

# A climate of change

Wellbeing resources for  
students and educators

Educators' guide



***A climate of change: wellbeing resources for students and educators***

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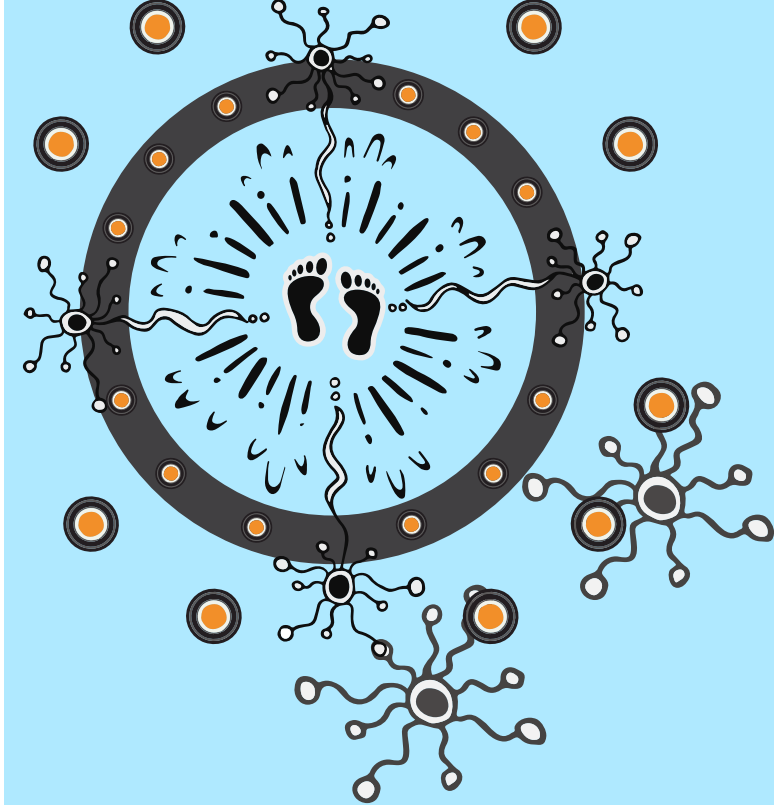
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## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the People and Community symbol.

# A climate of change

Wellbeing resources  
for students and  
educators

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# Part 1: The resources

## Overview of *A climate of change*

*A climate of change* is a package of resources designed to promote wellbeing among young people as our societies transform in response to the intersecting crises of climate change.

It is intended to support young people aged 15–17 (typically in high school), along with their teachers, educators, wellbeing professionals, and other supportive adults.

These climate wellbeing resources are organised into a program of 6 lessons, each lasting 90 minutes if all activities are included.

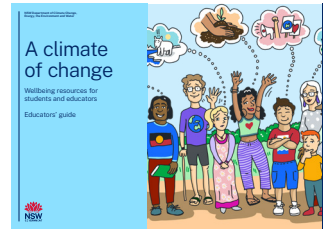
While the program has been designed to be delivered in its entirety, schools and educators are encouraged to adapt it to suit their context, provided the content from Lesson 1 is taught first.

Some teachers choose to stretch lessons across several weeks. Others have successfully delivered the full program as an intensive two-day incursion, combining classroom sessions with creative and outdoor wellbeing activities.

A sample incursion timeline is included on the [AdaptNSW website](#).

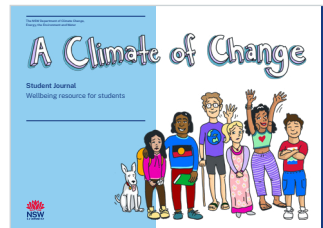
## What is included:

### Educators' guide



An educators' guide, with accompanying [Educators' video](#), provides guidance and top tips for the successful delivery of each lesson and the program as a whole.

### Student journal

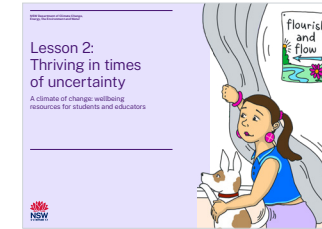


Printable in black and white, with a separate work booklet for each lesson, engages students in exploring their own thoughts, feelings and creative expression in relation to climate change.

### 6 lesson plans



**Lesson 1** – Stay Awake. Connect. Act.



**Lesson 2** – Thriving in times of uncertainty



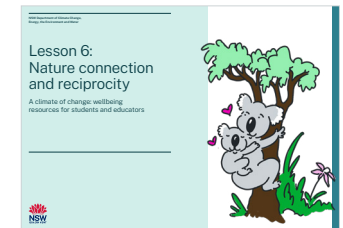
**Lesson 3** – Empowering feelings



**Lesson 4** – Visioning and inspiration



**Lesson 5** – Climate action



**Lesson 6** – Nature connection and reciprocity

### Lessons, and their lesson plans, include:



Short video with youth voice (average 6 minutes)



Activities, including detailed instructions for set up and scripts for guiding these activities



Teaching points



Illustration/poster containing key teaching points



First Nations contemplations.

### Aims and learning goals

The fundamental goal of *A climate of change* is to prioritise and enhance student and educator wellbeing in the context of the climate crisis.

Each lesson is designed with success criteria that focus on emotional, social and mental wellbeing rather than adding to knowledge about the science and impacts of climate change.

This program complements the existing climate change curriculum by addressing the often-overlooked emotional and psychological aspects of this topic.

First Nations perspectives and pedagogy are woven through all aspects of the program.

See [Part 3](#) for the foundations of these climate wellbeing resources.

### What this guide does not cover

*A climate of change* is designed to support wellbeing in the context of climate change, but it is not:

- an educational program about the science of climate change
- psychological treatment for clinical-level mental health disorders.

### How to use these resources

This package of engaging and in-depth, multifaceted resources can be used in several ways including:

- as stand-alone activities to be inserted into other lessons, excursions or environmental education
- as 6 separate 90-minute lessons (recommended)
- combined as a 2-day incursion.

The accompanying educators' video contains '3 top tips' for each lesson. (Each lesson plan refers to time stamps so you can identify that lesson in the video.)

Prepare for the lessons by reading through them beforehand, thinking about the best venue for the lesson, and printing any props that you may need.

This educators' guide provides in-depth background reading for understanding the whole program, and the lesson plans provide step-by-step guides.

For the most successful delivery of the program, to develop rapport with your students throughout the journey, and to achieve the greatest wellbeing outcomes for both students and educators, consider the following suggestions:

- Engage with authenticity and genuine presence.
- Listen with empathy and respect students' diversity of feelings, experiences and perspectives around climate change.
- Gather the resources, knowledge and wisdom that your students already have. This helps build confidence, self-efficacy and agency.
- Encourage group connection, empathy, respect and deep listening by the whole group, so that collaboration is possible.
- Draw upon any experience you have personally with somatic relaxation and recharge activities (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, yoga, nature connection).
- Aim for a general tone of engaged optimism, active hope, and staying open to positive possibility.
- Become aware of, and potentially engage with, local environmental, social justice and climate action projects. Share these with your students.

### Key considerations for delivery

*A climate of change* has been designed to be delivered by 2 educators, ideally one trained in wellbeing support. It has, however, been delivered successfully by single teachers.

It is your school's responsibility to meet the NSW Department of Education's standards for appropriate mental health care, providing an adequate 'safety net' for students participating in *A climate of change*. This means following your school's normal processes for assessment, liaising with students and their families, creation of 'safety plans' and receiving support from external providers.

See [Part 4](#) for more details.

### Where to find additional support

Facilitating climate wellbeing lessons can be both rewarding and emotionally challenging. It is essential to prioritise your own emotional wellbeing so you can guide students effectively and with compassion.

See [Part 5](#) for more details.

## Part 2: Creative reframes and positive action

### The importance of creative reframes

Framing shapes how we perceive and respond to challenges like climate change. It helps people find meaning, cope with adversity, maintain a sense of purpose, and focus on constructive actions rather than feeling overwhelmed.<sup>1</sup>

This program has been framed with empowering perspectives, to help students shift from feeling overwhelmed or numb, to feeling inspired. Reframing climate change to ‘*a climate of change*’ does not bypass the intersecting crises but includes the opportunities for growth, innovation and connection.

### A climate of change

We are living in a time of profound transformation – a ‘climate of change’ – that affects every aspect of our lives. This concept highlights the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, social and personal shifts, offering a lens through which students can explore the broader implications of climate change. Emphasising this context helps students understand that change is inevitable, but it can also be a catalyst for meaningful action and renewal. By embracing a ‘climate of change’, we empower young people to see themselves as active participants in shaping a regenerative and just future.

### Stay Awake. Connect. Act.

This is the guiding framework<sup>2</sup> of the climate wellbeing resources, drawn from The Joyality Project,<sup>3</sup> and is the foundational approach for engaging with climate change in a balanced and regenerative way.

These 3 streams interweaving throughout the program encourage students and educators to:

- stay awake to challenges and opportunities inherent in this moment
- connect with each other, the natural world and themselves
- take positive action in response to climate change and its associated social, environmental and economic challenges, guided by their core values.

### We are the ReGeneration

Each lesson features an illustration that captures its core concepts, accompanied by an alternative heading or tagline incorporating the prefix ‘re’. This reflects our current era – one in which we face the impacts of ecological damage, climate change and social injustice. We have the opportunity to reduce harm and to repair and regenerate the damage we have collectively caused. Moreover, we can deconstruct and reconstruct the worldviews, lifeways, and cultural and structural systems that have contributed to climate change and its interconnected effects.

We are, indeed, the ‘ReGeneration’.

Youth advisors have chosen the following taglines or themes for the series of lessons: *ReCharge*, *Feel Real*, *ReVision*, *ReGenerate* and *ReConnect*.





## Part 2: Creative reframes and positive action

### The role of positive action

Positive action plays a significant role in climate wellbeing, but the connection is nuanced. Research suggests that engaging in action can enhance a sense of agency and purpose, which contributes to wellbeing.<sup>7</sup> However, this relationship depends on whether the actions align with personal values and whether they feel meaningful. Actions that resonate deeply with an individual's beliefs are more likely to lead to sustained motivation and personal fulfilment.

Additionally, self-care must be integrated into any form of climate action to prevent burnout and to embody the care we have for others and the planet. Collective action, especially within supportive communities, strengthens a sense of belonging and shared purpose, which can magnify the positive impacts on wellbeing. Similarly, taking action for and with natural environments fosters a reciprocal relationship with the Earth, offering both physical and emotional benefits while contributing to ecological health.

### Broadening understanding of climate action

When facilitating *A climate of change* lessons, it is important to expand students' understanding of what constitutes meaningful climate action.

Climate action is not limited to high-profile activism or systemic change; it includes a wide range of personal, local and creative actions. It includes actions for adapting to climate change (social and psychological resilience, preparation and recovery from climate-related events) and as well as reducing its severity (mitigation). Planting a garden, sharing knowledge, engaging in storytelling, or fostering community connections are also valid forms of action that contribute to collective resilience.

Focusing on collective actions rather than individual efforts fosters a sense of connection, shared purpose and mutual support, which are essential for wellbeing in the face of climate challenges. Working together reduces feelings of isolation and overwhelm, while amplifying impact and creating a sense of agency.

### Group diversity and levels of engagement

Classrooms are likely to reflect a diversity of willingness, capacity and readiness to engage in climate action. Recognising and respecting these differences is important. The *Climate action game* (Lesson 5) demonstrates the different levels of action – from personal action and communication to community solutions and advocacy. Encourage students to engage at a pace and level that is right for them.

### Permission not to engage in action and/or to take a break

Within your group of students, we hope that there are some who are actively and passionately engaged in climate action. They are more likely to be (but not necessarily) confident, privileged, accomplished and female.<sup>8</sup> These young people need to be acknowledged and celebrated for the valuable work they do.

It is also important to help these students identify if they are starting to experience exhaustion or burnout from their positive action. Sometimes, as a supportive adult, it may be appropriate to encourage them – or even explicitly grant them permission – to step back from participating in action, even temporarily, if they feel the need.

Climate issues can be overwhelming, and students should know that taking time to reflect, process emotions or rest is a valid and healthy choice. This approach reinforces that self-care is a critical part of being an engaged citizen and allows individuals to recharge before re-engaging. Educators could model this by sharing examples of times when they've taken breaks themselves.

### Regenerative activism (decolonising activism)

Regenerative activism is a practice of taking action in ways that restore, rather than deplete, individuals and communities. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of social, ecological and personal wellbeing, focusing on healing and justice, are central goals. A key component of regenerative activism is decolonising activism,<sup>9</sup> which challenges any extractive, hierarchical practices of traditional activism such as white patriarchal leadership, individualism and over-work. Instead, it centres Indigenous wisdom, collective leadership and care, and reciprocity with the Earth.

By incorporating principles of regeneration and decolonisation, students can learn to approach climate action in ways that are sustainable, inclusive and deeply respectful of cultural and ecological diversity.

## Part 3: Foundations

### Expertise

*A climate of change* has been developed by a team of expert practitioners with decades of experience working alongside and empowering adolescents and young adults who are feeling eco-anxiety and climate distress.

The activities and concepts that form the basis of *A climate of change* are primarily sourced from the resources, workshops and programs designed, implemented and evaluated by The Joyality Project since 2015.<sup>10</sup> This non-profit project was co-founded by ecopsychologist Dr Eshana Bragg and young activist Rachel McKenzie Taylor to support young people aged 16-25 navigating the complexities of environmental degradation, climate change and social injustice. It now supports people of all ages.

These resources were co-designed by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and Joyality Collective practitioners, with input from youth, educators and First Nations advisors, who provided content and feedback on the program.

### Evidence-based activities

Activities throughout the lesson plans combine the following practices that research has shown promote positive mental health, emotional wellbeing, resilience and creativity.

#### Nature connection

Research consistently shows that connecting with nature reduces stress and enhances emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. Environmental education centres support schools by facilitating nature connection across NSW.<sup>11</sup> This resource package integrates nature-based activities to ground and support students, fostering a deeper reciprocal relationship with the environment. Activities range from relaxation and imaginative practices, exploring how participants spend time in nature, guided walking in a natural place, to deep listening with and learning from Country.

*‘In the city, I can feel distant from a connection with nature and the impacts of climate change.’*

---

Saoirse Chu  
Youth advisor



#### Creative arts (therapy)

There is ample evidence that creative expression has therapeutic benefits, as it can help process emotions and support psychological healing. All lessons, and the student journal, encourage arts-based activities like doodling, drawing, colouring, poetry and journaling to help students explore complex ideas and feelings and express themselves in meaningful and therapeutic ways.



### Identifying emotions

The ability to name emotions improves emotional literacy and emotional regulation. Lessons, activities and videos guide students to identify their feelings, helping them better understand and manage their experiences.

### Validating emotions

When young people's emotions are listened to and responded to with empathy and respect by adults and peers, a sense of safety and trust is cultivated. By acknowledging and respecting the diversity of students' feelings, the program promotes emotional resilience, empowerment and a supportive classroom environment.

*'It's important to have courage to talk about the things that matter to us.'*

---

**Will Macpherson**  
Youth advisor

*'Having these feelings is normal because the change is new for everyone.'*

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**Will Macpherson**  
Youth advisor

### Somatic or embodied practices

Somatic or embodied practices engage the body to support emotional regulation, resilience and wellbeing. These practices – such as breathwork, movement, grounding exercises and sensory awareness – help process stress and emotions by working directly with the nervous system. Research in neuroscience and trauma shows that bodily experiences shape our emotional state, and activating the parasympathetic nervous system through movement and breath can reduce stress, enhance focus and foster a sense of safety.

Lessons include embodied activities to help students release stress held in their bodies and process emotions in a way that facilitates healing.

## Part 3: Foundations

### Training in emotional self-regulation

Concepts from neuroscience and trauma psychology provide useful frameworks for students to understand their emotional experiences. Emotional regulation techniques that are woven through the lessons give students repeated opportunities to practice balancing their nervous systems, ultimately finding emotional agency.

### Group processes and co-regulation

The lessons leverage group dynamics to create a sense of belonging, to welcome a diversity of experience, and to foster shared understanding. Evidence suggests that group activities promote emotional co-regulation and connection.

Emotional co-regulation is the process by which individuals support each other in managing emotions through connection and shared cues of safety. Neuroscience shows that our nervous systems are wired for co-regulation – when a trusted person models calm, steady emotions, it can help others shift from stress or overwhelm to a more balanced state. Research shows that a congruent or calm nervous system has greater signal power – in other words, it can influence others. A dysregulated nervous system tends to match a more regulated or stable one.

We invite you to practice embodying a calm, curious and compassionate demeanor to help encourage these qualities in your group through co-regulation.

*‘I think for me, it comes to feeling less isolated about these challenges. If you don’t feel supported, it can be really easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless.’*

---

Saoirse Chu  
Youth advisor

### Community building and collaborative planning

The lessons encourage teamwork, collaborative planning and provide an experience of creating shared goals. Research shows that nurturing relationships and a sense of belonging like this has many benefits for social, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. Learning how to create positive change together is also a necessary skillset for effective environmental and climate justice outcomes.



### Fostering agency

Evidence shows that cultivating a sense of agency builds confidence and hope. The lessons empower students to be able to take meaningful actions, to care for themselves and others, and feel capable of contributing to positive change.

*‘When I take positive action, it’s like an encouragement. I feel motivated and a part of something bigger.’*

---

Will Macpherson  
Youth advisor

## Part 3: Foundations

### First Nations perspectives and pedagogy

First Nations perspectives and pedagogy are important foundations for this program and are woven throughout the lessons, videos, illustrations and activities.

First Nations advisors were actively involved in the development of *A climate of change*, and all activities are designed and written so that it is appropriate for non-Indigenous educators to facilitate this work.

Each lesson contains a First Nations activity, written by Birpai/Dunghutti educator Arlene Gili Mehan.<sup>12</sup>

Aspects of this program consistent with Aboriginal pedagogy<sup>13</sup> include: using visual symbols and images; sharing personal stories; non-verbal embodied learning; deconstruct/reconstruct approaches; place-based focus; and fostering community.



*‘Thriving in uncertain times means knowing that we are part of this oneness as an antidote to eco-anxiety. Can we inspire young people to think 7 generations ahead? Re-KIN-dling our relationship with land “with” and “as” Country rather than being “on” Country. I believe Country holds us in ways we can’t even imagine.’*

---

**Arlene Gili Mehan**  
(Birpai/Dunghutti)

### Facilitating First Nations activities

If you are a non-Indigenous person, it is understandable you may feel uncertain about guiding the First Nations activities included in the lesson plans. You may wonder whether you have the necessary knowledge, skills or understanding; and whether it is culturally appropriate to teach such a session.

These activities in the lesson plans have been designed specifically for non-Indigenous educators and have been reviewed by other First Nations advisors.

Each contemplation point focuses on developing a relationship with and learning from Country, as well as from First Nations perspectives, worldviews and pedagogy. While specific cultural knowledge is not shared, we acknowledge that these perspectives may be challenging to grasp for non-Indigenous educators. However, we have been entrusted with the opportunity to engage with and share these First Nations perspectives and invite our students to do the same.

Here are a few specific tips to help us approach this invitation:

#### Positionality

Positionality refers to understanding and acknowledging your own perspective, background and biases, particularly in relation to First Nations knowledge, experiences and stories. As educators, it is vital to reflect on our cultural identity, lived experiences and the societal systems that shape our worldviews. By being aware of our own positionality, we can better facilitate discussions without centring our own voice or assuming authority over Indigenous wisdom.

Positioning ourselves as learners alongside our students fosters an environment of mutual respect and deeper understanding.

#### Permission

Seeking permission is a practice of respect and recognition of boundaries when engaging with First Nations stories, knowledge and cultural teachings. We are fortunate to be invited into contemplations from a First Nations perspective in these lessons. Educators should ensure that any additional First Nations materials shared come from appropriate and respected sources.

You can also create space for students to reflect on their own need for permission when engaging with these themes, encouraging mindfulness and deep listening over assumptions or entitlement.

#### Relationality

Relationality acknowledges that all beings, humans, non-humans and the natural world, are interconnected. This core understanding held by First Nations cultures challenges the dominant Western colonialist tendency toward individualism and anthropocentrism (human-centredness). It encourages students to see themselves as part of a larger web of relationships.

As educators, we can guide students to contemplate their roles and responsibilities within these relationships, helping them to develop a sense of reciprocity and care.

Relationality also extends to the classroom dynamic, where creating trust, collaboration and shared responsibility encourages deeper and more meaningful engagement with First Nations perspectives.



*‘Our skin is the communication pathway or the membrane of our inner ecology and emotions and the outer ecology. If we had these yarns with Country, feelings about climate change would likely be there. What is the tree saying? The tree is likely saying “I live in fear”. But we also see so much courage being expressed.’*

---

Arlene Gili Mehan  
(Birpai/Dunghutti)

## Part 3: Foundations

### Authenticity

Approaching First Nations themes with personal authenticity means showing up as yourself, without pretense or performativity.

As educators, we should be honest about our own limitations and willingness to learn alongside our students. We don't need to have all the answers; instead, model genuine curiosity, humility and respect.

Students will sense when an educator is coming from a place of authenticity, which in turn fosters a classroom environment where vulnerability, reflection and meaningful dialogue can thrive.

### Curiosity

Curiosity invites students and educators to approach First Nations knowledge with an open mind and heart. Rather than seeking immediate answers or viewing Indigenous perspectives as 'lessons' to consume, curiosity encourages a deeper inquiry into worldviews, ways of knowing, and the lived experiences of First Nations Peoples.

*'Death and dying is part of rebirth – not the end – in Indigenous knowledges.'*

---

Hāweatea Holly Bryson  
(Ngāi Tahu/Māori)



### Humility

Humility is a cornerstone of approaching First Nations themes with care. It involves recognising that Indigenous knowledge systems are rich, deep and often beyond the scope of Western ways of understanding.

As an educator, humility means being willing to listen, unlearn and relearn – acknowledging the gaps in your knowledge without defensiveness.

