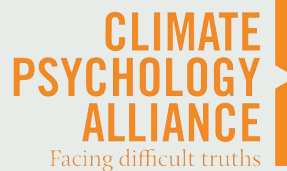


The Carbon Conversations guide to

Living with the
CLIMATE CRISIS
Participant's
handbook

Rosemary Randall, Rebecca Nestor,
Daniela Fernandez-Catherall



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

This work is protected by national and international copyright law.

This work is licenced under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 

This licence allows you to copy and distribute the material in unadapted form only, for non-commercial purposes only, and only so long as attributions are given to the authors, the publisher, those quoted and referenced. See <https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/> for more information. Any use must include the same Creative Commons licence.

If you wish to translate this material or adapt technical data to fit other geographical regions please contact admin@climatepsychologyalliance.org

Acknowledgments

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

Thanks also to Andy Brown for providing us with facts and numbers on carbon reduction.

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

Participant's
handbook

Rosemary Randall, Rebecca Nestor,
Daniela Fernandez-Catherall



CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Guide to the meetings.	2
1: Module one.	3
2: Module two.11
3: Module three.15
Bibliography19
Notes.19



INTRODUCTION

This short handbook is written for people taking part in the [Climate Psychology Alliance's](#) project, *Living with the climate crisis*.

Living with the climate crisis has grown out of Carbon Conversations, an award-winning project which started in 2007 and ran psychologically based groups on how to reduce carbon emissions. Times have changed and we have updated the focus to the concerns which are most pressing for people today.

You may be someone who is newly aware of climate change. You may be someone who joined the upsurge of concern that swept the UK in 2018. You may be someone who has been working on climate issues for decades. Whenever you became involved you will – like everyone in the climate movement – be facing questions about how to deal with the frightening and uncertain future in front of us. The groups aim to help people connect, find strength and take action in whatever way feels appropriate to them.

The groups run for ten sessions. These may be spread across ten weekly meetings. They can also start with a whole day meeting and follow this with seven weekly meetings or be run across three days, separated by several weeks. They are run by facilitators who are involved in the climate movement. The project is hosted by the Climate Psychology Alliance which recruits and supports the facilitators.



A lot of your time in the group will be spent talking, sharing experiences and gaining strength from being together. You will also be exploring skills which may be useful to you:

- skills in coping with distress;
- skills in communicating;
- skills in working together;
- skills in carbon reduction;
- skills in making your commitment sustainable.

In this guide you'll find:

- background information on some of the topics;
- instructions for some of the activities you do together;
- reminders of some of the issues covered.

An accompanying handbook *Living lightly* explains carbon reduction and how to reduce your own impact. It can also be used when working with other organisations to reduce emissions.

After the third session you will be paired with another group member and asked to meet from time to time, outside the sessions, during the rest of the group's life. If you want to, you can continue these meetings after the group itself has ended. These buddy pairs can be used in several ways:

- for mutual support;
- to work through the *Living lightly* handbook, exploring the dilemmas of carbon reduction;
- to explore in more detail the different parts of the climate movement you each want to be involved with.



Throughout the groups we compare the climate movement to an ecosystem. It has many habitats. Some are struggling. Some are flourishing. Some are supported. Some are under attack. There are numerous species of plants, insects and animals. Similarly, some are flourishing while others are less healthy. Somewhere in this ecosystem is the right place for you. Somewhere where you will flourish. Somewhere you will enrich the system, diversifying and supporting it. Somewhere you will make a difference. We hope that your *Living with the climate crisis* group will help you find that place.



Guide to the meetings

The meetings are divided into three modules:

- Module one: coming together and putting down roots
- Module two: communication
- Module three: the ecosystem of change.

Use this guide to:

- find instructions for some of the activities you will be doing during the group;
- remind yourself of what was covered;
- catch up on anything you have missed;
- explore background material your group may not have had time for in the meetings.

*It's important to
recognise that
these distressing
feelings are normal.
They originate in
the threats that
surround us.*

Module one:

Coming together and putting down roots

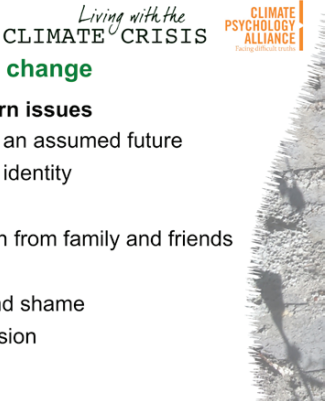
Module one brings your group together and helps you get to know each other. It explores climate distress and introduces a way of building strength together. There are three sessions:

- getting to know each other/climate distress;
- the tree of life;
- facing the storms.

