow, one sheep and one pig. Farmers in wellington boots scatter seeds by hand. A cart horse peers over a wooden gate from a small field with overflowing hedgerows. A handful of chickens cluck through an orchard. Most of us continue to prefer these images to the reality. We would rather not see the endless prairies, monoculture palm oil plantations, overstocked chicken barns and slaughterhouses. The advertisers oblige, decorating their egg boxes with a happy chicken and their milk cartons with a lone, beaming cow. In his book, Monbiot surfaces the subjugated narrative of the reality of farming practice and gives voice to the subjugated stories of those who are trying to farm differently. In doing so he creates much more complex stories which also offer hope and strength to anyone struggling with the impact of food on the climate crisis.

Dominant and subjugated narratives about climate change vary according to the group you are with. In activist circles, narratives of collapse are common. In environmental NGOs the public narratives alternate between

hope (look at the wonderful things we're doing) and disaster (it's awful, make a donation). Amongst 'green' businesses, the dominant stories are of opportunity while the subjugated ones are of waste and the folly of growth. One of the most common narratives in any group struggling with the climate crisis is that there is little they can do.

All these narratives are 'thin' – they lack detail, generalise and shift blame. The distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' narratives is an important one in narrative practice. A thin narrative lacks detail. It is often clichéd and full of generalisations. A 'thick' narrative is rich in detail, incident and character. It reaches out, making connections between past and present, individual and community. Michael White describes a narrative as 'thick' when it features 'the invocation of notions of desire, whim, mood, goal, hope, intention, purpose, motive, aspiration, passion, concern, value, belief, fantasy, commitment, and disposition' (White, n.d.).

As you work with people's stories, it's important to help them 'thicken' their narratives. In the detailed guidance for the tree of life activity we suggest questions that may be useful. Amongst privileged people this might mean helping people explore the underbelly of stories which describe how they can't live without a car. Amongst people whose confidence is low it might mean looking for stories about forgotten successes, filling out the detail and richness of these. For people who are feeling hopeless it might mean looking for stories about their capacity to offer help to others or stories that focus on creativity. The more detail, the more nuance and the more connection that the narrative contains the easier it is to find common ground and to build the collective strength that we all need to cope with the climate crisis.

Module two

Module two explores the vexed issue of communication. Climate campaigners often struggle to communicate well. Some still follow some version of information deficit theory – the idea that ignorance is the main reason for people's inaction. Believing this, campaigners then try to fill the gap with the correct facts, expressed as urgently and convincingly as possible. You can see this in demands to 'get the message out there', 'reach a wider audience' or 'help people face the facts'.

By talking desperately and urgently about the climate crisis people also unconsciously hope to unload some of the pain. Along with the message anger, rage and desperation are projected randomly outwards. Unfortunately, rather than finding that a trouble shared is a trouble halved, people often find themselves in the position of the messenger who is shot for bringing unwelcome news.

Other campaigners do know that focusing on information is not the best idea but they struggle to find alternatives or struggle to implement other ideas. People describe feeling blocked by indifference or bruised by rows

and fractured relationships. Some feel silenced. Others withdraw, not knowing what to do.

Living with the climate crisis introduces three possible approaches to these dilemmas:

- learning to listen, understand and empathise;
- learning to use stories;
- learning to think about different audiences and to target messages.

Insights from psychotherapy

The basic skills of listening, curiosity, empathy and respect are easy to explain but not always easy to apply. Being in a well-facilitated group should provide first-hand experience of these as well as offering the opportunity to use these skills and identify how they get derailed. The group also offers the experience of a space that is safe but challenging. Thinking about how to transfer this to other settings can be helpful.

Concepts like resistance, ambivalence, transference, defence and projection are harder to explain. In module two we use a simplified model focusing on the difference between content and process and talking about four levels in a conversation which we call content; agenda or desire; mood and emotion; perception. We sometimes use the image of content being the icing on a cake, dominating the appearance but concealing what is within, and sometimes the image of conversation as an iceberg where only a small part is visible to the naked eye and the mass of ice below must be inferred by other clues.

By talking desperately and urgently about the climate crisis people unconsciously hope to unload some of the pain.

The idea of agenda or desire introduces the fact that most people have motivations that they are only partially aware of but which can with reflection be brought to the surface. Asking the question 'What did you hope to get out of the conversation?' usually uncovers a wealth of revealing facts. 'I wanted her to tell me how brave I was,' said one person talking about a failed conversation with her mother. 'I wanted to destroy him,' said another talking of a confrontation on a demonstration. 'I was looking for a promotion for my climate work,' said a third of an encounter with her boss.

People become rueful, amused, saddened and surprised as they uncover these hidden dynamics.

The opposite question 'What do you think she/he/they were trying to get out of the conversation?' is often equally revealing. 'She was terrified I was ruining my life so she was just doing everything she could to stop me,' said the woman speaking about her mother. 'He probably wanted to destroy me,' said the man who'd got into a confrontation. 'This might sound a bit off the wall but I think he might have been trying to flirt with me,' said the woman who'd run into problems with her boss.

Focusing on mood and emotion is usually equally fruitful, as people pinpoint how the mood of a conversation fluctuates, with feelings which are sometimes in harmony and sometimes out of kilter. Identifying the fear, anger, affection, distaste, love or guilt that flow through any encounter frequently brings relief as people reflect on what has gone wrong in their attempts to talk to family and friends about climate change.

Our category perception covers what psychotherapy calls projection, projective identification and transference – the multiple ways in which people attribute their unwanted feelings to someone else, or treat others as stand-ins for past relationships. In the groups we talk about it in terms of unfounded assumptions, knee-jerk reactions or a lazy reliance on first impressions. We've found it helpful to focus on the polarising language that often characterises projection: 'You always…', 'You never...', 'You just…' along with the throwaway characterisations that people make of each other. We have sometimes used Eric Berne's shorthand of 'child-parent-adult' (Berne 1961) to describe the confusing ways in which people entangle themselves in knots of misunderstanding and defence. 'I'd approached it as if they were a bunch of stupid school-kids and I was the only grown-up in the room,' said a man speaking of his failure to engage his colleagues. 'I wanted his approval, like I've always wanted my Dad's approval,' said the woman in conflict with her boss.

Although much of the learning about empathy, curiosity, listening and respect arrives experientially in the group, we've found it helpful to offer people a model of how to deal with ambivalence and resistance by focusing on the minutiae of process, usually in the roleplays which are done in sessions one and three. Appreciating that most people are in states of ambivalence over climate change and learning to work with someone else's inner conflicts is important. Becoming able to identify the moment when resistance appears – as someone shifts in their chair, looks away or laughs inappropriately for instance – is often revelatory. Following this up with exploration of how to speak about this - naming a feeling, stepping back, creating space to talk about it - lets people see that this is also an ordinary human skill which they may be able to develop. 'I realised I could just call her out,' said the woman in conflict with her mother. 'I could say "You seem frightened" and see what might happen.'

Every therapist has their own way of speaking about these technical issues in an ordinary, human way. The 'translations' or models we've suggested are not the only ones that can be used. The key point is that at the heart of all climate communication is relationship, listening and understanding.

Public narrative

Marshall Ganz's *Public narrative* method uses stories as the central tool in public communication (Ganz 2011). We have used it successfully with UK campaigners to help them shift their attention from information giving to storytelling, while in the process coming to understand their own roots, motivations and commitment to change. Public narrative is most useful in those moments when you have a platform, or when someone has

answered positively to your request for a few moments of their time. Ganz's work gives people a repertoire of anecdotes, images and metaphors that they can draw on in these moments.

Ganz argues that stories stick in the mind in a way that facts, graphs and tables don't. They offer someone to identify with, create curiosity and suspense and catch at people's imagination. In Ganz's view everyone has a compelling story to tell. Stories, in his view, bring heart and head together, translate abstract values into lived emotion and lead to action. There is a lot of common ground with the ideas of collective narrative practice.

Ganz's view of narrative features a plot with a character who faces an unexpected challenge, forcing that character to stop, reflect, reconsider and make a choice for which she or he is not prepared. Everyone who has grappled with climate change easily recognises this story arc. You woke up to the news. You were shocked and your life felt on hold as you grappled with what to do. You recognised that you needed to make a choice and so here you are today, part of a movement struggling for change. Fleshing out the details of this story arc with personal, compelling detail is what gives Ganz's method its power.

The method has three key elements which he calls the story of self, the story of us and the story of now.

The story of self is an exploration of one's own history. How did you wake up to the issue? What were the steps along the way? In my case (RR), I remember my mother's concern for insect life, and a conversation from my early twenties with a cousin who asked me if I knew what ecology was. Later there were moments when I decided to get rid of the car, stop flying, start a community organisation, devote a day a week to climate action and so on. Ganz calls these moments critical choice points, moments when you are faced with a moral dilemma and have to decide what you are going to do. Each has a story attached to it.

The story of self also asks people to think about the values they grew up with and remember how their concern developed and what it was shaped by: parents, siblings, wider family, school, faith, politics and community. There are stories here too. People may remember personal unfairness that has shaped their commitment to justice. They may remember times spent in nature that led to a reverence for life. They may remember warmth from others that makes them value kindness and security. They may remember particular people who nurtured, explained and helped them find their way in the moral and emotional world. As people describe these influences it is important to encourage them to move away from the abstract and into the specific. Where were you? Who did you speak to? What did you feel? What happened next? How did you come to love and value the things you love and value? In my case I might remember the differences in the way my brothers and I were treated and talk about how this nurtured my feminism, or conversations with my grandmother about class and poverty which led me to socialism.

The idea is to create a story that has meaning, richness and resonance and which comes from the heart as much as the head. In narrative therapy terms, this is a thick narrative.

The story of us addresses the mistaken belief that the same message will appeal to all. Ganz shifts focus instead to the multiple groups of 'us' that people are part of. For example, I am a retired person, a sibling, a psychotherapist, a member of my street community, a gardener, an allotment holder and so on. Someone else might be an IT specialist, a parent of small children and a practising Muslim. Ganz argues that it is important to speak specifically and differently to each of the groups of us that you may be involved with, finding and using the points of commonality that appeal to each group, using your story of self to connect with values you share with these people.

The story of now is a brief explanation of the challenge that you face, an expression of hope that action can make a difference and an appeal to others to join you. This appeal or 'ask' is crucial. It needs to be concrete and specific: join me on this demonstration; attend this meeting; sign this petition; talk to three people this week; volunteer with me here and so on. It's usually best offered at the end of what you have to say.

These three elements are then drawn together into a coherent, brief story. My story (RR) of self, us and now would go like this in a one minute version aimed at other parents. 'Some time ago I had one of those moments that shakes you. I was on a walk with my son in a beautiful area of Wales. He was just 21. He talked to me about climate change and the disastrous future that lies ahead for his generation without action. I looked at him, just setting out on his life, still full of innocence and hope but full of horror and rage as well. I knew that in order to protect the things that I love about this world – the beauty of nature, the sense of family and community, the need for fairness - that I had to do something. I'm speaking to you today as a fellow-parent, someone who cares, like you do, about the world our children will inherit and I'm asking you to join with me in attending this demonstration next week.'

You'll notice that it's a story of a particular moment, that it describes the challenge point that Ganz talks about, refers to what I care about in a personal way and flags my connection with the people I'm talking to (other parents). Finally it contains an 'ask'. If I had more time, I would talk about my family and the values that I grew up with, describe some key personal experiences that led me to care about the natural world, fairness and equality. I might offer more detail of my epiphany, conjuring up the landscape around us and reporting some of the actual conversation. If I was speaking to a different group I would shift emphasis to whatever it is we share. With a faith group this might be our shared reverence for creation, with sportspeople our shared experience of teamwork, with walkers our shared love of the outdoors – and so on. In a one-to-one conversation I would not make a speech but would bring each of the elements into the

conversation gradually. The beauty of Ganz's method is that it creates a personal repertoire of stories and images, rooted in values, that you can draw on in multiple situations. It enables you to speak from the heart without threatening or frightening your audience.

Ideas from social psychology

Social psychologists have puzzled for many years over why people do not respond to climate information. They've researched the connections between attitudes and behaviour, explored the effects of different kinds of messages and evaluated the impact of different initiatives. At the forefront of this work is the charity Climate Outreach[3] who conduct their own research and synthesise the work of others in regular, useful reports, for example Robin Webster's *Talking climate handbook: how to have conversations about climate change in your daily life* (Webster 2019). You may like to consult these and also George Marshall's book *Don't even think about it: why our brains are wired to ignore climate change* which covers many of the ideas in an engaging manner (Marshall 2015). At the end of module two we suggest that you introduce people to some of these ideas if you have time. They are also covered briefly in the *Participant's handbook*. The key ones which we suggest you mention are these.

Information is not enough. People screen out messages they don't think apply to them.

People need to be in a safe space in order to process information about the climate crisis.

People make snap judgments, using rules of thumb and trying to fit new facts to their existing views rather than altering their views because of new information.

Trusted messengers matter. People are more likely to listen to those who are already trusted leaders in their communities. Trade unionists are more likely to pay attention to a trade union leader, church members to their priest, university students to a fellow student and so on. Match your message to your audience. Speak their language, focus on their concerns.

Don't terrify people. Communicate the scale and urgency of the climate crisis but with care. People need to be in a safe space and supported so they can process the information. Stories of disaster on their own make people shut down. Although their interest is raised in the short term, so is their anxiety and they quickly put their defences back in place.

Concretise what people can do. Offer appealing examples. Invite them to participate.

Emphasise the gains like cleaner air, better health, quieter streets, more jobs and less stress which come with some of the structural changes. Money-saving appeals are often counter-productive.

Values matter. Strengthening people's intrinsic values such as their concern for others and for 'bigger than self' issues, their care for nature and their desires for fairness will help create the climate for the changes that are needed.

Framing matters. Frames are unconscious structures in our minds – bundles of words, thoughts and feelings – that shape how we see the world. The way an issue is framed will dictate how we see it and who will be concerned. If the climate crisis is framed as an environmental issue for example, it will be seen as a minority concern. Framing in terms of public health or our children's future is likely to be more effective.

Module three

In module three our attention turns directly to the systems people are part of. Despite the complexity of these systems, people can have an effect on them. Our focus is on how to act. To run these meetings well you need to know something about systems thinking, carbon reduction and reflective practice.

Systemic approaches

Each one of us is part of many overlapping, interlocking systems. Your family, your neighbourhood, your workplace, economic class, social groups, local ecologies and the biosphere are all examples. Sometimes we are trapped by a system. It feels unchangeable. Sometimes it proves easy to shift. A small action in one part has a cascading effect throughout. Looking at the systems we live in can ease the personal guilt many people feel and help them plan effectively for change. Systemic thinking spans many disciplines. We have drawn in particular from sociology, systems-psychodynamics, and environmental planning.

In her book *Living in denial* Kari Norgaard introduced the idea of the socially constructed climate silence (Norgaard 2011). In the small Norwegian town she studied, it had become unacceptable to speak openly about the causes of the climatic changes people saw around them. Norway's dependence on oil revenues made this off limits. The early spring and the poor snow fall conflicted with their idea of themselves as environmentally sensitive people. Denial wasn't an individual defence. It was socially constructed. When faced with this kind of denial people need to come together. They need to co-imagine a different social reality. They need to organise in order to break the silence. They need to find new words to break the oppressive taboo. You can see this in the way women's groups have changed the conversation around misogyny. You can see it in the way Black Lives Matter has changed the way people see racism. We hope that groups like *Living with the climate crisis* can contribute to similar changes around climate issues.

Another good example of systems thinking is the exploration of social practices. Social practice theory looks at the mundane parts of life: the way people do the laundry, travel to work or go on holiday. Why do these

things change over time? Sixty years ago people washed their clothes once a week. Now it's often every day. Sixty years ago they walked to work or took the bus. Now they commute by car. Is this an accumulation of personal decisions? Or is it something else? Social theorist Elizabeth Shove argues that these aren't personal decisions (Shove 2003). They're co-determined in big socio-technical systems. Our laundry behaviour, for example, is part of a much bigger system. Washing machine manufacturers, house builders, textile designers, fashion houses and detergent producers all play a part. In their wake come ideas about comfort, cleanliness and convenience which are quite different from those of the past.

We're not only people making choices but also people who inhabit social practices.

Car use is another powerful example. National planning and development policies from the 1950s onward encouraged the creation of housing estates outside towns and away from good public transport. Car ownership became associated with personal freedom. Roads were designed to maximise traffic flow rather than to make it easy and safe to walk or cycle. As the roads became more dangerous, parents started to drive their children to school. More traffic was created and more danger.