Humility also means understanding that learning is an ongoing process, and that it is a privilege to engage with the wisdom shared by First Nations Peoples. Encourage students to hold a similar attitude, foster a sense of gratitude and respect for the insights offered.

*'The continuity of futuring is remaining humble, keep it simple, don't go above and beyond. If you keep it humble you have a happy life. It's my responsibility to care for community and I feel so inspired by that.'*

---

Aunty Glenda MacPhail (Yaegl)

## Part 4: Wellbeing, diversity and inclusivity

### Wellbeing focus

The fundamental goal of *A climate of change* is to prioritise and enhance student and educator wellbeing in the context of the climate crisis. Each lesson is designed with success criteria that focus on emotional, social and mental wellbeing rather than adding to knowledge about the science and impacts of climate change.

This program complements the existing climate change curriculum by addressing the often-overlooked emotional and psychological aspects of this topic.

*‘I’ve felt both helplessness, but also confident and encouraged to be part of the change in the world.’*

Oceana Pearl  
Youth advisor

### Trauma-informed practice

The lesson plans are grounded in trauma-informed principles to create a safe, supportive learning environment. Recognising that students may bring existing or emerging mental health concerns, or experience climate-related trauma, the program emphasises sensitivity to these challenges. By building trust, providing emotional safety, and avoiding re-traumatisation, educators can help students explore their emotions and responses to climate change in ways that are supportive and empowering.

Re-traumatisation is mitigated by creating a predictable and supportive learning environment where students feel safe to engage at their own pace. This includes offering choice and agency in participation, using grounding and regulation techniques, and balancing discussions around climate impacts with opportunities for hope, regenerative visioning, action and emotional processing.

### Informed consent and choice

Participation is based on informed consent, ensuring that both educators and students are aware of the content, goals and processes involved. Educators are encouraged to give an overview of the activities included within each lesson to enable this choice.

The lesson plans incorporate flexibility to allow for different levels of participation, empowering students to choose how deeply they wish to engage. Educators are encouraged to provide options for activities, creating a balance between challenge and comfort as appropriate for your students.

### Integration with the wellbeing framework

The program aligns with principles of the NSW Wellbeing Framework.<sup>14</sup> It does so by addressing how young people feel and function across several ‘domains of wellbeing’: cognitive, physical, emotional, spiritual and social.

The NSW Wellbeing Framework also describes how schools can positively influence student wellbeing by providing experiences of choice, achievement of meaningful goals, positive relationships, enjoyment, personal growth and development, health and safety – all of which are embedded in the climate wellbeing resources.

*A climate of change* promotes emotional awareness, resilience, agency and connection. Through activities that validate emotions, use group processes, nurture agency and develop emotional regulation skills, students can build the tools to navigate their feelings about climate change.



### Identifying and supporting students at risk

Educators play a key role in identifying students who may need additional support, particularly those exhibiting signs of distress or climate-related trauma. Guidelines are provided to help educators recognise mental health challenges and refer students to appropriate school or community support services. The program also encourages educators to check in with students regularly, and to invite questions and comments with the educator or wellbeing person after class or via email.

### Roles of educators

#### Teachers as educators, guides, facilitators and participants

Educators play a multi-faceted role in delivering these lessons. Beyond providing information, teachers are guides who hold space for contemplation, discussion, research and emotional expression.

By participating alongside students in activities, teachers model vulnerability, curiosity and shared learning, creating a safe and supportive classroom environment. In the context of climate change, teachers do not 'have all the answers'.

Additional resources for training and support are listed at the end of each lesson plan.

#### Support person as co-facilitator (presence of 2 adults)

If possible, it is recommended that a second person, such as another teacher or wellbeing staff member, is present as a co-facilitator. This allows for more effective wellbeing support, as one person can lead the activity while the other provides individualised assistance to students as needed, particularly if strong emotional responses arise.

### Role of wellbeing staff and student support staff

The lessons have been designed within a trauma informed framework,<sup>15</sup> and can be delivered by 2 adult educators (as just described). If there are school wellbeing staff available to co-facilitate *A climate of change*, they can provide additional support (especially in the case of a recent local climate event), help recognise signs of emotional distress, and offer follow-up support for individual students if needed.

Wellbeing staff in NSW high schools include head teachers, year advisors, school counsellors, student support officers, wellbeing nurses, school chaplains and student wellbeing officers.

If you are interested in delivering *A climate of change* in your school, make sure you introduce your wellbeing staff to the program, discuss their potential role/s and capacities, and enlist their support prior to delivering the program.

Potential roles include:

- co-facilitation of the program (this is ideal)
- engaging with students who need follow-up support
- supporting educators to feel confident facilitating wellbeing practices within the program and the school's wellbeing framework



- supporting educators with their own emotional responses that arise.

We recognise that wellbeing staff in your school may not have the time to co-facilitate the program as they may be at full capacity supporting students with more acute mental health presentations.

As outlined by the NSW Department of Education<sup>16</sup>, schools should have access to school counselling services and have a clear procedure if extra support or advice regarding a student's mental health is required. This program has been developed to improve resilience and reduce student distress. Some students may still experience distress and/or suffer from a mental health disorder. If a student shows signs of high levels of distress or staff are concerned about the wellbeing of the student, teachers should refer to their school guidelines and processes for extra support and advice.

The school must ensure that the NSW Wellbeing Framework is followed and that standards for appropriate mental health care are met by staff.

#### Whole-of-school approach

To ensure the program's success, a whole-of-school approach is encouraged. This involves engaging school leadership, wellbeing staff, psychologists or counsellors, as well as potentially extending connections with parents or other supportive and skilled individuals from the broader community.

When the entire school community is able to support students' emotional wellbeing during this 'climate of change', it creates a consistent and more effective learning environment – and the larger community can also benefit. The skills and mindsets learned through the program can have a positive ripple effect as young people are effective changemakers through family and friendship networks.

## Part 4: Wellbeing, diversity and inclusivity

### Diversity and inclusivity

Climate change affects everyone, but its impacts are experienced differently depending on cultural, social and geographic contexts. Recognising the diversity of experiences and responses is essential to creating a supportive and effective learning environment.

Students bring varied perspectives shaped by their unique lived experiences, which can range from direct encounters with climate disasters to more abstract understandings of environmental challenges. Some may feel grief or anger, while others might experience hope or determination. Some students may have no feelings one way or another.

Acknowledging this diversity helps normalise the wide range of emotional responses to climate change and promotes an atmosphere of understanding and empathy.

### Culturally diverse responses to climate change

Different cultures offer unique knowledge systems and approaches to living sustainably with the Earth, which can inspire students and expand their understanding of potential solutions. For example, Indigenous communities often hold deep ecological knowledge that reflects sustainable practices and interconnectedness with nature. Including these perspectives not only honours cultural diversity but also provides valuable insights into climate adaptation and resilience. By incorporating stories, practices and solutions from diverse cultural contexts, educators can enrich their lessons and foster a more inclusive approach to climate action.

### Handling climate scepticism

Many students are growing up in families and communities that actively reject climate science, seeing it as propaganda. Teachers can acknowledge that these students may feel caught between differing worldviews – such as pro-fossil fuel or extractivist perspectives at home and science-based discussions at school. Rather than requiring agreement, educators can foster respectful engagement by clarifying expectations for classroom behaviour, such as listening to different perspectives without the need for consensus.



Validating a student's lived experience and the complexity of their position can create a safer learning environment.

Educators may choose to begin with language that feels familiar or accessible to their students – for example, recent floods, fires or other local events are sometimes described as 'natural disasters'. These can be effective entry points for engagement. However, it is important to connect the discussion back to climate change so students can understand the underlying causes.

Teachers can also focus on localised or lived examples of climate impacts, or use the idea of 'a climate of change' to discuss instability and unpredictability in ways that feels relevant to students. These approaches support engagement while keeping climate change as the central learning objective.

### Ensuring inclusivity and choice in the classroom

The lesson plans are structured to help educators empower students to engage with climate wellbeing resources in ways that feel meaningful and relevant to them. This means providing multiple entry points into the material, offering choice in how students participate, and creating space for everyone's voice to be heard. Activities are adaptable to accommodate different learning styles, abilities and comfort levels. By prioritising inclusivity, educators can ensure that all students feel valued, respected and empowered to contribute, fostering a classroom culture where diversity is celebrated as a strength.

### Educators' emotional wellbeing

Facilitating climate wellbeing lessons can be both rewarding and emotionally challenging.<sup>17</sup> It's essential to prioritise your own emotional wellbeing so you can guide students effectively and with compassion.



#### Process your own emotions first

Before engaging with students, take time to acknowledge and process your own feelings about climate change. Sharing your thoughts and emotions with a like-minded colleague, friend or family member can help you feel supported and less isolated in your experiences. Reading more about climate emotions can also be helpful. A short list of books is included at the end of this educators' guide for your further reading.

#### Practise the activities with peers

Whenever possible, try the activities in these lesson plans with other educators before leading them in the classroom. This allows you to experience the benefits firsthand, familiarise yourself with the processes, and reflect on your own emotional responses. We understand this may not always be logistically feasible, but even a brief exploration can be valuable.

#### Benefit alongside students

These activities are designed not only to support students but also to offer meaningful benefits to educators. The processes shared in this program are being successfully practised by adult groups as part of their own climate resilience development. By engaging fully with the program, you are likely to find it enhances your own sense of agency, connection and emotional wellbeing.

### Additional support for educators

#### Professionals within schools

Ensure that you are familiar with the wellbeing professionals that service your school and be clear about your school's guidelines and processes for extra support and advice.

#### Professional support services

For more specialised or ongoing support, educators and students should access external professional services.

There are a growing number of mental health professionals with an awareness and understanding of the psychological impacts of climate change, able to provide climate-informed care to educators and students.

If your school's wellbeing staff or affiliated mental health professionals seek professional development, supervision or expertise on how climate change impacts student mental health, the NSW Government Department of Health offers a [list of resources](#), including organisations that provide relevant professional development.


#### General practitioners

Local or school-affiliated general practitioners can assess and refer students or staff for further psychological support if needed.

### Mental health support and resources

#### *Kids Helpline*


Free, 24/7 support for ages 5–25

 1800 55 1800

 [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

#### *Lifeline Australia*


Crisis support for anyone

 13 11 14

 [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

#### *Beyond Blue*


Support for anxiety, depression and suicide

 1300 22 4636

 [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)

#### *13YARN*

24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

 13 92 76

 [13yarn.org.au](http://13yarn.org.au)

#### *ReachOut*

Youth mental health support and forums

 [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)


#### *Headspace*

Free support for ages 12–25 and families

 [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)


#### *NSW Mental Health Line*

24/7 advice, assessment and referrals

 1800 011 511

#### *Medicare Mental Health*


Connection to local mental health services

 1800 595 212

 [www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au/](http://www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au/)

#### *SANE Australia*

Support for people with mental illness and their carers

 1800 187 263

 [sane.org](http://sane.org)

## Part 5: Additional support

### Responding to students with strong emotional responses

When discussing climate change and its associated challenges, students may experience strong emotional responses such as anxiety, grief or distress. The program is designed to validate and provide resources to metabolise strong emotions for the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the planet.

Strong emotional reactions are valid and may arise from personal experiences. Therefore, it's essential to approach such situations with sensitivity and respect, recognising that students process information differently based on their individual backgrounds, mental health and life experiences.

#### Ensure you have established 'safe space'

Ensure class agreements are in place that support physical and emotional safety, inclusivity and choice. (See Lesson 1 on how to set up a safe space.)

#### Use a wellbeing mascot

Establishing a symbolic, tactile wellbeing mascot (eg., a soft toy or natural object) allows students to invoke a pause and choose one of the 5 somatic practices to practise together for the next 1–2 minutes: earth, shaking tree, butterfly taps, finger hold, or a breath hack. (See Lesson 2 for more details.)

#### Recognise signs of distress

Be aware of signs of distress such as tears, fidgeting, outbursts, rapid and/or shallow breathing.

#### Respond calmly

Provide reassurance in a calm, steady tone, validating feelings and listening to any concerns the student shares.

#### Offer immediate support

Suggest one of the somatic practices for nervous system reset (see Lessons 1 and 2) or offer the wellbeing mascot (above) for students to choose their own somatic practice.

Seek support of school wellbeing staff, ensuring this pathway has already been established prior to starting the program.

#### Deciding suitability of the program

If a student consistently shows signs of distress, is unable to engage with the material, or has been identified as requiring professional mental health support, it is important to work with school wellbeing staff who understand the student's needs and circumstances. Rather than excluding students with mental health challenges, follow the steps below.

While the program focuses on psycho-education and resourcing, and is designed to be supportive of students' overall wellbeing, the unique situation of distressed students should be considered.

#### Check in with the student

- Speak with the student (if they're willing) to understand their concerns or triggers.

#### Consult school wellbeing staff

- Consult with school wellbeing staff to follow your school's guidelines and support pathways.
- Use your school's application of the NSW Wellbeing Framework.
- Apply the [individual health support plan](#).

#### Communicate about choice in levels of participation

- Explore alternatives for the student's involvement (share lesson plans and show that each lesson has options for levels of participation).
- Communicate that it is okay to pause their participation if that feels right.

#### Link to support

- Offer students access to other mental health resources, such as the school counsellor or external services like Kids Helpline or Headspace (contact details are provided above).
- If a student's distress is specifically related to climate change and the state of the world, educators should inform school wellbeing staff
- For further professional development, supervision and expertise in relation to the impacts of climate change on student mental health, refer to the NSW Government Department of Health's [list of resources](#), including relevant training providers.

## References

### Further reading

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Davenport L (2017) *Emotional resiliency in the era of climate change: a clinician's guide*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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- Atkinson J and Ray S (2024) *The existential toolkit for climate justice educators: how to teach in a burning world*, University of California Press.

### Acknowledgements

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# Lesson 1: Stay Awake. Connect. Act.

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 1

# Stay Awake. Connect. Act.



**Lesson length (all activities):** 90 minutes



**Materials:**

[Student journal](#)

[A climate of change illustration](#)

[Stay Awake. Connect. Act illustration](#)

[Stay Awake. poster printout](#)

[Connect. poster printout](#)

[Act. poster printout](#)



**Delivery:**

Indoor classroom with video projector, whiteboard



**Watch:**

[Educators' video](#)

(timestamp 08:42 to 11:01 – 2 minutes)



**Screen:**

[Lesson 1 video](#)

*A climate of change: wellbeing resources for students and educators*

## Lesson purpose and focus

### Key inquiry

*How do we collectively take meaningful action in this time of human-induced climate change? How can we live and act in a way that supports our wellbeing and the wellbeing of all life on Earth?*

### Key message

Climate change is reshaping our lives and people respond in many different ways. Its impacts fall unevenly, with those already marginalised often most affected. Amid uncertainty and tension, even within families and friendship groups, there is also innovation, community strengthening and realignment with our core values. This is a 'climate of change', and insights from First Nations Peoples and multicultural communities are vital in navigating it.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
30 mins	1. A climate of change	Illustration, whiteboard / butchers paper
10 mins	2. Student video engagement	Video and projector, student journal
20 mins	3. Stay Awake. Connect. Act.	Whiteboard or 3 x butchers paper 3 x poster printouts Student journal
20 mins	4. First Nations perspective and contemplation	Student journal, whiteboard
10 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Explore core concepts that the whole program is based upon, such as climate change, personal and community resilience, wellbeing, emotional safety, self-care
- Discover the rationale for the program, and an overview of all the lessons.

### Students can:

- Feel okay about their response to human-induced climate change – including feeling afraid, worried and anxious – as these are healthy responses to what is unfolding
- Understand the range of emotional and behavioural responses to this information and increasing lived experience, so that they have less judgement towards themselves and others
- Feel empowered by personal choice in the current state of the world.



## Introduce the program

- Explain why this program is important and needed
- Introduce *A climate of change* reframe, and the relevance of First Nations perspectives
- Run through the program briefly and how you intend to deliver (eg., all lessons? weekly?).



### Options

Options for using the illustration:

- Project file onto a screen
- Pause on the image while presenting the video
- Use a printed A3 illustration
- Identify it in the student journal.

[A climate of change illustration](#)

## Educators' script

We are increasingly experiencing the impacts of climate change.

Even so, it can sometimes be difficult to comprehend that this is really happening – and that human activity is driving these changes to Earth's life-support systems.

It's a big challenge – and people respond in many different ways through their thoughts, feelings and actions.

Human-induced climate change is scientifically proven, and yet there can be differences in opinions, conflicts and tensions within families and friendship groups.

This is also a time of social change. Climate change is stimulating positive innovations, strengthening communities and even realigning our core values. We are rethinking what is most important in challenging situations, and seeking just solutions so no one is left behind.

That's why this program is called *A climate of change*. It helps us to see the positives, potential and possibilities in this pivotal moment in history.

First Nations worldviews are particularly important in this 'climate of change'. They offer frameworks for us to understand our responsibilities to the land and each other, grounded in cultural knowledge, community strength and an unwavering determination to care for the environment for future generations.

Australia's diverse multicultural communities are also a rich source of knowledge, guidance and inspiration. They offer climate and wellbeing solutions that are effective, accessible, inclusive and socially just.

*A climate of change* is full of activities, ideas, cartoons, videos, reflections and discussions to help us navigate this time of change with curiosity and resilience.

## Its 6 lessons are:

1. Stay Awake. Connect. Act. (today's lesson)
2. Thriving in times of uncertainty
3. Empowering feelings
4. Visioning and inspiration
5. Climate action
6. Nature connection and reciprocity.

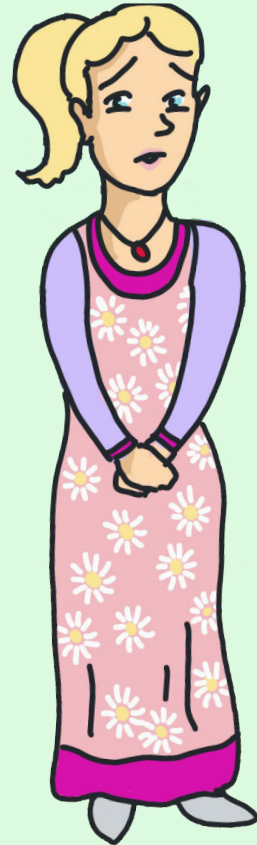
Our class will be completing lessons 1 through ... (insert your plan here), and I'll be guiding you through this series of lessons with ... (insert your co-facilitator here if you have one).



## Step 2: Explore illustration

Ask students:

*‘What do you think these characters are thinking and feeling about climate change?’*



### Options

Mention these elements of the illustration, if not identified by students. The image conveys:

- Both climate threats and opportunities for positive action
- That nature has thoughts and agency too
- Most people are young people their age, but wider community members are also in the picture – emphasising that we are all in this together, to provide support, and there are also future generations to consider
- There is a clear First Nations presence, knowledge and connection to Country.

## Step 3: Practise deep listening

Creating a safe space in the classroom is crucial for meaningful discussions about climate change because people experience and respond differently based on their unique lived experience and education.

### Options

‘What you name is what you’re showing up with and offering to the group.’ This changes the tone to not ‘asking’ for emotional safety, but ‘giving or showing up’ for emotional safety. This can create much deeper buy-in from your students. They are co-creating a space in which they have some ownership, rather than typical ‘group agreements’ where they sit back and often a few people are resistant or too cool.

After students name one quality for the safe space, establish a group gesture to express everyone is ‘in’ agreement or allowed to ask a question about it.

If your group is small enough, and time allows, ask each student to contribute one quality.

## Educators’ script

A ‘safe space’ is an environment where everyone feels respected, heard and free to express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgement or harm. It ensures we can all engage with challenging topics like climate change in a supportive and inclusive way.

Ask students:

*‘What is a safe space?’*

*‘What is one thing you need to feel emotionally safe?’*

On a whiteboard or large piece of butchers paper, write up students’ responses.

Offer suggestions that are missing. These become your safe space agreements.



**Educators' script**

Let's start with a question:

*'Why do you think it's important that our class feels like a safe space – and where else might that matter?'*

Now, let's explore why this idea of a safe space really matters when we're talking about climate change.

**Different climate impacts**

Climate change doesn't affect everyone equally. For example, Indigenous communities, people living in low-lying coastal areas, and those from regions already vulnerable to climate impacts often face greater risks than wealthier or more resourced groups.

This is what we mean by climate justice – making sure that the voices and experiences of those most affected are heard and centred.

**Different emotional responses**

We'll all respond to climate topics differently. Some people might feel energised and ready to act, while others may feel anxious, frustrated, distracted, or even a bit numb.

Having a safe space means we can share these feelings and learn how to manage them together.

Activities that help calm and ground us – like the relaxation exercise we'll do today – can make a big difference.

**Different perspectives**

Some of us might come from families or communities that question or even reject climate science. What matters is that everyone feels respected.

As a class, we can build safe-space agreements that encourage curiosity, open conversation and non-judgement. Focusing on shared values – like caring for nature, resilience and community wellbeing – helps us connect, even when our views differ.

**Respectful dialogue**

There are many ways to take climate action – from small everyday choices to big changes in systems. A safe space helps us talk about ideas openly, even when we disagree. It's especially important when we discuss topics like fairness, responsibility for emissions, or how we adapt to change.

**Class reflection**

Let's look back at the safe-space agreements we created together.

Do you think they support fairness and inclusion?

Is there anything we might add or change?

Finally, I'd like to ask – are we willing to treat this class as a kind of experiment? A place where we check in each lesson on how safe it feels, and where we can keep adding to our agreements as we go?

**Step 4: Lead a grounding exercise (Earth)**

Guide students through a short grounding exercise to help them feel calm, present and supported.

**Educators' script**

Feel where your feet contact the floor.

Move your feet around until you feel them softening or spreading out a bit.

Feel the floor beneath your feet.

Experiment with putting more pressure on one foot, then the other.

Feel the solidity and support beneath you.

See if you can imagine the earth beneath the layers of building material.

See if you can connect to or imagine the solid support of the earth.

Take a few moments to rest into a feeling of support.



**Step 1: Student video engagement**

Invite students to consider this question while watching the video.

