

Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work

*A handbook designed to provide emotional support,
resources, and tools for eco-anxiety, grief, and
the range of feelings that accompany climate work*

*Compiled by the
Climate Therapy Alliance
(Pacific Northwest Chapter)*

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit was compiled by a collective of psychotherapists specializing in climate psychology in the Pacific Northwest, to provide a resource for climate activists and organizations. We are all involved in the climate work we do because we are committed to being part of shifting to a cleaner, safer, and healthier world. Persistent and effective action is essential in this time of climate crisis, but this is heart-wrenching work. When we experience the devastation happening to the rivers we have swum in, to the trees that have given us restful shelter under their green canopy, and to all the natural places we love and belong to, we are instinctually seized by grief and anxiety. Reading the scientific projections of what more will come without significant change adds to these feelings. While painful, this is a healthy reaction to the loss of what we dearly love.

This handbook is designed to provide emotional support along with resources and tools to help address eco-anxiety, grief, and the range of feelings that accompany climate work. We have compiled some simple practices designed to build emotional resilience, promote self-care, and make room for the safe expression of eco-grief and anxiety. We also include methods that support bringing our best selves to this vital work. The exercises, which take from 5–15 minutes to complete, can be led by anyone. They are categorized by age group, and can easily be incorporated into a planning meeting, educational event, or community forum. We recommend that all gatherings regularly include time for resiliency building and self-care.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

You are invited to browse the table of contents and pick the themes that best fit your group, trying out different ones over time. Many exercises work well with repetition, which builds familiarity and skill like practicing musical scales or building strength through exercise.

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to managing the myriad deep and

complex emotional responses people have to the climate crisis. Sometimes we find ourselves rushing into action out of a sense of urgency and desire to make a difference, without taking time to process the very real and painful emotions brought up by these issues. Without allowing ourselves time to truly feel, share, and integrate our emotional responses, this can lead to burnout. Some of us are so highly empathetic to the soul-searing pain of our times, that we feel immobilized. It's important to identify and acknowledge where each of us falls on this spectrum at any given time, so we can then seek the support we need to move toward a healthy balance of emotional intelligence and action.

Sometimes we may fear that if we acknowledge and express our feelings, we will fall into an abyss of pain and sorrow with no way out. But the reverse is generally true. As one person recently shared, "Tears are the best way to bear what seems unbearable." Feelings, by their very nature, flow and change, and expressing them supports that natural movement.

Emotional resilience and emotional self-care are important concepts to understand when doing this work. *Emotional resiliency* includes increasing our capacity to bear witness to the difficulties we are facing; sharing our experiences with the support of others through community care help increase that ability. *Emotional self-care* includes knowing how to emotionally nourish ourselves, and recognizing that it is important to take breaks to replenish and refuel.

Sharing our eco-anxiety stories and related experiences in community with others can be both healing and overwhelming. While this is a collective effort, we each arrive with our own histories of grief and trauma, as well as our own strengths. You can find more information on how to support individual needs within group gatherings under "Tips for the Facilitator."

These practices are not intended to treat any condition or to be a substitute for mental health care. For those who need further support, many counselors and therapists are now including climate psychology in their practices.

TIPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

The practices and activities in this booklet can be used to generate group sharing and discussion. Coming together to share our eco-anxiety, grief and related experiences has the potential to be empowering, but it is important to create conditions that support this aim. Just as we prepare rich soil before planting in order to have thriving harvest, it is essential to create healthy ground from which to do group work. We have included guidelines for robust group dynamics that support both personal and collective growth, which can be adapted for support groups, organizations, and teams.

The first step is to create a *safe environment* where everyone's views are respected. Diversity of perspectives, expressed with emotional vulnerability and authenticity is essential, and everyone needs to trust the emotional safety of the gathering for this to occur. It can be challenging to hear perspectives and experiences that are different from one's own views and beliefs.

We recommend sharing the following guidelines at the start of any gathering that is using the practices in this toolbox.