Once you see our environmentally destructive behaviours as social practices you can think differently about how to bring about change. From this viewpoint we're not only people making choices but also people who inhabit social practices. Our choices are more limited than we suppose. It will certainly help if you don't commute by car but it's also important to change the system so that you and others have better alternatives.

Trying to make changes where other systemic forces are working against you is like banging your head against the proverbial brick wall. The point is to understand how innovation is likely to happen in these systems. This is what will enable large numbers of people to change. Systems-psychodynamics and environmental planning have both drawn on the ideas of Kurt Lewin (Lewin 1947) and his successors. Lewin categorised the forces at play in a system as either 'driving' (pushing for change) or 'restraining' (trying to maintain the status quo.) He proposed that social systems, like biological systems, will always 'want' to be stable. If a driving force is strengthened, the stability of the system is threatened. The restraining forces respond by increasing their strength. Lewin argued that change was always made easier by removing restraining forces rather than increasing driving forces. For example if a city wants to remove congestion and improve air quality should they introduce a congestion charge or improve public transport? They should probably do both but improving public transport removes one of the restraining forces that locks people into the status quo of car use so it needs to be done first.

Systems thinking has profound implications for climate work. It means that people have to get to know and understand the position of people who are resisting a change. For example, campaigners for safer streets and active

travel will need to understand and empathise with the challenges faced by families who rely on their car. A fragile combination of dropping the kids at school, running three part-time jobs, and getting the grocery shopping done can make a car feel essential. Environmental planners can use systems mapping – bringing people together from across a system to identify their needs and concerns – or force field analysis, in which the restraining and driving forces for a particular change are systematically identified. Processes such as citizens' assemblies can then be used to help people feel their way into what changes might be possible and how. In systems-psychodynamics, the Listening Post method invites a small group representing a wider system to explore its own unconscious dynamics, driving and restraining forces.[4] They then explore whether those dynamics and forces exist in the wider system they come from. This can add an important element to more cognitive or surface approaches.

In module three we suggest that you introduce your group to force field analysis. Knowing about the other aspects of systems thinking should strengthen your confidence here.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice is a method which helps people learn from experience and apply new insights. It's normally used in groups of people from the same workplace or profession who are members of the same systems. We've found it useful in helping campaigners and community groups think creatively about their projects.

The core ideas are that:

- humans learn through experience, not through being fed information by an authority figure;
- expertise develops through making experience available for thinking about and through putting into words understandings that would otherwise remain tacit;
- the learner is best placed to direct their own learning while supported by peers.

Reflective practice connects closely to Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) which we discussed in chapter two but many writers have contributed to its development. Donald Schön, Michael Eraut and Chris Argyris brought it into the mainstream of professional learning (Schön 1983, Eraut 1994, Argyris and Schön 1978). The action learning groups developed by Reg Revans are one well-known example of the practice (Revans 1982).

Making experience available for thinking about is also a feature of most therapeutic traditions. Here ideas about unconscious processes such as transference, counter-transference and projection are central to the practice of reflection. The groups run by psychoanalysts Michael and Enid Balint for GPs in the 1950s, the clinical training seminars described by Danbury and Wallbridge (Danbury and Wallbridge 1989) and Gillian Ruch's work on peer supervision in social work are all examples (Ruch 2007).

In module three we draw on a model of reflective practice developed by Gillian Ruch for the Tavistock Clinic. A group of peers offers a space in which one person presents a dilemma or challenge they are facing in their work. Following this they sit back, turn away or to one side, and listen while the other members of the group discuss the dilemma, exploring their feelings, thoughts and ideas rather than offering advice. Sitting back takes the pressure off the presenter to respond. The group's responses are allowed to resonate and stimulate thinking. The presenter can reflect while listening to others. The chosen dilemma is sometimes thought of as a 'critical incident', with learning potential for the group as well as for the individual practitioner.

In some settings, reflective practice groups work with the idea that the group exploring the issue carries the experience of the system within itself. The here-and-now experience of the group's members and the group process become part of the material being reflected on. This can highlight difficult dynamics or social defences in the wider system. If, for example, group members realise that they are struggling to pay attention to the dilemma, that some of them are feeling sleepy or distracted, or that they have gone off-topic, they might ask what this is suggesting about the nature of the dilemma within the system. Is it something that the system needs to ignore or distract itself from? If there is aggression within the group during discussion, could that be an echo of aggression in the circumstances being considered?

If you have been able to work in this way earlier in the life of your *Living with the climate crisis* group, you may find that you can work at this level in the reflective practice session too. But we hope that the working method we have suggested will be useful to the group whether or not it is interested in seeing itself as a microcosm of the climate movement.

Carbon literacy and carbon reduction

Reducing carbon emissions is key to solving the climate crisis. Carbon literacy is the ability to talk accurately about this. Paradoxically it involves some basic numeracy. You need to be able to understand and explain to others what is a big number and what is a small one, which actions will have a big effect and which are insignificant. In the material for the meetings, and in the *Living lightly* guide we try to present this information as clearly as possible but you will need to acknowledge that some people find numbers difficult. You may be one of them yourself.

Reduction can happen through:

- policy change
- technological change
- land-use change
- energy efficiency
- lifestyle and behaviour change.

Policy change drives many of the other changes. It can provide government finance. It can set regulations, phasing out some industries and supporting

others. It can create new infrastructure. It can influence public opinion. Since 2010 the UK government has retreated from many of the necessary policies, scrapping environmental legislation and struggling to meet the targets set under the Climate Change Act of 2008. The fossil fuel industries remain king. This has led many campaigners to concentrate their efforts on policy change: banning fossil fuels, restoring subsidies for insulation, improving public transport and so on. This is essential work but making changes in local, workplace and personal life matters as well. In *Living with the climate crisis* we encourage people to intervene in all the systems they can, finding the kinds of action that feel right for them. In order to do this successfully some level of carbon literacy is needed. People need to understand the kinds of changes that are needed, how they will come about and what their own contribution needs to be.

Carbon footprinting is the science of calculating the greenhouse gas emissions that an individual, organisation or country is responsible for.[5] It developed out of the ideas of Mathis Wackernagel and colleagues in the 1990s about ecological footprints and earth's limits (Wackernagel and Rees 1995). The first carbon footprint tools began to appear in the early 2000s. One of the best early ones was produced by CPA member Laurie Michaelis in 2003 for the Quaker group Living Witness. Both Wackernagel and Michaelis shared a concern with global justice and saw footprinting as a way of alerting people to the impact of developed world lifestyles and the need for cultural, social and political change.

Carbon foot-printing sometimes comes in for criticism because it is seen as shifting responsibility from fossil fuel producers and government to individuals. Critics point to BP's production of a personal calculator in 2004 as part of a greenwashing campaign to push responsibility away from oil companies and onto individuals. There is some validity in this view but BP's calculator never got much traction. Focusing on it risks hiding the fact that personal life needs to change as well as systems and technology. Energy efficiency, land use change and technological fixes can't deliver all the reductions needed. We need to move rapidly towards lives with:

- fewer consumer goods;
- less travel;
- almost no air travel;
- low-meat and low-dairy diets;
- highly insulated houses.

Knowing what will make a big difference and what is trivial matters, whether you are trying to make changes in your personal life, influence what happens at work or in another organisation you are involved with. Carbon literacy has improved over the last twenty years but many people are still confused and uncertain. For example, if you're trying to help your child's school reduce emissions is it better to concentrate on making school dinners meat-free? Encouraging children to walk or cycle to school? Persuading the French exchange pupils to travel by coach rather than fly? Creating a school vegetable garden? Planting some trees in the playground? Improving recycling rates? Similarly, at the personal level, is it better to

insulate your house or will turning down the thermostat be enough? Is eating local food as important as cutting out meat? Will cycling to work balance out a flight to Europe? The important thing is to understand which activities have high emissions and which are small enough to ignore.

An average UK footprint is around 15 tonnes CO_2 per year. A sustainable footprint is a mere one or two tonnes. Achieving this requires systemic change but most people can already do something. In talking about this you need to acknowledge the difficulties people face and the complex feelings that arise. Exploring your own responses with your co-facilitator should help you be open to the difficulties of others. Mike Berners-Lee in his book *How bad are bananas?* (Berners-Lee 2020) thinks five tonnes is an achievable goal for most people. In the old Carbon Conversations groups we encouraged people to aim to halve their footprint, whatever their starting point. The UK government's current carbon reduction plans rely on UK citizens making reductions of about 30% in their carbon footprints.

You should find all the detailed information you need on carbon reduction in *Living lightly*, the short guide we have produced for group members. If you also dip into *How bad are bananas?* (Berners-Lee op. cit.) you will be well prepared. Berners-Lee's approach is concise and factual. *Living lightly* takes a psychological approach, focusing on the cultural and systemic problems as well as the practicalities.

Acknowledge the difficulties people face and the complex feelings that arise.

Some facilitators will already have a good understanding of carbon reduction. Others may find they are learning alongside their first group. There is nothing wrong with this so long as you are familiar enough to run the discussion and activity about carbon reduction. If you haven't already done so it will help if you measure your own footprint using one of the tools suggested and start looking at reductions you can make yourself. Some facilitators may - like some group members - find numbers so daunting that they would rather ignore them. As ever, put on a psychological hat. Reflect on the problem and its history and look for ways round it. Your co-facilitator may be happier with numbers than you are. There may also be group members who are happy to step in and help. Exploring your own reaction when faced with numbers will also help you work with group members who share your panic or aversion.

For many people who find numbers difficult the best solution is to rely on some simple rules about which actions carry most weight. At the end of each section of *Living lightly* there are 'Rules of thumb' and lists of possible actions given in order of importance. Berners-Lee (2020 op. cit.) also has a good list of what to do at the end of his book.

Four:
The modules

This chapter describes the three modules and their sessions in detail.

Module one 'Coming together and putting down roots' is about climate distress and building the collective strength to cope.

Module two 'Communication' takes a psychological look at how to talk about climate change, firstly in conversations with family and friends and secondly in more public settings.

Module three 'The ecosystem of change' explores the systems people are part of and the possibilities of action before focusing on the ending of the group and the role it has played for people.

Modules two and three (apart from the ending) can be reversed if that suits your group better.

The materials are designed to be used by two people co-facilitating a group of six to eight people. They require 20 hours of group time. This could be:

- ten weekly meetings;
- a whole day workshop followed by seven weekly meetings;
- three whole day workshops with a follow up evening meeting;
- some other combination of your own devising.

You can also extract activities from the materials to use in workshops of your own design.

Outlines of the modules

At the start of the description of each session you will find a chart with the outline and rough timings for that session. If you would like to get an overview of all three modules, turn to appendix one which has the complete charts.

Activities and group time

The activities we describe range through short presentations of information, visualisations, art work, pair work, biographical work, brainstorms and roleplays. These need to be balanced with open group time, usually flagged as group discussion in the descriptions which follow. It's important to follow the needs of your group. If it becomes clear that a planned activity is not appropriate or would be better curtailed in order to meet those needs, follow your intuition.

The activities are all ones which we have offered in groups and workshops before, and as we describe in the earlier chapters they derive from a number of influences and approaches. Like everyone however we are limited by our backgrounds, the audiences we have worked with and our unconscious biases. It is possible that some of the activities may not be appropriate for the people you are working with. You may want to adapt them or substitute other activities. We look forward to developing a community of practice for *Living with the climate crisis* where facilitators feel free to adapt and share the innovations that they make.

There are a number of repeating elements that run through the modules.

Check-ins. Each meeting opens with a check-in or go-round, allowing each person to speak, briefly and without interruption or response. At other times we leave it to you to decide what your group needs. Often the best option is simply to invite people to name what is going on for them at present. 'Let's take a moment to share how we are all feeling at present' may be sufficient. More focused options might be 'How are you feeling to be back in the group?' or 'Any loose ends from our last meeting?' It can sometimes be appropriate to focus on the theme of the meeting and for some meetings we have suggested some ways of doing this. The check-ins are important for helping the group to settle and for picking up on issues that may need addressing. In an all day group you will only need a full check-in at the beginning of the day.

Check-outs. Similarly, each meeting ends with a brief opportunity for each person to make a last contribution or for the group to come together in a collective goodbye. This can be verbal, for example asking people to offer one word about how they are feeling now, or to say something they will be taking away from the group with them (positive or negative). Check-outs can also be non-verbal. One of our favourites is the solidarity squeeze where the group stand and hold hands. One facilitator squeezes the hands

of the people to the left and right of her and the squeezes are passed round the group till they arrive back where they started. In an all day group you will only need a check-out at the end of the day.

We suggest that both facilitators take part in the check-ins and check-outs. This allows you to model the kind of responses you are hoping for and makes it clear that although you are facilitating, you are not remote from the concerns which everyone shares.

Postcards to myself. In the last 15 minutes of each meeting we suggest you ask people to write a postcard to myself. The purpose is to help them create a spontaneous record of their experience of the group. Thinking of the journey they have begun in the group, they write whatever they wish to about the experience of that meeting and place the postcard in an envelope which they seal. Members are encouraged to put these aside and not look at them again till the last meeting of the group. One of the key activities of the last meeting is opening the envelopes and sharing whatever members wish to of this record of their journey. If it would suit your group, you can offer to collect in and hold the postcards till the final meeting. This ensures people don't forget to bring them to the final meeting, but it also removes responsibility which some group members may prefer to retain.

The activity can be done with plain postcards but is enriched if people are able to choose an image that intuitively appeals to them. For this you need a collection of picture postcards with a variety of appealing images: the reproductions sold by art galleries, images cut from the fronts of greetings cards, views of places or people. In order to give people sufficient choice you will need about 40 cards each time. This means collecting about 120 – 150 cards which sounds a tall order. If you hang on to greetings cards and ask family or friends to do the same, you can quickly assemble an adequate collection.

If your group is meeting weekly, the postcards will be written at the end of each meeting. If your group starts with an all day meeting, the first postcard will come at the end of the day. If you run your group as three all day meetings plus an evening people will only write three postcards and they will need more time to write each one. This may not give such a good idea of change and progress as writing more frequent postcards.

Buddy pairs. Towards the end of module one group members are asked to form buddy pairs who can meet in between meetings (and possibly beyond the end of the group) to offer support and continue to work on aspects of the content. This includes working through the *Living lightly* information on personal carbon reduction, practising communication skills and offering support in making new plans. You may want to check periodically how these pairings are working and adjust them if necessary, for example forming a three or shifting partnerships if one of the pairs has not worked out.

Information/content. At various points you need to give people information. Sometimes this is background information. Often it is instructions about what you want people to do. Nervousness in the group setting means that people frequently forget what they have been asked to do or only retain a part of this, so sorting out how you are going to provide the information matters.

- **Information for you** is provided in the descriptions of each activity, along with the instructions you need to give participants. It is helpful to prepare in advance what you intend to say and run through this with your co-facilitator.
- **Summary points** can be found on the PowerPoint slides. The information on them can also be easily transferred to flip chart paper. Displaying this can be helpful for participants.
- **Detailed instructions for participants** are given in the *Participant's handbook*. The *Participant's handbook* is quite short and you may wish to print it out and give people hard copies at the start of the group. Alternatively, you can just print out instructions for the activities which need detailed guidance, such as the tree of life and the story of self, us and now. Participants can also access the handbook on their phones but this may be in conflict with your ground rules.

We've found it helpful to send group members reminders about the group meetings a few days before each meeting...

Reminders

We've found it helpful to send group members reminders about the group meetings a few days before each meeting, telling them what the theme of the meeting is and reminding them of any materials they need to bring, such as their copies of the *Participant's handbook* or their tree pictures.

Evaluation

At the end of the material for module three we suggest some ways of evaluating the group.

Module one:
Coming together and putting down roots

In the first module we:

- create space for people to get to know each other;
- share experiences of living with the climate crisis;
- use a method adapted from collective narrative practice to help people feel less alone, and more in touch with their strengths and core values;
- share ideas about what helps with climate distress;
- offer frameworks for understanding climate distress if this feels appropriate.

Remember that in these early meetings of the group you will not just be dealing with people's complex feelings about the crisis, but with issues of group formation such as people's uncertainty about whether they wish to be there, their anxieties about acceptance, fears about rejection and unspoken negotiations over role and place.

Materials needed

- Art materials, Blu Tak and Post-it Notes for the tree of life activity.
- Laptop and projector if you wish to display slides. Alternatively, handouts for the tree of life activity.
- Flipchart paper and felt tips for the brainstorms.
- Postcards and envelopes for the postcards to myself activity.
- Additional postcards if you are doing postcard introductions.