*'Do I relate to any of the experiences shared by the people in the video? Do I have other feelings or responses that weren't named in the video?'*



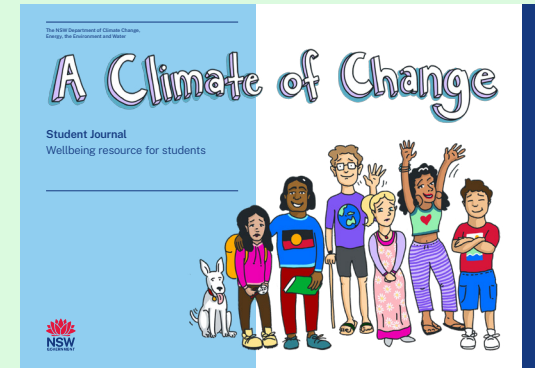
**Step 2: Play video**

Lesson 1 video: Stay Awake. Connect. Act. (8 minutes)



**Step 3: Ask students to journal**

Ask students to turn to page 4 of their student journal and reflect on the video. Another option is to share their responses in pairs.



## Step 1: Introduce the activity

Introduce three ideas – to stay awake, connect and act – as support tools, practical strategies and ways of being. Walk through each idea, explaining how these 3 keys foster personal and planetary wellbeing.

### Options

Project *Stay Awake. Connect. Act* illustration onto screen.

[☑ Stay Awake. Connect. Act illustration](#)



## Educators' script

### Stay Awake. Connect. Act.

These three ideas can help us make sense of our thoughts and feelings about climate change and the world around us.

They're also practical ways of being – things we can do in our daily lives, especially when times feel uncertain.

### Stay awake

To 'stay awake' is to be aware of climate change and the state of the world around us, and to find inspiration and connection in all the positive actions already underway.

It's about caring for our wellbeing, remembering who we are, and recognising the power we have when we act together.

Despite the challenges, it means staying awake to the wonder of being alive.

### Connect

To 'connect' means building relationships with nature, each other and ourselves. These connections help us feel grounded, inspired and part of something bigger.

When we connect with nature or Country, we appreciate the beauty and interconnections of all life. When we connect with others, we find support, motivation and opportunities to create change together.

### Act

To 'act' means taking part in positive change, contributing to a regenerative, hopeful future.

Action can empower us, connect us and bring us joy. It can even feel like an adventure.

Even when we don't meet every goal, we can still draw strength from being involved, collaborating with others, and showing that we care.

Together, these practices support our wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, the environment and future generations.

Each key unlocks empowerment, joy and positive action. So we call these the 3 keys to personal and planetary wellbeing.



### Step 2: Form 3 groups

Ask students to form 3 'key' groups:

Group 1 – Stay Awake

Group 2 – Connect

Group 3 – Act

Ask students:

*'Please turn to page 4 of your student journal and read the explanation of your group's key to personal and planetary empowerment.'*

### Step 3: Lead a discussion

Ask students:

*'In your group, think of ways you are already doing this, or things you could do in relation to your key.'*

Ask for a spokesperson from each small group to share with the whole class.

#### Options

- Mind map or list students' main points on the whiteboard when each 'key' group reports back or
- Give each 'key' group marker pens and a large piece of butchers paper with the relevant **Stay Awake. Connect. Act.** poster glued or taped in the middle to record their own answers.
- If students need ideas, tips for practising the 3 keys include:

#### Stay Awake

- Balance: seek out good news (see extension activities on page 10).
- Gratitude practice
- Take your 'bad' news with a dose of action (e.g., join up to online campaigns or websites where you can sign petitions).

#### Connect

- Connect with nature wherever you are
- Build friendships and community with a diversity of people who are interested in climate change and climate action
- Identify how you think and feel about climate change.

#### Act

- Focus on what you really care about
- Contribute skills you already have, and things you love to do
- Take action in community, and in nature too if you can.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educators' script

First Nations worldviews provide frameworks that can help us understand responsibilities to the land and to each other. They offer a path that is rooted in cultural knowledge, community strength, and unwavering determination to care for the environment for future generations.



## Step 2: Sharing

Share this reflection or contemplation point and invite students to write, draw or doodle on page 7 of their journal.

*'When birds migrate, they often navigate vast distances by responding to environmental cues and seasonal changes, demonstrating remarkable adaptability, resilience and communication. How can I learn from this to enhance my own approach to navigating change?'*

### Options

Before asking students to journal, briefly discuss the migration of birds and how they respond to environmental cues and seasonal changes. Then, as a class, explore how nature demonstrates adaptability, resilience and communication in different ways.



## Summarise the lesson

Introduce the *Circles of support* and *Balance* activities for use independently or as optional homework.

You may like to share links to the following websites with your students:

- [Good News Network](#)
- [Yes!](#)
- [DailyGood](#)
- [Positive News Foundation](#)
- [Upworthy](#)
- [Planet Ark](#)

### Educators' script

Today we've explored the many ways people respond to climate change.

We talked about why creating safe spaces matters – especially because climate change often affects those who are already marginalised, and those least responsible, like young people.

In your journal, write down at least one key takeaway from today's discussion.

We've covered some big ideas, so if anyone has any questions or comments about today's lesson, I (and our wellbeing support person) am available to chat with you after class or by email.



## Circles of support

### Educators' script

Please turn to page 6 of your student journals and the *Circles of support*.

Think about the supportive adults in your life – people you trust and could talk to if you needed extra support with these topics.

Start with school. Is there an adult you'd feel comfortable talking to if you were going through a challenging time, like a teacher or counsellor? Write down at least one adult at school you could talk to.

Now think about your family. A parent, carer, grandparent, aunt or uncle – someone you could talk to if you needed support. Write down their name.

And finally, think about your community. Is there a family friend, coach, counsellor or doctor you could speak with? Write down at least one name.

See if you can identify three people: one from school, one from family and one from your community. If you can't think of three right now, that's okay. I, and our wellbeing support person, are available to chat with you after class or via email.

## Balance

### Educators' script

When you read or hear about something upsetting – on the news or social media – allow yourself to absorb the story. Try not to turn away or sink into feelings of hopelessness. Simply recognise that it's happening.

Notice how your body responds. What sensations accompany your feelings? Name them. Be curious.

Now try this. Think of something you've recently seen or heard that has upset you. Jot down a few notes on page 8 of your student journal. Start with something small, not the 'big ticket item'.

Next, search for good news about the same issue. Look widely. You might find people working together, creating solutions, or taking inspiring local action.

Sit with that knowledge. Let yourself feel the care and joy it brings. Remember, there are good and beautiful things happening every day.

*Balance*, © 2015 The Joyality Project.

## Further resources for teachers

NSW Government, NSW Health (2025) [Mental health and climate change](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/netzero/Pages/mental-health-resources.aspx), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.health.nsw.gov.au/netzero/Pages/mental-health-resources.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/netzero/Pages/mental-health-resources.aspx)

Psychology for a Safe Climate (n.d.) [Resources](https://www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/resources), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/resources](https://www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/resources)

Seat at the Table (n.d.) [What is climate anxiety?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9ZVWFdCjow) [Video], YouTube, accessed 15 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9ZVWFdCjow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9ZVWFdCjow)

## Further resources for students

Climate Change Resources (n.d.) [Youth](https://climatechangeresources.org/youth/), accessed 15 October 2025. <https://climatechangeresources.org/youth/>

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Resources](https://www.forceofnature.xyz/resources), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.forceofnature.xyz/resources](https://www.forceofnature.xyz/resources)

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## First Nations further reading

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## Copyright material

Bragg E (2014) 'Activist ecopsychology', *Ecopsychology* 6(1):40–42, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2013.0096>

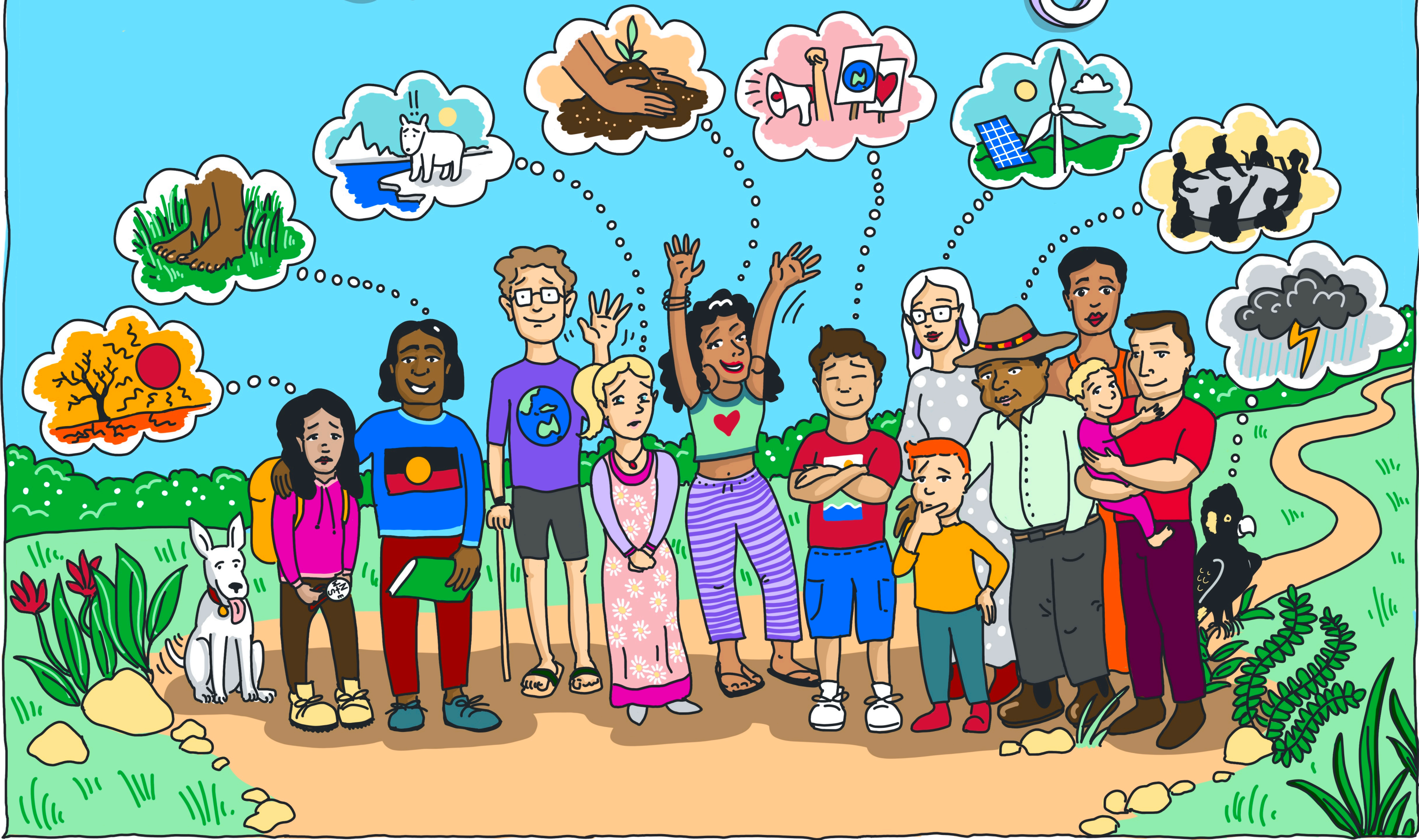
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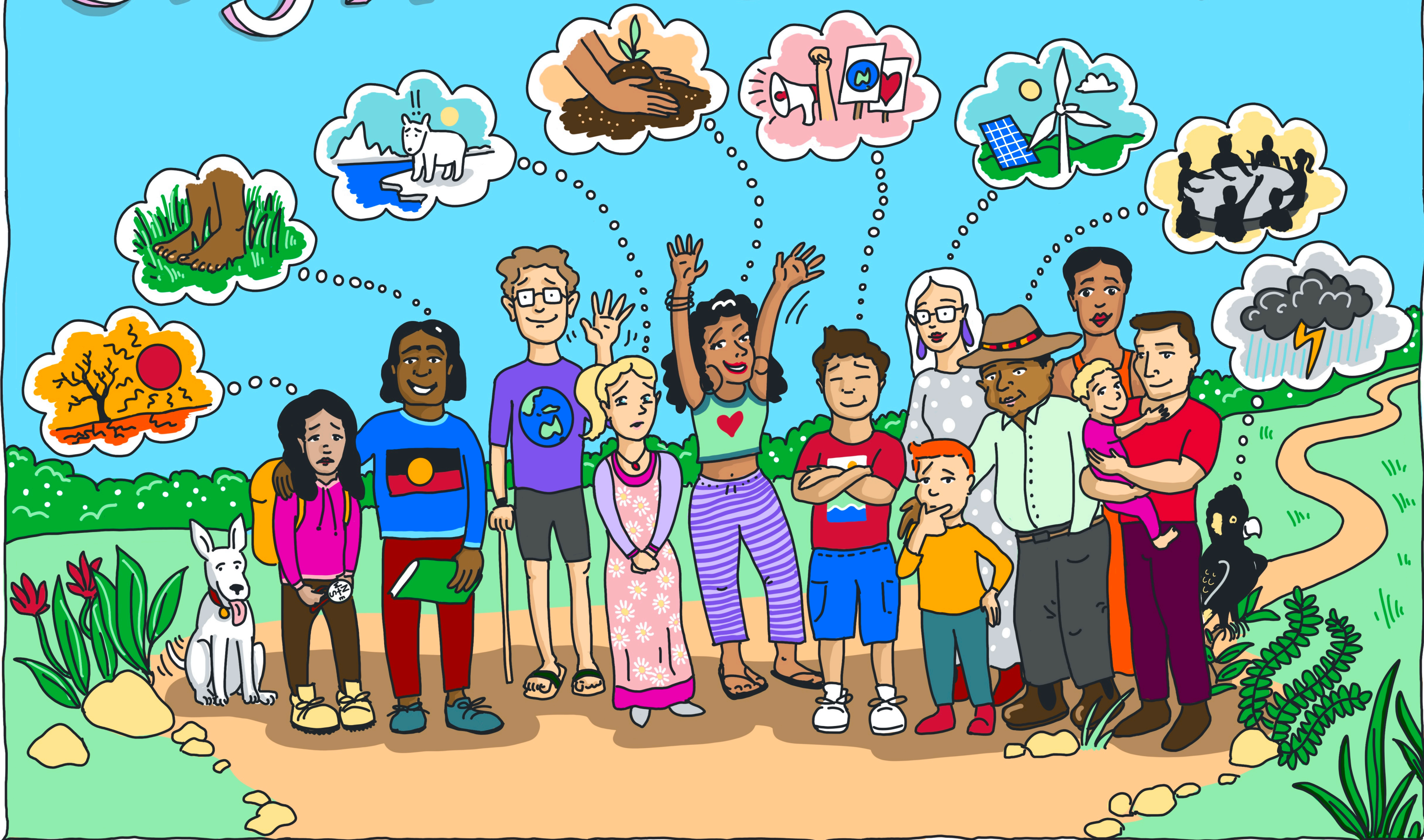
The Joyality Project (2020) [How on Earth](https://www.joyality.org/how-on-earth): Youth leadership training in climate resilience, accessed 21 November 2025. <https://www.joyality.org/how-on-earth>



# A Climate of Change



# Stay Awake. Connect. Act.



# Lesson 2: Thriving in times of uncertainty

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 2

# Thriving in times of uncertainty



**Lesson length (all activities):**

90 minutes



**Materials:**

Student journal

ReCharge illustration

Window of tolerance illustration  
(optional)

Butchers paper 'window' prepared



**Delivery:**

Indoor classroom with  
video projector, whiteboard



**Watch:**

Educators' video

(timestamp 11:02 to 12:38  
– 2 minutes)



**Screen:**

Lesson 2 video

## Lesson purpose and focus






### Key inquiry

*'How can we thrive, flourish, be well and happy among all the social, economic, environmental impacts of climate change?'*

### Key message

We are facing a serious situation as the impacts of climate change intensify. This can be stressful or even traumatic, and it is important to recognise how our nervous systems and brains respond under pressure. You may already know strategies to support you through challenging moments – and what works for you may also be helpful for others.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
 15 mins	1. Video and discussion	Video, Student journal
 30 mins	2. Brainstorming ways to relax and recharge	Whiteboard, Student journal, ReCharge illustration Window of tolerance illustration (optional), butchers paper 'window' prepared
 20 mins	3. Somatic practices	n/a
 20 mins	4. First Nations contemplation	Student journal, whiteboard
 5 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Be introduced to the basics of brain physiology (neuroscience) and our reactions to stressful or traumatic situations
- Use the 'window of tolerance' model of emotional and physiological arousal to explore a diversity of methods, tools and practices to self-regulate and co-regulate our psychological wellbeing during and after stressful and traumatic circumstances
- Learn and gain lived experience of self-regulation using somatic practice.

### Students can:

- Feel empowered and confident knowing they have tools and resources for feeling better in stressful situations
- Gain relief in knowing it is possible to feel better even in traumatic circumstances
- Remember one or more somatic practices for self-regulation.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

Witnessing or experiencing climate impacts can be stressful – even traumatic. This session helps students:

- understand how the brain responds to stress
- build tools to stay in their zones of ‘flourish and flow’
- practise a short nervous-system reset
- explore collective care for community and Country.



### Educators' script

Many of us have already experienced extreme climate impacts. Floods, storms and fires can have a big impact on our lives and wellbeing.

Seeing how climate change harms others can also be distressing – and that's natural. Our brains are wired to respond to threats, but understanding how stress works can help us build resilience.

When we're under stress, our 'fight, flight, freeze or fawn' response activates. It protects us in dangerous situations but isn't always helpful when challenges are ongoing.

Stress can make it harder to focus, decide, create or feel hopeful. Knowing this can help you see these feelings are normal and manageable.

In this lesson, we'll learn tools and practices to help stay in the zone of 'flourish and flow', also known as 'rest and digest'.

We will also learn some somatic practices to help us regulate and reset our nervous systems. 'Soma' means body, and somatic practices help us connect with our bodies and emotions.

Breathing exercises, stretching or gentle movement can help us pause and reset when we feel overwhelmed.

Our nervous system acts as a command centre that guides our response to stress. Techniques like slow breathing, humming or butterfly taps can calm and reset it, helping us feel grounded and in control. This is sometimes called self-regulation.

Being around calm people can also help – this is called co-regulation.

The vagus nerve links the brain, heart and stomach. Activating this nerve through breathwork, soothing sounds or gentle rhythmic movement supports relaxation and balance.

When we're calm and regulated, it's easier to take positive action for the climate and our communities.

The First Nations reflection and contemplation remind us that caring for each other and Country also helps us flourish and flow.

**Step 2: Engage students with the video**

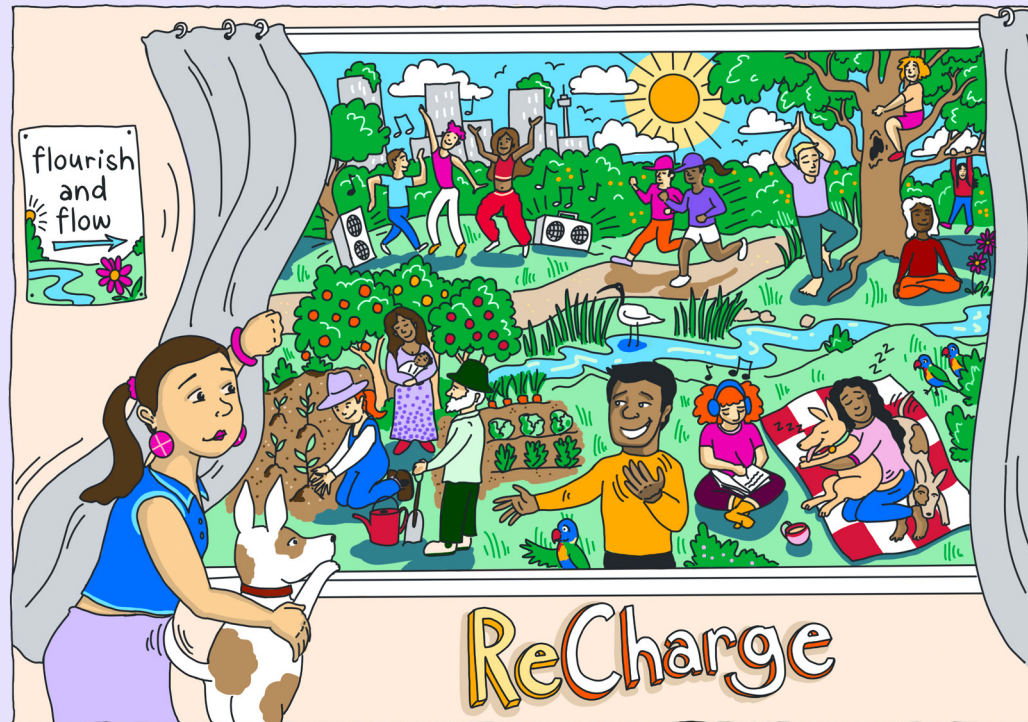
Invite students to consider this question while watching the video.

Ask students:

*'What is the zone that is spoken about in the video? How would I know if I were in the zone?'*

**Step 3: Play video**

Lesson 2 video: [Thriving in times of uncertainty](#) (6 minutes)



**Step 4: Ask students to share**

Ask a few students to share responses to the engagement question. Add to or clarify answers so students have a clear and correct understanding.

Add potential answers in here, for example:

- When we're balanced, we're empowered to take positive action
- I can 'think straight', solve problems, be creative
- I can feel connected to other people
- I feel like things are okay
- I feel okay about myself
- I can pause before I respond rather than react
- I feel a sense of balance in my body (not super tense nor depleted)
- I feel okay being by myself and okay around other people.



## Step 1: Explain the window of tolerance<sup>1</sup>

### Options

Project the [window of tolerance illustration](#) onto screen.