You may have done these all on one day or they may have been spread across three meetings.

Session one: climate distress

In the first session your group came together and began to get to know each other. Your facilitators will have introduced some ideas about climate distress and we've summarised these below as a reminder:



Common feelings about climate change

Immediate reactions	Slow-burn issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shock• Disbelief• Fear• Anger• Powerlessness• Despair• Feeling overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of an assumed future• Loss of identity• Grief• Isolation from family and friends• Anxiety• Guilt and shame• Depression

The feelings which arrive when you let yourself think about the climate crisis properly can be overwhelming. People describe feeling shock, feeling disorientated, being pole-axed by fear and knocked sideways by their own sense of powerlessness. Sometimes there is a panicky sense of disbelief – ‘this can’t be true, surely it’s not true.’ Often people are angry. Sometimes there are terrible feelings of guilt and shame, particularly if you are someone who has ignored the facts for a long time.

It’s important to recognise that these distressing feelings are normal. They originate in the threats that surround us. They are an appropriate response and don’t mean there is something wrong with you. They are the feelings we all have when we receive a piece of very bad news, something which, like the death of someone close to us, is life-changing. As they face the climate crisis, people often describe finding themselves questioning their values, their plans for the future, and their sense of identity. Some find themselves in difficult conflicts with family and friends. Some feel trapped in a life which they can see no way of changing. Others leap into manic action as a way of blocking out the pain.

It's important not to deny this kind of pain. Listening to it and giving it space is usually the best way to move past its intensity and live with its beat more creatively. It will never go away completely but if you see it as an opportunity to reshape your life and live differently you will gradually find a place that can still hold hope, meaning and joy. Throughout this module there are opportunities to talk about what helps with these difficult feelings and there is a summary of ideas towards the end of this module.

For some people the distress remains unmanageable. Sometimes professional help can be useful. The [Climate Psychology Alliance](#) offers three free sessions of psychological support which you can access through their website.¹ Your facilitators should have information about local sources of psychological help.

Session two: the tree of life

The second session centres on the tree of life, an activity developed by Naczelo Ncube-Milio and David Denborough.² Using metaphors of trees and forests it helps you explore your life and see your strengths and best qualities.

After this session, you may want to update or add to the tree you draw.



Tree of life instructions

Use any style of drawing and any materials you like. Label your tree's different parts as follows, beginning wherever you like.

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.

Add any other detail to your tree and come up with your own meaning for it too.

In the session your facilitators will have asked you to share your trees, talking about the strengths that will help you manage the journey of these meetings and your lives outside the group. You will also have shown appreciation of each other's trees and seen how together you create a forest – connected, supportive and a source of richness and strength.

Session three: facing the storms

The last session of module one looks at the way a forest faces hazards and storms and how you, as a group, can face the hazards and storms of the climate crisis together. You will have looked at how sharing experiences and working together brings strength. For this discussion your facilitators may have asked you to consider the following points:

- what are the skills, knowledge and values that sustain you? Can you name them?
- how did you learn them? Who from?
- can you remember some stories about them?
- how do they connect to your community and traditions?
- how do they nurture those close to you?³

What helps?

You will also have talked about what helps personally, brainstorming ideas or adding to the list below. The list summarises some ideas which research and experience suggest are helpful.

- Make sure your information is reliable. Skeptical Science and Carbon Brief are two good sites to look at.⁴
- Let go of the climate news. Don't torture yourself by revisiting it every day. The important thing is integrating the knowledge into your life, not punishing yourself by dwelling on it.
- Look for understanding and support from others. Talk about what you are going through. It's important to have comfort and support from people who understand that your distress is normal as you explore what the crisis means for you and what you want to do. Take your time.
- Allow yourself to grieve. Make space for tears and sadness.

Express what you feel. Let yourself be changed.