Key content

In this module, you need to hold in mind the ideas about climate distress, loss and grief, climate journeys and what helps, that we discuss in chapter one. You also need to be familiar with the tree of life method developed by Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo and David Denborough (Denborough 2008, Ncube-Mlilo 2017) which we discuss in chapter three.

Key issues

The key issues in this module are to do with managing climate distress and we use two different approaches. The first creates space for people to talk about their feelings about the crisis. The second – the tree of life – focuses on building collective strength in order to cope.

People experience a wide variety of different feelings in response to the crisis. The feelings are, for the most part, appropriate responses to receiving very bad news and people usually benefit from sharing these experiences and coming to see them as normal. Airing these feelings creates vulnerability however. In the first session you may need to feel your way carefully, working hard to create the safety that is needed to share difficult experiences.

For some people the frameworks of climate grief and the climate journey, which we discuss in chapter one, can help people find their way through

the intense and difficult feelings by giving shape to their distress and suggesting to them that there is life beyond the acute pain. When, and if, you offer these frameworks is a matter of judgment. Some groups will benefit from a formal presentation of this material and you can do this using the slides and notes. With other groups it will be better to build informally on the insights that begin to emerge through discussion, pointing members to where these frameworks are described in the *Participant's handbook*.

Remember too that not everyone who comes to your group will have woken up recently to the crisis. The distress of people who have been involved in the movement for many years, and who have had to deal with repeated experiences of failure, will not take the straightforward shape suggested by these frameworks. Their journeys may be complex and convoluted, with detours, digressions and all manner of good resting places and sad dead ends. Their grief may be that of experiencing repeated losses – of youth, of expectation, of courage for example – as well as the losses of climate change itself. Make sure you acknowledge and support this.

However you approach the conversation about climate distress it is important to acknowledge that although the acute feelings will lessen, they will not completely disappear: people are permanently changed by the experience of facing the climate crisis properly. Nonetheless it is both possible and important to arrive at a place where life continues to feel worth living and where people can make a genuine contribution to managing, solving or adapting to the crisis. Sharing ideas about what helps with the intensity of the feelings and exploring strategies for coping with the worst moments are an important part of this module.

It's also helpful to offer some input of your own about what helps. Slide 9 and the accompanying notes summarise some points that may be helpful and are also discussed in chapter one. We suggest raising what helps in the final discussion of module one but you may want to bring these points in earlier in response to what people say, particularly if they are feeling hopeless about life ever feeling any better. It's usually better to begin a conversation about what helps by asking the group to share what they have found useful, only bringing in your own summary and explanation later.

For anyone whose distress is so acute that they need professional assistance in managing, you need to be sure that you have a list of both national and local sources of help. Hopefully this will not happen as you will have filtered out anyone whose difficulties are too much for this type of group in your initial recruitment interviews.

Session one: getting to know each other

This session brings your group together, has a generous amount of time for introductions and makes space for people to talk about the experiences that have brought them to the group. It ends with an introduction to the tree of life and (in a weekly group) writing the first postcard.

Session one: outline and rough timings		
1	10 min	Welcome, introducing yourselves, ground rules
2	45 min	Group introductions using postcards or objects from the natural world. Hopes and expectations
3	30 min	Talking about climate distress. **Either** Climate journeys – pair work followed by group discussion **or** Talking about the feelings: input on climate distress followed by pair work and group discussion
4	20 min	Favourite trees: introduction to the tree of life
5	20 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break if this module is being done in one day)

1) Welcome, introducing yourselves, ground rules (10 min)

Introduce yourselves, say a few words about the group and set the ground rules (for example, confidentiality, listening, turn-taking and respect for others) that you hope the group will observe. Some facilitators like to generate the ground rules through a brain storm or group discussion once the first introductions have been made, but we've found that at the start of a group people are often too uncertain and nervous to do this effectively. Some may also inadvertently break rules during the introductions, leading to embarrassment when they are stated later. We've found that people generally feel reassured by the facilitators stating their aim of creating a safe, respectful space and explaining briefly what they mean by this. This is also a good moment to introduce the norm that during a 'go-round', people do not respond to each other until everyone has spoken. In most groups you will need to gently remind people of the ground rules which apply to each activity as you do them.

2) Group introductions (45 min)

At the start of your first meeting we suggest that you spend about 45 minutes allowing group members to introduce themselves and begin to get to know each other. You can also skip the postcard/natural object introductions and allow more time for hopes and expectations or substitute other inclusion activities that you prefer.

Postcard introductions (15 min). This is a way of moving gently into the expectation that people will share something of themselves. You can use the postcards you assembled for the postcards to myself

activity. For a group of eight people a collection of 40 postcards would be appropriate. Place the postcards in the middle of the group where everyone can see them. Invite everyone to take a picture, picking the first image that intuitively appeals to them. Then go round the group asking each person to introduce themselves, saying their name, one other fact about themselves and why the image they chose appealed to them. This activity removes the need for people to take difficult decisions about how much to share about themselves, but allows interesting associations and thoughts to emerge as people share why an image appealed to them.

An alternative for an online group is to ask people to bring with them something from the natural world that means something to them, which they would like to share with others. Several members of the online pilot group brought plants, others a rock, a shell, some seeds, a piece of slate and the view of a tree outside their window. They had rich associations to these objects which instantly brought connection with other members.

Hopes and expectations (30 min). Sharing hopes and expectations at the start of a group creates common ground and allows you to field any unrealistic expectations. Ask each person in turn to share what they are hoping to get out of the group. Explain roughly how much time each person has to speak and follow the norm that no-one comments till everyone has spoken. Try to allow time for some general discussion once everyone has spoken so that interactions between group members can begin to develop.

This activity can also be done as a paired exercise with people reporting back afterwards to the whole group. Remind people to share the time and to listen. Remind them of the half way point. Make the report-back specific and tell people what this will be beforehand. Asking people to share one thing they found they had in common with their partner and one thing which was different is usually effective.

3) Talking about climate distress (30 mins)

Use one of the two options below. Which you choose will depend on your sense of your group's needs. For some people it's important to realise that the awful feelings they have been enduring are shared and normal, and talking directly about climate distress may be helpful. For others this is too threatening and they will do better having space to tell their story without having to focus directly on the feelings.

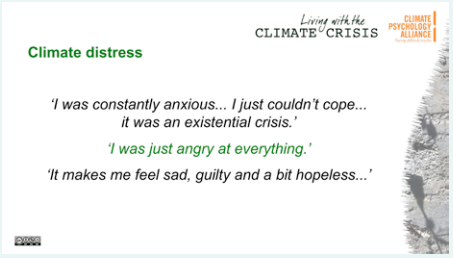
Climate stories. Ask people to work in pairs, telling the story of how they came to care about the climate crisis. Suggest they take a moment in silence to focus, and then take it in turns to speak for about four minutes. At the end, the listener should respond 'What I hear is that this is a story about...' and check whether this fits. (10 mins).

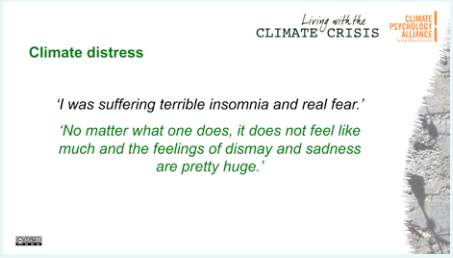
Share the stories in the group, drawing out common themes and differences. It's important to avoid slavish repetition of the stories and it can help to focus on the answers to the prompt, with each person speaking about their partner rather than themselves. For example: 'Joe's was a story about a lifetime of concern.' 'Meena's story is about a sudden realisation and being overwhelmed.' 'Karen's story had lots of exciting times with new people.' Allow the discussion to open up and encourage people to respond to each other rather than always offering a response yourselves. (15-20 minutes).

Talking about the feelings. Some people find it helpful to be given more prompts in order to talk about their experience of waking up to climate change. For this option, spend 5 minutes talking through the quotes and information on slides 2, 3 and 4. Then spend 10 minutes in pairs and 15 minutes sharing in the group. If you can't show slides, you can simply speak the quotes and point people to the *Participant's handbook* where slide 4 is reproduced.

Slides 2 and 3 have quotes from some research into the experiences of activists and are quite typical of what people feel when they first let the reality of the climate crisis hit them. Talk through them briefly, inviting people to think about whether they identify with them.

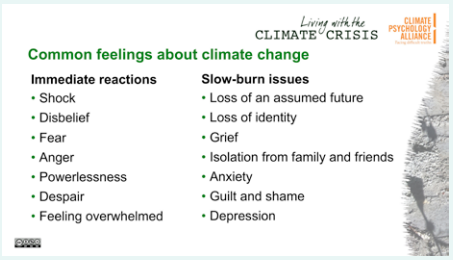
Slides 2 and 3: climate distress





Slide 4 shows common feelings about climate change, divided into the first reactions and the feelings and issues that develop more gradually over time. Again, talk through them briefly.

Slide 4: common feelings about climate change



Explain that on the left hand side are the feelings people typically experience when they first let the significance of the climate crisis really sink in, while on the right hand side are the feelings and questions that won't go away and which people return to again and again.

Emphasise that these feelings are normal responses to bad news. It may be helpful to compare the feelings to other experiences of hearing bad news that your audience will recognise such as hearing that someone close to you has died, hearing that you've failed an important exam or being told you're to be made redundant for example.

Acknowledge that people often want to know how to get rid of these painful feelings and explain that sadly this isn't really possible – if you try to do that, by ignoring them or trying to distract yourself, they have a habit of coming back to attack you with renewed energy later. The issue is how to assimilate them, how to let yourself be changed by them, how to listen to what they are telling you, how to live with them.

Add that what people need is time, space and support to explore the dark feelings.

Another way into this topic is to ask people to brainstorm all the different feelings about the climate crisis that they have felt, writing the responses on flip chart paper. Check back to chapter one if more detail on these experiences would be helpful to you in preparing what you will say.

Having shown the slides or done the brainstorm, ask people to talk in pairs for ten minutes about their own experiences of climate distress, sharing only what they feel comfortable about sharing but trying to add detail and stories to the feelings that have been identified. Remind people that it's important to listen as well as speak and tell them when they are half way through the time. Some questions that participants may find helpful in drawing out their partner's stories about climate distress are:

- Have you noticed changes in your feelings over time?
- Can you tell any stories about how those changes took place?
- What have you found has helped with these feelings?

Return to the group to share experiences and draw out common themes. As with other pair exercises, try not to get bogged down in repetition of what went on in the pairs and encourage interaction between group members. Asking a couple of questions such as 'Did you hear anything that surprised you?' and 'Did you hear anything that made you feel lighter?' can be useful ways to get into a general conversation.

4) Favourite trees (20 mins)

In a weekly group this activity is part of the closing sequence of the first meeting. In an all day group it will probably come before a coffee break or close the morning session. Explain that in the next meeting/session/after lunch you are going to do an activity that uses the metaphor of the forest for the way that we can build the collective strength that will help us face the climate crisis. To start this off you are going to share stories of your favourite trees.

Start by explaining the metaphor of the forest. Ask people to think in silence for a few moments about a favourite tree and briefly tell the group about it. This could be a species of tree that means a lot to them, or a particular tree. In the pilot group for *Living with the climate crisis*, one person recalled the mango trees from her native country, another a childhood tree that had provided her with a special seat from which to view the world, a third a favourite cherry that had been felled. Each tree had a story attached to it, usually one which expressed a connection to the natural world and brought with it memories and strong feelings.

In a weekly group this is the end of meeting one and you should move on to postcards to myself and a check-out activity. In an all day group you will be taking a break.

5) Postcards to myself and check-out (20 min)

In a weekly group, this will be the first postcard which people have written. Explain what you want people to do, give each an envelope in which they can seal the card and a larger envelope to contain all their cards. Invite them to choose a card. In an online group you need to ask people to supply their own cards and envelopes. Remember to do this in your welcome email.

A good check-out for the first meeting could simply be 'How are you feeling now?' or 'Any last thought you'd like to share with the group?'

Session two: the tree of life

This session covers the first part of the tree of life. The tree of life is an important tool for building group cohesiveness and strength. Look back to chapter three for more discussion of the method and make sure you are familiar with the detail of what people need to do to draw their trees.

Session two: outline and rough timings		
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in
2	35 min	Drawing the tree of life
3	10 min	Sharing trees in pairs
4	30 min	Building the forest of life
5	10 min	Open discussion
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)

1) Introduction and check-in (20 min)

Recap on the theme of this session and ask people to remind others what their favourite tree was. In a weekly group ask people to add a few words about how they are feeling to be back in the group.

2) Drawing the tree of life (35 mins)

Introduce the idea of the tree of life. Explain that each person is going to draw a picture of a tree and use it to represent anything they would like to about their lives: their history, their culture and community, the people who matter to them, their strengths, their values and the gifts they give and receive. Emphasise that people don't need to be good at art to take part and that people's trees are likely to be very different.

Explain that once the trees have been drawn, you will bring them together to build a forest and that in the next session you will look at how this forest can withstand the storms and hazards it may face.

If you wish to you can show slide 5 which has examples of some quite different trees.

Slide 5: examples

Then give out art materials and copies of the instructions from the *Participant's handbook*. Talk through what each part of the tree represents. It may be helpful as you speak, to show the summary on slides 6 and 7 or to put these points on a flip chart.

The roots are aspects of life that make you feel rooted and strong. These might be your origins, your cultural heritage, your family, those who have taught you most in life or helped you become the person you are. They might also be people who have come into your life later on, places where you feel you belong, people you turn to for strength, practices or beliefs that nurture you.

The ground is your present day life. You can put in words for where you live, your daily routine, the work you do and the activities you regularly take part in.

The trunk is a space for writing about your values, strengths, skills and abilities.

The branches represent your hopes, dreams and wishes. These can be personal but may also be hopes for humanity, your family or community.

The leaves are important people in your life. You can include people who have passed away as well as people who are still alive.

The fruits are gifts you have been given. These could be material things like a good education but also small acts of kindness, words of encouragement or appreciation.

The flowers are gifts you bring to others. Let yourself think about how other people might appreciate you.

Invite people to draw their own tree with roots, a trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits and to write on it using the scheme shown on slides 6 and 7 and in the instructions.

Slide 6: roots, ground and trunk

Slide 7: branches, leaves, flowers and fruits

As you talk through what you want people to do, reassure them that they don't need to be good at art to draw a tree. Its purpose is to let them describe some aspects of themselves and it can be quite schematic or vague. It's also important to say that everyone's tree will be different. Some may not have strong roots. One might have bare branches. Another might be loaded with fruits.

It's also important to offer as wide a definition of each aspect as possible. Some people's families of origin are traumatic or poorly remembered so offer other examples of rootedness such as people who have come to matter later in life, places people feel they belong and practices (spiritual, physical or practical) that help them feel rooted and solid. Say that it's fine to start wherever you want. You don't have to start with the roots.

Similarly some people will struggle to write about their own skills and abilities (the trunk) or describe the gifts which they bring to others (the flowers). Low self-esteem or a fear of seeming boastful can inhibit a lot of people. It can help to ask people to imagine someone else – a colleague, a teacher or a friend – describing their best qualities. What would someone else see in you? What abilities would they admire? What gifts would this other person think you bring to the people you know or the groups you are part of?

Older people who have fewer years ahead of them may find the hopes, dreams and wishes of the branches difficult. Again, offering a broad interpretation can be helpful. These do not have to be life ambitions. Small hopes and dreams - to have some days free of arthritis, or spend a summer with grandchildren - are just as valid as the dream of getting a degree or solving the climate crisis.

Finally, there are people who find it difficult to give their tree many leaves (important people) or fruits (gifts they have been given). They may feel they lack people in their life, or – in the case of older people – that all the people who mattered are dead. Some people may like to represent those who have died as leaves that have fallen and now lie on the ground, but it's also important to say that it's all right to only have a few leaves on the tree: your tree may be a wintry one, waiting for new leaves/friends to arrive. You may also need to acknowledge that some people feel that they have been dealt a raw deal, with few gifts. Encourage them to think widely about different kinds of gifts. These could be characteristics such as intelligence, beauty, charm or a sense of humour. They could be material benefits such as the opening to a good job or a good education. They could be day-to-day small acts of kindness or words of encouragement that others have shown to them.