Principles for Healthy Group Dynamics

- *Invite feelings:* Even if it's an action-oriented, problem-solving session, invite emotions to be expressed.
- *Confidentiality:* Group experiences can be meaningful, and there may be a natural urge to talk about these experiences outside the group. We recommend agreeing that what is shared in the group stays in the group, unless permission is given otherwise. This will help maintain a safe environment for all to feel welcome to participate freely.
- *Use "I statements":* Speak for yourself and from your own experience, rather than giving advice or trying to fix another. Being witnessed and received is one of the foundations for healthy growth with eco-anxiety and eco-grief.
- *Share the air:* Be sure that everyone who wishes to share has an opportunity to do so. This can be supported by a skilled facilitator, or the use of a timer or a "speaking object." It's important not to have cross-talk (side conversations

while someone is speaking), or interrupt the person speaking unless it is a facilitator helping to manage the time or remind members about group guidelines. Participating in the individual or group aspect of the exercise is optional, but encouraged. Reminders to silence phones may be helpful.

- *Practice self-care*: This may mean briefly stepping out of the group if feeling overwhelmed or triggered. It's optimal to have a facilitator or other group member assigned to accompany anyone who may appreciate individual support.
- When deeper climate grief or anxiety is explored, we recommend beginning and/or ending with a self-care or resiliency exercise.

GUIDE TO THE PRACTICES

#	Practice Title	Page(s)	Purpose(s)	Time needed	Age Range
1	Climate Town Square	7-8	Ice breaker, group cohesion	5-10 min.	Children, Youth, Adult
2	Name Drawings	9	Ice breaker	5-10 min.	Children, Youth, Adult
3	Being a Transformational Climate Leader	10-11	Self-inquiry, mindfulness, taking action	15 min. (plus discussion)	Youth, Adult
4	Rapid Feelings Check-in	11	Self-inquiry, emotional expression	5 min.	Youth, Adult
5	Climate Conversation	12	Self-inquiry, self-care	5-15 min.	Youth, Adult
6	Open-Ended Inquiry on Climate	13-14	Self-inquiry; group cohesion	15 min.	Youth, Adult
7	Repeating Climate Questions	15-16	Self-inquiry	10 min.	Youth, Adult
8	Dog Remedy	17	Humor & play; resiliency	5 min.	Children, Youth, Adult
9	The Tree is Me	18-19	Resiliency; connection with nature; group cohesion	5-10 min.	Children, Youth, Adult
10	Coming Home: A Centering Practice	19-20	Self-care; resiliency	15 min.	Youth, Adult
11	Self-care Brainstorm	20	Self-care, group cohesion	10-15 min.	Youth, Adult

THE PRACTICES

Ice Breaker Practices

PRACTICE 1. Climate Town Square

Purpose/Intention: Ice breaker; group cohesion	Length: 5-10 minutes
Materials needed: A bell, tone, or clap to cue participants to pair up with a partner	Age range: Children, youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: Open space, clear of chairs. Because this exercise involves walking in tight quarters, it is important to make accommodations for anyone with mobility issues.	
Credits: Adapted from the “Milling” exercises in <i>Coming Back to Life: The Guide to the Work that Reconnects</i> (2014), New Society Publishers, by Joanna Macy & Molly Brown (https://workthatreconnects.org/).	

