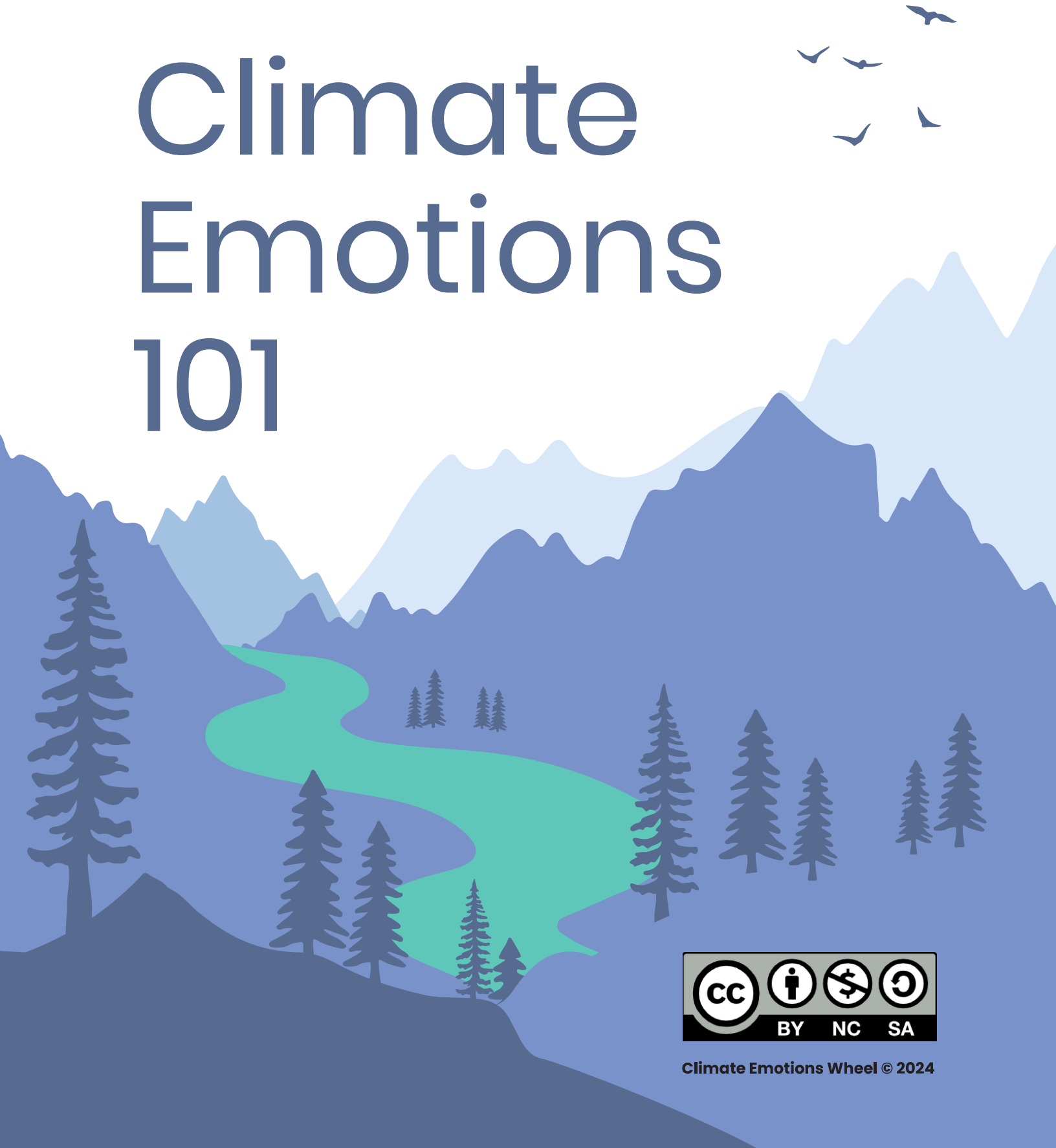
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Network