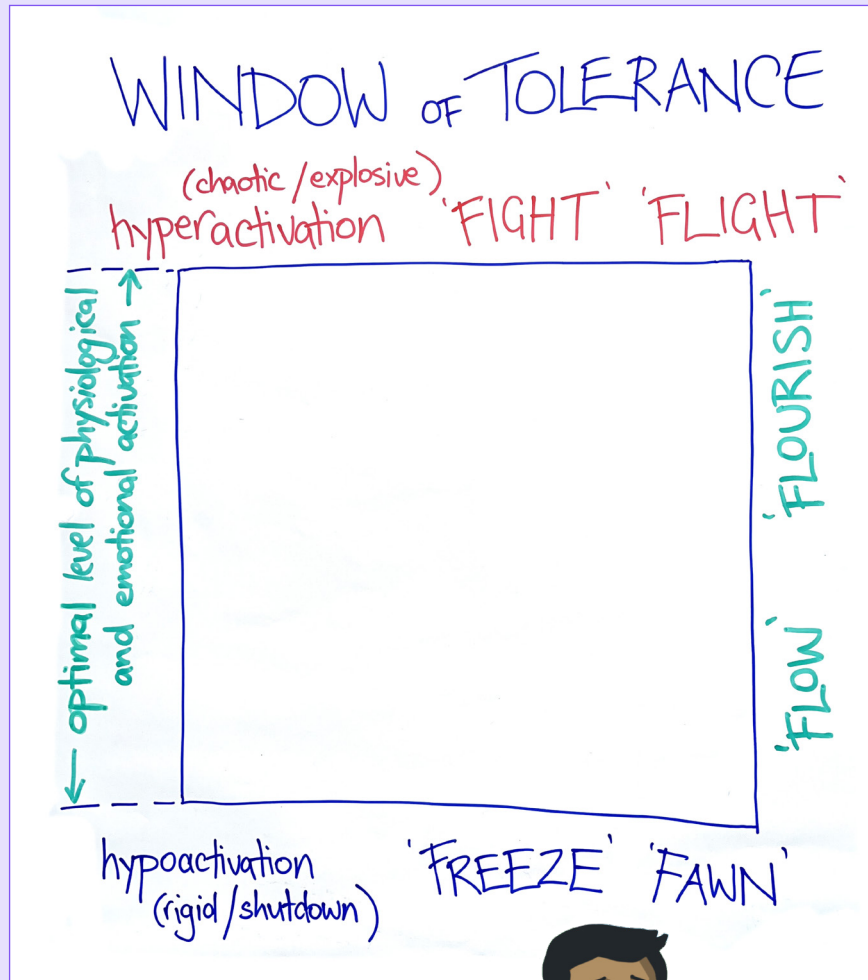
Or replay section 1:17 to 2:57 in the [lesson 2 video](#).

Draw a square box on a whiteboard with the heading *window of tolerance*.

Explain the window of tolerance theory while writing 'fight' and 'flight' at the top of the window and 'freeze' and 'fawn' at bottom. Then write 'flourish' and 'flow' beside it.

### Options

You could draw this up before class instead, and just explain the window and the labels to the students.



### Educators' script

The window of tolerance is a way to describe the 'zone' where we can handle stress and a range of emotions without feeling overwhelmed. That's the green zone.

When we get pushed out of that zone, things can go different ways.

Normal responses include feeling anxious, or like we're in fight-or-flight mode. That's the red zone. (Write 'fight' and 'flight' above the window in red).

Or, we might experience feeling numb, shut down, or even frozen. This is the blue zone. (Write 'freeze' and 'fawn' below the window in blue).

General stresses in our lives, as well as trauma, can shrink our window of tolerance, making it harder to feel okay or stay balanced in tough situations.

But there are many soothing and enlivening actions we can take to expand our own window of tolerance, such as meeting and greeting the feeling and sensations of overwhelm in the body.

When we're in the green zone we're able to think clearly, process what's going on, and stay calm. We feel balanced. We are able to flourish and flow. (Write 'flourish' and 'flow' beside the window in green).

We can have a wide range of feelings and emotions but not feel overwhelmed or shut down.

If we make relaxing and recharging part of our lives, when something does happen we can more quickly get back to a state of 'flourish and flow'.

**Step 2: Ask students to journal**

Ask students to turn to page 11 of their journal and write down ways they help themselves to feel better when they are stressed or experience challenges in life.

*‘How do you stay in the zone?’*

Ask them to look at the [ReCharge illustration](#) on page 9 of their journal for inspiration.



**Options**

Options for using the [ReCharge illustration](#):

- Project onto a screen
- Pause on the image while presenting the video
- Use a printed A3 illustration
- Identify it in the student journal.

**Step 3: Explore climate feelings**

Ask students, in a relaxed way:

*‘What are some of the feelings you have about climate change and the state of the world?’*

Write these feelings into the empty window (with a red whiteboard marker). Try to place the high energy feelings (eg., anxiety, anger) towards the top of the window. Place the low energy feelings (eg., helpless, numb) towards the bottom, and any positive feelings in the middle.

(The intention here is to normalise these feelings and treat them like any other uncomfortable feelings that arise in students' lives.)

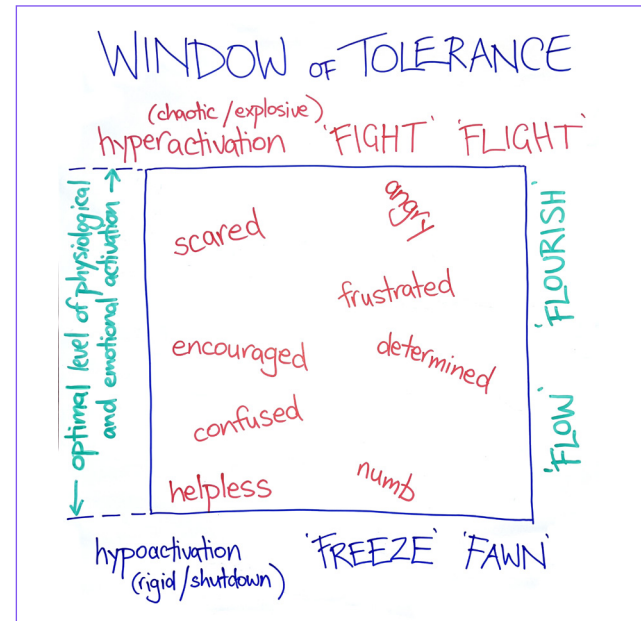


**Educators' script**

Humans are hardwired to catastrophise, unlike animals that release stress once a threat has passed.

As Robert Sapolsky explains in *Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, a zebra escapes a predator, shakes off the stress, and returns to grazing. In contrast, humans replay past dangers and imagine future ones, triggering prolonged stress responses that can last for weeks, months, or even years.

This tendency to ruminate and anticipate worst-case scenarios can fuel chronic stress – something we can experience when thinking about climate disasters.



## Step 4: Guide students to expand their window of tolerance

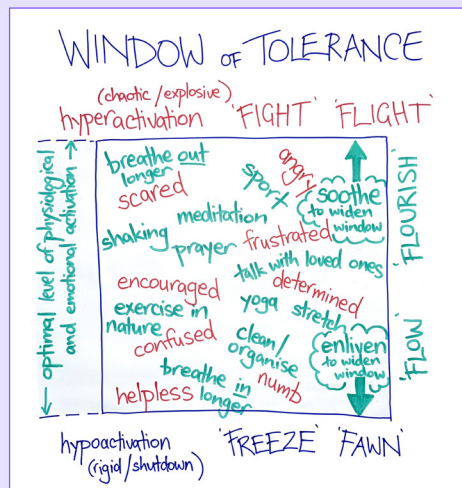
Write 'soothe' at the top of the window (arrow pointing up).

Write 'enliven' at the bottom (arrow pointing down).

Ask students to share the emotional resources they listed in their journals. Write these inside the window using a green or blue marker – placing soothing activities near the top, enlivening ones near the bottom, and those that do both in the middle. Work together to decide where each belongs.

Add any missing activities, especially those involving community care or connection with nature.

Encourage students to include a few marked with an asterisk from the list, as these directly support collective wellbeing.



### Community and self care

- Inviting a friend to meet for a walk\*
- Running
- Talking with a trusted friend\*
- Yoga
- Qi gong
- Planting trees with other people or by yourself
- Visiting or calling grandparents or extended family\*
- Drawing or journalling
- Listening to music
- Making music
- Prayer
- Reading
- Helping a parent, child or sibling\*
- Having a BBQ with family
- Dancing by yourself or with others\*
- Sharing stories around a fire or candle\*
- Going to the gym
- Martial arts
- Sport
- Cooking a healthy meal.

### Nature connection

- Sitting with back to a tree in contemplation or meditation
- Walking barefoot on the grass
- Surfing
- Fishing
- Swimming in the ocean, a creek or river
- Nature art and craft
- Playing with a pet
- Hiking
- Camping
- Snowboarding
- Skiing
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Sitting around a fire with friends\*
- Mountain biking
- Kiteboarding
- Nature sit spot
- Birdwatching
- Tracking
- Wildlife rescue\*
- Belly on the Earth, or face near soil
- Hug a tree
- Gardening
- Bush regeneration, weeding and planting trees\*
- Flower gazing
- Star gazing.

### Background notes

If your students don't have easy access to natural environments, they may not immediately relate to the idea of nature connection. You might ask them to consider the feeling they get from being in a shopping mall with artificial lighting and no windows, compared to walking along a beach or spending time in a park or garden. Lesson 6 explores this in more detail.

The concept of self-care is often rooted in an individualistic mindset, emphasising personal wellbeing as an end goal: feeling better, reducing discomfort and experiencing more ease or pleasure. While it is very important to nurture our own wellbeing, the primary focus is often on the individual.

In collectivist cultures, however, care is viewed through a broader, community-based lens. Here, self-care is not just about personal restoration but serves a larger purpose. When we're balanced, we're empowered to take action. It is a step toward sustaining our ability to contribute to the collective good as a means to keep showing up for the people, causes and values that matter to us. Taking this approach also recognises that directly caring for community and Country supports our own personal wellbeing.

Practise as many of these activities as time allows, or choose those that best suit your students. You can also substitute similar practices you're familiar with and feel confident sharing.

### Step 1: Tree shake<sup>2</sup>

This exercise can be practised for up to 5 minutes. It is a simple and enlivening way to release muscle tension. Demonstrate the activity before you invite students to join in, and remind them to go gently.



#### Educators' script

Let's stand up and stretch – reach your arms into the air or out to the sides, in any direction that feels good.

(Pause for 30 to 60 seconds.)

Now, stand with your feet about hip-width apart and your knees slightly bent. Imagine a string gently lifting you from the top of your head, so you're hanging softly like a puppet.

Let a gentle shake begin in your feet – just a small tremor. Let it build naturally if that feels good. You might imagine being lightly jiggled from that string above your head.

Allow the movement to travel up through your legs, hips and torso – shaking out your shoulders, arms and hands. Imagine releasing any stress or tension you've been holding.

Animals do this naturally after a shock or stressful event. It's how they reset.

Now, slowly let the shaking fade. Come back to stillness. Take a deep breath and notice how you feel.

### Step 2: Butterfly taps<sup>3</sup>

#### Educators' script

I'm going to show you a simple technique called *butterfly taps*. It's easy to learn and easy to remember.

Before we start, take a moment to notice how you're feeling – physically, mentally and emotionally. We'll check in again afterwards to see if anything has changed.

You can do this sitting or standing. Cross your arms in front of your chest so your fingertips rest lightly on your collarbones, near your shoulders. Your arms make an X shape – a bit like giving yourself a gentle hug.

Now, begin to tap slowly and gently, one side and then the other – a steady rhythm, like a relaxed heartbeat. Imagine a calm, sleepy butterfly fluttering its wings.

This movement activates both sides of the body – a process called bilateral stimulation – which helps regulate the vagus nerve and supports relaxation.

Keep tapping for about a minute.

Now stop – take a breath – and notice how you feel.



### Step 3: Finger holds<sup>4</sup>

Ask students to notice how they feel before starting and rate that feeling from 1 (low) to 10 (high).

Speak slowly and clearly, emphasising how simple and portable this technique is.

Demonstrate as you give instructions.

Afterwards, ask students to notice and, if comfortable, share how they feel now – again using the 1–10 scale. This helps build confidence in using somatic practices when needed.

Suggest options. For instance, students can use both hands or just one.



#### Educators' script

The next exercise I'm going to share with you is called the *Finger hold*.

This practice is part of a Japanese martial art and healing method called Jin Shin Fee, popularised by masters Giro Morai and Mary Burmeister.

It's very simple. Hold each finger gently in the opposite hand, beginning with the thumb. As you do, focus your attention on the point of contact: where your hand touches your finger, and your finger touches your hand.

Just notice any sensations that arise, like warmth, tingling or a soft pulse.

What we're doing here is called harmonising emotions.

Each finger relates to an emotion.

The thumb corresponds with worry or anxiety. By holding it, we help to harmonise that emotion in our body while strengthening our attention.

Our attention is valuable. In a world of constant distraction, this exercise helps to train your focus.

Traditionally, you might hold each finger for up to 2 minutes. Even 3 slow breaths can be enough.

After the thumb, move to the pointer finger, which supports the release of fear. Pause for at least 3 breaths and for up to 2 minutes.

Next comes the middle finger, harmonising feelings of anger or rage.

Then the ring finger, harmonising sadness or grief.

Finally the little finger, which harmonises strain and pretence.

There is no need to remember which finger corresponds to which emotion. Just hold each finger in turn.

The beauty of this practice is its simplicity. You can do it anywhere if you are feeling overwhelmed by any emotion.

Over time, the harmonising effect comes more quickly.

It's a quiet way to restore balance, whether as a daily ritual or in moments of stress.

## Step 4: Breath hacks<sup>5</sup>

### Educators' script

The next few exercises are *Breath hacks* that are easy to practice.

The first one is called *Soothing breath*, and it involves breathing out for twice as long as your in breath.

#### Soothing breath

Take a moment to notice how you are feeling – physically, mentally, emotionally.

Find a comfortable seated or standing position where you can lengthen your spine and relax your shoulders.

Close your eyes or soften your gaze and have your mouth closed gently so you can breathe through your nose.

Take a slow inhale that lasts for a count of 3.

Exhale slowly to a count of 6. (The count is not important, simply that you exhale twice the length of the inhale).

Practice 4 to 10 breaths this way and notice how you are feeling.

Remember this breathing exercise is not for pushing away uncomfortable feelings but for helping you 'be with' the feelings as you honour and respect them.

Trying to push feelings away is a red zone activity (fight/flight).

#### Equal breath<sup>6</sup>

The next activity is called *Equal breath* – and it's ideal for calm, energised focus.

Take a moment to notice how you are feeling physically, mentally, emotionally.

Find a comfortable seated or standing position where you can lengthen your spine and relax your shoulders.

Close your eyes or soften your gaze, and have your mouth closed gently so you can breathe through your nose.

Take a slow inhale through your nose that lasts for the count of 5.

Exhale slowly through your nose for the count of 5.

Practice 4 to 10 breaths this way and notice again how you are feeling.

### Options

Invite students to try just one, or both, or none and share their experience.

## Step 5: Invite students to create a wellbeing mascot<sup>7</sup>

This activity supports deeper safety through the lightness of a shared mascot and the power of a pause. It encourages students to take the lead, track and care for one another. It can support deeper integration of wellbeing exercises into real life contexts, which means students are more likely to remember, apply and practise the techniques learnt. A wellbeing mascot also enhances group presence and involvement, and can be introduced at any time throughout the program.

- **Choose a mascot:** Select one or more symbolic, tactile wellbeing mascots that will be visible and available for these lessons. The object can be a soft meaningful toy, like a native animal, or a natural object, like a stone, that feels good to hold. Acknowledge this as the group's wellbeing mascot (or mascots) and ensure they are easily accessible during activities.

- **Empower students to lead:** Any student can pick up one of these mascots at any time during an activity when someone needs a pause. This may be when they feel emotionally overwhelmed or restless, or when they notice another group member looking overwhelmed or withdrawn.
- **Invoke a wellbeing pause:** Picking up the mascot invokes a pause, when they or another student can name one of the 5 somatic practices to practise together for the next 1-2 minutes. Remember, the practices are: *Earth, Tree shake, Butterfly taps, Finger hold* and *Breath hack*.
- **Resume the lesson activity:** After 1-2 minutes of somatic pause, the group returns to the lesson, feeling more present and regulated.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educators' script

For First Nations thinkers, thriving in the face of climate change is deeply rooted in the principles of Country, community and cultural continuity. Thriving begins with a deep and respectful relationship with Country.

Indigenous scholar and activist Mary Graham emphasises: 'Country is the key to Aboriginal identity and wellbeing. It is a source of physical, emotional and spiritual sustenance.'<sup>8</sup>

When we care for Country, it cares for us in return, providing the foundation for our health, happiness and resilience.



## Step 2: Share reflections

Share this reflection or contemplation point and invite students to write, draw or doodle in their journal.

*'The interconnected mycelium network is the underground web that helps trees share nutrients. How can I learn from this to draw on practices that support my wellbeing during climate stress? And how can I share the tools I use with others to build collective resilience?'*

### Options

Before asking students to journal, briefly discuss interconnected mycelium networks – underground fungal connections that help trees and plants share nutrients and support forest ecosystems.

Messages from Aunty Glenda MacPhail (Yaegl Elder)

*'Connecting with the Earth is important for your health and there are many simple practices.'*

*Focus on a healthy body, mind and spirit.*

*Listen to your body and intuition; always respect yourself.*

*The first hour when you wake up is really important, put your mind in a good place before you face the world.'*



## Summarise the lesson

Introduce the *Everyday recharge* activity, and guide students to page 14 of their journal. This can be a class reflection, independent activity or be set as homework.

### Educators' script

We learnt about the neuroscience of stress and trauma and ways to stay in our zone of flourishing.

We also learnt some easy nervous system reset exercises and reflected on what mycelium networks can teach us about caring for ourselves and others.

In closing, if anyone has any questions or comments about today's lesson, I (and our wellbeing support person) am available to chat with you after class, or by email.



## Everyday recharge

### Educators' script

Reflecting on our lesson today about how we stay within our window of flourish and flow.

Turn to page 14 of your journal and respond to the following:

*'What are some signs that you might have noticed in your body and/or mind when you are heading out of the green zone.'*

For example: 'The muscles in my shoulders get tight and sore and I feel especially irritated by my sibling'.

Reflect on some signs that you are already in the red or blue zone. For example, 'My heart pumps fast and I feel really angry'.

Ask yourself:

*'What is one strategy that has helped me get back into the green zone?'*

*'What is something I do regularly that helps keep me in the green zone?'*

*'What enjoyable self-care and community care activities can I schedule into my weekly timetable?'*

## Further resources for teachers

Cleverly (n.d.) Jin Shin Jyutsu [finger exercise for total relaxation](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 15 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1e1DbtARgl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1e1DbtARgl)

[Genjo: Calm for Eco-Anxiety](#) [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/mt/app/genjo-calm-for-eco-anxiety/id6476467190>

Golddigger Trust (n.d.) [The window of tolerance](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 15 October 2025. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQfnxlnlMOg>

Mindful practice (n.d.) [Butterfly hug](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 15 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RurqWg2Bcuo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RurqWg2Bcuo)

## Further resources for students

Yoga International (n.d.) [Soothe your nervous system with 2-to-1 breathing](#) [Video], *Yoga International* website, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://yogainternational.com/>

## First Nations further reading

Bond C (2019) 'The trouble with "anti-racism"', *Australian Feminist Studies* 34(102):163–169.

Dudgeon P and Walker R (2015) 'Decolonising Australian psychology: discourses, strategies, and practice', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 3(1):276–297.

## References

- 1 Siegel DJ (2012) *The developing mind: how relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*, 2nd edn, The Guilford Press.
- 2 Levine P (1997) *Waking the tiger: healing trauma*, North Atlantic Books. Somatic shaking is an ancient Qi Gong practice popularised by Levine.
- 3 Mindful practice (n.d.) [Butterfly hug](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 15 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RurqWg2Bcuo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RurqWg2Bcuo) [The butterfly hug was created by Lucina Artigas and Ignacio Jarero as part of Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy.]
- 4 Waldeck F (2012) *Jin Shin Fee healing method by Master Jiro Murai and Mary Burmeister*, Creative Story.
- 5 [Yoga International](#) (n.d.) Soothe your nervous system with 2-to-1 breathing [Video], *Yoga International* website, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://yogainternational.com/>
- 6 [Joyful Heart Foundation](#) (2011) 'Four steps to focus: equal breathing', *Joyful Heart Foundation* website, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://joyfulheartfoundation.org/>
- 7 Bryson HH (n.d.) [Nature knows home page](#), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.natureknows.co/](http://www.natureknows.co/) [Wellbeing mascot activity from Hāweatea Holly Bryson Hāweatea Bryson].
- 8 Graham M (2008) '[Some thoughts about the philosophical underpinnings of Aboriginal worldviews](#)', *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 45, November 2008, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2008/11/01/some-thoughts-about-the-philosophical-underpinnings-of-aboriginal-worldviews/>

## Copyright materials

The Joyalty Project (2020) [How on Earth: Youth leadership training in climate resilience](#), accessed 21 November 2025. <https://www.joyalty.org/how-on-earth>



flourish  
and  
flow



# ReCharge

# Lesson 3: Empowering feelings

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 3

# Empowering feelings



**Lesson length (all activities):**  
90 minutes



**Materials:**

Student journal

Feel Real illustration

5 x A3 *Feelings* poster printouts  
5 x A3 *Flipsides* poster printouts  
([see p.6 for links to posters](#))

5 x 5 metre ropes



**Delivery:**

Large indoor space (classroom with chairs and tables removed or hall, video projector)



**Watch:**

Educators' video

(timestamp 12:38 to 19:13  
–7 minutes)



**Screen:**

Lesson 3 video

*A climate of change: wellbeing resources for students and educators*

## Lesson purpose and focus

### Key inquiry






*'How do I feel about climate change? Is feeling anxious, bad or distressed about climate change okay? How can I use, process or metabolise these feelings to feel empowered and take positive action?'*

### Key message

Uncomfortable emotions are normal and healthy when we are in challenging circumstances – and climate change is challenging.