Instructions:

1. The group starts by standing in a circle around an empty area. The facilitator asks the group to “mingle,” walking around the shared space, as in a town square. Participants can look at others in the group to avoid collision, but should not interact with anyone verbally, until the facilitator makes a signal (e.g., ringing a bell, clapping, etc.).
2. At the sound of the bell, each person pairs up with someone nearby, at random. The two face each other, and the facilitator announces a *Challenge*. This Challenge can be a simple ice breaker, such as “Introduce yourself,” or something more personal (e.g., “Name something about the world that makes you angry”). Challenges should allow for short, simple answers, so that they can be answered before each person moves on. Examples to try:
 - *Introduce yourself, and say why you are here*
 - *Express something about yourself, using just body language (no words)*
 - *Make a movement or gesture that expresses how you feel right now*
 - *Talk about a favorite memory of being in nature*
 - *Talk about one thing you care about*
 - *Talk about one thing that frightens you*
 - *Talk about something that makes you feel hopeful*

When working with kids, the challenges can be adapted to be more fun and age-appropriate. For example:

- *Introduce yourself as your favourite animal*
 - *Have a conversation only using animal sounds*
 - *What would you tell a group of friendly aliens about the world we live in?*
 - *What do you do when you are worried (or scared, angry, hopeful)?*
 - *Express how you feel just with your body, without using words*
3. Each person in the pair takes a turn sharing their answer to the challenge.
 4. When the facilitator signals with the bell again, the pair says, “Goodbye,” and the group continues to mingle. They then repeat steps 1-4 when the bell is rung again, finding a new partner each time.

The facilitator should ring the bell after the group has moved around for about 30 seconds, and can let people talk for 20 seconds (for quick answers) or 2 minutes (for longer ones). The group can continue with the same challenge until everyone has worked together, or, for a faster-paced practice, a new challenge can be announced each time the bell is rung.

PRACTICE 2. Name Drawings

Purpose/Intention: Ice breaker	Length: 5-10 minutes
Materials needed: Drawing surface and drawing implement	Age range: Children, youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: None	
Credits: <i>Focusing Oriented Art Therapy: Accessing the Body's Wisdom and Creative Intelligence.</i> Author: Laury Rappoport. 2009. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London.	

Instructions: *Facilitator reads* - slowly, with a pause after each question.

Take a few deep cleansing breaths.

Greet and accept whatever it is that you notice in this moment.

Take a few moments to say your name to yourself.

Hear your name on the inside. Ask inside, "What would I like to tell the group about myself?" Am I creative, silly, thoughtful, etc.

Ask, "What do I enjoy?"

Ask, "Who or what is important to me?"

Allow yourself a few moments for the answers to arise within.

When ready, ask yourself, "What is the feel of all that I am, and what I'd like the group to know about me?"

See if there is an image. Maybe the name feels big or small, a color or thickness. Are there any images, symbols or shapes that go with your name?

Sense that image, in the body. If it's not right, let it go and invite a new image come.

When the right image has arrived, gently open your eyes and bring your attention into the room.

As you are ready, create the image on the page in front of you.

Facilitator may choose to have group members share in trios or with a larger group (depending on size).

Self-Inquiry & Emotional Expression Practices

PRACTICE 3. Being a Transformational Climate Leader

Purpose/Intention: Self-inquiry; mindfulness; taking action	Length: 15 minutes, plus discussion time
Materials needed: Paper and pen for each participant	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: It could be helpful to the facilitator to write the questions onto a white board or large paper, but not essential.	
Credits: Adapted from <i>Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change</i> (2017), Jessica Kingsley Publishers, by Leslie Davenport.	

Instructions:

1. **Facilitator Reads** (give participants a few minutes to write responses):
Buckminster Fuller asked, “If the success or failure of this planet and of human beings depended on how I am and what I do, how would I be? What would I do?” One of the qualities of being a transformational leader is: “You stand for a sustainable, just and fulfilling future.” Can you imagine three specific ways this principle could operate in your personal or professional life, now or in the near future? Take a moment to write about it now.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
1. **Facilitator Reads:** *Take a moment to reflect on the following questions. Feel welcome to close your eyes or lower your gaze as we spend time here.*
 - *What symbol or image can you use as a touchstone to reconnect you to this vision?*
 - *What supports you in moving toward that vision?*
 - *What gets in the way?*
 - *Is there a step you are willing to commit to right now that would begin or enhance your participation?*