Climate Emotions 101



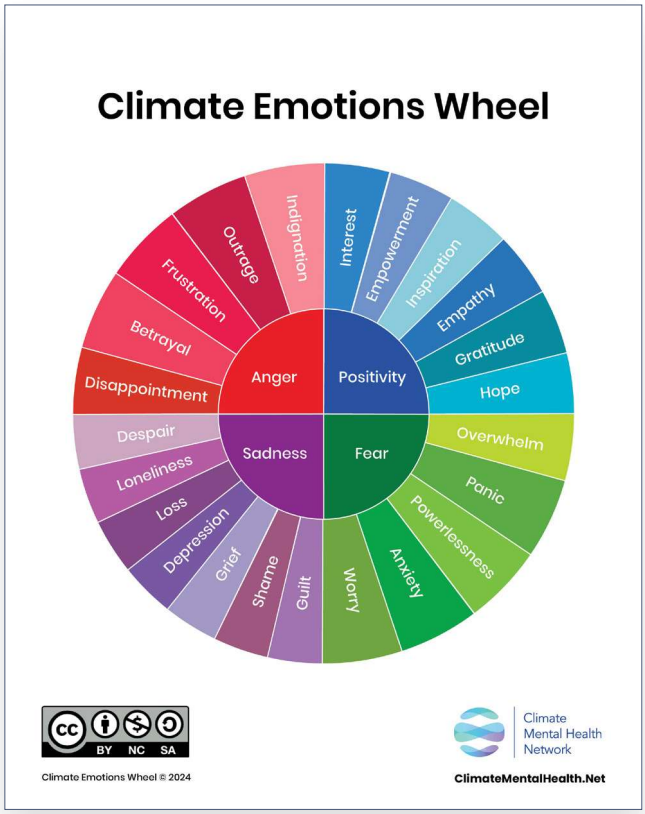
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Climate Emotions Wheel © 2024

Climate Emotions 101

What are Climate Emotions?

As climate change intensifies, its effects are increasingly felt by people around the world. In the United States, the percentage of Americans who have been directly affected by climate change-related disasters – such as wildfires, heatwaves, floods, and hurricanes – has increased dramatically in recent years. Disaster survivors, often grappling with significant losses, are often left feeling intensely sad, helpless, anxious, angry, and fearful.



People who have not been directly impacted by a major disaster can also experience very real emotions related to climate change. Bearing witness to the negative impacts of climate change or learning about how climate change is causing suffering to people and ecosystems can lead to significant psychological suffering, including anxiety, grief, fear, anger, and guilt, and other emotions.

Challenging emotions about climate change are often referred to as "climate anxiety", "eco-anxiety", or "climate grief", and can range from mild to severe. Climate change can also incite positive emotions, such as inspiration, empathy, and hope. The Climate Emotions Wheel (above) depicts a range of common climate emotions.

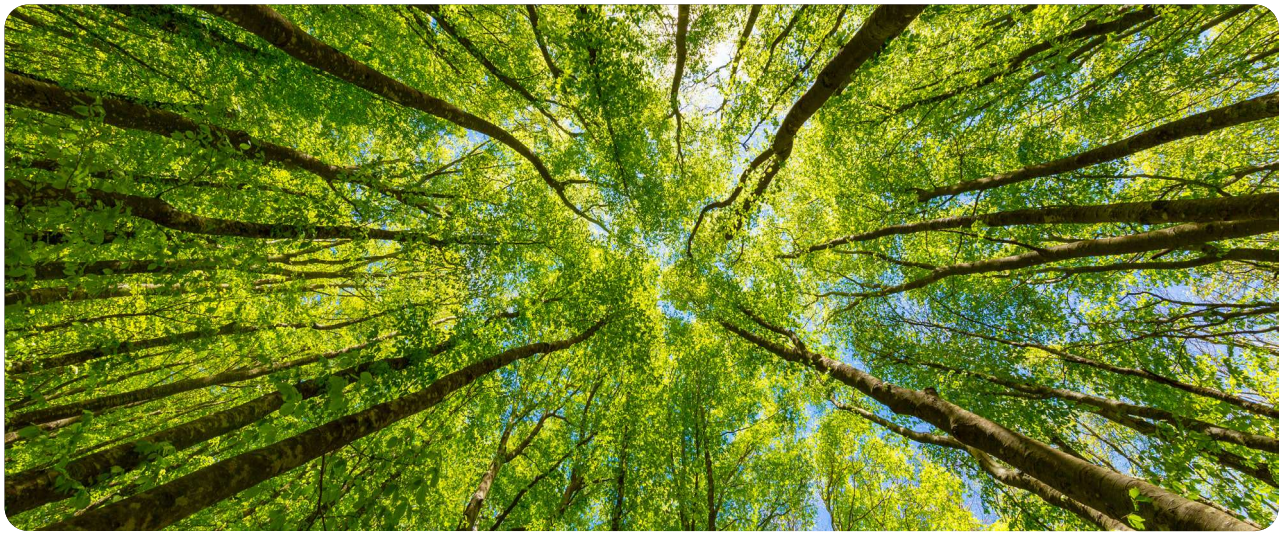
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Climate Emotions are Normal