There are many ways we can support ourselves and each other so these feelings are not too overwhelming (see lessons 2 and 6). We can even be empowered through awareness of our emotions, understanding their 'flipsides', and using them as energy to create positive change. Self-care, deep listening, mutual support and connection are core aspects of being a positive changemaker.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
 15 mins	1. In this together	Clear space in classroom/hall
 15 mins	2. Student video engagement	Video, video projector
 30 mins	3. 5 feelings and flipsides	5 ropes (5-7 metres), 5 <i>Feelings and Flipsides</i> posters
 20 mins	4. First Nations contemplation	Student journal
 10 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Be able to appreciate that our uncomfortable feelings are valid, valuable and necessary responses to climate change
- Understand the relationship between feelings and action
- Be aware of the 'flipsides' of our emotions
- Understand that everyone is affected by climate change.

### Students can:

- Realise 'I am not alone' and 'we are in this together'
- Lean in to challenging emotions and express them to others
- Process and metabolise challenging feelings into empowering feelings including motivation for positive action
- Practise nervous system regulation when experiencing a challenging emotion.



Step 1: Lead a discussion

**Educators' script**

Talking about climate change and living in a 'climate of change' is uniquely challenging because it touches every aspect of life on Earth.

It's not just about melting glaciers or rising seas – it's about the interconnected systems that support life, from food and water security to biodiversity and human health.

Climate change affects everyone differently – and the most vulnerable communities often face the most severe consequences.

At the same time, it creates a ripple effect across global economies, ecosystems and cultures. This complexity makes conversations about climate change emotionally charged and often overwhelming.

Living in a 'climate of change' also means navigating the uncertainty and transformation that this crisis demands. It challenges individuals and communities to rethink the way we live, work and interact with the natural world.

These conversations are not just scientific or political – they are deeply personal and moral. They require us to confront our fears, our hopes, and our roles in shaping a future that balances human wellbeing with ecological integrity.

Engaging with these discussions, while difficult, is also an opportunity to create more resilient, equitable and regenerative ways of living together on this planet.

Step 2: Guide a somatic exercise

Review and practise one of the nervous system regulation exercises we practised in Lessons 1 and 2 (*Earth, Tree shake, Butterfly taps, Finger hold* or *Breath hack*).

Repeat the same practice again after the *5 feelings and flipsides* activity.



## Step 3: Create a climate sociogram

Instructions for the sociogram are found in the [educators' video](#) (timestamp 14:37 to 16:47 – 2 minutes).

Let students know that we are going to be talking about climate effects in our lives and that you will describe each activity so they have the choice to participate in a way that feels appropriate for them.

### Options

Invite students to watch, colour, doodle, write in their journal or opt out if they aren't comfortable participating in the activity.

Ask the class to form a large circle. Then invite students to take a small step in if the answer is 'yes' to the questions posed.

Sociogram question examples:

- You have noticed changes in summer temperatures
- You have helped someone stay cool (like taken someone for a swim, given someone a cool drink)
- You have helped prepare a house before a climate event (storm, bushfire, flood)
- You live in an area that has flooded
- You live in an area that has had a bushfire
- You have taken part in a climate march or strike
- You had to leave your home or school in a climate event
- You had friends or other people from your community help you
- You have helped someone else keep calm if a close friend or family member had to leave their home in a climate event
- You helped someone repair or clean their house after an extreme weather event
- You have talked with someone about how to take effective action to prevent climate change
- You have had a brilliant idea about how to help other people through climate change
- You have been without power for more than a day
- You have planted a tree with the idea of drawing down carbon from the atmosphere
- You have turned the lights off to reduce carbon emissions
- You can think of at least one person who may experience more challenges and greater impacts of climate change than those who have more means to protect themselves
- You or someone you know is involved in positive regenerative action of any size.



**Step 1: Introduce the student video**

*'Our emotional responses to climate change can be healthy reactions to an unhealthy state of the world. Learning to engage with our emotions can empower us to take positive action.'*

Dr Eshana Bragg, ecopsychologist.<sup>1</sup>

**Educators' script**

We are going to watch a video where some young people speak about challenging feelings that they have in relation to climate change.

**Options**

Invite students to watch, colour, doodle, write in journal or opt out if they aren't comfortable participating in the activity.

**Step 2: Ask a video engagement question**

Invite students to consider this question while watching the video, and then write down their thoughts on page 16 of their student journals:

*'What do the young people in the video mean when they talk about flipsides?'*



**Step 3: Play video**

**Lesson 3 video: Empowering feelings** (7 minutes)

**Step 4: Share reflections**

Ask a few students to share their understandings of 'flipsides'. Add your own ideas if helpful.



## Step 1: Set up ropes

Take the 5 ropes and put one end of each rope in the centre of the room where all the 5 ropes will meet. Then position each rope so they radiate out towards the edges of the room, creating 5 triangular segments (see educators' video for image).

### [Educators' video](#)

(timestamp 16:48 to 19:13 – 3 minutes) also contains these instructions with video footage showing the activity.

## Step 2: Set up posters

Place a positive feeling poster face down in each segment, with a challenging feeling poster face up on top of the positive feeling poster.

These are the matching pairs:

- **Passion** (face down) – **Anger** (face up)
- **Courage** (face down) – **Fear** (face up)
- **Love** (face down) – **Grief** (face up)
- **Humility** (face down) – **Guilt** (face up)
- **Beginner's mind** (face down) – **Overwhelm** (face up)

(You could stick them together before class so they don't get muddled.)

## Step 3: Guide students to identify their feelings

### Educators' script

Start moving around the room looking at the feelings in each segment. Gravitate to the feeling that best describes how you feel about climate change and the state of the world.

If you are feeling this feeling strongly, stand closer to the centre of the room (within your chosen segment).

If you are only feeling this feeling a little, position yourself towards the edge of the room within your chosen segment.

### Educators' note

In Step 4, when students share in pairs, there may be a slight risk of some students becoming triggered. Some students may share information about the consequences of climate change that is an emotional shock for other students. To support your students before this step, you can remind them of their emotional resources and the somatic practice you did together in Activity 1 of this lesson.



## Step 4: Share feelings

### Educators' script

Find a partner near you – preferably in the same segment – and take turns sharing why you feel this way, starting with 'I feel'.

For example:

*'I feel sad when I think about all the animals that lost their homes in the bushfires.'*

*'I feel really angry that there are already so many innovations available to help climate change and we are still using polluting industries.'*

*'I feel overwhelmed when I think about everything that's going on in the world.'*

### Options

You can allocate 60 seconds to each question or encourage more casual conversation. Offer students the choice not to speak or to simply listen. If time allows, repeat the exercise with a different feeling.



## Step 5: Introduce flipsides concept

Explain your understanding of the flipsides (based on the educators' video) and, if you feel comfortable, share an example of your own.

Ask someone in each segment to flip the poster to reveal the positive flipside feeling.

Say to students:

*'Spend time talking with your partner in your segment about the flipside.'*

If there is time, repeat with another 'flipside' feeling.

## Step 6: Guide somatic exercise and reflection

Practise one of the somatic practices we learnt in Lessons 1 and 2 – the same one you used earlier in this lesson (*Earth, Tree shake, Butterfly taps, Finger hold or Breath hack*).

### Options

Use another somatic practice the class has tried before. Afterwards, invite students to share insights from the activity with the group, or reflect in their journals.

## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educators' script

Feeling anxious, distressed, or even angry about climate change is a natural response to witnessing harm to the land, waters and skies that sustain us. These emotions are not only normal but also reflect a sense of responsibility and care.

Dr. Anne Poelina, an Indigenous academic and leader, has noted: 'Our Country is sick, and we feel that sickness in our bodies and minds.'<sup>2</sup>

Recognising this connection helps to validate our emotional responses and frames them as a form of ecological and cultural empathy. The process of turning anxiety and distress into action involves finding ways to restore balance through connection to Country, community and culture.



## Step 2: Share reflections

Share this reflection and invite students to write, draw or doodle in their journal.

*'A forest can regenerate after a cool fire, using the disturbance to spark new growth. How can I use feelings of anxiety or distress to strengthen my connection to nature and let those emotions guide actions that restore balance and regenerate my own growth?'*

### Options

Before asking students to turn to page 18 of their journal, briefly discuss how a forest regenerates after a cool fire.

- Contemplate how anxiety and distress are like a cool fire.
- Discuss actions that help restore balance and regenerate growth.

Messages from Aunty Glenda MacPhail (Yaegl Elder)

*'Fire is required for new growth, makes the seeds grow, keeps you warm, and the smoke cleanses the old energies and brings the new.'*



*Make time for reflection; pausing and holding your feeling, leaning in, absorbing, thinking about pros and cons, then releasing the feeling to Country. Say: "I've had enough of this now".*

*Tell the tree everything. Talk and vent and get everything out of your system. Trust the tree, the water, the wind to listen. It's held, not spoken. Your feelings can be given away. The wind takes it away, the waves wash it away. The universe has heard you. It will make it better.'*

## Summarise the lesson

Briefly revisit the key ideas explored today.

Introduce the *Everyday recharge* activity.

Explain that students can complete this now, or later as an independent or homework task (on page 14 of their student journal).

Remind students that support is available if any feelings arise during reflection or the *Everyday recharge* activity.

### Educators' script

In this lesson we saw how climate change is touching all of us in different ways.

We voiced some of our more challenging emotions about climate change and the state of the world and we explored how acknowledging these feelings can give us access to their 'flipsides'.

We contemplated what fires and regrowth can teach us about guiding restorative and regenerative action.



## Final reflection

### Educators' script

Again, we have explored some big topics today. Well done and thank you for your participation. Take out your journal and consider:

***'What is one self care, community care, nature care or connection activity that I could do this afternoon?'***

Turn to page 17 of your student journal and write down your response.

In closing, if anyone has any questions or comments about today's lesson, I (and our wellbeing support person) am available to chat with you after class, or by email.

## Further resources for teachers

Climate Psychology Alliance North America (n.d.) [An educator's guide to climate emotions](#), Climate Psychology Alliance North America website, accessed 15 October 2025. [www.climatepsychology.us/educators-guide-climate-emotions](http://www.climatepsychology.us/educators-guide-climate-emotions)

Climate Mental Health (2023) [The emotions wheel teacher guide](#), accessed 15 October 2025. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Hes0yZ7QQIT6laYijax3\\_5aXbtHAX-Llj\\_VDPVzG4I4/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Hes0yZ7QQIT6laYijax3_5aXbtHAX-Llj_VDPVzG4I4/edit?usp=sharing)

## Further resources for students

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Do I have eco-anxiety?](#), accessed 15 October 2025. <https://www.forceofnature.xyz/eco-anxiety-quiz>

## First Nations further reading

Dudgeon P & Bray A (2020) 'Indigenous psychological health: the role of cultural identity and cultural continuity', *Australian Indigenous Health Bulletin* 20(4).

Marshall V (2017) *Overturing aqua nullius: securing Aboriginal water rights*, Aboriginal Studies Press.

Moreton-Robinson A (2015) *The white possessive: property, power and Indigenous sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press.

## Background reading

Macy J and Brown M (2015) *Coming back to life: The updated guide to the work that reconnects*, New Society Publishers.

Macy J and Johnstone C (2022) *Active hope: How to face the mess we're in with unexpected resilience and creative power*, New World Library.

Pikhala P (2020) 'Eco-anxiety and environmental education', *Sustainability* 12:10149, doi:10.3390/su122310149.

Pikhala P (2022) 'The process of eco-anxiety and ecological grief: A narrative review and a new proposal', *Sustainability* 14:16628.

## References

- 1 NSW Government, AdaptNSW (2022) [The rise of eco-anxiety and building our climate resilience](#), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/rise-eco-anxiety-and-building-our-climate-resilience](http://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/rise-eco-anxiety-and-building-our-climate-resilience)
- 2 Poelina A, Taylor K and Perdrisat I (2019) 'Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council: an Indigenous cultural approach to collaborative water governance', *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* 26(3):236–254 accessed 22 October 2025. [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14486563.2019.1651226](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14486563.2019.1651226)

## Copyright materials

The Joyalty Project (2020) [How on Earth: Youth leadership training in climate resilience](#), accessed 21 November 2025. <https://www.joyalty.org/how-on-earth>



# Feel Real



Overwhelm Beginner's mind



Anger Passion



Grief Love



Guilt Humility



Fear Courage



# Lesson 4: Visioning and inspiration

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 4

# Visioning and inspiration



**Lesson length (all activities):**  
90 minutes



**Materials:**

[Student journal](#)

[ReVision illustration](#)

[A3 Vision poster printout](#)

Butchers paper and marker pens



**Delivery:**

Indoor classroom with video projector, whiteboard (can clear space in classroom for visioning exercise)



**Watch:**

[Educators' video](#)

(timestamp 19:14 to 21:40 - 3 minutes)



**Screen:**

[Lesson 4 video](#)

*A climate of change: wellbeing resources for students and educators*

## Lesson purpose and focus

### Key inquiry

*'Now we are witnessing and personally experiencing more impacts of climate change, and learning about predictions for the future, how do we remain actively hopeful and inspired?'*

### Key message

There are 3 powerful stories or narratives of our time:

- Business as usual
- Disaster
- The great transition.

Choosing the story we each live by impacts our personal life, our wellbeing and the world around us.

We are in a time of significant change and uncertainty. There is possibility and promise in this time, and we are collectively creating the future every day. While understanding the parameters or limits of the reality of climate change, seeking out positive initiatives and strengthening our 'imagination muscles' will have significant practical impacts.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
20 mins	1. <i>Three stories of our time</i> video	Student journal, video, illustration
20 mins	2. Group visioning <i>Our positive future</i>	Butchers paper (or whiteboard) Vision poster, textas
20 mins	3. Inspirational stories of action	Student laptops, WiFi
20 mins	4. First Nations contemplation	Whiteboard, Student journal
10 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Explore examples of positive regenerative climate action
- Use imagination and creativity to stretch the possibilities available to them and the future
- Experience the motivating power of narrative choice, visioning and positive examples and role models.

### Students can:

- Enjoy the process of applying imagination and creative thinking to gnarly climate-related problems, and experience empowerment and self-esteem from doing so
- Collaborate effectively to co-create a positive vision together and feel a sense of community support
- Feel more inspired, motivated, actively hopeful and optimistic, and a sense of relief that 'another world is possible' even within the constraints of climate change.



### Educators' script

There are 3 main stories shaping our time – lenses through which we see the world and our place in it.

These stories live through us, shaping how we think and act. We can choose which one we feed with our energy and attention.

The first is *business as usual* – the story that nothing needs to change.

The second is *disaster* – a story of collapse, destruction and hopelessness.

The third is *the great transition*. This invites us to focus on a regenerative, just and sustainable world.

It's natural to move between all three, but where we choose to focus matters to our wellbeing and can help sow the seeds of positive change.

Like a garden, the future grows from the seeds we plant today. And just as a gardener nurtures the soil, we must cultivate our imagination muscle – because envisioning a better world is the first step to building one.

#### Strengthening imagination muscles

Visioning is about using imagination to picture the future we want. Instead of dwelling on problems, we ask:

***'What could it look like if the regenerative future we dream of existed now?'***

By visualising and rehearsing positive outcomes in our minds, we strengthen creativity, motivation and problem-solving. The same neural pathways light up as if we were living it.

#### Visioning

As we are reimagining the future, we often focus on physical things – like technologies or landscapes – but values matter too.

***'What guiding principles do we want to weave through everything we create?'***

Our visions must be grounded in knowledge – scientific facts, cultural wisdom and lived experience. Visions aren't wishful thinking. They are based in reality.

And they must include many other voices, especially those of the natural world and of people who are traditionally marginalised in our society. Because the future belongs to all of us.



## Step 1: Explore illustration

Use the [ReVision illustration](#) as a visual aid to describe the 3 stories of our time (can be printed as colour A3 poster or projected onto screen).

The illustration can be read from left to right:

- Grey indicates a continuation of business as usual
- The coloured centre shows the potential for the great transition
- Brown, at the right, shows a path towards disaster.



## Step 2: Introduce the great transition

Ask students:

*‘What can you see in the central vision of the great transition? What kinds of values can you see portrayed in this vision?’*

Encourage students to notice not just the physical or environmental features, but also the social and community actions.

Prompt students to turn to page 20 of their student journal to reflect on these two questions – either through writing, drawing or discussion.

## Step 3: Play video

[Lesson 4 video: Visioning and inspiration](#) (7 minutes)

To prepare students for the visioning exercise, ask them to answer the questions on page 21 of the student journal. Ask them these questions:

*‘What values were important to the young people in the video?’*

*‘What are the core values you would like to weave into your collective vision?’*

## Step 1: Prepare for the activity

Stick the [A3 Vision poster](#) to a large piece of butchers paper (or whiteboard).

Place in the centre of the circle of students, if you have cleared space in the classroom.

Decide who will be scribing the student responses in large writing on butchers paper or whiteboard.



### Options

If your students are likely to be comfortable calling out their ideas and visions in front of the rest of the class, then scribe their answers as they are shared.

You can ask students to share their ideas at different places through the educators' script, such as after each prompt question, or at the very end, depending on what feels best with your group.

A quieter version of this activity is for students to use many coloured marker pens to write their own visions on the paper (or whiteboard) for you to read out.

Another creative option is to ask students to draw aspects of their vision for the future and then reflect collectively on the drawing.

## Step 2: Create a shared vision

### Educators' script

Let's take a moment to envision a positive future – one that supports the environment and humanity.

As humans, we have the creativity to picture infinite possibilities and the power to shape our future paths. Before we act, we need to dream of where we want to go.

Close your eyes or lower your gaze. Imagine it's 20 years from now. We've answered the planet's call – cutting emissions, restoring nature, and creating fair, regenerative communities.

Picture your community:

- What are people doing, and how are they getting around?
- What's changed? Are there still petrol stations or single-use plastics?
- Where do people meet, and where does nature thrive?
- How do people connect with each other and with the natural world?

Now imagine something joyful. What are people celebrating in this flourishing future? What's your role in this vision, and how does it feel to be part of it?

Call out your ideas and I'll write them up on the board.

Let's build this vision together – vivid, vibrant and hopeful!



### Options

You could also use categories to guide and encourage responses if needed, such as biodiversity, community care, renewable energy, mental health, education and food.

*Group Visioning Our Positive Future, © 2020 The Joyality Project.*

## Step 1: Share examples

Share inspiring examples of regenerative climate action – local or global. These might be projects, movements or initiatives you're involved in, know about, or have found online.

If you don't have local examples, search for community or council-led projects such as community gardens, solar installations, tree planting, biodiversity programs, housing retrofits, regenerative farming, or community support during extreme weather.

You can also use the lesson illustration or teacher resources to spark ideas, and look for projects where young people are actively involved or leading with adult support.

### Educators' script

Hundreds of millions of people around the world are actively engaged in powerful and inspiring actions to make the world more resilient, regenerative and socially just in the face of climate change. These actions range from individual behaviours and small-scale projects, through to local and regional initiatives, right up to global movements and agreements.



## Step 2: Research stories

Ask students to research in class using laptops and WiFi.

*'Find a story of positive change that inspires you. Write down some notes so you can share this story.'*

Ask students to consider:

- Projects they are already involved in
- Projects in local area that they've heard about
- Other initiatives of young people.

Then do some online research to try and find more information:

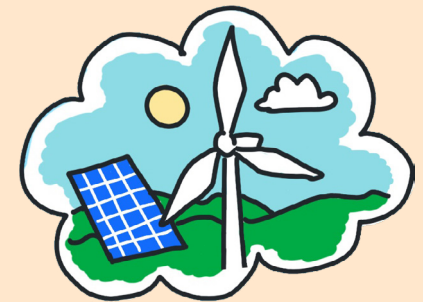
- Revisit the *Balance* independent activity from Lesson 1 (and the websites) for inspiration
- Write notes about these projects in their student journal on page 23 and save the links.

## Step 3: Invite students to share

Ask students to form groups of 4 and take turns sharing the most inspiring story they've found, and listening to others share theirs.

### Options

Each group shares their most inspiring story. Ask a few small groups to share back to class; or join pairs of groups together to share with each other.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educators' script

First Nations Peoples have faced and adapted to numerous challenges over millennia demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of adversity.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson says: 'Indigenous communities possess a deep well of cultural knowledge and resilience that can guide us through the most challenging times.'<sup>3</sup>

Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison noted the role of imagination and vision in shaping a positive future:

*'Our connection to Country and our cultural stories provide a vision of hope and a roadmap for creating a sustainable future.'*<sup>4</sup>



## Step 2: Share reflections

Share this reflection and invite students to write, draw or doodle in their journal (on page 24).

*'Mangroves constantly adapt to shifting tides. How can I adapt to change by engaging with cultural stories, joining community-led activities, and taking shared responsibility for caring for the land?'*

### Options

Before asking students to journal, briefly discuss how mangroves adapt, grow, thrive and protect the land and ecosystems in a time of climate change.

Brainstorm how cultural narratives, community initiatives, and focusing on shared responsibility for the land might be similar to mangroves.



### Summarise the lesson

Introduce the *Inspiration* activity. Explain that students can complete it now, or later as an independent or homework task. Remind them that support is always available if any emotions arise while reflecting on today's lesson.

#### Educators' script

In this lesson we spoke about how this is a time of great potential for positive change. We envisioned our inspiring collective positive vision of the future. And we heard some inspiring stories of ways people are already working towards this future.

Then we contemplated what mangroves can teach us about engaging with cultural stories, joining community-led activities, and taking shared responsibility for caring for the land.

In closing, if anyone has any questions or comments about today's lesson, I (and our wellbeing support person) am available to chat with you after class, or by email.

### Complete inspiration activity

To close the lesson, encourage students to turn to page 23 of their journals and write down additional examples of projects, people, places, songs, quotes or anything else inspiring that has been shared during this lesson.