If you've taken part in this activity before, bring the tree that you created to add to the forest in the next section. If not, you need to decide whether to participate by creating your own tree or to facilitate the activity by moving round the room, clarifying anything that is confusing and offering encouragement. It's helpful if at least one of you is able to move around the room offering support.

In an online group you need to ask people to come prepared with their own art materials.

3) Sharing the trees (10 min)

Move into pairs so that people can share their trees and the stories contained in them. Encourage people to speak about the hopes and dreams, skills and abilities that they have recorded. The pain of the climate crisis often leads to people feeling that there is nothing to hope for and that they have little to contribute. Drawing and then sharing the trees helps to counteract this. It offers a fuller sense of life. People are given permission to hope and dream. A sense of the self as capable and

strong is encouraged. Moments of joy can emerge as people describe those who matter to them.

Move straight from this sharing into the next activity.

In an online group this activity can be done in pairs in breakout rooms or in two small groups, one with each facilitator.

4) Building the forest of life (30 min)

The second part of the tree of life focuses on making connections between people, appreciating each other's trees and seeing the strength that can come from this.

Introduce this by explaining that in nature, trees connect to each other underground through a complex root system, supported by the fungi and bacteria underground. This communicates opportunities and dangers, and sends messages and nutrients to other trees who need help. Trees know that together they have more chance to withstand the challenges.

Adapt the following text into your own voice. 'We are now going to connect our trees together and try to form the strong root system that will help all the trees to stand strong. As humans, who tell stories, we have begun to build this connection by sharing the stories of our trees. We will continue by:

- putting our trees side by side to admire the richness and strength of all of them together;
- walking through the forest and writing a couple of notes showing responses such as appreciation, admiration and curiosity for each tree.'

Give people Blu Tak and Post-it Notes. Ask them to build the forest by sticking their pictures on the walls, looking at each other's trees and writing their appreciations. Ask people to respond as spontaneously and as widely as they can, writing whatever they like about each other's trees. For example, people might appreciate:

- the shape, colours, detail of the tree;
- the way the branches reach out, the leaves dance or the roots connect;
- the words that are written, the values that are expressed, the care that is shown.

People then return to their own tree and read what others have written for them.

In an online group ask each person to show their tree in turn by holding it up to their camera and describing it in any way they wish. The rest of the group put their appreciations into the chat. Save the chat and distribute the comments to members after the group.

5) Open discussion (10 min)

Sit together and look at the forest you have created. Invite the group to comment in whatever way they wish on the experience. In an online group ask people to hold their trees to the camera again. This is an opportunity for group members or the facilitators to draw out the connections between the trees. You might remark on the strong roots that you share, the diversity of the experiences described, the remarkable skills that are portrayed. This should be a point where people can begin to feel the strength of the collective and appreciate their connections with others.

People in the pilot group spoke of how much they valued the trees and other people's appreciations as reminders that they could return to after the group ended.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

In a weekly group this is the end of the second meeting. Ask people to write their second postcard to myself and do a check-out. Ask people to make sure to bring their tree pictures with them to the next meeting.

In an all day group it's time for a break.

Session three: facing the storms

Session three looks at the threats to the forest and how to respond. Relationships between group members should be beginning to develop and you should be beginning to get a stronger feel for the particular needs of your members. This can be a more difficult session as it asks people to return to the pain of the climate crisis directly.

Session three: outline and rough timings		
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)
2	10 min	Visualisation about the forest
3	10 min	Brainstorm on facing the storms
4	50 min	Group discussion on what helps, introducing the frameworks of grief and the journey if appropriate
5	15 min	Forming buddy pairs for support
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (20 min)

Explain the session's focus: you are going to look at the storms, threats and hazards (literal and metaphorical) that the climate crisis brings. In a weekly group, you need to return people to their memories of the strength of the forest. For the check-in ask people to show their trees again and, if they wish, to read out one of the appreciations made of their tree. After a few moments of looking at the circle of trees move on to the visualisation. In an all day group, you can move straight to the visualisation. If people are sluggish after lunch a quick physical shake-out may help.

2) Visualisation about the forest (10 min)

Ask group members to close their eyes and centre themselves. Adapt the text below, about the connectedness of a forest, into your own voice.

'Imagine the tree you have drawn is part of a forest. Maybe it's a huge mother tree, its upper leaves just touching those of another tree and sheltering the growth beneath. Maybe it's a small tree, just beginning its growth, stretching up through a recently cleared space to reach the sun. Are there insects living in the bark? Moths or butterflies feeding on the flowers? Birds nesting in the branches? Animals concealed in the undergrowth? How is your tree connecting with those around it and with all the other inhabitants of the forest? Imagine all the connections in this forest: the trees, the plants, the birds, the insects and mammals, the soil the plants are rooted in, the systems of fungi and bacteria that help the trees communicate. Breathe the clean air of our forest and feel our strength. When you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the group.'

Allow the group to share their responses.

3) Brainstorm on facing the storms (10 min)

Explain that you are now going to look at the storms that a forest and its creatures can face - in our case the storms of the climate crisis - and think about what we can do to face that. Focus this by doing three quick brainstorms:

- hazards/threats of the climate crisis
- effects on us and our communities
- how we can respond.

Record the responses rapidly on a flip chart, making sure that people don't begin discussion till the lists feel complete. In an online group, use the chat or the whiteboard function to do the brainstorm.

At the end of the brainstorm, focus mainly on the last point about how to respond. Use the ideas which people have contributed to move

gradually into the next discussion about what helps us face the storms of the climate crisis.

4) What helps: group discussion (50 min)

Open up a discussion about what helps when facing the climate crisis. We have left this session flexible but the most fruitful discussions are likely to come when people are able to reflect and share what has worked for them in both this and in other difficult situations. We suggest staying in the whole group but you could also opt to divide into two small groups for some of the time, each with one facilitator.

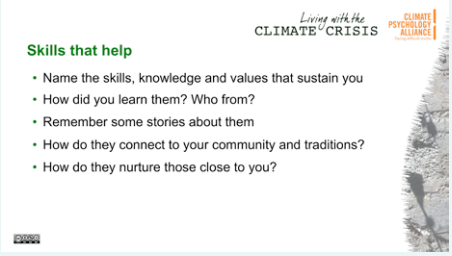
During this discussion you may also find it helpful to introduce the ideas of the tasks of grief, the climate journey and what helps which we cover in chapter one and which are summarised in the *Participant's handbook*. This may best be done informally, in response to the group but you can also present them using the slides and notes below if you wish.

Start by encouraging people to share stories. Look for rich detail. There may be proverbs, songs or collective practices from people's childhoods or history which they can share and draw strength from. What nourishes people? What sustains them? What skills do they use to cope? What skills can they use to help others? David Denborough has some questions in his book *Collective narrative practice* (Denborough 2008) which you may find helpful to keep in mind or offer to the group as you facilitate this discussion:

- What is the *name* of a special skill, knowledge or value that sustains you, or those close to you, through difficult times?
- What is a *story* about this skill, knowledge or value - a story about a time when this made a difference to you or to others?
- What is the *history* of this skill, knowledge or value - how did you learn this? Who did they learn it from?
- What is the *ecology* of this skill, knowledge or value – how does it connect to the traditions, stories and songs of your community? How does it nurture those close to you, your family or community?' (Questions adapted from Denborough 2008, p. 36.)

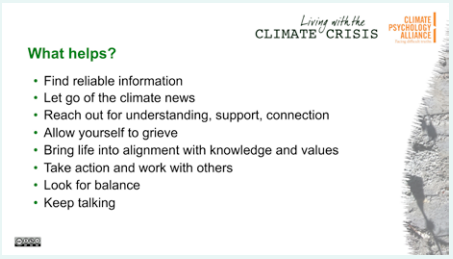
If you would like to share these questions with your group you can use the summary on slide 8 which is also in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 8: skills that help



This discussion is also a point where you may want to introduce the list of what helps which is summarised on slide 9 and expanded on in the *Participant's handbook* and in chapter one of this guide.

Slide 9: what helps?



Some of the items on the 'What helps?' slide are aspects of the tasks of grief. Others come from our experience of the climate movement and the best practice we have observed amongst climate activists. In general, four things are important:

- finding support to work through the painful feelings;
- making connection with others who share your concerns;
- taking some form of action;
- balancing activism with continued enjoyment of the ordinary pleasures of life.

Talking, making space for your feelings, pacing yourself and being kind to yourself are obvious to most people. Less obvious is the advice to reflect on your values and to bring your life into alignment with what you now know. These are part of Worden's task of adjusting to the new reality of life after loss. Reflecting on values can help people identify what really matters to them and answer the difficult question 'How do I want to live my life now?' The advice to stay away from the climate news is also connected to grief. Once you know the reality of a loss, it does not help to torture yourself with the detail of how it occurred.

Finding reliable information matters though. Some people find it hard not to get dragged into the echo chambers of the online world where either false optimism or relentless pessimism prevail. We recommend the Skeptical Science site https://skepticalscience.com/ and Carbon Brief https://www.carbonbrief.org/ as reliable sources.

Achieving balance is another part of the tasks of grief. Taking action restores a sense of self efficacy but throwing yourself manically into everything you can do can be a way of pushing the distress aside. This rarely ends well. Continuing to enjoy life matters - whether this is a wild night out, a gentle walk in the woods or time spent with those close to you. It can also be important to balance the kinds of action taken. Political action requires tenacity and often ends in disappointment or only small gains. Balancing this necessary work with actions which feel good or give immediate gains, such as planting trees or volunteering at a community garden can help people manage this.

Describing the framework of grief can be particularly helpful if discussion moves to the losses that people are facing. Slide 10 and the brief notes below may help you, as will the more detailed discussion in chapter one.

Slide 10: grief and loss

The four tasks:

Accepting the reality of the crisis. This usually happens intellectually first, with the emotions catching up as people allow themselves to reflect on what the crisis means for them and what it calls on them to do.

Working through the painful emotions, mourning what is lost. The losses may be connected to the sense of a vanishing natural world but just as important are the losses of the lives people may have expected to lead. Young adults may be struggling with the question of whether or not to have children. Older people may have imagined a retirement filled with foreign holidays. For everyone, the disappearance of a life without fear of floods, storms, droughts and upheaval can feel very frightening.

Adjusting to the new environment, reshaping a sense of identity, finding support and solidarity with others. Reflecting on your values, reconsidering the way you live and what matters to you is usually important.

Choosing a path of action, reinvesting emotional energy. Becoming able to use the energy of your anger is often important here.

You may need to explain that these tasks aren't simple and you don't simply complete one and then move on to the next. Most people find themselves cycling through them, getting stuck, taking a step forward, suffering a setback. There are dark days when you feel overwhelmed by difficult emotions and bright days when you begin to work out what this all means for you and what you might do.

It can also be helpful to explain what happens when people turn away from the tasks. This is when realistic fear turns into anxiety; it's when people become depressed and hopeless; it's when people get stuck in masochistic repetitions of how dreadful everything is or caught up in apocalyptic narratives.

The second framework that may be useful in this discussion session is that of the climate journey. It often applies best to young people who are facing climate change for the first time. If your group has members who seem to be at different stages of this journey, introducing the framework may be useful. The ideas come from research into the experiences of climate activists (Hoggett and Randall 2018) are summarised on slide 11 and described in more detail in chapter one. Make sure you are familiar with the detail if you want to use these ideas.

Slide 11: climate journeys

Epiphany: the moment of waking up to the issue.

Immersion: finding out everything you can; feeling very distressed and often overwhelmed.

Action: throwing yourself into action as a solution and making changes – politically, at work, in your community, in your personal life.

Crisis and resolution: Urgency and over-commitment lead to burnout. Reappraisal of what is personally possible leads to a more personally sustainable level of action.

Don't expect this discussion to come to neat resolution or conclusion. Be aware of the particular vulnerabilities and needs of your group. Be prepared to revisit these themes as the group develops. End this discussion by returning the group to the strengths and abilities of the forest. You could ask them to:

- hold up their trees again;
- identify the strengths;
- celebrate the qualities they most appreciate.

5) Forming buddy pairs for support (15 min)

Explain that the idea of the buddy pairs is to:

- offer support in practising skills and making plans;
- share experience and knowledge about different forms of local action;
- explore personal and family carbon reduction, using the *Living lightly* guide once this has been covered in module three.

Putting people into pairs can be done through consultation with the group, by allocating people according to your sense of what is best, or randomly by putting names into a hat and drawing them out in pairs. Our preference is for consulting. If you're consulting, it's important to ask the group to reflect on who they think should be paired with whom, rather than inviting them to say who they would like to be paired with. This avoids some people feeling they are the last to be chosen or finding that no-one wants to pair with them. Explain the purpose of the pairings and then say something like 'I'd like you to reflect for a moment on who you think should be paired with whom - not who you would like to be paired with yourself but who you think would make good pairs.' If the discussion of this becomes too messy, time consuming or inconclusive, revert to drawing the names from a hat or make the allocation yourselves.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

In a weekly group, this will be the third postcard which people have written. In a group that starts with an all day session it will be the first.

Module two: Communication

In this module we explore three aspects of communication about climate change:

- how to have meaningful conversations with family, friends and colleagues;
- how to speak up, using stories, in conversations which range from chance encounters to presentations in formal groups;
- how to use insights from social psychology about targeting and framing messages.

The focus is on sharing experiences and on developing and practising skills.

Like module one, this module requires about six hours of group time. This could be three evening meetings or a whole day. In a whole day event you will need less time for checking in and checking out and you can expand group time accordingly.

Materials needed

- Paper and pens for each participant. (You can ask people to bring their own but it's useful to have spares for those who forget.)
- Lap-top and projector if you wish to show slides. Alternatively, prepare the necessary information on flipchart paper or as handouts.
- Handouts with instructions for the story of self, us and now if you have not printed the complete *Participant's handbook*.
- Postcards for the postcards to myself activity.

Key content

In this module, you will be introducing the concepts and practices about communication described in chapter three.

In session one the focus is on the often difficult conversations people have with family, friends and colleagues. You will be introducing the ideas of content and process, of empathic listening and of responding creatively to ambivalence and resistance. The goal is to move people away from information-giving towards thinking about relationships, listening and understanding defensiveness.

In session two the focus shifts to situations where people have opportunities to speak and uses Marshall Ganz's *Public narrative* method (Ganz 2011). You will be helping people develop their story telling skills in order to communicate with others, using Ganz's idea of the stories of self, us and now. The method gives people a repertoire of anecdotes, incidents, images and metaphors - rooted in the values and strengths that they identified during module one - that they can draw on when the occasion allows. In order to deliver the workshop confidently, you need to have created your own story of self, us and now and practised using it a few times.

In session three you will be using roleplay to help people practise these skills. In all three sessions you may find it helpful to introduce some ideas

from Climate Outreach about messaging and audiences. We discuss these in chapter three and provide a slide that you can use if you wish. Do become familiar with Climate Outreach's work for yourself as you may be able to pick out elements that are particularly useful for your group and adapt the slide for their particular needs.

Key issues

These three sessions make up much of the middle of the group. Your group should be beginning to work well together. A complex web of relationships should be developing. People should generally be feeling more confident about their place in the group and their capacity to contribute. You will have established the buddy pairs at the end of module one and you should check periodically during the next sessions how these are working. You may need to make adjustments (such as setting up a threesome) if there are problems.

Although the group should now be more confident there are still issues centring on communication and climate change that can be difficult.

Some people find it hard to get away from the conviction that information is everything. You may need to ask them to suspend judgment until this module is finished. Some feel that they need to be an expert on climate science to open their mouths or fear that they lack enough information to talk about climate change at all. Explaining that the amount of information you need is actually quite small and suggesting that the issue is more one of confidence may help. Others may still be too overwhelmed with feelings of anger to resist lecturing others. It can help to acknowledge that there is sometimes psychological work to be done before people feel comfortable with the methods proposed.

Talking about conversations with family and friends which have gone wrong can be very upsetting. Distress can be re-stimulated. Some people may feel embarrassed or not be comfortable about sharing very personal information. Keeping the focus on safety and the mood non-judgmental will help. Sessions one and three also include roleplay activities in which a volunteer offers an experience of theirs for the group to enact and then replay, in order to see if new skills might lead to new insights or a different outcome. Roleplay creates anxiety for some people. We have offered an alternative to the roleplay for use if necessary, but we'd encourage you to stick with roleplay if you can. It may help to say at the beginning that there are several ways in which people can take part, only a couple of which actually involve playing a role.