- Take action and work with others. There are many different types of action, from reducing your own impact to engaging with others in community, political and workplace action. Working with others shares the burden, provides support and allows for shared experiences of success and failure. It's important to find something that feels right for you while also stretching yourself to try new possibilities. You'll look at this more closely in module three.
- Reflect on your values and bring your life into alignment with what you now know. Reducing your impact as far as possible restores a sense of integrity to your life. You'll look at this more closely in module three.
- Look for balance. Make time for the ordinary joys and pleasures of life: spending time with family and friends, sharing a meal or a drink, pursuing the pastimes that have always given meaning to your life. Balance actions that are about stopping something with actions that focus on creating something.
- Keep talking, listening and giving space to your feelings and those of others.

Frameworks

Some people find it helpful to put a framework round the painful feelings they are going through. Here are two that we have found useful. Your facilitators may have introduced them during the sessions or may have encouraged you to read about them here.

The tasks of grief

The emotions of waking up to the climate crisis are similar to those you go through following a loss. There's the same difficulty in believing it's really true. There's the same sense of disorientation. There's the same sense of life being turned upside down. Thinking about grief and mourning can be helpful. The diagram below is adapted from the work of William Worden (Worden 1983).

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Understanding the facts is usually followed by a whirlwind of shock. The losses the crisis will bring begin to take shape in your mind. These don't feel the same for everyone. The losses you feel may be about:

- the loss of security, safety and predictability;
- the loss of the natural world;
- the future for your children or grandchildren;
- the life you expected to lead, whether this was a retirement filled with foreign holidays, a career in a high-carbon industry or just a life without fear of floods, storms, droughts and upheaval.

Mourning in the climate crisis means slowly letting go of old expectations and attachments. It means talking about your sadness, your anger and your despair. It means letting go of old hopes. It means accepting what can't be changed. You may find yourself re-thinking your values. You may find yourself questioning how you have lived in the past. Your sense of yourself may slowly shift. You will begin to find meaning in new pursuits. Life slowly stops feeling black and turns to shades of grey. There are moments of colour and brightness. Despite everything you begin to find moments of joy. You begin to see that life can continue to have meaning and purpose. Finding support and strength with others is crucial. Finding a path of action is crucial. You begin to see that even if we can't prevent everything that may happen we still have power. We can still make a difference. We can still live.

The tasks of grief aren't simple. 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. Working through grief is a repetitive, continuing process. 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. 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 live its possibilities despite the uncertain and difficult future.

Problems arise when people turn away from the tasks completely. Sometimes they believe paying attention to their distress will make it worse. Sometimes they don't have support from others. This is when realistic fear turns into anxiety that won't go away. It's when people become depressed and hopeless, stuck in obsessive repetitions of how dreadful everything is or caught up in apocalyptic or unrealistically optimistic narratives. It's when people retreat into bitterness and isolation. The support of others makes this much less likely to happen.

The activist's journey

The second framework your facilitators may have talked about is the activist's journey. This comes from some research done by Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall (Hoggett and Randall 2018). The activists all described a similar experience of moving from extreme distress to what the researchers came to call sustainable activism. It's a pattern that seems to be most common amongst young people hearing about the climate crisis for the first time. There are four phases: epiphany or awakening, immersion, action, crisis and resolution.

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

Immersion is a period of thinking about little other than climate change, being preoccupied with finding out as much as possible but also of experiencing extremely difficult feelings of fear and other forms of distress. This phase often overlapped with the next one, where people became deeply involved in activism.

Action is 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 restored a sense of meaning and a feeling of being able to do something. Connection with others provided strength and support.

Crisis and resolution describes a phase of over-commitment which frequently led to burnout. It was clear that for many interviewees new traumas (for example from confrontations with the police) could easily be piled onto the earlier one of waking up to the crisis. At the time of interview, all the young people had reached a position the researchers called sustainable activism. A continuing deep commitment was balanced with the capacity to live other aspects of life as well. It was a calmer and more mature place.

Some of you will recognise yourselves in this description but others will not. Older people who have been involved in the climate movement for many years face different issues. The long struggle can lead to exhaustion and sometimes to bitterness or cynicism. Past successes can feel paltry in the face of continued emissions. The experience of repeated failure can take its toll. And while the arrival of a new generation of climate activists is heartening it can also be painful. It can be bruising to be found wanting by younger people and painful to be reminded of your own youthful energy.