## Further resources for teachers

FanForce (n.d.) [The power of activism](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl4Nbd\\_DeMo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pl4Nbd_DeMo)

Climate Action Australia (n.d.) [Organisations taking action](#), accessed 22 October 2025. [www.climateactionaustralia.net.au/information/organisations-taking-action/](https://www.climateactionaustralia.net.au/information/organisations-taking-action/)

NSW Government (n.d.) [Stories of success](#), NSW Climate and Energy Action, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.energy.nsw.gov.au/government-and-local-organisations/stories-success-local](https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/government-and-local-organisations/stories-success-local)

NSW Government (n.d.) [Stories and case studies](#), AdaptNSW, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/stories-and-case-studies](https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/stories-and-case-studies)

NSW Government (n.d.) [NSW Government action on climate change](#), AdaptNSW, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-adaptnsw/nsw-government-action-climate-change](https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/about-adaptnsw/nsw-government-action-climate-change)

## Further resources for students

Australian Youth Climate Coalition (n.d.) [Homepage](#), accessed 22 October 2025. [www.aycc.org.au](https://www.aycc.org.au)

Seed Mob (n.d.) [Homepage](#), accessed 22 October 2025. [www.seedmob.org.au](https://www.seedmob.org.au)

## Copyright material

The Joyalty Project (2020) [How on Earth: Youth leadership training in climate resilience](#), accessed 21 November 2025. <https://www.joyalty.org/how-on-earth>

## References

- 1 Macy J and Johnstone C (2022) *Active hope: how to face the mess we're in with unexpected resilience and creative power*, New World Library
- 2 Bragg E (2015) [“What if...?”: climate change as ally](#), *Ecopsychology* 7(4):231–237, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2015.0022>
- 3 Moreton-Robinson A (2015) *The white possessive: property, power, and Indigenous sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press
- 4 Dulumunmun Harrison M (2013) *My people's dreaming: An Aboriginal Elder speaks on life, land, spirit and forgiveness*. Finch Publishing.



# ReVision



# Lesson 5: Climate action

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 5

# Climate action



**Lesson length (all activities):**

90 minutes



**Materials:**

**Student journal**

**ReGenerate illustration**

4 x A3 posters for levels of action  
4 x A3 posters for types of action  
(refer to page 3 for links to posters)

Students' vision on butchers paper created in Lesson 4

A5 coloured paper  
(4 different colours)

Marker pens

6 ropes (6-7 metres if full size class)



**Delivery:**

Large hall space (no video projector or whiteboard needed)



**Watch:**

**Educators' video**

(timestamp 21:41 to 25:25

– 4 minutes)

## Lesson purpose and focus

### Key inquiry






*'It's so overwhelming when I think about everything that needs to be done to adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts. Where do I start?'*

### Key message

A diverse range of actions and engagements are necessary in response to climate change and its intersecting crises. All ideas are welcome. This is a time for 'all hands on deck' – while also recognising the relationship between privilege and the ability to respond and the responsibility to respond.

In order to effect the scale and speed of change required, we need to apply the power of creative collaboration and innovation across all levels of action for social change, and all aspects of climate action. When we take a systems approach, responding reciprocally to each other and with the natural world, emergent solutions will arise that regenerate our world and protect those most vulnerable.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
 15 mins	1. Let's power up!	Student journal, illustration
 15 mins	2. Get ready, set ...	Student journal
 30 mins	3. <i>Go! Climate action game</i>	6 ropes 4 x A3 posters – levels of action 4 x A3 posters – types of climate action Vision from Lesson 4
 20 mins	4. First Nations contemplation	Student journal
 10 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Broaden and deepen their understanding of climate action
- Learn about and apply 4 levels of action required to create effective engaged citizens and advocates
- Become aware of and understand 4 different types of climate action
- Learn about and generate practical ideas for climate action
- Draw upon their own life experiences and existing projects or groups
- Experience a fast and joyous process – one that is both competitive and friendly, encouraging and collaborative, and which demonstrates that we want everyone to be successful.

### Students can:

- Have fun in small groups addressing the core challenges of our time
- Collaborate creatively to develop positive actions
- Balance urgency with care and consideration for all stakeholders
- Gain a sense of empowerment, agency and self-esteem through developing ideas quickly.



## Step 1: Introduce the activity

In this section, students will explore the different ways individuals and communities can contribute to social and environmental change. The content is structured across two key dimensions: types and levels of action.

### Types of climate action:

- [Mitigation](#)
- [Psychological and social resilience](#)
- [Preparation](#)
- [Response and recovery.](#)

### Levels of action for social change:

- [Personal action](#)
- [Communication](#)
- [Community solutions](#)
- [Advocacy.](#)

*‘Hope lies in action and it all starts with the first step.’*

Kal Glanznig, young Australian changemaker and filmmaker of Rising Up.<sup>1</sup>

## Educators' script

We are going to focus on 4 types of climate action:<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Mitigation

Actions that reduce the extent and impacts of climate change, for example by reducing fossil fuel emissions in the atmosphere.

### 2. Psychological and social resilience

Maximising psychological wellbeing and community cohesiveness and collaboration.

### 3. Preparation

Getting ready for extreme weather events and climate-related disasters.

### 4. Response and recovery

Dealing with and healing from extreme weather events and climate-related disasters.



And 4 levels of action for social change<sup>3,4</sup> towards the climate goals are:

### 1. Personal action

Anything we can do as an individual that contributes to these goals (in other words, ‘Do it yourself!’).

### 2. Communication

Or communic-action, which is sharing information, ideas, feelings and actions in response to climate change (in other words, ‘Talk about it!’).

### 3. Community solutions

Grassroots action towards these climate goals, systems change from the bottom up (In other words, ‘Let’s do it ourselves!’).

### 4. Advocacy

Grassroots influence for change to systems from the top down (In other words, ‘Change the system!’).

Each one of these levels builds on the one before – from personal, to communication, to community solutions and advocacy. We each have stronger ground to stand upon when we practise the level before it, and joining together to take action collectively is where our ultimate strength and wellbeing lie.





### Climate action game

	Mitigation	Psychological and social resilience	Preparation	Response and recovery
<p><b>4. Advocacy</b></p> <p><b>‘Change the system!’</b></p> <p>(Grassroots influence for top down change)</p>	<p>Writing to government and corporate decision-makers encouraging the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy and advocating for a just transition for workers and communities.</p>	<p>Educating politicians about the mental health impacts of climate change; and lobbying for government resources to support resilience initiatives.</p>	<p>Supporting politicians and businesses that promote sustainable, regenerative, local economies.</p>	<p>Talking with local politicians and people working in government about declaring a state of emergency and seeking funds for recovery efforts covered by insurance.</p>
<p><b>3. Community solutions</b></p> <p><b>‘Let’s do it ourselves!’</b></p> <p>(Grassroots action)</p>	<p>Embracing community gardens and farmers markets to reduce food miles.</p>	<p>Taking action to feel productive and reduce eco-anxiety such as a community tree planting day, beach clean-up.</p>	<p>Hosting market stalls and community events to raise awareness about preparation for climate-induced disasters.</p>	<p>Asking friends for help and forming working bees to clear fallen trees and make the place safe again.</p>
<p><b>2. Communication</b></p> <p><b>‘Talk about it!’</b></p> <p>(Share info, ideas, feelings and actions)</p>	<p>Creating videos for social media that educate others and inspire action.</p>	<p>Sharing personal experiences and feelings about climate change with other people to receive support and help others not feel alone.</p>	<p>Raising awareness for what can happen in the future – climate predictions.</p>	<p>Sharing on social media the devastation of a storm; the actions needed to recover; and the resilience of the forest.</p>
<p><b>1. Personal action (start here!)</b></p> <p><b>‘Do it yourself!’</b></p> <p>(Direct impact)</p>	<p>Eating a plant-based diet and shopping at local farmers market.</p>	<p>Adopting self-care tactics including meditation, getting out into nature.</p>	<p>Having fire season plans including clearing gutters, evacuation kit and plan.</p>	<p>Clearing pathways and fallen branches, repairing damage after storms and cyclones.</p>

\* Climate Action Game © The Joyalty Project (2020)

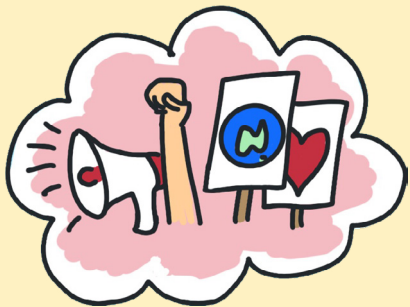
### Step 1: Introduce the activity

#### Educators' script

When we centre justice, decolonisation and inclusivity in climate action, we create solutions that benefit everyone, not just a privileged few.

This approach helps to build resilient communities, amplifies voices that are often left out – such as First Nations peoples and those most affected by climate change – and draws on diverse knowledge systems to create sustainable, regenerative solutions.

Focusing on fairness ensures that climate action is not only about surviving but thriving together in a fairer, more equitable world.



### Step 2: Form teams

Split the class into 4 groups (with a staff or student facilitator in each). Assign one of the 4 questions to each group to briefly discuss. Write questions on the board or pieces of paper for each group.

Ask students to consider:

*‘Who benefits most from current climate actions, and who might be left behind?’*

*‘How can we make climate solutions more inclusive and accessible to everyone?’*

*‘What can we learn when we listen to Indigenous people and the lived experiences of communities most impacted by climate change?’*

*‘What might climate justice look like in our town, suburb, city or region?’*

Ask for a spokesperson from each group to report back to the class.

### Step 3: Identify what matters most

Guide students to generate a checklist of ‘what’s important to us’ or ‘guiding principles’ to weave into their climate actions.

#### Options

Ask students to write this list on page 28 of their journal.



## Step 1: Prepare the space

The *Climate action* game helps students move beyond feelings of overwhelm and generate creative, practical ideas for a just and regenerative future.

Set up as a giant board game, students work in teams to brainstorm actions and move towards the positive future they imagined in Lesson 4.

Prepare all posters in advance. In a large hall or open space, lay out ropes on the floor in a grid pattern.

Make the squares large enough for about a quarter of the class to stand in or gather around. Adjust based on space and rope length; 6–7 metres should suit a full class.

Label the columns with the types of climate action:

- Mitigation
- Resilience
- Preparation
- Response and recovery.

Label the rows with levels of action for social change, placing personal action closest to the starting line:

- Personal action
- Communication
- Community solutions
- Advocacy.

Place coloured pieces of paper in each square – one colour per team – for students to record ideas as they move up their column.

Aim for one sheet per 3–4 students in each team.

Place the class's Lesson 4 vision at the far end of the grid.

Now the game is ready to begin.

### Options

While this activity is designed as a race, teachers may choose to run it as a collaborative brainstorm instead – more like a patchwork or puzzle than a linear progression.

If using this approach, ask students to work in pairs. Each pair starts at one square, discussing and noting their ideas. When they're ready, they move to another empty square and repeat the process until all squares have been filled.

To finish, invite each student to share one idea with the class, ensuring every contribution is heard and captured.

Instructions are described in the [Educators' video](#) (timestamp 24:04 to 25:25 – 2 minutes)

## Step 2: Start with a somatic practice

Ask the students to stay in the 4 groups they have already formed for Activity 2 (Get ready, set...). Ask each group to stand together at the starting line.

Invite students to participate in a simple grounding exercise.

### Educators' script

Feel where your feet contact the floor.

Move your feet around until you feel them softening or spreading out a bit.

Feel the floor beneath your feet.

Experiment with putting more pressure on one foot, then the other.

Feel the solidity and support beneath you.

See if you can imagine the earth beneath the layers of building material.

See if you can connect to or imagine the solid support of the earth.

Take a few moments to rest into a feeling of support.



## Step 3: Run Round 1

### Educators' script

Welcome to the *Climate action game*.

Here's how to play:

#### 1. Match teams with themes

Your team will focus on one of 4 themes: mitigation; psychological and social resilience; preparation; or response and recovery.

#### 2. Your goal

Work as a group to come up with actions for each 'level' of the game. These actions will move your team step by step towards the ultimate goal: our collective vision of a regenerative future.

#### 3. The levels

Each level requires a specific kind of action related to your team's theme, starting with personal action at the bottom and progressing through to advocacy at the top.

#### Level 1: Personal action

Think of something one person can do that has a direct positive impact on your team's theme and write it on the coloured paper in that square.

Example: For mitigation, it might be planting a tree.

#### Level 2: Communication

Come up with a way to share or educate others about your action. Write it on the coloured paper in the communication square.

Example: Sharing on social media why tree planting helps with flood mitigation.

#### Level 3: Community solutions

Plan how your group can collaborate with others in your local area.

Example: Organising a tree-planting event with your neighbours or friends.

#### Level 4: Advocacy

Think of an action that involves working with or influencing decision-makers.

Example: Encouraging government support for large-scale tree planting projects.

#### 4. Teamwork and creativity

Work together to brainstorm creative, meaningful actions at each level. Keep your ideas grounded but forward-thinking, aiming for real-world solutions.

We need all teams to win, so when one team reaches the finish line, encourage celebration and then ask them to turn and cheerlead the other teams.

#### 5. Reflect

*'What was it like working as a team in a race towards our vision?'*



## Step 4: Run Round 2

### Educators' script

Just like in real life, we are responding to urgent threats and challenges. However, these challenges need to be met in ways that integrate climate justice, First Nations knowledge, and that engages and benefits marginalised people.

#### 1. Review

Go back to the starting line with your group. Read through each action you have created. See if in your hurry you have left anyone behind. Have you included diverse knowledge and experience from multicultural groups and First Nations Peoples? Is your action inclusive of people with differing abilities, identities and privilege? Any other adjustments?

#### 2. Refine

Move toward our vision more carefully this time, and make any necessary adjustments to make your actions just and inclusive.

#### 3. Share

Ask for a spokesperson from each team to report their team actions.

#### 4. Reflect

Ask students:

*'What was it like reviewing your actions as a team?'*

## Step 5: Repeat the somatic practice

Students may have a range of responses and feelings as they participate in or observe this game, depending on their own experience with climate impacts. Be alert to any signs of distress in the group as a whole or individual students.

Use one of the somatic practices from Lessons 1 and 2 (*Earth, Tree shake, Butterfly taps, Finger holds, Breath hacks*) after this game and follow up by checking in with them and offering any additional support.

### Options

Use the wellbeing mascot and ask students to choose the somatic practice of their preference.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educators' script

Addressing the challenge of climate change requires a multi-dimensional approach that integrates Traditional Indigenous wisdom with contemporary strategies.<sup>5</sup>

As Professor Marcia Langton AO articulates, starting with community-led initiatives and valuing Indigenous knowledge systems can provide a strong foundation for effective climate action.<sup>6</sup>

Applying effort at all levels – from grassroots community actions to high-level policy advocacy – creates solutions that are both transformative and inclusive.

## Step 2: Share reflections

Share the contemplation point below and invite students to write, draw or doodle on page 29 of their journal.

*‘Wetlands filter pollutants, provide habitat and adapt to environmental change to support many species. How can I learn from this to explore different ways of understanding climate action? How can I do this while recognising that people and communities have different capacities and responsibilities?’*

### Options

Before asking students to journal, briefly discuss how wetlands support a multitude of species by filtering pollutants, providing habitat and adapting to environmental changes

Brainstorm different ways of understanding climate action while recognising the diverse capacities and responsibilities within our communities.



## Summarise the lesson

Briefly revisit the key ideas explored today.

Introduce the *3 circles* activity<sup>7</sup>, or suggest students undertake this as an independent activity for homework.

### Educators' script

Today we explored the 4 levels of action for social change and how climate justice benefits everyone.

We played the *Climate action game*, refining our ideas to ensure no one is left behind.

We reflected on what wetlands can teach us about taking action for a just future.

Now, write in your journal (on page 28) one idea for an action that sparked your interest or inspired you.

If anyone has any questions or comments about today's lesson, I (and our wellbeing support person) am available to chat after class or by email.

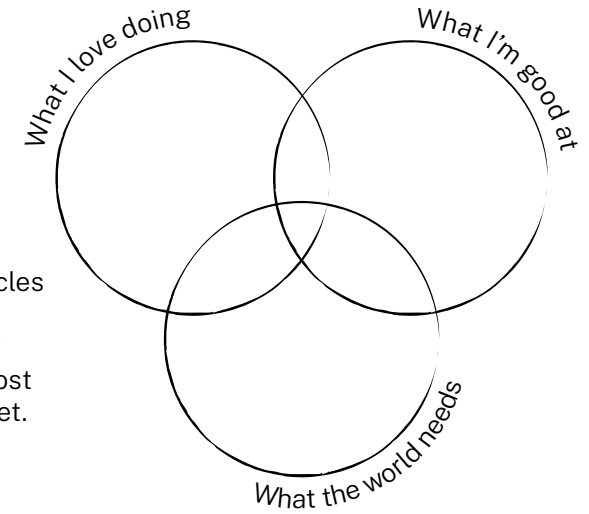


### Educators' script

In your journal (page 30), find the *3 circles* page. You'll see three overlapping circles labelled:

- What I love doing
- What I'm good at
- What the world needs.

The aim is to find where these circles intersect. Actions that sit in this shared space are often fuelled by joy and purpose. These are the most regenerative for you and the planet.



## Further resources for teachers

Climate Action Australia (n.d.) [What can my community do?](https://www.climateactionaustralia.net.au/what-can-i-do/my-community/), accessed 22 October 2025.

Climate for Change (n.d.) [Homepage](https://www.climateforchange.org.au), accessed 22 October 2025.

## Further resources for students

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Community](https://www.forceofnature.xyz/community), *Activating a global community of change-makers*, accessed 22 October 2025.

Gasch R and Reticker-Flynn J et al. (n.d.) [Youth activist toolkit](https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf), *Advocates for Youth*, accessed 22 October 2025.

Glanznic K (2024) [Rising up](https://www.risingup.tv) [Film], accessed 22 October 2025.

## Background reading

Thomas L (2022) *The intersectional environmentalist: how to dismantle systems of oppression to protect people and planet*, Voracious.

## Copyright material

The Joyality Project (2020) [How on Earth: Youth leadership training in climate resilience](https://www.joyality.org/how-on-earth), accessed 21 November 2025.

## References

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- Australian Council of Social Service (2015) *Resilient community organisations: six steps to resilience*, [Emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery](https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/leading-resilience/emergency-management-prevention-preparedness-response-recovery), accessed 22 October 2025.
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- AtKisson A (1991) [The innovation diffusion game](https://www.context.org/iclib/ic28/atkisson/) – a tool for encouraging participation in positive cultural change, Context Institute, accessed 22 October 2025.
- Yunupingu G (1997) *Our land is our life: land rights – past, present and future*, ed. G Yunupingu, University of Queensland Press.
- Langton M (2020) *Welcome to Country: a travel guide to Indigenous Australia*, Hardie Grant Books.
- Mitsuhashi, Y. (2018) *Ikigai*. Kyle Books.



# ReGenerate



Advocacy

Community Solutions

Communication

Personal Action

Mitigation

Resilience

Preparation

Recovery

# Lesson 6: Nature connection and reciprocity

A climate of change: wellbeing  
resources for students and educators



## Lesson 6

# Nature connection and reciprocity



**Lesson length (all activities):**  
90 minutes



**Materials:**

Student journal

ReConnect illustration

Butchers paper (optional)

Marker pens, coloured pencils,  
Textas and paints



**Delivery:**

Indoor classroom with video projector, whiteboard; classroom with view of vegetation or sky (preferable) and easy, quick access to outdoor area with grass (if possible)



**Watch:**

Educators' video

(timestamp 25:26 to 27:44  
-2 minutes)



**Screen:**

Lesson 6 video

*A climate of change: wellbeing resources for students and educators*

## Lesson purpose and focus

### Key inquiry

*'Why is connecting with nature important? How can I connect with nature in ways that nourish me? What if I don't have many natural places around me? What does reciprocity mean, and how can this shape my actions and relationships with all living beings?'*






### Key message

We have spent 99% of our history as human beings living in wild nature. This is why, on a deep psychological and physiological level, we respond like we are 'at home' and our 'rest and digest' mode switches on (refer to window of tolerance in Lesson 2).

There is clear and strong scientific evidence for the psychological benefits of nature connection. Even in our contemporary, industrialised, materialistic, electronic society, many of us seek out natural environments for our rest and recreation.

Nature has traditionally been a source of healing, inspiration and guidance for humanity and can still be so, even in times of dramatic change and destruction. The principles of reciprocity inherent in First Nations cultures still operate, and we will be wise to develop our ability to listen directly to and learn from Country: 'Look after nature, and nature will look after us'.

## Teaching sequence (total 90 minutes)

Time	Activity	Materials
 20 mins	1. Connecting with nature and video	Illustration, whiteboard; Student journal butchers paper (optional) video and projector
 15 mins	2. <i>My nature place</i>	Student journal, coloured pencils, textas or paints
 20 mins	3. Walking meditation, <i>Letter from Gaia</i> exercise	Outdoor space (if possible)
 20 mins	4. First Nations contemplation	Student journal
 15 mins	5. Reflection	Student journal

## Learning intentions and success criteria

### Students will:

- Learn about the psychological benefits of deep nature connection, and how to experience these benefits even during environmental degradation and climate change
- Experience the power of sensory awareness and imagination to turbo-charge the positive impacts of spending time in nature
- Collect ideas for different ways of connecting with nature
- Practise reciprocity.

### Students can:

- Feel relaxation, wonder and awe from being part of and deeply connected with nature, and being supported by nature
- Find inspiration and sources of resilience from nature
- Feel 'on the same side' with nature even as the climate changes
- Practise new ways of connecting with nature, including experiencing direct benefits of visualising nature connection
- Feel comfortable sharing personal experiences of nature connection with others.



## Step 1: Introduce the activity

There are many psychological and physical benefits of nature connection.<sup>1,2</sup> Among these, nature can:

- Reduce stress, anxiety, depression and improve overall emotional wellbeing
- Improve focus and creativity
- Enhance sleep, lower blood pressure, boost immunity and lower the risk of chronic disease

- Develop a reciprocal relationship, with mutual benefits including psychological wellbeing, health and regeneration of both the natural world and humans.

### Options

Project the [ReConnect illustration](#) on screen, pause on screen during video, use printed A3 illustration, and/or identify it in student journal.



## Educators' script

When we take time to connect with nature – walking in a park, listening to birdsong, or simply sitting under a tree – we give our minds and bodies a chance to rest and recharge.

