Climate
Mental Health
Network



Creative Arts Therapy for Climate Emotions

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Additional Resources:

American Art Therapy Association
arttherapy.org

Center for Arts in Medicine, University of Florida
arts.ufl.edu/academics/center-for-arts-in-medicine/

Climate Mental Health Network
climatementalhealth.net

Ecoart Therapy
ecoart-therapy.org/

International Expressive Arts Therapy Association
ieata.org

Lesley University Department of Expressive Therapies
lesley.edu/academics/expressive-therapies

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I am a senior at Lesley University, studying Expressive Arts Therapy. I created this guide as part of my internship course with the Climate Mental Health Network. This guide was born out of my personal experiences with climate emotions and my school studies. I am passionate about inspiring people to use the arts as a healing modality. I have anxious dreams and worrying daytime thoughts about the future of the world and my life because of the climate crisis. To manage these emotions, I find that talking and doing art therapy with the people in my community is extremely beneficial to manage these feelings. I hope you find this guide useful and inspiring and healing.

- Eliya-Quaye Constance, December 2022

This guide is not a substitute for professional services when needed. In the US, text or call 988 for a 24/7 crisis hotline. For emergency mental health telephone numbers in other countries, go to: **findahelpline.com**



What are Climate Emotions?

Climate change and mental health are inextricably linked. To heal the planet, we have to collectively heal ourselves.

- Climate Mental Health Network

Climate emotions are a normal response to the climate crisis and can arise from both direct experiences (e.g. experiencing extreme weather, loss of home or belongings, displacement) or indirect experiences (i.e. learning and reading about the climate crisis). The range of emotions could include anxiety, sadness, trauma, grief, hopelessness, or fear. They are all valid. This guide is a resource for self care, process emotions, and to encourage improved well being.

Our climate-related emotions are arising out of an empathetic, familial connection with Earth. By choosing to feel our emotions, rather than disconnect from them, we are helping heal the Earth at a cellular level. A greater sense of connectivity among the Earth's living components will enable the organism (including ourselves, as one piece of it) to more creatively adapt to the challenges of our time. Feeling is healing!

- Sage Palmedo

What is Creative Art Therapy?

The Creative Art Therapies are supportive practices for everyone to help people process their emotions. They include art therapy, bibliotherapy, dance, drama and movement therapies. There are no expectations or standards–the purpose is to let your body express emotions through a range of mediums as a tool for healing. Don't judge yourself–just be in the flow of the activity.

Creative Art therapy activities are for everyone. Art is about making connections. It's a way sometimes to connect with yourself, to explore how you really feel about something. Sharing our art is also a way of making community and allies and fostering resilience in ourselves and others. Art also connects us to the next generation, so they know how we felt and what we were going through at this moment in history. Art is wonderful because it asks us to be brave, and you have to remember that you are.

- Emily Diamond



Using this Guide

The description of these activities are loose guidelines. Feel free to participate in whichever activities you want in whatever capacity you are able. There are no expectations when doing these practices.

Place: Find and create a comfortable space where you can be creative and connect with your emotions without any judgment. Is there a park, garden or other safe greenspace that is accessible to you? If not, consider bringing nature into your home (e.g. plants, imagery, nature sounds). Doing these practices in nature is called eco-art therapy. The imagery and the inherent restorative potential of the reflective art making process are greater when people connect with nature. There can be a different balance of hope and despair.

> *Sense ourselves as part of nature, not disconnected from nature.*
> *- Jane Richardson*

Who: Some of the activities can be done alone while others require a partner. Consider sharing your experiences in the guide by doing the activities with groups of friends or as a family. Some of the activities are accessible to even young children.

Art Supplies:

- Paints (water color, acrylic, oil, etc.)
- Paint brushes
- Drawing tools (markers, pencils, crayons, pastels, chalks, etc.)
- Large and small paper (lined and unlined)
- Collage materials (magazines, newspapers, cut images, etc.)
- Glue
- Scissors
- Materials found in nature (leaves, twigs, pebbles, etc. Please do not pick wildflowers or other protected species)
- Whatever else calls to you

There are a few extra pages at the end of the guide for you to draw, write, color, doodle, etc.

Writing Therapy Section (Bibliotherapy)



Journaling Prompts

Choose whichever prompts you want but you do not have to do them all at once. Take your time and slowly work through the questions over an extended period of time. Consider going back through them again and again, noticing how your responses might change.

