



# YOUTH WELLBEING

## CLIMATE & HEALTH

### RESPONDING TO YOUTH EMOTIONAL DISTRESS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Climate change is leading to feelings of depression, anxiety, and hopelessness about the future in our youngest generations. This guide includes age-specific activities and ways to talk to youth about climate change and inspire action. The activities can promote hope and resiliency in youth by connecting them to nature and family.

#### AGE 0-6

##### TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

- Foster environmental interest with nature-based activities
- Introduce to gardening
- Start with small positive environmental actions
- Minimize catastrophic language about the future to support healthy attachment to adults

##### CONNECTING TO NATURE & OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- Pick apples and sow seeds to introduce to the world of plants
- Build pinecone and peanut butter birdfeeders to take advantage of common natural elements
- Teach small environmentally friendly activities (i.e., turning off lights and recycling)

#### AGE 6-12

##### TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

- Introduce basic science concepts
- Promote optimism and participation in community organizations
- Teach the importance of individual action

##### CONNECTING TO NATURE & OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- Nature hunting in your backyard or neighborhood encourages conversations on local plants and Minnesota ecosystems; discuss what they are learning through their senses
- Assign recycling, composting or age-appropriate lawn-care activities
- Bring to volunteer clean-up events (when appropriate)
- Create nature meditation spaces to promote slowing down and being reflective

**CLIMATE CHANGE IN MINNESOTA:** The rise in greenhouse gases is leading to increasing temperatures and changes in precipitation. These changes are causing changes in air quality, weather patterns, water quality and quantity, and ecosystems.



## AGE 12-14

### TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

- Encourage environmental inquiry
- Support personal interests in the environment
- Ask about what they learn about the environment from school and the media

### CONNECTING TO NATURE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- Watch nature-based TV programming, like Animal Planet or Discovery Channel, or read books about nature
- Get involved with school-based environmental programs and groups
- Offer opportunities to engage with nature, like walking at a nearby park, hiking, camping, paddle boating, or other outdoor activities



## AGE 14-18

### TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

- Be open to learning from your teen
- Share what you read and learn with them
- Support development of coping mechanisms
- Facilitate community activism
- Inspire hope

### CONNECTING TO NATURE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- Encourage joining an environmental group of interest
- Support weekly environmental check-ins to discuss news and to promote the sharing of ideas; communication can be learned as a way to manage stress
- Openly discuss your own feelings about climate change to model how to talk about emotions
- Use plant identification phone apps (e.g., PictureThis) to connect nature and technological interests



## ROLE OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Youth are increasingly reporting climate anxiety, and interventions are needed to foster resiliency. Parents and caregivers uniquely impact how children think about climate change and can influence feelings of powerlessness in the face of the climate crisis.

## REFERENCES / RESOURCES

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