You may have noticed how being in nature helps you feel better. Research confirms this. Time in nature can reduce stress, sharpen focus, lift mood and even boost our immune system. It helps us feel calmer, healthier and more alive.

Nature connection is more than just spending time outside. It's about forming a relationship with the natural world and recognising that we're part of something bigger.

When we feel that connection, we see how everything – including us – is linked. This can inspire us to make choices that care for both people and planet.

Not everyone has easy access to natural spaces. Urban environments, mobility challenges, or barriers like cost, safety or time can make it harder. But connection is still possible. This might be by tending indoor plants, watching nature videos or simply listening to recorded birdsong or ocean sounds. Small moments can help us connect with the natural world.



Connecting with nature, © 2023  
The Joyality Project.



## Step 1: Lead a quiet activity

Let the students know they will undertake a quiet, imaginative activity for the next 5-10 minutes.

### Educators' script

In this activity we are going to explore a space in your mind's eye where you feel safe and good. Perhaps even a place where you feel inspired, peaceful or joyful.

I invite you to close your eyes, if that feels comfortable, or just soften your gaze.

I invite you to picture a place in nature where you feel good – maybe a park, a beach, a forest, or perhaps a small garden. Imagine yourself there.

Take a deep breath and notice what's around you.

- What can you see? Maybe it's the bright green of leaves, the movement of water, or the shape of clouds overhead?
- What can you hear? Is it the rustle of wind, birdsong, or the steady rhythm of waves?
- What can you feel? Imagine the texture under your feet – grass, sand, or soft moss. Feel the warmth of the sun or the coolness of a breeze.
- What can you smell or taste? Perhaps there's the salty tang of ocean air or the earthy scent after rain.

If it's hard to imagine a whole place, that's okay. You might think about something smaller, like a plant on a windowsill, a beloved pet, or even the vast openness of the sky. These are all parts of nature we can connect with, no matter where we are. Focus on the details of your connection: the way a pet's fur feels under your hand, the shifting shapes of clouds, or the vibrant green of a leaf.

Our connections to nature, no matter how big or small, can be a source of creativity, joy and grounding. We don't have to actually be in nature to feel connected. Simply imagining your nature place can give you the same wellbeing benefits as being there.

And it is something we can easily do in times when we are feeling like we require some extra support or to help stay in our zone of 'flourish and flow' (see Lesson 2).

I invite you to take a few breaths here, appreciating the details of your nature place.

When you're ready, gently bring your attention back to the room, bringing with you any positive feelings from this activity.

## Step 2: Ask students to journal

Encourage students to draw or write some details of their nature place on page 34 of their journal.

Ask them to give their nature place a nickname or a title. Explain: 'Similar to how we call on a friend, remembering the nickname or title of your place can help you remember these replenishing feelings in a moment of need.'

### Options

Write a poem, list of words, draw a picture of the place, or use colours to describe and express your feelings.

## Step 3: Sharing

Ask students:

'Who would like to share what that experience was like for them?'



If you have quick or easy access to an outdoor space from your classroom, we recommend you take the second half of the lesson outside.

### Options

Guide one or both of these activities. The walking meditation is best guided outside, but can be adapted – with a bit of imagination – for indoor use.

Indoor adjustments include:

- **Feeling your feet on floor:** Use your imagination to trace your connection down through the building's structure to the earth beneath.
- **Head in the sky:** Picture the space beyond these walls – the open air and sky above.
- **Breathing:** Even indoors, every breath connects us to the wider world – the same air shared with plants on land and algae in the ocean.
- **Everything from nature:** Notice that the materials in this room – the wood from trees, metals from the earth, and even plastics from ancient wetlands transformed into oil – come from nature.

### Options

Students can watch, colour, doodle, write in their journal or opt out.

## Step 1: Guide a walking meditation (10-15 minutes)

### Educators' script

Start off walking fast, as if you're late for something important – handing in an assignment, meeting someone, keeping an appointment.

Walk very quickly. Feel your heart rate lift and notice that sense of urgency and tension.

Now slow down.

Take a deep breath.

Notice where you are and who's around you.

Look for signs of nature – the sky above, its colour, the clouds, the weather.

Notice what's beneath and around you: trees, plants, grass, sand, rocks, animals, birds, insects, people.

As you walk, pay attention to your feet. Feel the ground – its texture, temperature, softness or firmness. Notice the weight of your body meeting the earth.

Now imagine the crown of your head stretching upwards, as if a thread connects you to the sky. Feel that sense of height and space while your feet stay grounded.

As humans, we're always connecting to the earth and sky. Gravity pulls us down,

our bodies knowing instinctively which way is up.

Pause for a moment and play with gravity where you stand. Test your balance. Gently rock forward and back until you find the point where you're steady. That's your centre of gravity – always there, even as you move.

Begin walking again, feeling that ease and balance. Notice the air on your skin – whether wind or stillness. Sense the movement of your body through the air, like a fish swimming through water.

We move through air because we're not on the planet, but in it – part of the biosphere and atmosphere. Feel yourself moving through that space. Notice the sun on your skin, or the moisture in the air. Remember your skin is a sense organ – experience everything it feels.

Now focus on your breath. As you breathe in, notice what you can smell – grass, flowers, the ocean, food, even urban fumes. Each scent tells you something about where you are.

Let your walk lead you to different textures in nature. Reach out to touch the bark of a tree, a petal, the earth beneath you. Feel the variety of sensations.

As you walk, expand your awareness. Look for details – tiny leaves, shadows, colours, movements.

Soften your gaze so you're not focusing on any one thing. Imagine you can see in all directions – even behind you. Let your hearing help you sense the space around you.

Recognise that you're part of an ecological community. Every creature – bird, insect, reptile, human – shares this place with you and senses your presence as you sense theirs.

Imagine a bird watching you from above. What might it notice?

Then imagine the trees around you respond to your presence.

As you keep walking, picture the earth feeling your footsteps. How does that awareness change the way you move? Try walking slowly, lightly, with care.

Finally, come to a place of stillness.



## Step 2: Introduce Letter from Gaia<sup>3,4</sup> (10-15 minutes)

Introduce students to Lovelock and Margulis' Gaia Theory and origins of the word Gaia, an ancient Greek Earth goddess.

Alternatively use the words 'Mother Earth' instead, explaining that many cultures across the world have some form of honouring the Earth in feminine form.

Remind students about the importance of strengthening their imagination muscles, and encourage them to try this out as an experiment.



### Educators' script

The living organisms of this planet interact with each other and with the physical aspects of Earth to form a complex, synergistic and self-regulating system.

This is known as the Gaia Theory, after the Greek word for the ancestral mother of all life, the primal Mother Earth goddess. It refers to the view that the Earth as a whole is a living system, of which we are a part and from which we are born.

Imagine the Earth could speak to you – what do you think it would say?

As you have begun to deepen your relationship with nature through this lesson, and through the climate wellbeing resources, the idea that the Earth can speak to you may not seem so far-fetched.

Indeed, the Earth speaks to us every day in many ways, and we can view climate change and environmental crises as messages from the Earth, like cries for help or warnings that something is wrong.

When we see a rainbow, a dragonfly lands on our coffee cup, or long-awaited rains come causing everything to bloom, these can be received as messages of love and nurturing from the Earth too.

Take a minute to imagine that the Earth is speaking to you in your language. In your student journal, write a letter to yourself from Gaia.

Begin this way:

*'Dear [insert your name],  
this is your mother Gaia ...'*

Relax and see what comes. Don't think, just write. Remember, no one will see this, so it doesn't have to be 'good'. Just write what comes, listen, allow yourself to be a transmitter, and allow the Earth to speak through you.

## Step 3: Ask students to reflect

Ask students to reflect on and share their experiences.

### Options

Students can work individually in their journals on page 34, discuss their reflections in pairs, or share their insights with the group.



## Step 1: Introduce the concept

### Educator's Script:

Dr. Stephanie Harrison is the author of *Caring for Country*. She says maintaining a reciprocal relationship with Country – rooted in principles of respect and mutual care – can transform feelings of despair into sources of inspiration and support.<sup>5</sup>

Even in the middle of dramatic environmental changes, Indigenous practices emphasise the importance of listening to and learning from the land, which continues to offer guidance and healing.

By embracing these principles, we can find renewed meaning and resilience in our interactions with nature, honouring its role in our wellbeing despite challenges nature faces.

## Step 2: Share reflections

Share this reflection or contemplation point and invite students to write, draw or doodle in their journal.

*‘Wattle trees and their pollinators thrive in a symbiotic relationship. How can I learn from this to find inspiration in nature’s reciprocal connections? How can I, even in the face of environmental challenges, practise a similar reciprocity with Country?’*

## Step 3: Invite relationships

### Educators' script

First Nations people also invite us into direct personal relationship with Country, nature and the elements.

Message from Aunty Glenda MacPhail (Yaegl Elder)

*‘If you have not done so already, I invite you to begin a conversation or relationship with Country where you live, work and play. This can be done by introducing yourself to Country (just as you would introduce yourself to another person) or find an opportunity to be introduced to Country by an Elder from that area.’*

Message from Hāweatea Holly Bryson (Ngāi Tahu/Māori)

*‘The elements such as the rain, wind, fire and the forest are our elder siblings. They have been around far longer than us, and as human beings, we are the younger siblings who can learn from them. As our older sibling, nature will experience everything first. Nature also provides answers we seek for change and transformation. When we have a personal relationship with nature we receive direct guidance.’*

*As my Elder Manu Korewha says: “The elemental beings are bigger than us, and if we stop turning to them, if we stop talking to them, they’ll stop talking to us.” We talk among humans all the time. Having a conversation with the natural world is often immediately helpful as well as reassuring.’<sup>6</sup>*





## Further resources for teachers

Nature's Benefits (n.d.) [Nature's benefits 101](#) [Video], YouTube, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tplo7hKnQPI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tplo7hKnQPI)

Richardson M and Butler CW (2022) [The nature connection handbook: a guide for increasing people's connection with nature](#), University of Derby, accessed 22 October 2025. <https://findingnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/the-nature-connection-handbook.pdf>

Wikipedia (n.d.) [Gaia hypothesis](#), Wikipedia, accessed 22 October 2025. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia\\_hypothesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis)

## Further resources for students

*AllTrails: Hike, bike and run* [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/alltrails-hike-bike-run/id405075943>

*iNaturalist Classic* [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/inaturalist-classic/id421397028>

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The Joyality Project (2015) [The Joyality program: Toolkit for empowerment, connection and conscious action](#), accessed 21 November 2025. <https://thejoyalityprogram.org/>

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The Joyality Project (2023) [The Power of Nature: Weekend Immersion in Ecopsychology](#), accessed 21 November 2025, <https://www.joyality.org/powerofnature>

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2. Carlile A (2015) *365 nature: projects to connect you with nature every day*, Hardie Grant Publishing.
3. Seed J, Macy J, Fleming P and Naess A (1988) *Thinking like a mountain: towards a council of all beings*, New Society Publishers.
4. Rainforest Information Centre (n.d.) [Letter from Gaia](#), accessed 12 December 2025, <https://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/letter%20from%20gaia.htm>
5. Harrison S (2022) *Caring for Country: the Indigenous knowledge of land management*, Aboriginal Studies Press.
6. Māori Healers (n.d.) Manu Korewha (Ngāpuhi Tohunga Ahurewa) of [Māori Healers](#) [Please note he is no longer alive] accessed 22 October 2025. [www.maorihealers.com](http://www.maorihealers.com)



# ReConnect



# A Climate of Change

## Student Journal

Wellbeing resource for students



# A Climate of Change.

## My Journal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

This journal is yours to keep – a place for your reflection, creativity, and exploration as you travel through *A Climate of Change* wellbeing resources and lessons.

Some activities will be part of class, while others are for you to do when you wish.

Use these pages however feels right for you. Doodle, draw, colour in the pictures, journal your thoughts, write poetry or songs, or just jot down whatever comes to mind.

There are no right or wrong answers here.

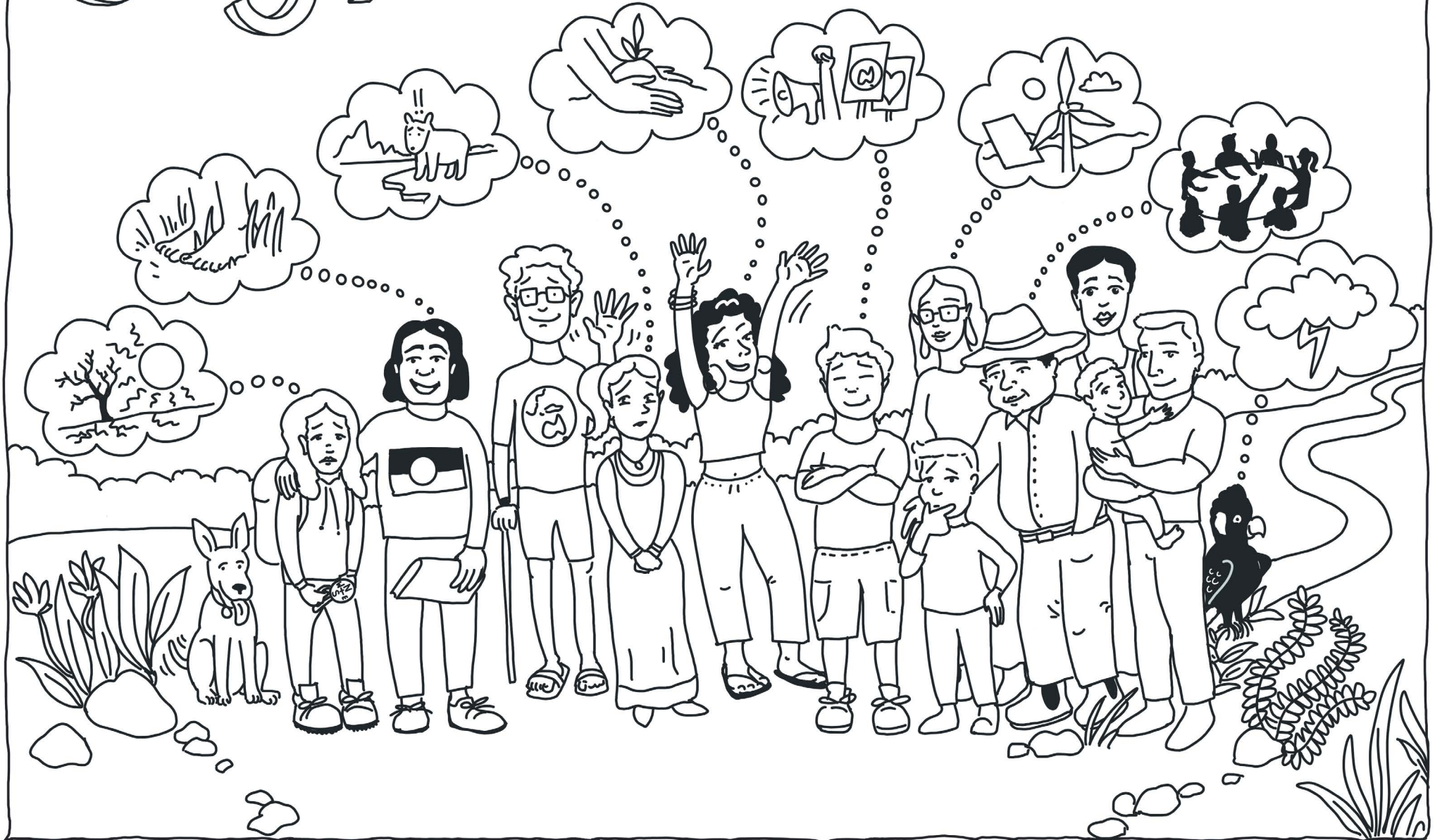
This is a space for you to reflect, express, process, learn and grow as we explore ways to care for ourselves, our communities, and the planet.



What do I think, and how do I feel, about climate change at the beginning of my journey through these lessons?

(Write or draw.)

# Stay Awake. Connect. Act.



## Lesson 1

# A Climate of Change

To **'stay awake'** is to be aware of climate change and the state of the world around us, and to find inspiration *and* connection in all the positive actions already underway. It's also about looking after our wellbeing, remembering who we are, and recognising the power we have – especially when we act together to create change. It means, despite all the challenges, staying awake to the wonder of being alive.

To **'connect'** means connecting with nature, each other and our own values and passions. These are all sources of wellbeing, and can help us feel a sense of belonging and to make sense of these times. Traditionally, people have found relationships with nature a source of strength, inspiration and wisdom. By intentionally reconnecting with nature or Country, we can appreciate the beauty and interconnectedness of all life. Connecting with each other can be a source of support and motivation – and an opportunity to create positive change together.

To **'act'** means to take part in positive changes underway around the world. Taking action for regenerative futures can empower us, connect us, and bring us joy and positive experiences. It can even feel like an adventure. Even if our actions and efforts don't reach a goal we've set, we can draw strength from being engaged, collaborating with others and showing we care.

*\* Stay Awake. Connect. Act. © The Joyality Project (2015).*

## Stay Awake. Connect. Act.

Do I relate to any of the experiences shared by the people in the video?

Do I have other feelings or responses to climate change and the state of the world that weren't named in the video?

# Stay Awake



# Connect



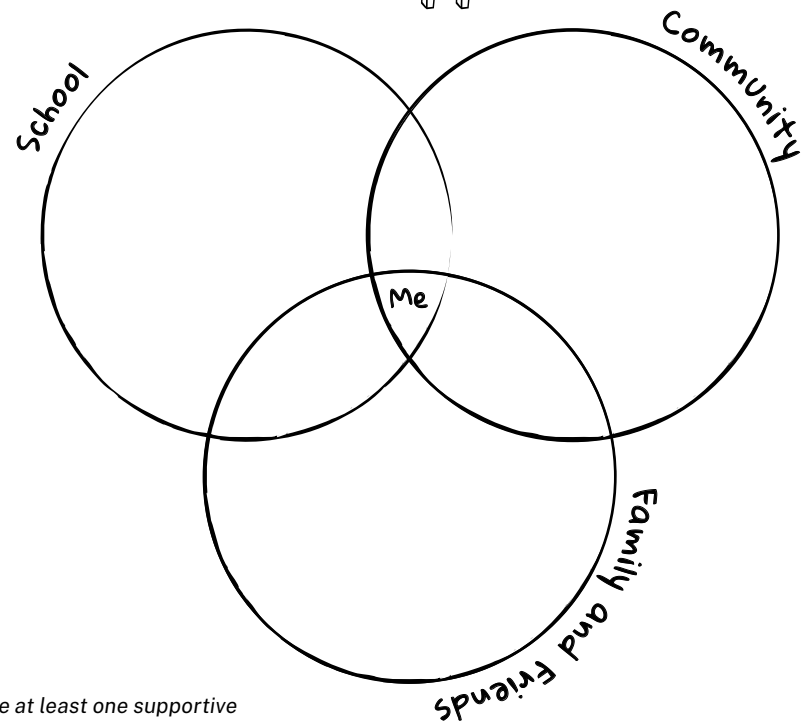
# Act



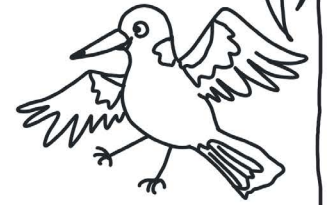
My key takeaway

People in my life  
I can talk with about  
these topics.\*

## Circles of Support



\* Include at least one supportive  
adult in each circle.



# First Nations Contemplation

'When birds migrate, they often navigate vast distances by responding to environmental cues and seasonal changes, demonstrating remarkable adaptability, resilience and communication. How can I learn from this to enhance my own approach to navigating change?'



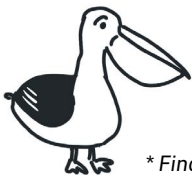
## Finding Balance

Something that upsets me about climate change and the state of the world, and how I feel about it ...

## Good News Stories

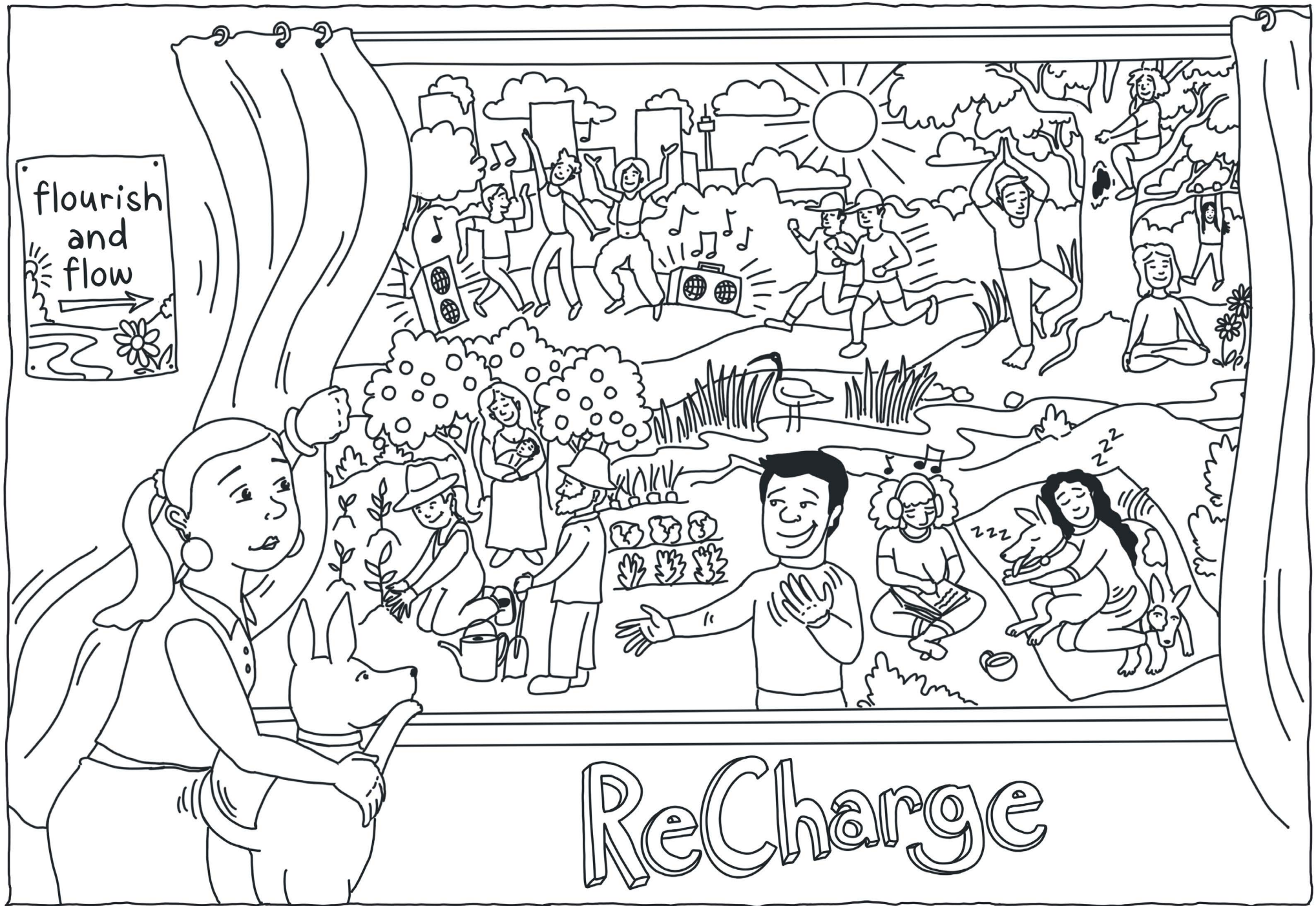
Some good news about the same issue or event.

