

# EXPLORING **CLIMATE CHANGE**

DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING & EMPOWERMENT



A PARENT'S GUIDE



Millions of young people are growing up conscious about climate change and how it will affect their future. To best support our children moving forward, we need to expand our information, approach and response to climate-education, going beyond the mere sharing of facts to equipping young people with tools to allow them to feel empowered.

As parents and educators, we need to recognise that building emotional resilience is a key aspect of responding effectively to the climate crisis and supporting ourselves and the young people around us moving forward.

**It's time to talk about climate change.**

# Contents

How (and why) to talk about climate change

Page 4

A brief history of climate change

Pages 5-9

Learning in schools

Page 10

Useful resources

Pages 11-13

## The importance of talking

Because climate change is such a complex issue with no ‘quick fix’, it can often feel difficult to know what to say to children, and therefore perhaps feels easier to say nothing. However, these issues are not going away, nor will they get easier to face the longer we leave them. Now is the time to be supporting our children with the knowledge, tools and inspiration they need to step into their futures ready to thrive.

Young people are already talking about climate change and hearing scattered ideas and information on a daily basis – and so offering them a safe space to be supported with their questions and concerns is a comforting response. A major part of learning about climate change is exploring our emotions and it is useful to remind your children that learning about empathy, compassion and emotional intelligence is just as important (if not more so) as learning the facts and figures.

As parents, we too need to start talking about climate change ourselves with family, with friends, with the people around us. Building networks of people we can talk with, can share our anxieties or concerns with, explore our fears or questions – this sharing supports our own wellbeing moving forward. To help our children, we also need to be creating a safe space for ourselves to be talking about climate change in the same way.

We don’t need to be experts on climate change in order to talk about it. Instead, we can simply welcome the conversations. In this way, your children can understand that their knowledge, opinions, beliefs and emotions are valid and are being heard –and you open the opportunity as a parent or caregiver, to explore and engage in the learning together.

Encouraging your children to engage with what interests them most and providing the time to explore their questions can be very empowering. By doing this, you are focusing on teaching children how, not what, to think, and the *how* is based on critical thinking and empathy. Your children are practicing shaping their own opinions about a subject and learning to read the feelings connected to it.

It’s perfectly okay to be humble in your knowledge of information and be honest about what you may not know. In that way, your children can feel encouraged to explore ideas with you or engage in self-directed learning – but most significantly feel heard and supported when sharing their thoughts and feelings moving forward.

## How did we get here?

Over the evolution of human history, many people have shifted from early ways of living, moving from a time where we were working in balance with the ecosystem to a system of over-consumption (taking just enough to satisfy our needs) to a time where we are living separately from (and in many ways dominating) the natural world. So how did this happen?

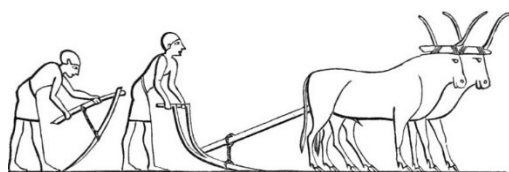
Over time there have been two significant human-led developments which fundamentally changed the way that we live on Earth and which can be identified as triggers for our changing global climates:



Early development of agriculture – **Neolithic agriculture** – started around ten thousand years ago. Humans began productively *using* the Earth in around 3200 BCE (*Before Common Era*) in the region joining northeast Africa to southwest Asia. This area had an abundance of rivers and forests proving a crucial factor in people's decision to settle. From this, the two earliest known civilisations began to form.

The Neolithic Revolution was the major transition period for humans from nomadic hunter-gatherers to **permanent settlers**. Communities began learning to change and adapt their natural surroundings through the cultivation of food crops, the action of deforestation and the implementation of irrigation systems (which is why rivers and forests are important in locations for human settlements).

The experimentation and introduction of food storage allowed for the production of extensive food and the creation of surplus supplies, therefore allowing people to settle in one place and start storing food. It was also during this period that humans first began experimenting within the husbandry of plants and animals, using them for their own needs and benefits.



From this time onwards, many human communities started transforming from small, nomadic hunter-gatherer groups into sedentary societies, living in larger, more built-up communities and developing what have been termed as 'civilisations'.

These communities were now able to start turning their attentions beyond their previous focus on survival (finding food, water and shelter each day) to finding ways to settle and develop homesteads and communities.