Session two - finding your voice - asks people to speak openly about themselves and to plan to use this information in more public settings. Occasionally you may have someone in your group who is uncomfortable with this idea. Some people find speaking about themselves hard. Some may have been brought up to believe that talking about oneself or one's feelings is wrong. Some may fear the exposure that comes with telling a personal story. Others lack the vocabulary to describe their feelings or

struggle to summon up an image or metaphor. Emphasise that people should only use experiences they feel comfortable with. Offer prompts and suggestions to those who seem stuck for words.

Some people find it helpful when writing their stories to refer back to the tree of life picture they created in module one, so remember to ask people to bring these with them for session two.

Session one: talking with family and friends

This session starts by introducing the idea that there are different types of conversation and then inviting people to share their experiences of difficult climate conversations in pairs. Following a discussion of the concepts there is then a roleplay activity in which one or two members bring a real experience that is enacted by the group. This can help people to see vividly how a conversation could go differently.

Session one: outline and rough timings		
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in
2	5 min	Different types of conversation: brief input
3	20 min	Sharing difficult conversations: pair and group work
4	20 min	Levels in a conversation: input and group discussion
5	15 min	What helps: brief input, video and group discussion
6	25 min	Application and practice: roleplay or group discussion
7	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (20 min)

Explain that this session explores what goes on under the surface in conversations about the climate crisis, and how difficult it can be to hear other people's feelings and to express your own in a way that doesn't end in a stand-off. You may find it helpful to use a check-in that brings this to life by focusing on people's feelings about being at this stage of the group's life and by encouraging them to empathise with each other's feelings.

You could begin by saying that at this point in a group like this we might expect people to be beginning to feel a sense of connection, cohesiveness and shared experience but also to be grappling with all kinds of feelings that may be harder to express. Give some examples to make clear what you mean. The examples you give will depend on what you are picking up from beneath the surface and need to be offered tentatively. These feelings could be both positive and negative. Some that

we've experienced at this point in a group are disappointment that the group isn't going to solve things, a fear of needing support, desperation about the crisis and a longing for recognition of years of hard work. Your group may share these feelings or have quite different feelings bubbling beneath the surface.

Invite people to take it in turns to speak to the prompt: 'What sorts of feelings are you aware of having experienced during the group so far? What has been easy to express? What has been harder to say?'

When everyone has spoken, invite people to respond to what they have heard. 'What resonated with your own feelings or was a surprise to you?'

If you are running this session as part of an all day event you can allow a more generous amount of time for it.

2) Different types of conversation (5 min)

Explain that this session focuses on conversations with the people we meet day to day - our families, friends and colleagues. Campaigning and wider communication will be covered in the next session. Here, it's relationships and feelings that matter, and small moments as well as big ones. How can we:

- hold a conversation about climate change that doesn't end in upset or embarrassment?
- help others feel that the subject is important to them and that they can do something about it?
- manage conflicts about the subject with people we love and like?
- cope with our own feelings when the topic comes up?

Use the list on slide 12 to emphasise that it's important to normalise talking about climate change in all kinds of situations.

Slide 12: successful climate conversations

Shallow: you mention climate change in passing.

An exchange: You mention climate change and the other person responds.

Explorative: you have a few exchanges on the topic.

Deep: you have a meaningful exchange of ideas.

A shift: You have a deep exchange and there's in shift in the other person's (or in your) concern, awareness or knowledge ('I've not thought of that before....').

People sometimes expect climate conversations to be transformational, but they don't have to be. Bringing this idea in early on gives a reassuring signal to group members who worry that they never have any meaningful conversations about the climate crisis. You can show the slide, summarise the points on a flip chart or simply talk.

3) Sharing difficult conversations (20 min)

Ask people to form pairs or put them into pairs and ask them to recall and share a difficult conversation they have had about climate change. It could be with friends, family, a work conversation, or a chat with someone at a bus-stop or in a shop. It could have been difficult for all kinds of reasons, and it might be that they stopped the conversation or barely started it because it was so difficult. Encourage people to think of a specific occasion if they can, and to try to remember how they felt during the conversation and how they think the other person felt.

Remind people to take it in turns to speak and to give the other person their full attention. Suggest some prompts such as: 'How did you feel during the conversation?' and 'How do you think the other person felt?'

Allow ten minutes for this, and prompt the pairs when it is time to swap. In an online setting you can usually send a broadcast message to the breakout rooms.

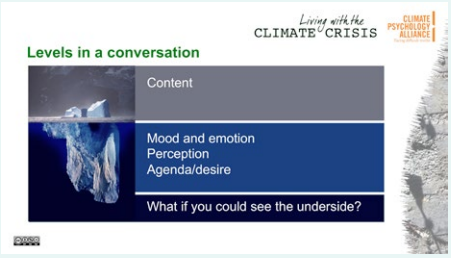
Return to the group and ask for brief feedback on the process. Try to avoid people repeating exactly what was said in the pairs by posing questions like: What was similar in your stories? What was different? Did anything surprise you?

Validate the difficulties without reinforcing people's sense of how impossible climate conversations are. For example, sometimes people will say that they can't bear to talk with a particular person or group 'because they are climate deniers'. This may be true of course, but try not to reinforce wholesale dismissals. Instead, refer to the feelings that may come up in such encounters.

4) Levels in a conversation (20 min)

Introduce the ideas of content and process and of levels in a conversation using slide 13, the description below and the detail in chapter three.

Slide 13: levels in a conversation



Explain that most conversations take place at several levels. We often focus on the **content,** such as planning a holiday, arranging a meeting or talking about climate change. This is the surface level and what goes on underneath (the process) can be just as important. You can think of a conversation as having four levels: the content, the mood or emotions felt by the people involved, the agenda each person has and their perceptions of each other.

The mood of a conversation may be (for example) lighthearted, serious, excitable, comfortable, edgy, curious or distant. The emotions each person feels could range across enthusiasm, affection, love, anger, disapproval and many more. Both mood and emotion can change repeatedly during the course of a conversation.

Perception is how people see each other, their assumptions about each other. We often slot people into our existing perceptions and stereotypes, for example parent/child, puritanical campaigner, role model or teacher.

Agenda is what people hope to get out of the conversation, consciously or less so: for example to flirt, to show superiority, to persuade, to learn something, to show they are well-disposed.

You can use this example, or substitute one of your own. A woman says to her husband: 'Have you thought about supper?' Invite the group to define:

- the content (a factual question);
- her mood (edgy and irritable though she's attempting to conceal this because she doesn't want a row);
- her perception (that her partner is lazy and thoughtless because it's already late and he's checking his email again);
- her agenda (to get him to make supper, or alternatively to make him feel guilty).

Follow up by talking about her husband's response. He replies: 'Not really', which is factual and true (the content). His mood is irritable in return because he feels wrong-footed. His perception of his wife is a parental one - mother telling him off. His agenda is not to lose face.

Invite people to apply these ideas to the conversations they discussed in the paired activity. Which of the levels can they identify? Which are

harder to see? Does thinking in this way make any difference to how they feel about the conversation? You can return to pairs for this, but it is often easier to stay together in the group where you can tease out the details from examples people are happy to share.

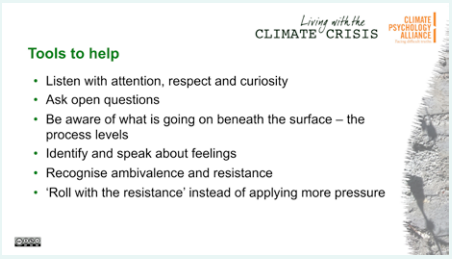
5) What helps? (15 min)

Move on to look at some tools that help in climate conversations.

If you can, start by showing the four-minute, cartoon film The Secret to Talking about Climate Change made by the Alliance for Climate Education, with advice from climate psychologist Renee Lertzman.[6] The film is funny and clear, and although its intended audience is young people we have found that people of all ages respond well to it.

Hold a short discussion of the film (about five minutes) and then talk through the points on slide 14, following this with more discussion.

Slide 14: tools to help



Emphasise the importance of listening, respect and curiosity. Describe the difference between open and closed questions. Emphasise the importance of tuning into the process levels, that ambivalence is inevitable about anything which involves change, and that we all have mixed feelings. Give some examples of how resistance may appear: for example fidgeting, glancing away or seeming to agree too easily. Explain that opposing resistance head on doesn't help. It needs to be approached from a different angle and the feelings need to be addressed. Encourage people to enjoy connecting with another person, to accept that not all conversations need to be deep and to set aside the wish to change someone's mind.

6) Application and practice (25 min)

We suggest two options for helping people apply and practise these ideas. The first involves roleplay which can be challenging for some group members and requires confidence from the facilitator. There is also space in the last session of this module to repeat these activities.

The first (and we think most powerful) option is a roleplay, based on a group member's experience. Invite one member of the group (the presenter) to offer a scenario from their own experience – perhaps the difficult conversation they brought to the paired activity, or another one.

The presenter describes the conversation briefly, giving enough detail about the context and the people involved so that others can imagine it. They then, at your invitation, identify two roleplayers from the group: one to play themself and one to play the other person. These two people take on their roles and act out the conversation as it happened, not necessarily all of it but up to a point where you, as facilitator, can see that the conversation could now go in different directions.

Ask the players how they felt during the enactment and ask the presenter how they felt watching it, and whether their view of how the other person in their scenario felt has changed at all. Invite suggestions from the group about what could be done differently, with a focus on using the ideas suggested on slide 14.

When a few suggestions have been made, bring in the presenter so they can say which suggestion they want to try out, and then ask the roleplayers to enact this approach. Depending on the skill levels in the group, you may need to be more or less interventionist. You may want to point out when or how resistance appears, ask the players to comment on what is happening, ask the presenter to comment, or suggest another approach the players could try. Allow the players and the presenters to debrief. The players need time to speak about how it felt to take on these roles and to make clear that they are not the person they were playing. The presenter needs time to speak about how it felt to watch an intimate situation from their life being enacted and to say what they now feel.

This activity can also be done in two smaller groups, each led by one facilitator.

The second option moves away from people's actual experience to fictional examples and makes the roleplay aspect optional. This can be helpful if your group is uncomfortable with roleplay or uncomfortable with working directly on their own examples. Offer a simple example of a conversation where climate change might come up, for example:

- a friend is telling you about all the places she's longing to fly abroad to, and your usual response is to stay quiet but feel furious with her. What other options do you have?
- your mother is explaining her plans for a traditional Christmas with all the meaty options and excessive present-buying. How do you respond, given that you'd like a vegetarian/vegan meal and more modest spending?
- a passer-by at a climate demonstration is frustrated at the disruption. How do you explain what you're doing?
- you're tired of your best friend tiptoeing around climate change in your presence, or saying 'You won't like this but…' about their high-carbon lifestyle. How do you create some space in which you can each share your thoughts?

You can ask two people to roleplay one of these options to bring them to life and then proceed as in option one, trying out different approaches and responses. An alternative is to ask the group to first brainstorm the most unhelpful approaches and responses they can think of. Encourage them to let their imaginations run riot. Write all of these down on the flipchart or on your online platform's whiteboard. Discourage comment at this stage, though there will be some laughter as people come up with enjoyably bad suggestions. Then ask them to suggest responses that focus on process and engage at the level of feeling. Write these down as well, adding your own if this seems helpful to the group. Discuss how these examples relate to people's own experiences.

Whichever option you have chosen, explain that there will be more opportunities for discussing and practising these skills in the third session of this module. Respond to anything else that has come up that needs to be responded to.

7) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

In a weekly group distribute a choice of picture cards for people to select from and ask them to write their next card. Choose an appropriate check-out for the mood of your group, for example, asking people for one word to describe how they are feeling now about holding a climate conversation with someone they are close to.

If module two is being held over a day, skip writing postcards till the end of the day and have a break.

Session two: finding your voice

Session two moves on to explore situations where people may have the opportunity to explain, persuade or engage others. It focuses on the creation and telling of stories.

Session two: outline and rough timings		
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)
2	10 min	Story of self, us and now: brief input
3	25 min	Story of self: writing, followed by group sharing
4	25 min	Stories of us and now: writing, followed by group sharing
5	25 min	Performing stories followed by open discussion
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (20 min)

To introduce the theme, explain that:

- you will be using the work of Marshall Ganz to explore how to best use those moments when someone does seem prepared to listen;
- the method is based on stories and that you will be asking people to use their own background and experience to craft a story that will appeal to specific groups they are connected with.

In a series of weekly meetings you will need to do a check in. Your feel for the way your group is developing will give you the best clue for what to use but some possibilities are:

- tell us how you've been feeling since the last meeting;
- has anything changed in your approach to conversations with family and friends since last week's meeting? Have you been able to apply anything in practice?
- reflect for a moment and remember occasions (not necessarily climate related) when other people have welcomed your opinion and listened to you. When you're ready we'll share these in the group.

For the second suggestion you need to remember that some people's approach may not have changed and they may not have been able to put anything into practice. Acknowledging this will allow people to offer something about the difficulties instead.

For the last suggestion you need to be aware that some people may feel that they have never been listened to. Similarly, allow for this in the way you present the suggestion. You may be able to draw useful themes out from the responses such as having skills that are respected, communicating calm and confidence or being in a position of leadership.

2) Story of self, us and now: brief input (10 min)

Our explanations and slides are developed from Marshall Ganz's own handouts for the story of self, us and now. Detailed instructions for group members are in the *Participant's handbook*. Make sure everyone has a copy or print off the relevant pages as a handout. You may also find it helpful to look at his originals and use them if you prefer.[7] They can be found here.

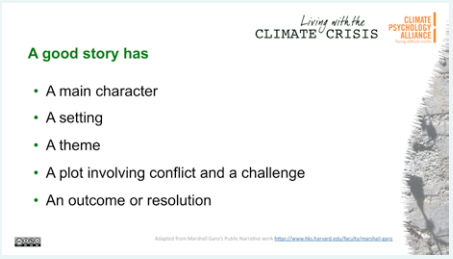
As you make your explanation you may also find it useful to introduce some of the ideas from Climate Outreach. There is time to discuss these in detail in session three but they connect quite closely with some of Ganz's ideas and can be helpful here. The idea of the trusted messenger is particularly relevant to the story of us, while the point about the need to balance impact with the solutions is useful in constructing the 'ask' in the story of now. These ideas are summarised on slide 22.

Begin by showing slide 15, explaining that Marshall Ganz is a US veteran of the 1960s civil rights movement, trade union organiser, Harvard professor and originator of the public narrative method which helps campaigners to use stories to communicate. Talk through the information. If you're not showing slides you can put the headlines on a flip chart. The information is also in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 15: Marshall Ganz and stories

Explain Ganz's view of the key elements in a good story, using the summary on slide 16 if you wish.

Slide 16: good stories



The main character engages our attention. We identify with him or her and see the action through his or her eyes. In a public narrative this is you.

The setting is the place and time that the story takes place. In a public narrative, the setting is your life, the experiences that have made you who you are and the events that have brought you to the point you're at now.

The theme is the central idea or belief which runs through the story. In a public narrative, this is the issue that has grabbed your attention and which you want to tell us about.

A plot involving conflict and a challenge of some kind. The main character (you) is moving towards a desired goal and runs into an unexpected event - a challenge. This crisis engages our curiosity. What will happen? How will she or he solve the difficulty? What will he or she choose to do?

An outcome or resolution. What choice does the main character make? How does the outcome feel? What has the main character learnt?

Continue by explaining the three interlinked elements of the stories of self, us and now, using slide 17 if you wish.

Slide 17: the story of self, us and now

The story of self focuses on how you got to the place you are now; the milestones that brought you to the moment of wanting to act; the challenges you had to face, the choices you made and the satisfactions or frustrations you experienced.

The story of us focuses on all the groups you are part of – family, classmates, friends, members of a team or club, the school community, a faith group, your culture for example – and asks you to pick one 'us' and think about the experiences and motivating values you share.

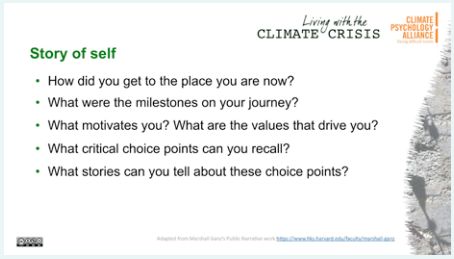
The story of now focuses on the urgent situation you face and calls on your audience to act. It is rooted in the values you celebrate in your story of self and it should contain a specific 'ask'.

At the end, illustrate the ideas by sharing very briefly your own story of self, us and now and explain that you will be using the rest of the meeting to help people construct their own stories.

3) Story of self. (25 min)

Talk through how to write a story of self, using slide 18 if you wish, and pointing to the instructions in the *Participant's handbook* or on the handouts you have printed out.