- When participants have finished writing their answers, a group member reads this aloud slowly: *Close your eyes for a moment and begin to breathe into your heart. Imagine bringing that commitment into the center of your heart, and surround it and infuse it with your life force, a sense of “Yes!” and wellbeing. If it feels right, you can place a hand over your heart for a few breaths. Take about a minute in silence to be with your experience, and when you are ready, open your eyes.*

PRACTICE 4. Rapid Feelings Check-in

Purpose/Intention: Self-inquiry; emotional expression; self-care	Length: 5 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: None	

Instructions: This practice involves a brief check-in about emotions related to climate and the environment. The facilitator explains the practice and keeps track of time. If needed (e.g., when working with a new group, or if the group is not accustomed to discussing emotions), the facilitator provides some prompts, such as listing possible emotions (anger, grief, hopelessness, hopefulness, fear, sadness). The facilitator should remind participants to pay attention to how their feelings manifest in their bodies.

Steps:

- Participants get into pairs, and each person takes turns speaking for 1 minute each, answering the following question: *“How have you been feeling lately about the climate, activism, the environment, and the future?”* (2 minutes total)
- When the facilitator signals again, Each person turns to a *new* person nearby, and they take turns speaking for 1 minute, answering a new question: *“What have you done for self-care in the last week?”* (2 more minutes total)

PRACTICE 5. Climate Conversation

Purpose/Intention: Self-Inquiry, self-care	Length: 5-15 minutes
Materials needed: Drawing surface and writing implement	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: Remind participants, that this exercise is about using art materials for expression. Encourage them to put aside any judgments about their art ability and simply be in the process.	

Instructions:

1. Find a partner and place the drawing surface on the floor or surface in front of you.
2. **Facilitator reads:** *You are going to start a climate conversation with your partner. This will be like any other conversation, except that you will use line, shape, and color instead of words (laughter is welcome!). You might focus on how you are feeling about climate change, ways you are taking action, how you are coping with or receiving care and support as you address climate change in your life, or what you want your partner to know about climate change. One person will begin, and the other will respond. Continue to go back and forth as the time allows. Do not feel like you need to understand what your partner is communicating, just follow the process and what emerges in the moment.*
3. Ask the pairs to decide who will make the first mark on the page (i.e., start the conversation).
4. Once the process is finished, take a few minutes to share and listen to what each person intended to bring to the conversation, and what they imagined the other person was trying to say.
5. Consider closing with a calming breath exercise.

PRACTICE 6. Open-ended Inquiry Into Your Feelings about Climate Change

Purpose/Intention: Self-inquiry; expression of emotions; group cohesion	Length: 15 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: None.	
Credits: Some inquiry questions adapted from the “Open Sentences” exercises in <i>Coming Back to Life: The Guide to the Work that Reconnects</i> (2014), New Society Publishers, by Joanna Macy & Molly Brown (https://workthatreconnects.org/).	

Instructions:

1. Following an introduction by the facilitator, the group divides into pairs, facing each other. (It’s good to work with people you know well, as well as new people.)
2. Each partner takes a turn speaking for 5 minutes about a subject related to coping with the emotions of climate change. (This can be open-ended or following prompts listed below.) During these five minutes, the second partner sits silently, listening attentively and neutrally. Once the first person has finished their 5 minute inquiry, the roles reverse and the second partner speaks for 5 minutes.
3. For the final 5 minutes, the partners have a discussion about their experiences of listening and sharing. They can talk about how the experience of sharing felt, notice whether they felt hesitant or excited, and how it felt to hear about another person’s feelings.

Suggestions for the person talking: For this exercise, it is important to take these five minutes to focus on yourself - your worries, your hopes, your anger, your excitement, your grief. Allow your feelings to be expressed to the extent you feel comfortable and safe, and resist the temptation to talk about about the details of what is going on in the world, except as they impact you emotionally. Take this time to be as open as you feel comfortable being, avoiding self-judgement or concern about what the other person is thinking. You may find that the 5 minutes fly by; or, you may have trouble coming up with anything to say. Regardless, stay with where you are, breathe, feel into your arms and legs, and allow the truth of your experience to come out.