- *What is something I need to let go of?*
- *What do my climate emotions sound, look, and feel like to me?*
- *What are some self care ideas I can use when I am struggling with climate emotions?*
- *What would it feel like to forgive myself?*
- *What activities make me feel good? What brings me joy?*
- *Are your climate emotions trying to tell you something? What is it?*
- *Today I am grateful for…*
- *If I could make one promise to myself it would be…*
- *Make a list of 10 affirmations.*
- *List 3 things about the climate crisis that challenge you most and why.*
- *Who are 3 people I can talk with about my climate emotions?*
- *What are things that make me feel safe?*

Letter to the World

Go to a place that calls to all of you, a place you care about with friends or alone. Listen to the sounds you hear, focus on the sights, smells, textures you see, and how it makes you feel. Focus on the strength it gives you, the feeling of connection, noticing whatever emotions arise.

Write down your reflections as a letter or poem. Don't worry about perfection. Write it to your friends or family and also write it to the place. If you are in a group, share what you have written. At the conclusion, express gratitude and thanks to the location.

The Letter to the World activity is inspired by odes to nature that were often done by Taoist or haiku poets in Japan. They would pack a lunch, be alone or with their friends, and write poems and odes which included the nature around them. Connect with these poetic traditions from East Asia by spending time in nature, or bringing nature into your home such as in the form of leaves, flowers, or growing edible plants.

– Dr. Emily Diamond

Arts Therapy Section

Individual Activities

Drawing challenging climate emotions

Choose a drawing tool. , Create an image that depicts how your climate emotions feel in the center of the page. Then, take a moment with this challenging image. Does it have any messages to you? Write or draw those messages or feelings on one side of the image. Next, ask yourself what is helping you with this anxiety? What would help your anxiety? Draw or write these on the other side of your image.

Climate Emotion Collage

Using magazines, newspapers, printed pictures, etc., cut out images or words that represent the emotions you have about climate change. Paste them together on a plain piece of paper. Take a moment when you are complete with the piece. What makes these images and words powerful? What messages do these anxieties have for you? If needed, feel free to rip up, burn, or destroy your collage.

Group Activity

Theme Group Drawing

In a group of 4-8, using a large piece of paper, create a group piece around the theme of climate emotions. Use whatever art supplies call out to you and allow each group member to take turns adding whatever they wish based on theme. What images, words, etc reminds you of this theme? When your piece is finished, ask each group member to share what emotions the piece evoked and share what they added and why. How does doing this in a group differ from doing it alone? What does the group activity mean to you regarding the climate crisis?

Opportunity: Reflect on an artistic tradition in a culture you may know or be a part of, and contemplate how it may have helped people to connect with places, animals, plants, and the ecosystem. In that tradition, is there an art form that would help you process their climate emotions? Can you connect to share about it with others in your life?

- Dr. Emily Diamond

Dance/ Movement Therapy



Individual Activities

Free Dance with Writing

Prior to beginning your movement, think about the way climate emotions manifests in your body. What do they feel like for you? Using our provided playlist (see the music section, below) or any music that you connect to, move freely for five minutes. Shake your body, jump, make sounds, and move in any other ways that help you channel the emotions out of your body to help you feel more of a sense of calmness, connection and grounded-ness. When you have finished your movement piece let the following prompts guide your writing.

I feel...
I notice...
I imagine...

Body Scan with Body Map

Find a comfortable position either seated or lying down to help you feel connected to your body and breath. Starting at the top of your head and moving slowly from down your body to your feet notice the sensations of your body. How is your breath? Where might you feel pain or tension, or spots that are relaxed. Allow yourself to experience all of the different sensations that your body is feeling without placing judgements such as “good” or “bad” on them. Try to notice what emotions arise at different parts of the body.

Spend at least 5 minutes allowing yourself to feel the sensations of your body. Draw an outline of your body. Then color, write, collage, etc. what sensations or emotions you felt in your body. Allow your intuition to dictate what colors, shapes, images, and tools you use.

Group Activity

Mirroring

In groups of two, face your partner. Discuss with your partner your experience with emotions about the climate crisis. How does it show up in your body-what do you feel and where? What feelings do you have as an ally to each other, about being in community. Partner #1 begins the movement, moving in the way climate emotions make them feel in their bodies. Partner #2 mirrors Partner #1’s movements. After five minutes, switch. After Partner #2 leads the movement, take time to discuss how the process felt with your partner.

Music Therapy Exercises

https://tinyurl.com/Sage-Playlist

Individual Activity

Playlist with Visual Arts

While listening to the playlist provided, engage in whatever form of visual arts calls to you. Do not place any pressure on yourself to create something specific, allow yourself to create whatever you feel while listening to the music. After creating your piece, give it a title in the form of an affirmation to yourself.

Group Activity

Group Rhythm

In a group of four or more, sit in a circle. One group member begins a rhythm using any body parts, instruments available, or their voice. One by one each group member adds a new piece to the rhythm with a new sound. Allow the person who began the activity to create a gesture to complete the piece.

Discuss with your group how it felt to release your emotions through sound and music.

Questions or to connect, visit **climatementalhealth.net** or **Instagram.com/climatementalhealth**