Slide 18: story of self



Ask people to spend ten minutes writing their story of self. Encourage them to focus on this without angling it towards the stories of us and now. This can come later. It is important to get depth and detail in the story of self. Share the stories in the group. Ask people to listen carefully and offer feedback using the prompts on slide 19. These prompts are given in more detail in the instructions in the *Participant's handbook*.

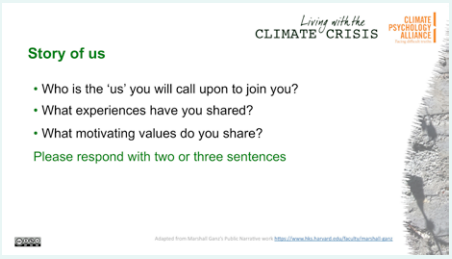
Slide 19: feedback

If you have more than six participants it will be better to split into two groups at this point, one with each facilitator.

4) Stories of us and now (25 min)

Talk through the points on slide 20 and ask people to work individually for five minutes on their stories of us. Detailed instructions are in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 20: story of us



Then spend ten minutes sharing stories and giving feedback as above.

Talk through slide 21 and ask people to work individually for five minutes on their stories of now. Detailed instructions are in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 21: story of now

Then spend ten minutes sharing stories and giving feedback.

5) Performing stories and open discussion (25 min)

Ask for one or two volunteers to perform their whole story briefly, acknowledging that the stories will probably be unfinished and ragged. Allow the group to offer feedback, using the feedback guidance. You will

not have time to hear a performance from everyone and not everyone will want to do one. Emphasise that it can take a while to perfect a good story and encourage people to continue to work on their stories, possibly with the person they are paired with. Explain that there will be another opportunity to share and perform more stories in the next session.

Allow the group to continue to discuss the workshop's theme openly for ten to fifteen minutes, guiding the conversation as necessary. People may want to talk about their experience of creating the stories, how they might apply what they've done, difficulties they anticipate in using them and so on. Emphasise that in day-to-day life people don't always have the opportunity to present their stories in full, but creating the story gives them a way of speaking and a repertoire of incidents and images they can draw on.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

In a weekly group ask people to write another postcard to myself. For the check-out you could ask people to say one thing they are taking away with them from the workshop or substitute a check-out of your choice.

If module two is being held over a day, skip writing postcards till the end of the day and have a break.

Session three: bringing it all together

The last session of module two creates opportunities to practise and integrate the ideas from the previous two sessions. There is also time to introduce some insights from social psychology about communication strategies that do and don't resonate with the population generally.

Session three: outline and rough timings		
1	15 min	Introduction and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)
2	30 min	Listening with empathy and respect: practice session
3	30 min	Performing stories: practice session
4	10 min	Insights from social psychology: brief input
4	20 min	Open discussion
5	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out

The framework for this session is deliberately loose. How you use the time will depend on how your group got on with the ideas and skills introduced in the previous two sessions. You might want to concentrate on:

- practising skills of listening and responding that can help in difficult conversations;
- developing and sharing people's stories of self, us and now, exploring where people might use them;
- talking about the opportunities which people have or can create for talking about climate change;
- sharing any other concerns people have about communicating climate change;
- exploring the information from social psychology about communication strategies.

Our outline and timings are for a meeting that includes all of these but you may want to omit some and give more time to others.

1) Introduction and check in (15 min)

For the check-in you could ask people to say how they've been feeling about communicating climate change since the last meeting or use something else that fits more with your group's needs. Then introduce the session by explaining its purpose and listing the possibilities given above for what you might do. You can put these on a flipchart or, for an online group, create a slide using the template provided. Ask members to identify what their priorities are amongst the possibilities you have listed. Involve the group in discussion of what you are going to do.

2) Listening with empathy and respect (30 min)

Repeat the roleplay activity from session one of this module, using an example from another member. If your group wasn't ready in session one to risk this activity they may well be ready now.

3) Performing stories (30 min)

Ask some more group members to share and perform their stories of self, us and now. In a weekly group they will have had time to do some more work on these which will make this more valuable. In an all day event you could use half the time for people to perfect their stories and half for sharing and performing.

4) Insights from social psychology (10 min)

Show slide 22 or briefly talk through the information if you can't show slides.

Slide 22: insights from communications research

There is more background in chapter three and the list itself is elaborated in the *Participant's handbook*. You may find it helpful to have copies of some of Climate Outreach's reports and a copy of George Marshall's book (Marshall 2015) for people to look at. Explain that the research work of Climate Outreach has come to very similar conclusions to Marshall Ganz about what is effective and that their very readable reports and blogs have lots of useful detail about how to understand different audiences, how different messages play with different people and how some messages, like emphasising the health benefits of action, play well with a lot of audiences. Trusted messengers are usually those who come from the same group or background as the people they are addressing. Amongst public figures, scientists are usually well trusted across society while journalists and politicians score low.

Suggest that people follow up some of this material in order to perfect their story telling skills.

5) Open discussion (20 min)

Allow the group conversation to go where people wish, bringing it back to communication issues if that seems appropriate.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

Distribute a choice of picture cards for people to select from. Ask people to write another postcard to myself. Choose an appropriate check-out for the mood of your group and close.

Ask people to bring their pictures of trees from the tree of life to the next meeting, or remind them in an email.

Module three:
The ecosystem of change

In the final module we turn to the complex systems people are part of and how to influence them in the service of change. There are many issues your group may want to consider, from the multiple players involved and the power relations between them to the way change emerges from surprising places. In the first three sessions there are opportunities to:

- explore the systems people are part of and want to influence;
- look at possibilities for action;
- explore skills people can contribute;
- get to grips with carbon reduction in personal, community and workplace settings;
- introduce ways of reflecting on involvement to ensure it is sustainable;
- spend time reviewing the experience of being in the group, talk about its ending and say goodbye.

Materials needed

- Paper and pens for each participant. (You can ask people to bring their own but it's useful to have spares for those who forget.)
- Lap-top and projector if you wish to show slides. Alternatively, prepare the slide information on flipchart paper or as handouts.
- Flipchart paper and felt tips for the brainstorms.
- Postcards for the postcards to myself activity.
- Large ball of string or wool for the final check-out.

Key content

In session one we return to the metaphor of the forest and explore the systems people are part of. Members are asked to think about their connections to the wider community, their workplaces and the networks of groups that are active on various aspects of the climate crisis. We also look at the skills people can contribute to the climate movement.

Session two focuses on carbon reduction and how to approach the changes needed both in personal life and in organisations people are involved with. To facilitate this session well you need some familiarity with the content of *Living lightly* and with force field analysis which is described both in chapter three and in *Living lightly*.

Session three slows down the pace by focusing almost entirely on reflective practice and the need for a sustainable level of action. Reflective practice is described in chapter three.

Session four is the final meeting. There is no new content but plenty of time for review and reflection.

Key issues

As these four meetings progress you are drawing closer and closer to the ending of the group. Bear in mind the feelings people may have about this

and allow space for people to talk about them. Satisfaction and increased confidence will be mixed with sadness, regrets and disappointment. Some people will welcome their time freeing up. Others will fear the loss of the group's support. Issues of loss and grief are likely to re-emerge.

There can be deep connections between feelings about the group and feelings about the climate movement or about the state of the world. Parallels, resonances and projections are all likely to be present. For example, if a sense of failure or disappointment is expressed it is worth reflecting on the failures and disappointments of the climate movement. A feeling that the group has not been enough may be a projection of the feeling that nothing one does is enough. A feeling that the group has been too focused on the personal may reflect a fear of the powerful feelings the crisis evokes.

We've allowed plenty of time in the final meeting for exploration of such feelings, but these issues will be present from earlier on and you may need to make tricky judgments about whether to curtail or shorten an activity to free up space for group issues as they arise.

In session one differences in people's climate activity may emerge, alongside feelings about what is right, what is needed and what is possible. Some people may be feeling inadequate, self-critical or guilty. Some may be feeling pride or looking for approval and recognition. Some may be coping with a history of inaction by hurtling towards over-involvement and burnout. Be prepared to explore and validate all kinds of different experiences. Don't let one type of response dominate.

Session one also explores skills. Many people find it hard to talk about their own abilities. You will meet people who tell you that they have nothing special to offer or that they don't like to put themselves forward in case the skill they think they have isn't enough. Encourage people like this to imagine what others would say about them: how would someone who valued you write your reference? Other people may be fed up with always being called on for their financial, practical or administrative acumen. Encourage these people to think of other skills they would like to develop.

Session two focuses on the scale of carbon reduction needed and the systems involved in making it happen. It demands engagement with facts that may be uncomfortable for some. The scale of change required in daily life may be a surprise for some participants and can evoke defences. The previous modules have surfaced climate distress and helped participants to find their personal and collective strengths, and you may find that it is helpful to refer back to these as a source of motivation to stay with the difficulties. In addition you may like to flag that participants may notice defensive responses in themselves. One such response can be a feeling of powerlessness. 'How could I possibly persuade the kids that we're going to stop eating meat?' 'I have no idea how the local authority makes its decisions about public transport and road use.' 'I'm just a front-line worker, how could

I get my employer to turn the lights off at night?' Encourage people to be interested in their own responses and to be open to exploring them.

Session two also includes technical material and numbers. People differ in their confidence and familiarity with this kind of information, and for some the presence of numbers may evoke anxiety or stress, perhaps from schooldays. You can address this by how you introduce the whole meeting and how you handle the understanding numbers activity. Encourage people to guess and to be curious, rather than implying that they should know the answers.

It is important to be clear that carbon reduction by individuals, in workplaces and in communities all require changes in a system. Individuals contribute to changes in systems, but no system changes solely as a result of heroic efforts by one person. The design of the meeting encourages people first to consider their place in the system where they can make the changes that are possible, and then work with others to influence change.

Session one: outside the forest

This session uses the metaphor of the ecosystem to explore the many overlapping systems people are part of. It then asks them to think about how and where they might influence those systems and the skills they can contribute.

Session one: outline and rough timings		
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in
2	20 min	The ecosystem of change: visualisation
3	30 min	Beyond the comfort zone: mapping, small group work and whole group discussion
4	25 min	Skills for change: brief input followed by pair work
5	15 min	Open discussion
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if most of this module is being done in one day)

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (15 min)

Introduce the theme of the module, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between personal and collective action.

Explain that you are going to be looking at the systems you are all part of and how you can involve yourselves in action - personal, political, community, workplace - that is sustainable personally. The first session looks at the systems you are all part of, the second focuses on carbon reduction and the third on reflective practice, a method for continuing to explore your involvement and keep it on track.

Emphasise that there are all kinds of action and that what suits one person may not suit another. Acknowledge that some people will already be very involved while others may be just at the beginning.

For the check-in you could ask people who are already involved in some form of action to share one thing they find enjoyable about action and one thing they find difficult. People who are not yet involved in action can share one thing they look forward to about being involved in action and one thing they feel anxious/fearful about. If this doesn't feel right for your group, substitute something that feels more appropriate.

2) The ecosystem of change: visualisation (20 min)

Explain that this activity will enable participants to move from the strengths and connections of the group - represented by the forest that you made together during module one - to thinking about where that forest sits in the wider ecosystem. What are the possibilities for change in this bigger system? People need their tree of life drawings for this so make sure you have reminded the group to bring them.

Put the suggested text below into your own words. The idea is to move imaginatively from the protected space of the group to the wider environment. Although you share the geographical reality of the town or region you come from, people's feelings about it, and what people imagine in this activity, can be very different. One person may feel they are in a rich ecosystem. Another may feel they are in a desert. One person's wider landscape may feel safe and secure. Another's may feel under threat.

'Look at your own tree of life and reconnect with it. Notice what each part represents for you. Notice how you feel looking at it again today. You may have many feelings: happiness? Sadness? Exhilaration? Connectedness? [From your knowledge of your group you may be able to mention the most appropriate feelings as prompts.] Now close your eyes, and bring to mind the forest that is this group. [Fill out the detail by commenting on any common characteristics of your group's forest.]

Now take a path out of our forest. What do you see as you reach the forest's edge? Take in the landscape in front of you. Maybe there are hills and countryside. Maybe it's wild and mountainous. Maybe it's agricultural. It could be a monoculture. Or a desert. Or a rich landscape buzzing with insect life. Take a few steps outside our forest. Breathe in the air of the world beyond our forest. Scent its special smells. How does it feel to be on the edge of this space?

Now imagine you are a bird. Take flight and explore a bigger area. Are there cities? A river? Industrial areas? Factories? Roads? Motorways? Houses? People? The sea? What is happening in this bigger landscape? Take in everything you can see. How do you feel flying over it? Is it welcoming you? Supporting you? Threatening you? Challenging you? Note any areas where you feel happy and anywhere that your feelings are more negative.

Circle round this area and fly back towards our forest. Find a place within the forest where you feel safe and secure. When you are ready, open your eyes, look around and come back to the group.'

Ask people to share their responses to the visualisation in the group, using the following prompts:

- How did you feel doing this visualisation?
- What did you imagine?
- Where did you feel particular energy?
- What differences are there between what people imagined?
- What connections can you see between the landscape you imagined and the real environment – personal, social and political -that you live in?

This can be done in pairs if you prefer but by this point the group should be working well together. With a little help they should be able to manage time so that everyone can contribute. People are likely to have had quite different experiences as they explored the world beyond the forest that is the group. Make sure you encourage people to offer different visions of the world beyond the group and validate what each one says.

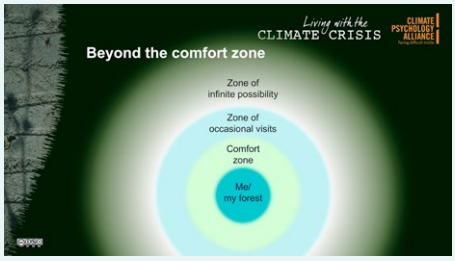
Encourage people to draw out the metaphors. One person may feel that their social environment is a bit of a monoculture. Another may see battles with the local authority as a terrible hill to climb. A third may compare the poison of climate denial to a factory farm deluging the rivers with effluent.

You should be able to move seamlessly from this activity into the next one.

3) Beyond the comfort zone (30 mins)

In this activity participants create individual maps of the systems they are part of. We suggest you allow 5-10 minutes for people to create their maps, 10-15 minutes for the pair work, 5-10 minutes for feedback and discussion in the whole group. We've suggested a simple map of concentric circles but some people may like to deviate from this and make a map with more complex connections. This is fine. Show slide 23, or draw the diagram on a flip-chart or ask participants to look at the diagram in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 23: beyond the comfort zone



Explain that you are going to look at what you bring to the wider system, the connections you have, and how you might develop these.

Ask participants to copy the diagram on to a piece of paper and fill it in. Explain that:

- The forest could be the forest of this group but it could also be the forest of your family or those very close to you.
- In the comfort zone, put all the people, groups and organisations you are closely involved with: perhaps the school your children go to; a friend you meet up with every week; close colleagues; the church, mosque, community group, political party, or social group that you attend regularly.
- In occasional visits put the people, groups, organisations and networks that you only occasionally connect with, for example someone from a different part of your workplace, a friend you rarely see, a group you go to occasionally.
- The zone of infinite possibility is the land of people, groups, networks and organisations that you have no connections with but whom it might be interesting to meet.

Acknowledge that some people's maps may be full of detail. Others may have few connections. Neither is right or wrong.

Move into two small groups, one with each facilitator, for people to share their maps. Some questions which you might like to use during this conversation are:

- can you tell me about a time when you were making a contribution to this ecosystem? What do you think you did that was helpful? What are the skills, knowledge and values that you bring?
- are there parts of this ecosystem which feel out-of-bounds/ mysterious/problematic for you? How might that change?
- if this person/group/organisation/network was a feature or creature of the landscape what would it be? (For example, a hill you can't climb? A beautiful view? A fierce animal? A bird that shows you the way? An impassable motorway? A welcoming path?)

These questions may not be appropriate, so don't force them on the conversation.

4) Skills for change (25 min)

Return to the whole group and explain that you're going to look at people's skills in more detail. Show the headlines using slide 24, or write them on a flip-chart. Then ask participants to look at the detailed lists in the *Participant's handbook*, or on copies you've made of the relevant page.