Suggestions for the listener: When listening, it is important to remain neutral and not provide verbal or physical feedback during the partner's inquiry. This allows the other person to be fully present with what they are feeling and experiencing, and not have to worry about your reactions. Save any response or feedback for the final 5 minutes of conversation.

Suggestions for the discussion: Sometimes sensitive, intense, or painful thoughts or feelings come up in an inquiry. In the final 5 minute discussion, focus on sharing your own experience of the exercise - how did it impact you to speak, and to listen? Avoid trying to make the other person feel better, reassuring them, or questioning the validity of what they expressed.

Timing: We recommend the facilitator manage time-keeping for the entire group, telling everyone when to start, and when to switch roles.

Possible inquiry topics: The facilitator or group can come up with their own relevant inquiry topics, but here is a list of some prompts:

1. *When you think about climate change right now, what do you feel?*
2. *What kinds of feelings have you been having lately about climate change?*
3. *What do you love and appreciate about the Earth?*
4. *What do you love and appreciate about being alive on Earth?*
5. *What climate-related feelings do you carry around with you during the week?*
6. *What feelings come up, when you think about the future?*
7. *How do you experience grief as it relates to climate change?*
8. *What do you find hard about working on climate issues?*
9. *How do your feelings about climate affect your body?*
10. *What do you need to help you take care of yourself in the face of challenging feelings?*

PRACTICE 7. Repeating Climate-Questions

Purpose/Intention: Self-inquiry	Length: 10 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: None	

Instructions: This exercise is done in pairs. (If there is an odd number of participants, one group forms a triad.)

1. Partners sit facing each other. Each pair chooses one person to be the Questioner, and one to be the Answerer.
2. For 5-7 minutes, the Questioner repeatedly asks *one* question, assigned by the facilitator (see examples below), and the Answerer answers after each question.
3. Each time the Answerer answers, Questioner says “Thank You”, and *asks the same question again* (not a new question).
4. This pattern is repeated, with the Answerer coming up with new responses to the same repeated question, until the time is up.
5. At this point, the roles switch - the Answerer becomes the Questioner, and starts asking the same question.

Questions can be developed by the facilitator or group, but here are some examples:

Grief and Loss Questions:

- What makes you angry [or frustrated, or enraged] about the world?
- What makes you scared about the future?
- How do you experience grief for the Earth?
- What is something that you are afraid of losing?
- What’s hard about talking about climate grief?
- What is one way you can be hard on yourself?
- How do you feel about your relationship with nature?

Healing and Coping Questions:

- What do you love about the world?
- What gives you hope for the future?
- What is one way you cope well with your feelings about climate?
- What is something you would like to let go of?
- What are some supports in your life?

- What is a way that you take care of yourself?
- How do you connect with nature?

The purpose of answering the same question multiple times is to dig deeper into a topic, and to uncover deeper feelings. Answerers should answer off the top of their heads and allow for unexpected, strange, or “wrong” answers. Answers should be brief - one word, or a short sentence can suffice - so that the question can be asked several times. An answerer can always say, “pass”, “I don’t know”, if they wish. When this happens, the questioner says, “Thank you,” and asks again. The questioner should remain neutral while in that role, without providing feedback or commentary.

Alternate methods:

1. If time permits, choose two related questions, one from the “Grief and Loss” list, above, and one from the “Healing and Coping” list. For example, in the first 5 minute-round, the questioner asks, “What makes you scared about the future?” Then, for an additional 5 minutes, they ask, “What gives you hope for the future?” This allows the exercise to touch on painful emotions, but also allows for experiencing hope and movement forward.
2. Another way to do this practice is to have the Questioner go through an entire list of questions (such as the ones above), rather than repeating the same question. This allows for covering more topics, but with less depth.