This movement introduced a significant shift in human behaviour as people moved from adaptability and survival towards *development*, with expansive growth gained from the comfort of sedentary existence.

It was during this period that we can see a huge development in human capabilities and actions such as owning property, developing political structures, developing hierarchies, the emergence of trading economics, the division of labour and the emergence of structured systems for passing on knowledge and information (writing and documentation).

The Neolithic agricultural revolution was fundamental in the building blocks of what are termed *human civilisations* – a time when humans started taking active control and ownership over the natural environment and started separating from being a part of nature to – in many ways - becoming *dominant* over the natural world.

Moving forward in time (*this is a very brief history!*), the Agricultural Revolution in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries was fundamental in triggering the Industrial Revolution. This period allowed a vast increase in agricultural productivity across some parts of the world, starting in earnest in the United Kingdom. The UK - a nation already sustained by agriculture - moved through a huge transition during this period in the shift from hand-powered to machine-powered agricultural production.

The introduction of chemical processing, of water and steam power, of coal power and of machine-tools moved people away from a reliance on human and animal energy, towards a new dependency on mechanical energy. Threshing machines, steam powered mills and engines, coal powered factories, canals, roads, railways, petrol refining, dynamite - there was no stopping the breadth and speed of industrial progress once it had begun and it was swiftly spread across the world.

In brief, these trigger points led to vast increase in:



Over time, as humans have developed in different parts of the world, some of our habits and behaviours have collectively started to negatively impact ecosystems and climates. Three significant areas of our interaction with the planet have led to high levels of destruction of the earth's natural resources and eco-systems.



When humans first started consuming, producing and polluting the planet in this way, we were much fewer in numbers as our population on the planet was small in comparison to current population levels.

However, as industrial development allowed for a huge population swell across the world, there are now so many people living on the planet carrying out these actions that the Earth can no longer cope with our growing demands. Our population numbers are booming whilst natural resources are dwindling – which is why industrially developed societies are being asked to adapt or rethink some of our actions and habits very quickly.

One of the biggest problems in the current consumption, production and pollution cycle is our overuse and over-reliance on fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) which are non-renewable energy sources, the burning of which leads to an increase in greenhouse gases. Humans have developed amazing systems that continuously take fossil fuels from the ground but we have no way of ever replacing them, meaning they will eventually run out. We are also continuing to rapidly cut down ancient woodland and forests for food production and development, causing ripple effects on climate, biodiversity and ecosystems across the world.

As there are now so many people across the world carrying out consumptive, productive and polluting activities on such a mass scale, these behaviours have become unsustainable and the Earth can no longer cope. Furthermore, as the industrialised world is developing at such a rapid rate, and the rest of the world is being encouraged to follow, we find ourselves at a crossroads where we cannot sustain what we have started.

*NB: Humans did not consciously set out to create unhealthy actions in our societies as they developed. However it is important to recognise that now we know the long term impacts and consequences of some of these behaviours, we need to respond by changing or adapting these actions and habits.*

NB: To understand in brief why some of our daily human habits in industrialised communities have contributed to climate change and what this means, take a look at one or both of these short explanatory videos:

[Message from Antarctica](#) / [Climate Change in 60 seconds](#)

There are endless ripple effects to consider when changing human actions to tackle climate change, as it is such a huge, complex issue and as such there isn't one 'quick fix solution'. This also means that there are many disputes about how to best to respond and there are many reasons for political apathy or inaction (some perhaps more transparent than others).

However, there are even more significant ripple effects from doing nothing, which we are now starting to see happening across the world: from fires to floods to droughts to storms to biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse – ignoring these issues simply isn't an option, now that we know what is causing them to happen.

All of us need to appreciate that doing nothing isn't going to make these problems go away. Admittedly these are big, complex issues that we're facing and can feel very overwhelming – and yet there can be a sense of empowerment that comes when facing up to what lies ahead and opening up the space for learning, collaboration and creativity. Coupled with organisations and individuals working tirelessly on ways to respond and adapt to climate change are the indigenous voices across the world from whom we can learn essential wisdom and practice on restoring and regenerating healthy eco-systems.