Slide 24: skills for change

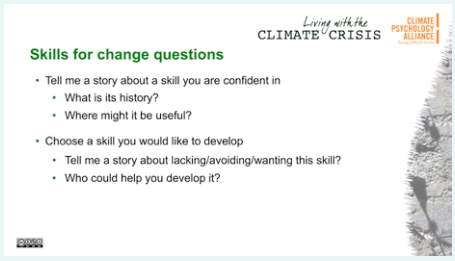
Talk through the lists. Points it can be helpful to make are:

- people can make many different contributions to action on climate change;
- for some people it's important to use existing skills but for others it's important to look for opportunities to try new things or push yourself a little;
- the lists are not definitive. People may wish to add to them to make them more appropriate to themselves.

Some people may be multi-skilled. Others may feel they have little to offer. It's important to introduce these lists without inducing anxiety amongst those who have little confidence. Emphasising the idea of an ecosystem and the idea that there is a place for everyone may help. By this time you should know your group quite well and will know how to introduce this without inducing anxiety. Thinking about how to pair people supportively for the next part of this activity should also help.

Move into pairs. Ask people to share their thoughts about what skills they have that they might bring to climate action. The prompts on slide 25, which are also in the *Participant's handbook*, may be helpful but emphasise that people can talk freely and do not have to respond to them.

Slide 25: skills for change questions



5) Open discussion (15 min)

This is time which you and the group can use as you wish. The group may want to offer feedback from the pair work, continue the discussion on skills or reflect on the whole session. At the end of this discussion briefly explain the theme of the next session.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out. (15 min)

Distribute cards to select from and ask people to write another postcard to myself. Choose an appropriate check-out for the mood of your group and close.

Session two: carbon reduction

Before the session email your group explaining that the theme of this session is carbon reduction and the people and systems that are involved in achieving it. Attach a downloaded pdf of *Living lightly* or give them the link to where they can download it themselves on the *Living with the climate crisis* website.

Session two: outline and rough timings		
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (check-in not necessary in an all day group)
2	20 min	Understanding the numbers: card matching game
3	15 min	Carbon reduction and realistic goals: brief input, followed by group discussion
4	15 min	The complexities of change: brief input followed by pair or small group work
5	40 min	Force field analysis: brief input, worked example, followed by pair work
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if most of this module is being done in one day)

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (15 min)

Explain that the theme of the meeting is carbon reduction. The focus is on:

- understanding the kind of changes that are needed;
- using numbers to reduce your own impact and bring your personal life into alignment with your concern about the climate crisis;
- working out how and where you can make your best contribution to real reduction;
- becoming a role model for others in the systems you are part of.

Remind the group that personal or family carbon reduction is just one part of the reductions needed. Organisations, institutions, governments and corporations need to reduce emissions as well.

Acknowledge that complex systems keep our unsustainable behaviours in place. It may help to use some of the examples we give in chapter three, or to talk about how the different aspects of a system

(government, industry, cultural practices, social norms) make individual action hard or easy.

Explain that you're going to be looking at some numbers. It's important to know what is a big reduction and what is a small one. Acknowledge that some people find numbers difficult. If you find numbers difficult yourself it may be helpful to share this.

Choose a check-in. If you want one that relates to the theme of the meeting ask people to recall an experience with numbers that is memorable for them. Emphasise that it could be memorable for a positive reason or for a negative reason. If one facilitator is able to model a positive memory and the other a negative one that can be useful.

2) Understanding the numbers (20 min)

This game helps people grasp some of the numbers involved. To play it you need to create two sets of cards, one set with amounts of CO_2, the other with matching facts such as the emissions from manufacturing a large car, or heating an average house, or the reduction in CO_2 from creating a walking bus to get children to school. You can print these from appendix two. There are 21 sets of cards.

Online, the activity can be done using the free interaction tool Padlet. We have set up a template for the activity here. Set up your own Padlet account and then visit the template page. Click remake to copy the page into your own account. Change the settings so that your participants can write to the page. Share the link to your page with the group in the chat within your video platform, and invite everyone to visit the page by clicking on the link. Explain that they can all move the cards around and talk at the same time.

To introduce the game explain that it can be helpful to grasp the meaning of the numbers used to measure the carbon impact of ordinary activities. This is not about knowing all the detail but being able to see the relative impact of different activities so you can focus on carbon-reduction efforts that make the most difference. Again, use some of the examples we give in chapter three. Acknowledge that some people may already have a good grasp of this. Others may not.

Distribute both sets of cards amongst the group, two or three from each set to each person. People then move around the group, talking to each other, trying to match their cards. Give people hints if they seem stuck, emphasise that you are asking people to guess, and don't let this part of the game run too long if people seem to be struggling to find the right answers. When people think they have found a match they should lay their cards together on a table or stick them on the wall so that everyone can see them.

For a quicker version, lay all the description cards on the table or stick them to the wall and just distribute the number cards, asking people to match these where they think they belong. This is less interactive.

Once most cards have been matched, gather the group together and give the right answers, repositioning any cards that are in the wrong place and allow some discussion. There are usually some surprises for people. Allow time for participants to express their responses.

A good focus is the difference between the current UK 15 tonne per person emissions and the 1.5 tonnes that is sustainable. It may be helpful to reiterate that some of this reduction will come through technological and policy change but much needs to come from shifts in people's behaviour. Add that this information is developed further in the *Living lightly* guide and that people will be able to explore it in more detail outside the meeting.

If you have time, it may be helpful to show slide 26 and allow a conversation about responsibility to develop, using these prompts:

- What responsibility do these different groups have for acting on the climate crisis?
- How are the actions they can take connected?
- Where can you have an effect?

Slide 26: whose responsibility?

The rest of the session focuses on helping people find realistic ways of impacting the carbon emissions that are within their control.

3) Carbon reduction and realistic goals (15 min)

Introduce the *Living lightly* pamphlet. Explain that its purpose is to help people look seriously at how to reduce their own impact. It links to sites that calculate emissions, provides information on what to do and suggests ways of talking about the issue.

Check that people have access to *Living lightly* and explain that one of the purposes of the buddy pairs is to support each other in working through it.

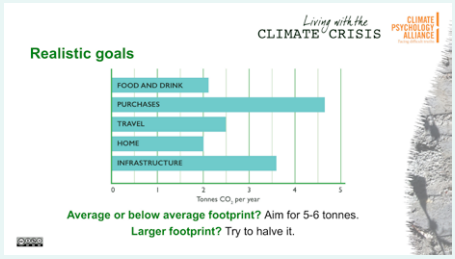
Talk briefly about reducing personal impact and point out that you can also use the information in the pamphlet to target reductions in other

organisations you are involved with. Introduce any of the following points which seem helpful for your group:

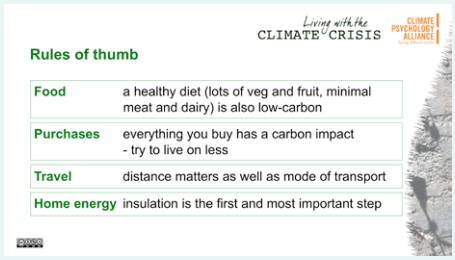
- An average UK footprint is around 15 tonnes. A sustainable footprint is around 1.5 tonnes.
- Some reductions will come through technology and policy change. The rest need to come from changes in how we live.
- If people have an average or below average footprint they should aim to reduce it to around 5 or 6 tonnes, about 1.5 tonnes in each of the four key areas.
- People with larger footprints should aim to halve their footprints.
- Realistic timescales could vary from between 1 and 5 years.
- The first stage is to know more precisely how much energy you are using and in what areas, so that you can set goals that you will be able to measure. Acknowledge that many of us don't have this information and so the first step might be things like counting up the number of regular journeys you make by different forms of transport, or finding your energy meters and working out how much gas and electricity you use.
- Point out the pages in the pamphlet where monitoring is explained.

If you have access to slides, slides 27 and 28, which have some information from *Living lightly*, will help you. Otherwise simply make the points above.

Slide 27: realistic goals



Slide 28: rules of thumb



Some group members may have already made big steps to reduce their impact. Some may feel they have little room to make changes. Some may fear shame and humiliation if they suspect they have large footprints. Acknowledge that people are likely to be coming to this issue with many different feelings and experiences. Emphasise that the point is to gain knowledge and explore what to do. This is not about judgment. It is about facilitating change.

Invite responses and comments. You could ask:

- how people feel about the need to change their lives;
- if people feel they are already well on the way;
- if people feel it is impossible to do more than they are currently doing.

Use the group's responses to lead into the next activity.

4) Complexities of change (15 min)

Explain that it can be helpful to think about carbon reduction like any other change in our lives: a step that will involve others, and be made easier or more difficult not just because of our own decisions, personalities and will-power but also because of how much or how little the social and family systems around us support the change.

Talk briefly about different types of change people may have experienced:

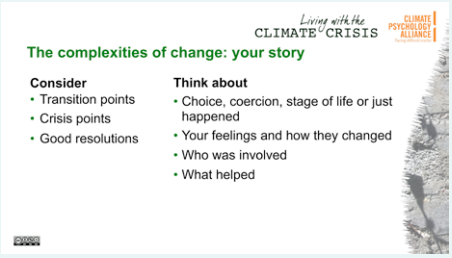
- **transition points** – for example, changing school, starting a new job, getting married, having a baby, the children leaving home, retirement;
- **crisis points** – for example, financial difficulties, illness, divorce, redundancy, family conflict;
- **good resolutions** – for example, working harder at school, doing a fair share of the housework, weight loss and exercise programmes, reducing alcohol or drug use.

Form pairs or small groups (no more than four) and ask people to share stories about the complexities of previous changes in their lives, thinking about the categories above and using these prompts if they are helpful.

- Was the change a choice, forced upon you, a stage of life, or something that just happened?
- How did you feel about the change? How did your feelings change through time?
- Who was involved?
- What helped?

Slide 29 summarises these points. The information is also in the *Participant's handbook*.

Slide 29: the complexities of change



If you have time, finish with some brief feedback from the pairs or small groups to the whole group. Otherwise move straight into the next activity.

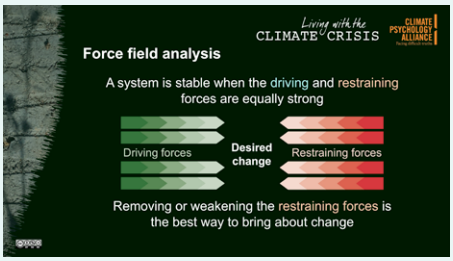
5) Using force field analysis (40 min)

We've allowed 5 -10 minutes to explain force field analysis, 10 minutes for each worked example in the group and 10 minutes for the final pair work. Depending on how the group examples go you may not have time for the final pair work. If this is the case suggest that the buddy pairs complete it outside the group.

Acknowledge how easy it is to be overwhelmed by competing demands both practical and emotional when thinking about carbon reduction. Suggest force field analysis as one way of coping coolly with the complexity of factors and feelings involved.

Explain that force field analysis is a way of looking at the systems surrounding a desired change and working out how to influence the factors that are preventing it from happening. You can point to the example of force field analysis in *Living lightly*, show slide 30, or draw a schematic force field analysis diagram on a flip chart.

Slide 30: force field analysis



Explain that force field analysis is useful for showing how feasible a desired change is. Sometimes the forces stacked against it are so strong it is better to start with another aspect of carbon reduction. Just as often however it shows you how and where to begin.

Talk through the example from *Living lightly* or substitute one of your own.

The next part of the activity can be done in the whole group or in two small groups. Which you choose will depend on how easy your group finds it to come up with examples they are willing to work on publicly.

Ask people to think of carbon reductions they would like to make. These could be:

- changes they want to make in their personal/family life;
- changes they want to persuade a friend or social group to join them in;
- changes they want an organisation they are involved in to make.

Some examples might be commuting by public transport instead of by car, persuading a friend to holiday in the UK with you instead of flying abroad, getting your children's school to cook meat-free dinners several times a week, or persuading your employer to reduce travel by adopting a video-conferencing policy.

Ask for a volunteer to explore their example with the group. Using a flip chart write the desired change in the centre and then help the volunteer to first brainstorm the driving and restraining forces and then weight them, as in the example in *Living lightly*.

An alternative to this, which some groups may prefer, is for the volunteer to describe the situation and the people involved and for the group to then roleplay this. This sometimes helps people draw out the different factors more easily. It also subverts people's tendency to rationalise.

End each example by asking the volunteer 'What are your next steps?'

Aim to work through one personal example and one community or workplace example.

If you have time, you can end by asking people to work on their own examples and share them in pairs, returning to the group to share their next steps.

6) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

Distribute cards to select from and ask people to write another postcard to myself. Choose an appropriate check-out for the mood of your group and close.

Session three: reflective practice

This session provides space for people to think about how to make their commitment achievable, effective and sustainable, using reflective practice as the tool.

Session three: reflective practice		
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (check-in not necessary in an all day group)
2	10 min	Contributions to change: pair discussion
3	80 min	Reflective practice: practice sessions
4	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out

1) Introduction of theme and check-in (15 min)

It may be helpful to remind people that this is your penultimate meeting. You might like to choose a check-in that reflects this, such as 'How does it feel to know that we are approaching the end of this group?'

Explain that the theme of this meeting is reflective practice. It's a way of exploring your involvement in climate action with the help of other people. It can help you keep on track. It can help you reflect on what is sustainable. It can help you work more creatively. You hope people will be able to take the method away with them and use its approach once the group has finished.

2) Contributions to change: pair work (10 min)

Ask people to talk in pairs about a climate-related contribution they would like to explore. They could be wanting to explore something new, something they are currently struggling with, something they would like to retreat from or anything else. This is preparation for reflective practice – an exploration about your place in the ecosystem of change that can take you in any direction as it develops. The contribution could be:

- a skill you would like to develop;
- a move towards greater involvement in the climate movement as a whole or in a particular organisation;
- a move towards less involvement in the climate movement to make life more sustainable;
- making lifestyle changes to reduce personal carbon impact;
- a move to make changes at work;
- something else entirely.

3) Reflective practice (80 min)

You have time to do three reflective practice discussion rounds, each of 25 minutes.

For each round, one person volunteers to bring their own questions about the contribution they are looking to make. This person is known as the presenter. Their role is to present a real situation, in which they are thinking hesitantly about doing something. The working assumption is that the group is a microcosm of the ecosystem under discussion, and the idea is that the discussion of a real situation both benefits the individual presenter and opens up thinking for others in the group. If you are unsure about facilitating this session, look back at the discussion of reflective practice in chapter three and follow up some of the references given.

Phase 1. Ask the presenter to think out loud for up to five minutes about their dilemma. Invite them to say something about all or any of the following:

- what's the situation?
- what have they tried?
- what is their wish/desire/ideal outcome?
- what are they struggling with or hesitant about?
- what's stopping them?

When the person has had their time, ask 'What in particular would you like from the group?'

Then invite the presenter to move so that they are a little outside the circle of chairs, and turned away from the group. (Online, you can represent this by asking the presenter to turn sideways and mute their audio.) Explain that their role for now is to listen to others' reflections. They will be invited to rejoin the discussion after ten minutes or so.

Phase 2. Ask the remaining members of the group to begin by saying what feelings they were aware of in themselves while the presenter was talking. Encourage people to explore the meaning of these. There are likely to be echoes and reflections of wider systems in people's reactions and this is important in helping the presenter connect to these wider systems. Have a round of these and then invite people to reflect together on what they heard, with a focus on thinking together rather than on offering advice. The convention is to refer to the presenter in the third person rather than addressing them directly.

After ten minutes or so, invite the presenter back into the group and ask them to say something about what most interested them or intrigued them in the discussion they have been listening to, and what they would like to think further about in the next ten minutes. Let the discussion flow from here. Bring the process to a close when the 25 minutes is up.

Repeat the process twice more with two different volunteers as presenters.

At the end of the third round, invite everyone to take a moment to consider in silence what they are taking away from the reflective practice discussion.

4) Postcards to myself and check-out (15 min)

As before, distribute a choice of picture cards for people to select from. Ask people to write their final postcard to myself. Remind people to bring their envelope of postcards to the next meeting or (if you have been keeping people's collections for them) remind people that you will be giving them back at the next meeting. Choose an appropriate check-out for the mood of your group and close.

Session four: ending

This is your final meeting. The timings for this session are deliberately loose and you may find that you want to impose even less structure than we have suggested. You need to respond to your group and go with whatever seems the best way of helping them make a good ending.

Session four: outline and rough timings	
20-30 min	Introduction and check-in
10 min	Opening the envelopes: solitary reading
30 min	Sharing the postcards: group sharing and discussion
30-40 min	What next? group discussion
20 min	Check-out and evaluation

1) Introduction and check-in (20-30 min)

Remind people that this is your last meeting and that people are likely to have many, varied and complicated feelings about this.