There are also people whose feelings about the climate crisis follow no neat pattern. It is important not to shoehorn your feelings into a box that doesn't fit. Please feel free to put these frameworks to one side if they are not helpful. The most important thing is to feel that you can use the group as a place where you can talk and share whatever you want to about these difficult matters.

Postcards from your journey

At the end of each meeting you are asked to write a postcard to yourself about your journey through the group. In some groups your facilitators will collect these and keep them safely for you until the last meeting. If you are working online, you will need to keep your own postcards. Put these in an envelope and put them to one side. Try not to look at them again till the last meeting of the group. At that meeting your facilitators will invite you to open your envelopes, read your postcards and share whatever you would like about what the postcards say about your journey together.

The most important thing is to feel that you can use the group as a place where you can talk and share whatever you want to about these difficult matters.

Module two: Communication

Campaigners often focus on what they want to say and the facts that they want to get across. This module looks at some other approaches: listening, thinking about relationships, telling stories, and using research on framing and targeting your message. There are three sessions:

- talking with family and friends;
- finding your voice;
- bringing it all together.

Session one: talking with family and friends

It's common to run into difficulties when talking about climate change to family and friends. Your urgency and strong feelings get caught up in old patterns of relationship. In this session the focus is on everyday conversations. The ideas covered in the session are summarised below.

Useful conversations don't have to be deep

They could be:

- shallow: you mention climate change in passing, normalising it as a topic of conversation;
- a short exchange: you mention climate change and the other person responds;
- explorative: you have several, cautious exchanges on the topic;
- deep: you have a meaningful exchange of ideas;
- a shift: you have a deep exchange and there's a shift in awareness or knowledge ('I've not thought of that before...').

It's helpful to look beneath the surface

Most conversations go on at several levels.

Content is what we appear to be talking about, such as planning a holiday, arranging a meeting or talking about climate change. This is the surface level, the 'what' of a conversation.

Beneath this, partially submerged, are the three process levels, the 'how' of a conversation, how it feels, how you are seeing each other, what you each want.

Mood and emotion are the feelings that ebb and flow during a conversation. For example, the mood might be lighthearted, serious, excitable, comfortable or edgy, shifting in response to what you both say. Emotions such as love, affection, rage or hate may appear, disappear, be suppressed or expressed.

Perception refers to how people see each other and the assumptions they make about each other. We often slot people into our existing perceptions and stereotypes – parent/child, puritanical campaigner, role model, teacher, etc.

Agenda and desire refer to what people hope to get out of the conversation, consciously, unconsciously or just beneath the surface. Someone might wish to flirt, to show superiority, to learn something or to show they are well-disposed for example.

Stories speak
the language
of our
emotions and
our hearts.

What helps?

You probably looked at the video *Talking about climate change* from the Alliance for Climate Education during this session. You can watch it again [here](#).⁵

The important points to remember are:

- listen with attention, respect and curiosity;
- ask questions;
- be aware of what is going on beneath the surface – the process levels;
- identify and speak about feelings;
- recognise ambivalence and resistance;
- 'roll with the resistance': unwrap what lies behind resistance instead of applying more pressure.

In the meeting you will have role-played some of the difficult conversations members shared, using the tools above. Practising these skills and making conversations about climate change part of everyday life is one of the most important things you can do.

Session two: finding your voice

This meeting looks at Marshall Ganz's story-telling technique: *Public narrative* or the *Story of self, us and now*. This is a great way of talking about climate change when someone is ready to listen to you. You may have half a minute during a friendly chat or half an hour in front of a public meeting. Whichever it is, developing your own story of self, us and now gives you a repertoire to draw on whenever you get a chance to speak.

Story of self, us and now

Stories speak the language of our emotions and our hearts. They catch our attention. They're memorable. They give us characters to identify with, suspense to keep us listening and an outcome to remember. They're often how we learn. Most of us tell and listen to stories every day of the week without noticing it. A good story has:

- **A main character** who 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.
- **A setting** – 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.
- **A theme** – a 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 of some kind. The main character (you), moving towards a desired goal, runs into an unexpected event – a challenge. This crisis engages our curiosity. What will happen? How will she or he solve the problem? 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?

Story of self

How did you get to the place you are now? Think about your parents, wider family and experiences of growing up. Who influenced you? What stories did they tell? What did you learn to love and value?

Describe the milestones that brought you to the moment of wanting to act. Focus on challenges you had to face, choices you made and the satisfactions and frustrations you experienced.