Humor & Play Practices

PRACTICE 8. Dog Remedy

Purpose/Intention: Humor & play; resiliency	Length: 5 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Child, youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: While this is a gentle movement practice, remind participants to move safely, respecting their own body limitations.	
Credits: Adapted from <i>Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change</i> (2017), Jessica Kingsley Publishers, by Leslie Davenport.	

Instructions:

1. **Facilitator reads:** *Research shows that physical shaking is one of the fastest and most effective ways to relieve stress and anxiety. Can you recall the way a wet dog dries off with a progressive shimmy-shake that starts with the head and travels to the tail, water drops spraying in a dynamic water halo? We can use this image to “shake off” some of our own stress. There is no “right way” to do the movement: The important part is just the shaking itself.*
2. The facilitator demonstrates the movement exercise as they describe it: *Stand with your feet shoulder distance apart to create a solid base. Begin gently shaking just your head – side to side, up and down. Take about 20 seconds with each area of the body. Now let your head rest, but keep the shaking going in your shoulders. After about 20 seconds, let the shaking travel into your arms and hands, as if you were flicking water off your fingers. Let the shaking move to your torso and hips, with as much mobility as possible through the ribcage and pelvis. The final segment is to let the shaking travel down each leg one at a time, alternating lifting each foot off the floor and flicking “water” from the toes. If balance is a concern, a chair back can be used for stability when on one foot, or both feet can remain on the floor, with alternating heel taps.*
3. Repeat the “dog remedy” progression about 6 times, increasing the speed that the shaking progresses through the body until the final one is one quick, shimmering flow.

Resiliency Practices

PRACTICE 9. The Tree Is Me

Purpose/Intention: Resiliency; connection with nature; group cohesion	Length: 5-10 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Children, youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: This exercise involves a brief individual guided meditation, followed by a brief sharing with a group of 4-5 participants.	

Instructions:

1. Find a comfortable place to stand and feel your feet connected to the earth. If sitting is best suited for you, please find a comfortable seat.
2. Gently close your eyes or lower your gaze and notice your breath, just as it is in this moment.
3. Begin to imagine yourself as a majestic and beloved tree.
4. Breathe in the air around you. Let out a long cleansing exhale.
5. With your feet rooted to the ground, imagine a deep root structure stretching into the earth beneath you. Feel nourished by the soil.
6. Start to notice and embody the qualities of your tree:
 - What is your stature? tall and dense? short and willowy? one trunk or many?
 - Notice the sensation of your canopy: leaves or needles? How does the air move with and through you? Are you soft, prickly, large/small?
 - What is the texture and pattern of your trunk and branches?
 - Are your roots close to the surface or do they reach deep? Do you share roots with other trees?
 - Do you interact with other beings around you?
7. If you like, imagine stretching toward the sun or reaching your branches wide across a meadow or lake. Allow your body to follow in this movement.
8. Take a moment to pause as you notice sensations. Bring to mind what most delights you as you embody your beloved tree.
9. Now, start to bring yourself back into awareness of the room and space around you. As you are ready, gently open your eyes and take a deep cleansing breath.

With ease, come into groups of 4-5 and share your response to the question, “What most delighted you as you embodied your beloved tree?”

Optional: Offer space for a few to share their responses with the larger group.

When doing this practice with children, consider shortening the mindfulness aspects of the exercise, and increasing focus on play and imagination.

Self-Care Practices

Practice 10. Coming Home to Yourself: A Centering Practice

Purpose/Intention: Self-care; resiliency	Length: 10 minutes
Materials needed: None	Age range: Youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: Quiet environment free of distractions	
Credits: Adapted from <i>Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change</i> (2017), Jessica Kingsley Publishers, by Leslie Davenport.	

Instructions: The facilitator should read this slowly, with a pause of about a minute after each paragraph.

Close your eyes, or let them have a soft focus, and take three clearing breaths.