Start with a grounding exercise. You may have a favourite one of your own that feels right for your group. If not, use the following one.

Ask the group to settle quietly. Then ask them to silently notice:

- five things they can see;
- four things they can feel;
- three things they can hear;
- two things they can smell;
- one thing they can taste.

Pause between reading out each item to give people time to notice. Ask them to close their eyes after the first item.

A variation, which returns the group to the tree of life and the metaphor of the forest, is to ask the group to imagine they are in the forest and then take them through imagining the five items.

Then do a go-round asking people to say something in response to the question 'How are you feeling now?' People may respond about how they feel having done the grounding exercise or more generally how they feel about the ending of the group. Either is fine.

2) Opening the envelopes (10 min)

If you have been keeping people's postcards for them, hand them back. Ask people to find a quiet space where they can be private. Ask them to open their envelope of cards and look back at what they wrote. The

following prompts may be helpful.

- Be aware of your feelings – either those you recorded or those you feel now, looking at the postcards.
- Look at the pictures you chose. What do these tell you about your experiences with the group?
- Look at the cards as the story of a journey. What kind of journey has it been for you?

Emphasise that people do not have to follow these prompts if they are not helpful.

3) Sharing postcards (30 min)

Return to the group and ask people to share whatever they wish to from their postcards. If some people don't want to share anything make it clear that this is fine too: they may have written things which just feel too private to share. Sharing the postcards should help the group with the task of making sense of their own journey and of the group experience.

Some people may see clear themes developing as the weeks progressed. Others may be reading about a much more chaotic journey. Some people may have found themselves returning to forgotten parts of the group experience. Others may be struck by what their choice of pictures reveals.

People's experiences will have been personal but they have also been in a group. You may be able to pick up on common themes or feelings that it's helpful to speak about, such as the mixed feelings that come with the end of the group, or feelings that relate to particular experiences that were part of the group's life together. It's also important to validate the variety of experiences which people have had.

When the group feels ready, move into the next discussion.

4) What next? (30-40 min)

Invite discussion about people's next steps and what they plan to do now the group is finishing. You can move into pairs or smaller groups for part of this if you feel your group would benefit from this but we prefer to leave it as an open space where people can think together about the future beyond the group. Desires for a reunion may come up. People may wonder how long their buddy pairs will continue to meet. Some people may be anxious and sad about the group's ending. Some may have regrets. It's important that the group itself takes responsibility for what happens after the end of this meeting. It may be helpful to make comments from your group work experience. For example you may wish to comment gently that the desire for reunion is often a defence against the sadness of endings and encourage the group to feel the sadness and process it together.

5) Check-out (20 min)

We suggest that you focus on appreciation for the final check-out and we suggest using the ball of string method which provides a visual memory of the group's internal connections. Ask everyone to make eye contact with everyone, one by one and think 'If I get the chance to say something in appreciation of this person, what would I say?' Then take your ball of string and, holding one end of it, pass the rest to the person whose name is next to yours alphabetically, saying your short appreciation of them. That person then holds onto the string and passes the ball to the person whose name is next to theirs in the alphabet, along with their appreciation of them. Carry on with this pattern until everyone has received an appreciation. Look at the network that is revealed in the cat's cradle of string. Appreciate your connection to each other. Close the group.

This activity can be done at an imagined level online, by asking people to imagine the ball of string and to mime passing it to someone while holding onto their strand.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a more common practice in learning groups than in therapy groups. We've found as facilitators of groups and workshops like *Living with the climate crisis* that it is helpful in all kinds of ways. It can provide confirmation of our own hunches but also challenge our assumptions about the things which went well and badly. It can provide feedback on our skills. It can shape how we run future groups.

It is notoriously difficult to get a group to complete evaluation questionnaires unless it is done on the spot or unless there is some incentive for doing so. The following are all options you could consider.

A short questionnaire

Prepare a short questionnaire that you hand out at the end of the last meeting and which people can complete anonymously between the group itself ending and people leaving the meeting room. Anonymity means that some people may be franker in their responses. Four questions such as those below should be enough.

- What did you find helpful about taking part in this group?
- What could we have done to make it a better experience for you?
- Please rate your overall experience of taking part in this group. Circle one option. Very good / good / average / poor / very poor.
- Any other comments?

Sending questionnaires round after the event tends to get low responses.

A follow-up email a week after the ending

Send a personal email to each group member individually, asking them to offer you any feedback on the group experience that they would like. You could suggest some themes you would like to hear about such as the content of the sessions, the quality of the facilitation, the experience of meeting and working with others, the feelings that the group evoked for them and whether or not it was helpful to them in coping with these.

People are more likely to respond to a personal email than to a request to fill out a questionnaire. The lack of anonymity means that they may be inhibited in how frank they feel able to be but you are likely to get a feel for some aspects of the group experience that would otherwise remain hidden to you.

Post-group interviews with each member

This is time-consuming but we have found it helpful, particularly if this is the first *Living with the climate crisis* group you have run. It's best approached as a collaborative conversation about the group that will help you run future ones better. It can help you see themes and difficulties more clearly.

You need to flag that you would like to do this before the group ends and tell people how long it will take. (We suggest 30 minutes.) You need some shaping questions such as:

- What was the single most important moment/event for you when taking part in the group?
- What was the most frustrating/difficult aspect of the experience for you?
- What if anything has changed for you in the course of the group?
- Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

Then allow a conversation to develop. If you record the interviews you can transcribe them using software such as Otter https://otter.ai/ whose basic service is free. Make sure you have people's consent to record and transcribe and make clear that you will delete the recording and transcription after use.

APPENDICES

Appendix one:
plans and rough timings for all modules

Module one: coming together and putting down roots			
Session one: getting to know each other			
	Time		Your notes
1	10 min	Welcome, introducing yourselves, ground rules	
2	45 min	Group introductions using postcards or objects from the natural world. Hopes and expectations	
3	30 min	Talking about climate distress. Either climate journeys – pair work followed by group discussion, or input on climate distress followed by pair work and group discussion	
4	20 min	Favourite trees: introduction to the tree of life	
5	20 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break if this module is being done in one day)	
Session two: the tree of life			
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in	
2	35 min	Drawing the tree of life	
3	10 min	Sharing trees in pairs	
4	30 min	Building the forest of life	

5	10 min	Open discussion	
6	15 min	Postcards and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)	
Session three: facing the storms			
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)	
2	10 min	Visualisation about the forest	
3	10 min	Brainstorm, pair work and group discussion on facing the storms	
4	50 min	Group discussion on what helps, introducing the frameworks of grief and the journey if appropriate	
5	15 min	Forming buddy pairs for support	
6	15 min	Postcards and check-out	

Module two: communication			
Session one: talking with family and friends			
	Time		Your notes
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in	
2	5 min	Different types of conversation: brief input	
3	20 min	Sharing difficult conversations: pair and group work	
4	20 min	Levels in a conversation: input and group discussion	
5	15 min	What helps: brief input, video and group discussion	
6	25 min	Application and practice: roleplay or group discussion	
7	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)	
Session two: finding your voice			
1	20 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)	
2	10 min	Story of self, us and now: brief input	
3	25 min	Story of self: writing, followed by group sharing	

4	25 min	Stories of us and now: writing, followed by group sharing	
5	25 min	Performing stories followed by open discussion	
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if this module is being done in one day)	
Session three: bringing it all together			
1	15 min	Introduction and check-in (not necessary if this module is being done in one day)	
2	30 min	Listening with empathy and respect: practice session	
3	30 min	Performing stories: practice session	
4	10 min	Insights from social psychology: brief input	
4	20 min	Open discussion	
5	15 min	Post-cards to myself and check-out	

Module three: the ecosystem of change			
Session one: outside the forest			
	Time		Your notes
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in	
2	20 min	The ecosystem of change: visualisation	
3	30 min	Beyond your comfort zone: mapping, pair work and whole group discussion	
4	25 min	Skills for change: brief input followed by pair work	
5	15 min	Open discussion	
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if most of this module is being done in one day)	
Session two: carbon reduction			
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (check-in not necessary in an all day group)	
2	20 min	Understanding the numbers: card matching game	
3	15 min	Carbon reduction and realistic goals: brief input, followed by group discussion	
4	15 min	The complexities of change: brief input followed by pair or small group work	

5	40 min	Force field analysis: brief input, worked example, followed by pair work	
6	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out (or break, if most of this module is being done in one day)	
Session three: reflective practice			
1	15 min	Introduction of theme and check-in (check-in not necessary in an all day group)	
2	10 min	Contributions to change: pair discussion	
3	80 min	Reflective practice: practice sessions	
4	15 min	Postcards to myself and check-out	
Session four: ending			
1	20-30 min	Introduction and check-in	
2	10 min	Opening the envelopes: solitary reading	
3	30 min	Sharing the postcards: group sharing and discussion	
4	30-40 min	What next? group discussion	
5	20 min	Check-out and evaluation	

Appendix two:
understanding the numbers game

15 tonnes	UK, per person CO_2 emissions each year
1.5 tonnes	India, per person CO_2 emissions each year
0.3 tonnes	Tanzania, per person CO_2 emissions each year
1.5 tonnes	Sustainable per person CO_2 emissions each year
5 tonnes	Average CO_2 emissions for a UK house each year

1 tonne	CO_2 saved each year by insulating the walls of an average house
0.3 tonnes	CO_2 saved each year by turning the thermostat down from 21° to 20° C in an average house
0.4 tonnes	CO_2 saved each year by draught-stripping an average house
2 tonnes	CO_2 emitted when one person takes a return flight to New York
3 tonnes	CO_2 emitted driving 5,500 miles in an average car

2 tonnes	CO_2 emitted due to one person going on a 2000 mile cruise
0.5 tonnes	CO_2 emitted due to one person travelling 5000 miles by train
5 tonnes	CO_2 emitted in growing 100 kg of tomatoes in a heated greenhouse
0.04 tonnes	CO_2 emitted in growing 100 kg of tomatoes outdoors
1.5 tonnes	CO_2 emitted providing a primary school with meat-based dinners for a week

0.6 tonnes	CO_2 emitted providing a primary school with vegetarian dinners for a week
35 tonnes	The embodied CO_2 in a new Land Rover Discovery
10 tonnes	The embodied CO_2 due to a £20,000 kitchen refit
0.25 tonnes	CO_2 embodied in a year's worth of clothing purchases
3 tonnes	CO_2 saved per year when 25 children come to school in a 'Walking Bus'

6 tonnes

CO_2 saved when 20 employees decide to come to work by bike (for half the time)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, M. (2016) *Ecological crisis, sustainability and the psychosocial subject: beyond behaviour change,* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1978), *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective.* New York: McGraw-Hill

Balint, M., Balint, E., Gosling, R., Hildebrand, P. (1966) *A study of doctors*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Bednarek, S. (2021). 'Climate change, fragmentation and the effects of collective trauma: bridging the divided stories we live by' *Journal of Social Work Practice,* 35: 5-17.

Berne, E. (1969) *Transactional analysis in psychotherapy.* London: Profile Books..

Berners-Lee, M. (2020) *How bad are bananas: the carbon footprint of everything.* London: Profile Books.

Bion, W. (1961) *Experiences in groups.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Carmichael, R. (2019) *Behaviour change, public engagement and net zero: report for the Committee on Climate Change.* Available at https://www.theccc.org.uk/publications/ and http://www.imperial.ac.uk/icept/publications/

Centre for Alternative Technology (2013) *Zero carbon Britain: rethinking the future.* Machynlleth: CAT Publications. Available at https://cat.org.uk/info-resources/zero-carbon-britain/research-reports/

Chambers, N. et al (2001) *Sharing nature's interest: ecological footprints as an indicator of sustainability.* London: Earthscan.

Danbury, H. & Wallbridge, D. (1989) Directive teaching and gut learning: The seminar technique and its use in video-based role-play learning, *Journal of Social Work Practice,* 3:4, 53-67, DOI: 10.1080/0265053890841340 1

Denborough, D.3 (2008) *Collective narrative practice.* Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Eraut, M. (1994) *Developing professional knowledge and competence.* London: Routledge.

Foulkes, S.H. (1964) *Therapeutic group analysis.* London: Allen and Unwin. Reprinted London: Karnac, 1984.

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* London: Penguin.

Ganz, M. (2011) *Public narrative, collective action and power.* Available at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:29314925

Gold, M. (ed.) (1999) *The complete social scientist: a Kurt Lewin reader.* Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association.

Hickman, C et al (2021) 'Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey', *The Lancet* 5 (12).

Hoggett, P. and Randall, R. (2018) 'Engaging with climate change: comparing the cultures of science and activism', *Environmental Values* 27 223-243.

Holland, S. (1991) 'From private symptoms to public action', *Feminism and psychology,* 1(1) 58-62.

Holmes, G. (2010) *Psychology in the real world: community-based groupwork.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS books.

Kagan, C. et al (2011) *Critical community psychology.* Blackwell/John Wiley: Chichester.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Lakey, G. (2010) *Facilitating group learning: strategies for success with diverse adult learners.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lertzman, R. (2015) *Environmental melancholia: psychoanalytic dimensions of engagement,* London: Routledge.

Long, S. (2015) 'Turning a blind eye to climate change', *Organisational and Social Dynamics* 15 (2) pp248-262.

Marshall, G. (2015) *Don't even think about it: why our brains are wired to ignore climate change.* London: Bloomsbury.

Monbiot, G. (2022) *Regenesis: feeding the world without devouring the planet.* London: Allen Lane.

Ncube-Mlilo, N. (2017). *Tree of life practitioners guide.* Johannesburg: Phola

Nitsun, M. (1996) *The anti-group: destructive forces in the group and their creative potential.* London: Routledge.

Norgaard, K. (2011) *Living in denial: climate change, emotions and everyday life.* Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Pihkala, P. (2020) 'The cost of bearing witness to the environmental crisis: vicarious traumatization and dealing with secondary traumatic stress among environmental researchers.' *Social Epistemology* 34:1, 86-100

Pihkala, P. (2021) 'towards a taxonomy of climate emotions'. *Frontiers in Climate* 3. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fclim.2021.738154/full

Randall, R. (2005) 'A new climate for psychotherapy' *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 3 (3) pp 165-179.

Randall, R. (2021) *Coping with the climate crisis* https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsRN4nXuxewofTVBhxteXsg

Revans, R. W. (1982). *The origin and growth of action learning.* Brickley, UK: Chartwell-Bratt.

Ruch, G. (2007) 'Thoughtful' practice: child care social work and the role of case discussion, *Child and Family Social Work,* 12, pp 370–379.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action.* London: Maurice Temple Smith.

Schutz, W. (1967) *Joy: expanding human awareness.* New York: Grove Press.

Shove, E. (2003) *Comfort, cleanliness and convenience: the social organisation of normality.* Oxford: Berg.

Wackernagel, M. and Rees, W. (1995) *Our ecological footprint: reducing human impact on the earth.* Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers.

Webster, R. (2019) *Talking climate handbook: how to have conversations about climate change in your daily life.* Oxford: Climate Outreach. https://climateoutreach.org/reports/how-to-have-a-climate-change-conversation-talking-climate/

Weintrobe, S. (2013) 'The difficult problem of anxiety in thinking about climate change' in *Engaging with climate change: psychoanalytic and interdisciplinary perspectives* ed. S. Weintrobe. London Routledge.

Weintrobe, S. ed (2013) *Engaging with climate change: psychoanalytic and interdisciplinary perspectives.* London: Routledge.

Weintrobe S. (2021) *Psychological roots of the climate crisis: neoliberal exceptionalism and the culture of uncare.* London: Bloomsbury.

Whitaker, D. S. (1985) *Using groups to help people.* Routledge, Kegan Paul.

White, M. (date unknown) *Narrative therapy* http://www.al-edu.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Michael-White-Narrative-Therapy.pdf

Worden, W. (1983) *Grief counselling and grief therapy.* London: Tavistock.

Yalom, I. D. (1995) *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy.* Fourth Edition. Basic Books: New York.

NOTES

1 See Weintrobe (2013) and Randall (2005 and 2009)

2 See https://phola.org/

3 https://climateoutreach.org/

4 Information about the Listening Post method can be found on the website of the Organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society https://www.opus.org.uk/

5 The major greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides. Figures for them are usually expressed as carbon dioxide equivalents or CO_2e.

6 See The Secret to Talking about Climate Change https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkklaXhbTuA

7 See https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/30760283/Public-Narrative-Worksheet-Fall-2013-.pdf