



Climate change and mental health

Caring for ourselves while caring for the planet



Climate change is part of the world that children and young people are navigating today. They're living in a time when it shapes so much of what they see, learn and talk about.

Learning about the environment can spark curiosity and hope, giving children and young people a sense of connection with the world around them, but it may also bring feelings of worry or uncertainty about the future.

This toolkit is informed by The Compass Project, a collaboration between Anna Freud and the Climate Cares Centre at Imperial College London, to support the wellbeing of young people as they navigate a rapidly changing world.

You can read more about this project, alongside further information on climate and mental health education, [here](#).

“Throughout my time at the Compass Project, I've realised just how closely climate change, mental health, and wellbeing are connected.”

Compass Project Youth Advisor



Exploring the theme in your school or college

This toolkit offers practical ideas and trusted resources to help your setting explore the link between climate change and mental health.

You can use this toolkit to:

- support students to recognise and manage strong emotions about climate change
- build students' confidence to take meaningful action
- create a sense of hope and shared responsibility across your community.

Planning with care

Talking about climate change can sometimes feel challenging. It helps to balance honesty with hope and to remind students that they're not alone in how they feel. Encourage them to share their thoughts and listen to one another's perspectives, recognising that everyone responds differently.

If a discussion raises concerns, let students know they can always speak to a trusted adult or your pastoral or safeguarding team.



Primary resources

Help pupils explore their feelings about the planet, understand fairness and empathy, and recognise how small actions can make a difference.



[Climate change stories | Oxfam](#)

A lesson using real stories to help pupils learn how people and communities are responding to climate change around the world.



[Eco-anxiety and how to cope | British Red Cross](#)

A lesson that introduces eco-anxiety, exploring how it may affect people and encouraging discussion of practical ways to respond to climate-related worries.



[The climate game | Oxfam](#)

An interactive role-play activity that helps pupils explore climate justice and how inequality affects people and communities differently around the world.



[Talking Mental Health | Anna Freud](#)

Animation and accompanying teacher toolkit designed to help begin conversations about mental health in the classroom and beyond.

Activity idea

Invite pupils to choose one space or habit in the school they'd like to improve for both wellbeing and sustainability such as creating a quiet garden area, reducing plastic use or improving recycling. Let them plan and lead small changes over time, sharing their ideas and progress with the school community to celebrate what they've achieved together.



Secondary and FE resources

Support students to reflect on the emotional impact of climate change, explore climate justice and build a sense of agency and connection.



[Who makes change happen? | Friends of the Earth](#)

A lesson exploring what makes an effective changemaker, and how governments, organisations and individuals can influence action on climate change.



[Goals for Good - school toolkit | Global Action Plan](#)

A four-part lesson series that explores how values, wellbeing and sustainability are linked, supporting young people to set goals that are good for themselves, others and the planet.



[Climate Change and Mental Health | Natural History Museum](#)

A set of short activities helping students explore the links between climate change and mental health through reflection and positive action.



[Let's talk about anxiety - Anna Freud](#)

A short animation and accompanying resources for teachers, exploring the topic of anxiety with secondary school students aged 11 to 13.

Activity idea

Invite students to explore real-world examples of climate action and analyse what made them successful or inspiring. Discuss how these stories make them feel about the challenges and possibilities of addressing climate change, then work together to develop proposals for realistic, school-based initiatives that could help to make your school or college more sustainable.



Resources for staff

Education staff play a vital role in helping students feel supported and informed. Many adults also experience similar emotions about climate change and acknowledging this can create a culture of care and honesty across the whole community.



[Working with eco-emotions | ClimatEdPsych](#)

A practical guide that introduces eco-emotions related to climate change and offers strategies to support both staff and students in managing these feelings.



[Take action for climate justice | Oxfam](#)

A practical guide that supports education staff with activities, planning tools and advice to inspire young people take meaningful action on climate change.



[Eco-anxiety awareness e-learning | Red Cross](#)

A short, accessible e-learning module introducing the concept of eco-anxiety and offering simple, supportive strategies.



[Wellbeing in climate education | Anna Freud & Climate Cares](#)

Guidance to support students' wellbeing when teaching about climate change.

Activity idea

Staff may have their own feelings about climate change, as well as the responsibility of supporting students. Invite staff to take part in a short 'climate check-in' during a staff meeting. Ask everyone to share one word or phrase that describes how they feel when teaching or talking about climate change, then one thing that helps them manage those feelings. Capture key themes and use them to shape future wellbeing and CPD plans.



Creating a climate for wellbeing

A mentally healthy school or college understands that our wellbeing is shaped by the world we live in.

Reflecting on how your setting supports the wellbeing of young people as they learn about climate change and the world around them can be a helpful starting point.

- Are students encouraged to talk about their feelings around climate change?
- Are staff supported to explore climate-related emotions and discuss these safely with students?
- Is student voice shaping sustainability projects and decisions?
- Are young people given chances to learn through real-world and outdoor experiences that support wellbeing and connection with nature?
- Does your school or college lead by example through visible sustainability actions?
- Does your approach to climate and wellbeing include collaboration with families and the wider community?

Every small step, every open conversation and every act of care for the planet, helps build a culture where young people feel empowered to act and hopeful about their future.