As you breathe in, infuse your body, heart, and mind with fresh oxygen, feeling and imagining it traveling from head to toe. When you exhale, release the focus on thoughts and invite your body to relax. Let your mind follow the movement of the inhalation and exhalation in your body, inviting each clearing breath to be slow, full, and long.

Let your breathe settle into its own rhythm now. Now call into your awareness, one by one, the significant interactions of the day – clients, friends, and strangers. As each one appears, take a moment to honor the interaction and person, and then with a breath of kindness, release them from your focus, sending their energy back to themselves.

When they are all released, turn your awareness toward the direct experience of your own vitality and sense of wellbeing. Sense those qualities in your body. You may recognize your vitality as an image, a color or light, or a physical sensation. However you experience it, take the next few minutes to practice nourishing breaths.

When you breathe in, feel and imagine the oxygen from your breath strengthening your vitality. If you imagine it as a light, it may gradually shine brighter. If it is a color, it may shift and change. Simply breathe in, receiving nourishment; breathe out, simply rest. While

the images may or may not change, the practice is simply to breathe in, receiving nourishment; breathe out, simply rest.

After five minutes, notice any changes, however subtle, in your body, mind, and emotions. Feel yourself present and grounded in your body, and when you are ready, open your eyes. Take the next few minutes to move a little more slowly than you usually do, (as you continue into your day or evening... or... as you open your eyes and bring your focus back to the group.)

PRACTICE 11. Self-Care Brainstorm

Purpose/Intention: Self-care; group cohesion	Length: 15 minutes
Materials needed: Whiteboard and markers; paper and pens	Age range: Children, youth, adult
Other requirements/caveats: None	

Instructions: This practice supports discussion of specific challenges participants face in terms of self-care, and allows them to brainstorm ideas together. The facilitator frames the discussion by defining different categories of self-care, such as:

1. Supporting physical well-being
2. Supporting healthy nutrition
3. Supporting healthy self-image and defending against negative inner judgement
4. Allowing for pleasure and enjoyment (e.g., relational, sexual, sensory, intellectual, creative)
5. Supporting healthy sleep and rest
6. Asking for help
7. Being assertive and saying “No”

Participants are invited to brainstorm individually for a few minutes, on paper, ways in which they struggle with self-care. Participants then identify one category (from the seven listed above) where they could use support, e.g., around self-judgement; poor sleep or rest; or difficulties with assertiveness.

The facilitator helps the group divide into sub-groups of 3-4 people who share similar concerns. For about 10 minutes, participants in each subgroup share specific examples of how they struggle with self-care, and brainstorm ways of addressing these challenges.

If there is time, each sub-group shares some of the strategies they discussed with the larger group.

REFERENCES & CREDITS

- “Name Drawings” was adapted from *Focusing Oriented Art Therapy: Accessing the Body's Wisdom and Creative Intelligence*. Author: Laury Rappoport. 2009. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London.
- “Being a Transformation Climate Leader,” “Coming Home to Yourself: A Centering Practice,” and “Dog Remedy” are adapted from *Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change* (2017), Jessica Kingsley Publishers, by Leslie Davenport.
- Some parts of “Open Ended Inquiry” and “Town Square” were adapted from the “Open Sentences” and “Milling” exercises in *Coming Back to Life: The Guide to the Work that Reconnects* (2014), New Society Publishers, by Joanna Macy & Molly Brown (see <https://workthatreconnects.org/>).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Free relaxation MP3s can be found here: <https://lesliedavenport.com/audio/>
- Joanna Macy: Active Hope and the Work that Reconnects:
 - <https://www.joannamacy.net/main#work>
 - <https://workthatreconnects.org/>
- Climate & Mind: <https://www.climateandmind.org>
- The Good Grief Network: <https://www.goodgriefnetwork.org/about/>

CONTACT & CITATION

We are actively expanding this list of practices. If you have ideas for what could be included in this toolkit, please contact us at:

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If you would like to reference this toolkit, please use the following citation:

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