- What motivates you? What are the values that drive you?
- What critical choice points can you recall?
- What stories can you tell about these choice points?

Write as much as you want about this. You can choose parts of it later.

Story of us

Think of 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. With whom do you share a common past? With whom do you share a common future? Your story of us should describe:

- the 'us' you will call upon to join you;
- some experiences you all share;
- some motivating values you all share.

You only need two or three sentences here.

Story of now

A story of now is urgent. It should inspire others to drop what they are doing and pay attention. It can be based on a threat, an opportunity or both. It is rooted in the values you celebrate in your story of self and us but it poses a challenge to those values. It contrasts a vision of the world as it will be if we fail to act and the world as it could be if we do act. It calls on us to act. Your story of now should describe:

- the urgent challenge you are calling on us to face;
- the vision we could achieve if we act;
- the action you are calling on us to join you in taking.

Again, two or three sentences is enough.

Feedback questions

As you listen to other people's stories, think about:

- What caught your attention? What made you sit up and listen? What kept you interested?
- What connects with me? Think about the person's choices, their values and the images they used.
- What would I like to know more about? Think about the details that you would like to hear more about and the gaps that left you curious and wanting more.

It takes a while to write a polished story. You may want to work on the first part of your story in between meetings and continue to improve it once this module has ended. If you're meeting with your buddy pair you can give each other feedback and help each other improve your stories.

You can read more about public narrative [here](#) and see Marshall Ganz's own worksheets [here](#).⁶

Session three: bringing it all together

This session is for practising the skills you learned in sessions one and two. Your facilitators may also have introduced some ideas from communications research which are summarised below.

- Information is not enough. People screen out messages they don't think apply to them.
- People often 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.
- 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.
- Emphasise what people can do. Give detail. Be inviting.
- 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. Framing in terms of public health or our children's future is often effective.

You will find more information on the [Climate Outreach](#) site. Look at their blog posts and the reports *Britain talks climate* and *The talking climate handbook* (Wang et al 2020 and Webster et al 2020).⁷

Emphasise the gains like cleaner air, better health, quieter streets, more jobs and less stress.

Module three:

The ecosystem of change

Module three has four sessions:

- outside the forest;
- understanding the numbers;
- reflective practice;
- ending.

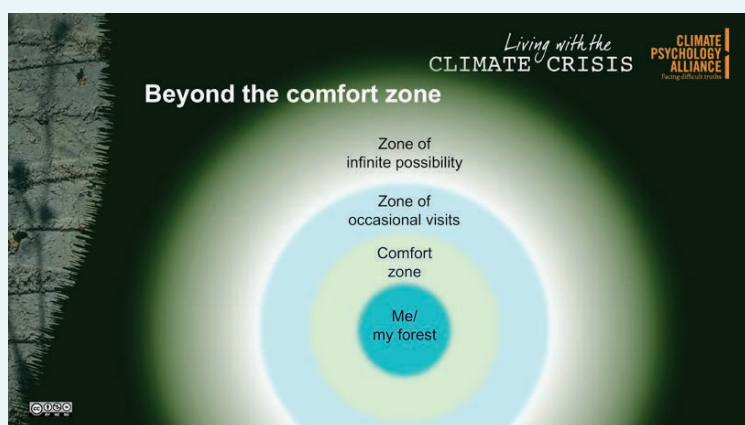
Session one: outside the forest

This meeting looks at the different ways you can join with others to make a difference. Each person needs to find a place in the ecosystem of change where they can flourish. There are three aims:

- to explore your web of connections;
- to think about all the different groups and organisations you could get involved with;
- to explore the skills you could contribute.

Beyond the comfort zone

In this module you draw maps of your connections and think about how to develop and expand them. Draw the diagram below onto a sheet of paper. Fill it in according to the instructions.



- Me/my forest – the people you feel closest to.
- Comfort zone – people, groups, networks or organisations you move comfortably amongst.
- Zone of occasional visits – people, groups, networks or organisations you know superficially, see infrequently, feel less sure with.
- Zone of infinite possibility – people, groups, networks or organisations you've heard of but don't yet have connection with.

After the meeting you may like to develop your map further and talk about it with your buddy pair.