### **What can we do?**

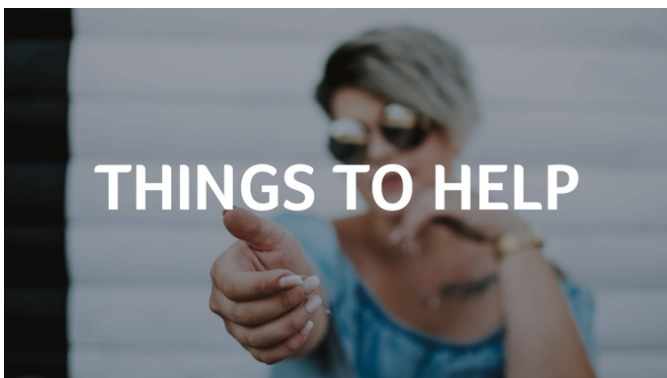
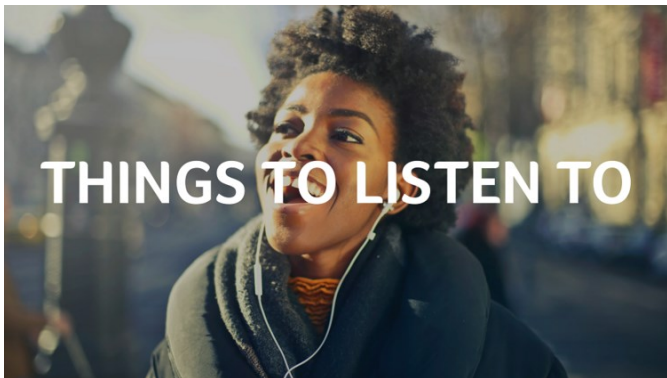
We can all recognise that a future of escalating climate collapse is not the world that we *want* to live in, neither is this the world we *need* to live in. All of us can be conscious of our levels of waste, our food-production systems, our energy use and levels of consumption, and to consider our choices in these daily habits.

To start, it is helpful to understand and appreciate *why* climate change is happening – to step back from some of our habits and actions for a moment to think about the wider consequences and impacts and appreciate that we can all do something, no matter how small or inconsequential we may feel.

On a very basic level, something we can all do straight away is **start talking** about climate change with our friends, with our family, with our children – creating the space to be sharing thoughts, feelings and reflections about the world we are all sharing, this one planet we all call home.



If you want to learn more about some of the cause and effects of climate change, here are some engaging and insightful resources to give you a quick introduction



*NB: Resources for talking with your children about climate change and supporting their emotions, reflections and responses can be found at the end of this pack.*

## How can our schools support?

It is important for children and young people to understand some of the causes and effects of climate change so they can understand the world around them and find their place within it. Yet it is even more essential for them to do so in a safe, guided space where they can explore their emotions and move from overwhelm and disconnection to a place where they feel empowered.

---

“

Climate change must become part of our education if the next generation are to understand the cause and effect, appreciate how everything interconnects and feel empowered in creating their future stories.

RACHEL MUSSON | DIRECTOR OF THOUGHTBOX

---

ThoughtBox has responded to this need by developing a free [Changing Climates curriculum](#) bringing this space into the classroom. Students will experience captivating stories, videos and lesson plans that offer a variety of perspectives about climate change from around the world.

The free curriculum comprises of lessons and resources for every school aged child from 5-18 years old, designed by teachers with the guidance of climate psychologists and with emotional wellbeing at the very heart of the learning journey.

- Lessons introduce key information about the cause & effect of climate change, engage with the emotions and effects on both human and non-human communities and inspire empowered actions moving forward
- Students practise skills of critical thinking & questioning, deep listening and empathy building by engaging in a wide range of learning stimulus, discussion ideas and creative exercises
- Additional resources provide schemes of work and guidance for teachers and parents in facilitating discussions and offer students a rich bank of resources to support their own learning journeys

Lessons and resources build on key ideas and guidance from climate scientists, practitioners and psychologists. Created for schools all over the world, the programmes all support UK Ofsted requirements for PSHE, SMSC & Global Citizenship.

Beyond our curriculum for schools, we have curated some useful resources for parents to support conversations about climate change at home. Included on the next page are a selection of podcasts, articles and websites to help you feel empowered when talking with your children - and supporting your own emotional wellbeing.