Experiencing challenging emotions about climate change is common, valid, and warranted. In fact, studies show that the majority of adults (64%) in the United States are worried about climate change, and frequently report feelings of frustration, sadness, anger, and anxiety about the issue.[1] Young people are also commonly impacted. In a 2024 nationwide survey of nearly 16,000 youth (ages 16-25), 85% of respondents reported being worried about the impact of climate change on people and the planet, and more than 60% said that climate change makes them feel anxious, powerless, afraid, sad, and angry.[2] So, if you're distressed about climate change, rest assured that you're in good company and that your concerns are shared by many.

Climate Emotions Need Attention and Care

It's perfectly normal to feel anxious or upset about climate change; what's more, these feelings can help motivate people to take action to help tackle the problem. However, when climate emotions become too intense, overwhelming, or unrelenting, they can negatively impact one's mental health and well-being. Concerns about climate change can lead to anxiety and depression, loss of sleep and difficulty concentrating. In the next section, we offer tips for helping to manage one's climate emotions in a healthy way to prevent emotional overwhelm and help build emotional resilience in the context of climate change.



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Tips for Navigating Climate Emotions

Acknowledge Your Feelings. Take the time to recognize and honor your emotions. Simply naming a negative emotion, such as anxiety or fear, can reduce its intensity.[3] If you need help identifying what you are feeling, you can use the Climate Emotions Wheel (page 1). Bringing awareness to what you are feeling is the first step to coping with those feelings effectively.

Embrace Emotions. Feeling anxiety or grief about climate change shows you care about the planet and its creatures. These emotions aren't negative; they signal that you're compassionate and aware of the need for change. Instead of pushing anxiety away, embrace it as a sign of your values and a call for systemic action to protect what matters most.

Use Emotional Coping Tools. Initiate a practice, such as mindful meditation, breathwork or gratitude, to avoid being overwhelmed or debilitated by climate emotions.

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Connect with Nature. Spending time in nature can calm the nervous system, ease stress, and reduce rumination. Go for a hike, head for the park or take a swim. Remember that there is still so much beauty in the world to preserve and protect.



Take Action. People often feel helpless in the face of climate change; one of the best ways to address this is to take action. Some of the most impactful actions an individual can take are reducing food waste and adopting a plant-rich diet.[4] Additionally, taking action with others has the potential to make a greater impact and is more protective for mental health.[5] Consider participating in a local environmental group or organizing a cleanup or composting project with friends or coworkers.



Engage in Self-Care. Action must be balanced with self-care, which includes activities that foster positive feelings, like gardening, playing with pets, running, cooking, or napping. Taking regular breaks for self-care helps prevent burnout and enhances productivity in the long run. Physical activity is key; it regulates mood and boosts confidence, essential for coping with chronic stressors like environmental issues. Additionally, maintaining good sleep and eating habits can mitigate stress and promote resilience.

Visit **climatementalhealth.net** for more tips, resources, and program information.

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