Skills for change

During this meeting you discuss skills, using the lists below as a starting point and adding your own ideas. You're asked to think about which ones you have, which you might like to develop and to talk about where you might offer them.

Facilitative/support roles

Team builder
Listener
Facilitator
Negotiator/mediator
Networker
Participation enabler

Practical roles

Gardener
Engineer
Builder
Driver
Artist
Cook

Leadership roles

Strategist
Tactician
Warrior
Visionary/inspirer
Influencer
Risk taker
Reality checker
Problem solver

Advocacy roles

Public speaker
Media interface/public relations
Writer

Spiritual/ethical roles

Healer
Sage/wise person/elder
Meditation leader
Witness
Sense maker
Guide
Visionary/inspirer
Celebrator

Educational roles

Consciousness raiser
Trainer
Informer
Facilitator

Organisational roles

Project planner
Fund-raiser
Bookkeeper
IT and website organiser
Chair
Secretary
Manager

You may like to revisit this list with your buddy pair after the meeting. These are the prompts you were given when you talked about it during the meeting.

- Tell me about a skill you are confident in? What is its history? How did you learn it? Can you tell me a story about it? Can you think of an organisation/network/group where it could be useful?
- Choose a skill you would like to develop. Can you tell me a story about lacking/avoiding/wanting this skill? Can you think of a person/organisation/environment that would help you develop it?

Telling stories about your skills can help you feel pride and ownership in them and help you feel confident about applying them.

Session two: understanding the numbers

This meeting looks at the numbers involved in carbon reduction. The focus is on:

- how to reduce your own impact;
- how to reduce the impact of organisations you are involved with;
- the process of making changes.

There is time to talk about:

- the systems that make change difficult;
- the relationships that can be affected;
- your own mixed feelings about change.

During the meeting your facilitators will talk about how to measure carbon emissions and either give you a copy or ask you to download the pamphlet *Living lightly* which is available on the [Living with the climate crisis](#) website.

This contains:

- information about the key areas of a personal footprint;
- rules of thumb to help you identify what to do easily;
- lists of possible actions;
- conversation topics to explore with other people;
- frequently asked questions;
- links to more information.

You can work through this outside the meetings with your buddy pair or with friends and family. You can also use it in organisations you are involved with to help you talk about how to make carbon reductions.

The complexities of change

During this session the group talks about the complexities of change. These are the instructions for the activity that explores this.

Think about other times in your life when you have made (or tried to make) changes. Choose a change you are happy to talk about and share your story with your partner or small group. Think about:

- **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.

Think about:

- 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?

This session also looked at force field analysis which is covered in detail in *Living lightly*.

Session three: reflective practice

This meeting is an opportunity to:

- reflect on your involvement in climate action;
- talk about what you are currently doing and what you would like to do in the future;
- think about how sustainable your plans are personally.

Your facilitators will introduce you to some effective ways of doing this which you will be able to take away with you for future use.

Session four: ending

This is the final session of your group. There is no new content. You will open your envelope of postcards, look back at your personal journey and share whatever you want to about the story that is told there.

This meeting is a time to reflect on the hours you have spent together; talk about how you feel about the group's ending and say goodbye.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Denborough, D. (2008) *Collective narrative practice: responding to individuals, groups and communities who have experienced trauma*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.

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

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

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

Wang, S., Corner, A., and Nicholls, J. (2020) *Britain talks climate: toolkit for engaging the British public on climate change*. Oxford: Climate Outreach.

Webster, R. et al (2020) *The talking climate handbook*. Oxford: Climate Outreach.

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

NOTES

- 1 See <https://www.climatepsychologyalliance.org/support/indsupport>
- 2 You can read more about the tree of life on the Dulwich Centre website <https://dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/>, in David Denborough's book *Collective Narrative Practice*. (Denborough 2008) and in Ncazelo Ncube's *Tree of life practitioner's guide* (Ncube 2017)
- 3 Questions adapted from Denborough 2008, p. 36.
- 4 See <https://skepticalscience.com/> and <https://www.carbonbrief.org/>
- 5 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U59bfo_nnb0
- 6 See Ganz, M. (2011) *Public narrative, collective action and power* available at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:29314925> and the worksheets at <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/30760283/Public-Narrative-Worksheet-Fall-2013-.pdf>
- 7 See *Britain talks climate* and *The Talking climate handbook* at <https://climateoutreach.org/>