As a starter, here are two of our favourite resources for parents which may prove supportive moving forward:

Podcast: [How to talk to your kids about climate change](#)

Article: [How to Stop Freaking Out and Tackle Climate Change](#)

We have also built a selection of age-appropriate resources for children and young people, which they can explore with you or in their own time to widen their knowledge and emotional response to climate change:

[www.thoughtboxeducation.com/student-resources](http://www.thoughtboxeducation.com/student-resources)

Finally, our short children's stories (*Little Stories for Big Thinkers*) explore big issues in gentle ways, through metaphor and simple engaging narratives. You can download a copy of one of our stories which has been written to introduce some of the emotions and impact of climate change to younger children:

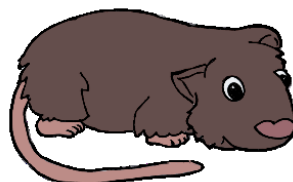
[Vole's Big Flood](#) – A ThoughtBox Story.

For further support and guidance, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our team who can signpost you towards wider resources, practitioners and support.

Contact us at [hello@thoughtboxeducation.com](mailto:hello@thoughtboxeducation.com) or visit our website below.

 Rachel

:Box Team.



## [How to talk to kids about climate change](#)

A short podcast and article on how to talk to kids about the climate crisis.

## [What to do about climate anxiety](#)

A thoughtful article offering some practical guidance and support

## [Actions To Support Youth](#)

Adults sharing possible actions to support young people in their demands for a safe climate future.

## [25 books that teach kids to care about the environment](#)

Ten engaging children's books about Climate Change.

## [Story books for empowerment](#)

The first in a series of fiction books for children that shows kids they really do have the power and influence to make a difference and change the world. This is a free storybook to download.

## [Books about Climate Change](#)

10 books to help children get to grips with climate change

## [Worrying About Climate Change](#)

Article exploring the importance how presenting facts about climate change isn't as helpful as encouraging people to reflect on their feelings.

## [Self Care Tips](#)

General self care tips for teachers and parents.

## [Talking to kids](#)

A podcast talking with kids about climate change and exploring some of their thoughts and emotions

## [Supporting kids' emotions](#)

What to do if climate change flares up kids' anxiety and depression.

## [Sustainable Learning](#)

Connecting teachers with free learning resources and expert knowledge to inspire children about sustainability through National Curriculum learning.

## [Take Learning Outside](#)

The case for teaching outside - serious learning doesn't have to be an indoor activity.

## [Overview Of Climate Change](#)

Sir David Attenborough presents some facts on climate change.

## [Four Ways to Start Self Care](#)

Why it is so hard for teachers to take care of themselves and suggestions on how to start.

## [Resources on Self Care](#)

Various tips, links, reflections, and mindfulness practices to help teachers cope with the common challenges faced by educators and other helping professionals.

## [How to Not Be Depressed About Climate Change](#)

Doing something every day can be profoundly helpful in giving people hope, and it's a path to change.

## [Parents for Future](#)

A community of parents and grandparents sharing resources, advice and advocacy

## About us

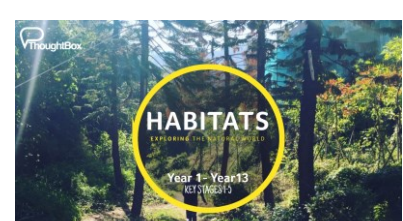
*ThoughtBox is a social enterprise supporting schools with global learning programmes that encourage triple wellbeing by strengthening young people's relationships and connections with themselves, society and the natural world.*

ThoughtBox programmes help pupils to think more critically about the world around them, engaging with their thoughts and feelings and developing a more reflective kind of self-awareness.

Our mission is to help young people understand the world around them and find their place within it by developing life skills for the wellbeing of people and planet:

1. Critical thinking
2. Empathy building
3. Systems thinking (or connected learning)

Our full *ThoughtBox Learning Journey* has been designed to explore global issues in depth and from a range of perspectives, allowing young people to immerse, understand, explore and feel empowered about themselves and the changing world around them.



All of our curriculum is designed and developed by teachers. We focus on:

- Offering the space, the skills and the opportunities to nurture wellbeing through building healthy relationships to self, to others and to the natural world
- Working towards achieving a more just and sustainable present and future in which people and planet are connected
- Enabling pupils to understand the links between their own lives and those of others around the world by increasing understanding of the social, cultural and environmental influences which shape our world

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white patterned sweater, is shouting with her mouth wide open. She is holding a wooden stick vertically in front of her. In the background, other people are visible, some with their mouths open as if shouting. A sign with the word "DOS!" is partially visible in the upper left. The overall scene suggests a protest or a public demonstration.

**Changing Climates**  
This sort of learning can't wait