Stories of groups finding creative and inspiring solutions to challenges, working together to create powerful change, or small, local examples of empowered community in action.



\* Finding Balance © The Joyalty Project (2015).





## Lesson 2

# Thriving in Times of Uncertainty

The window of tolerance is a way to describe the 'zone' where we can handle stress and a range of emotions without feeling overwhelmed. That's the **green zone**, where we flourish and flow.

When we get pushed out of that zone by life's circumstances, things can go different ways. Normal responses include feeling anxious, or like we're in fight-or-flight mode. That's the **red zone**.

Or, we might experience feeling numb, shut down, or even frozen. This is the **blue zone**.

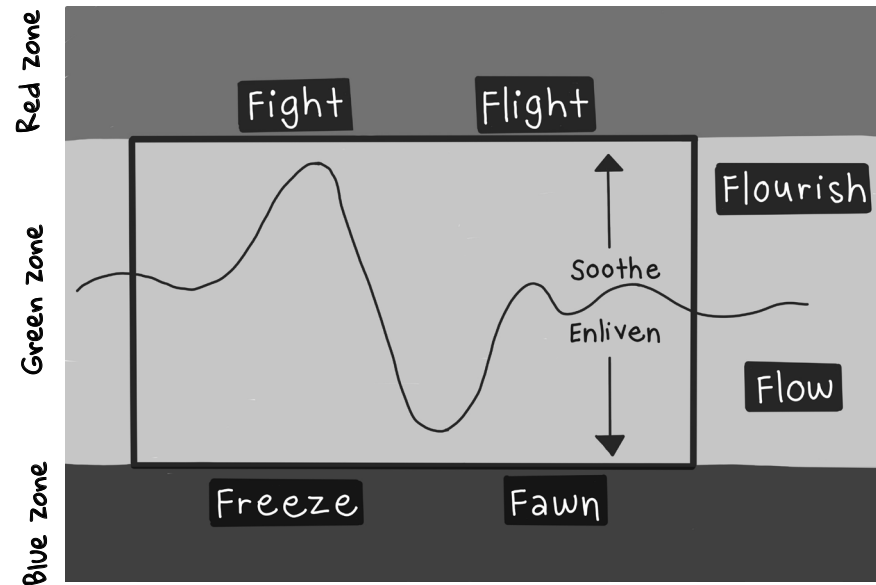
General stresses in our lives, as well as trauma, can shrink our window of tolerance, making it harder to feel okay or stay balanced in tough situations. But there are many soothing and enlivening actions we can take to expand our own window of tolerance, so we can relax and recharge.

When we get back into the green zone, we're able to think clearly, process what's going on, and stay calm. We feel balanced. We are able to flourish and flow. We can have a wide range of feelings and emotions but not feel overwhelmed or shut down.



\* Window of tolerance concept from Dan Siegel (2012)

# ReCharge



'Self-regulation' is learning how to control our inner state in a changing or challenging world. These techniques support us to feel more control within ourselves, to feel safe, calm or more grounded and awake.

## Green Zone

What is the zone that is spoken about in the video? How would I know if I were in the zone of flourish and flow?



## Relax and Recharge

- Self care
- Community care
- Nature connection

## My Emotional Resources

How do I help myself feel better when I am stressed or experience challenges in life? How do I stay in the zone?

Which of these activities are best for soothing? For enlivening? And which work for both?

Other good ideas I might try from the rest of the class.



# New Soothing and Enlivening Activities

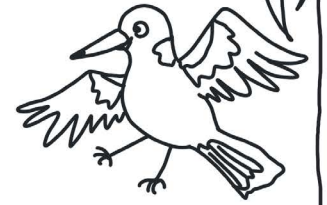
What are my favourite somatic practices I've learned? Write some notes here to remind myself about how to do them ....

## Hints

- Earth
- Tree shake
- Butterfly taps
- Finger holds
- Breath hacks



How I feel before and after doing these practices.  
Write some words, a poem or drawings.



# First Nations Contemplation

'The interconnected mycelium network is the underground web that helps trees share nutrients. How can I learn from this to draw on practices that support my wellbeing during climate stress? And how can I share the tools I use with others to build collective resilience?'



# Everyday Recharge

What enjoyable self care and community care activities can I schedule into my weekly timetable?



## Review

What are some signs that I might have noticed in my body and/or mind when I'm heading out of the green zone? For example, 'the muscles in my shoulders get tight and sore' or 'I feel irritated by my sibling'.

Some signs that I'm already in the red or blue zone? For example 'my heart pumps fast and I feel really angry'.



What is one strategy that has helped me get back in the green zone?

What is something I already do regularly that helps keep me in the green zone?

# Feel Real



Overwhelm Beginner's mind



Anger Passion



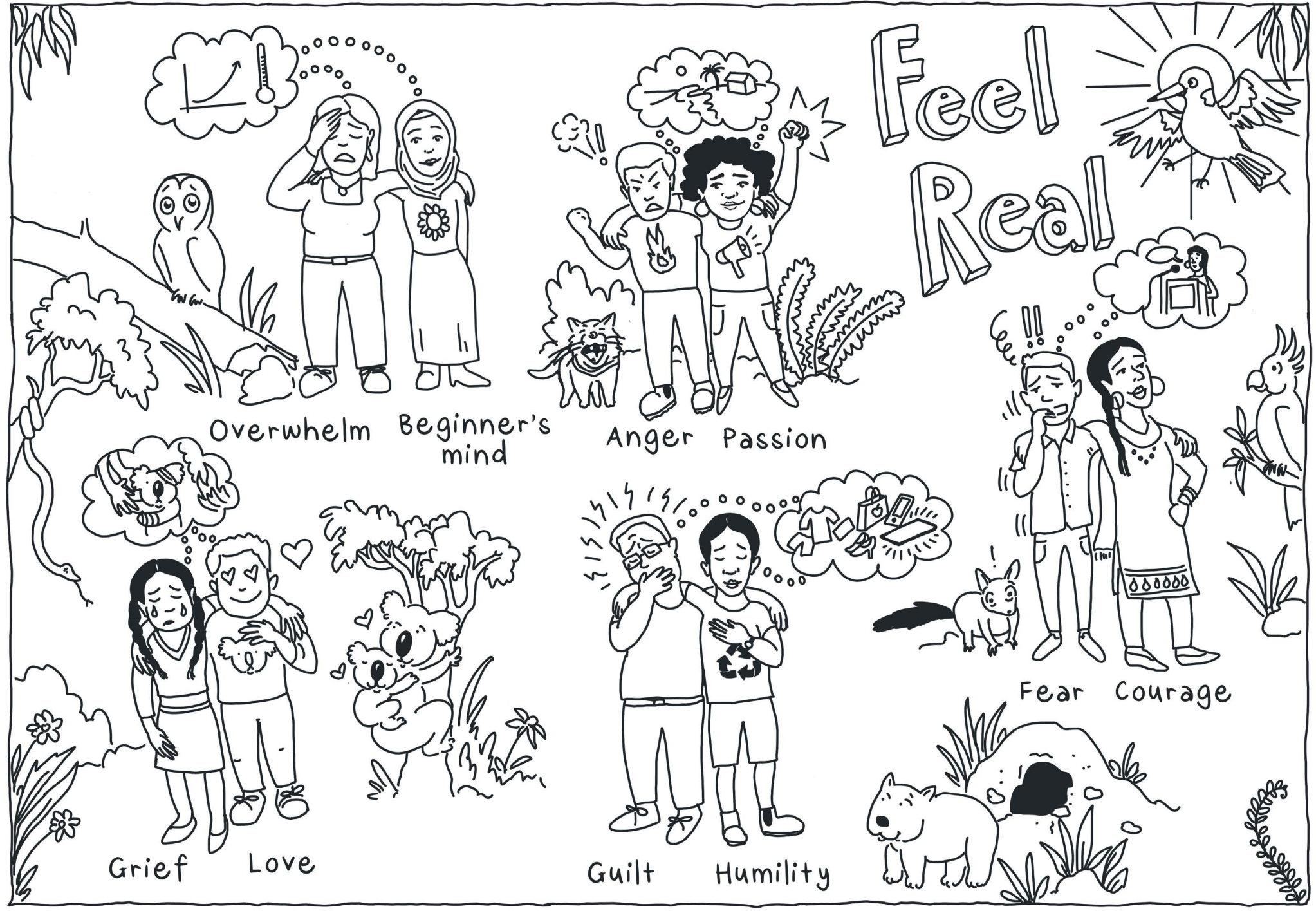
Fear Courage



Grief Love



Guilt Humility



### Lesson 3:

# Empowering Feelings

*'Our emotional responses to climate change can be healthy reactions to an unhealthy state of the world. Learning to engage with our emotions can empower us to take positive action.'*\*

Uncomfortable emotions are normal and healthy when we are in challenging circumstances – and climate change is challenging. There are many ways we can support ourselves and each other so these feelings are not too overwhelming.

We can even be empowered through awareness of our emotions, understanding their 'flipsides', and using them as energy to create positive change.

Self care, deep listening, mutual support and connection are core aspects of being a positive changemaker. Creating safe spaces for ourselves and others to identify and share our feelings helps us to process our emotions, and find:

- Love and care within our grief and sadness
- Passion for justice within our anger and frustration
- Courage and action even if we are anxious or afraid
- Humility and desire to repair within our guilt and shame
- A beginner's mind within our sense of overwhelm.

\* Dr Eshana Bragg, *How on earth: Helping young people overcome climate anxiety* (2022)

## Feel Real



What do the young people in the video mean when they talk about flipsides?

What was it like talking about a challenging feeling I have about climate change and the state of the world?



What was it like talking about the flipside of a challenging feeling?



## Care

What is one self care, community care or nature connection activity that I could do this afternoon?



# First Nations Contemplation

'A forest can regenerate after a cool fire, using the disturbance to spark new growth. How can I use feelings of anxiety or distress to strengthen my connection to nature and let those emotions guide actions that restore balance and regenerate my own growth?'





## Lesson 4:

# Visioning and Inspiration

There are 3 main stories shaping our time – lenses through which we see the world and our place in it.

These stories live through us, shaping how we think and act. We can choose which one we feed with our energy and attention.

The first is **'business as usual'** – the story that nothing needs to change.

The second is **'disaster'** – a story of collapse, destruction and hopelessness.

The third is **'the great transition'**. This invites us to focus on a regenerative, just and sustainable world.

It's natural to move between all 3, but where we choose to focus matters to our wellbeing and can help sow the seeds of positive change.

*\* 3 stories of our time concept from Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone's book 'Active Hope' (2022)*

## ReVision

What can I see in the central vision for the great transition?

What kinds of values can I see portrayed in this vision?

# Our Values

What's really important?

What values were important to the young people in the video?

What are the core values I would like to weave into our collective vision?

## Strengthening our Imagination Muscles

A visioning process is all about using imagination to picture the kind of future we want to create. Instead of dwelling on our challenges, we ask: 'What could it look like if the regenerative future we dream of existed now?'

By visualising positive outcomes, we're essentially 'rehearsing' for success, which strengthens problem-solving skills, boosts motivation, and enhances our ability to be creative.

When we vividly imagine a scenario, our brain activates similar neural pathways as if we were actually experiencing it. This not only feels really good. Over time, it can lead to greater ingenuity and innovation, as our brains get used to exploring new ideas and possibilities!



# My Vision for the Future



Describe, draw or write a poem about your vision of the sort of future you want to see for the world and be part of.  
What are your favourite bits of what you've created?

# Inspiration Station

Find a story of positive change that inspires you to take action in your community or more broadly. Write down some notes so you can share this story.

Think about:

- projects or groups you're already involved in
- projects or groups in your local area you've heard about
- other initiatives for young people.



What has inspired me most from today's lesson?

**'Hope lies in action and it all starts with the first step.'**

*Kal Glanznig, young Australian changemaker and filmmaker*

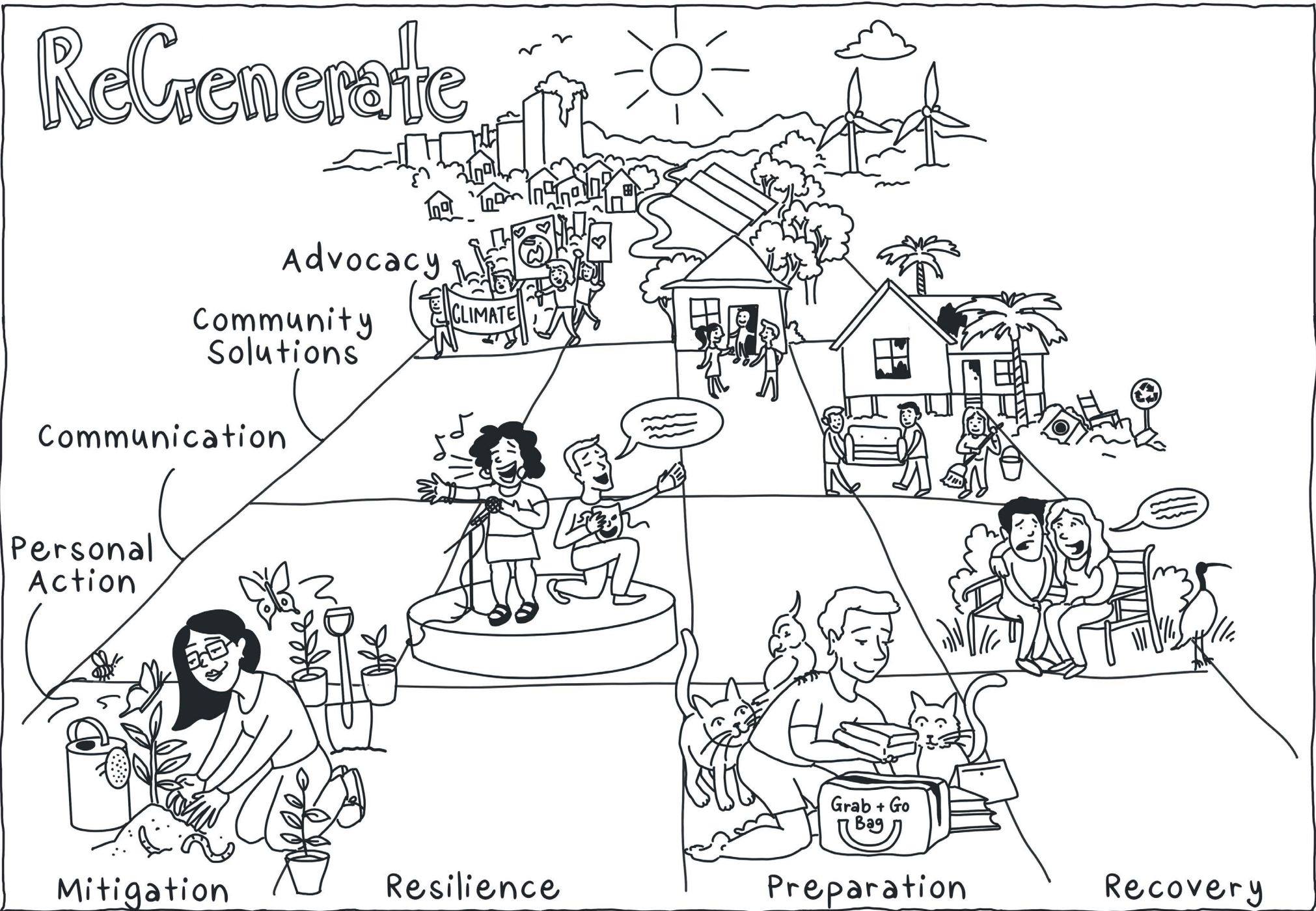


# First Nations Contemplation

'Mangroves constantly adapt to shifting tides. How can I adapt to change by engaging with cultural stories, joining community-led activities, and taking shared responsibility for caring for the land?'



# ReGenerate



## Lesson 5:

# Climate Action

## Levels of Action for Social Change

### Level 1: Personal action

Think of something one person can do that has a direct positive impact on your team's climate action theme and write it down.

Example: For 'mitigation', plant a tree.

### Level 2: Communication

Come up with a way to share or educate others about your action. Write it down.

Example: Sharing on social media why tree planting helps with flood mitigation.

### Level 3: Community solutions

Plan how your group can collaborate with others in your local area.

Example: Organising a tree-planting event with your neighbours or friends.

### Level 4: Advocacy

Think of an action that involves working with or influencing decision-makers.

Example: Encouraging government support for large-scale tree planting projects.

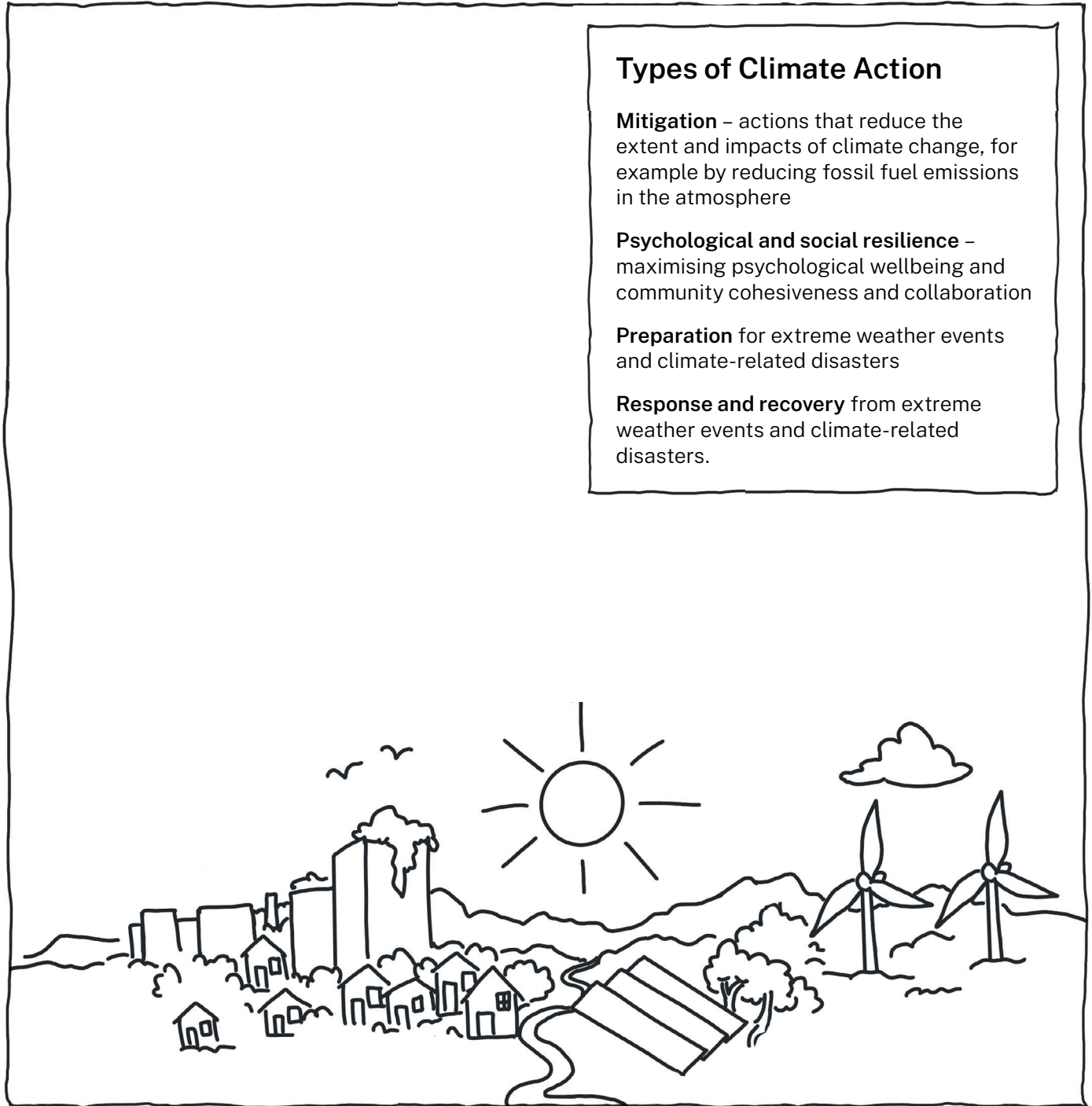
## Types of Climate Action

**Mitigation** – actions that reduce the extent and impacts of climate change, for example by reducing fossil fuel emissions in the atmosphere

**Psychological and social resilience** – maximising psychological wellbeing and community cohesiveness and collaboration

**Preparation** for extreme weather events and climate-related disasters

**Response and recovery** from extreme weather events and climate-related disasters.



# Ideas for Action



Bring these ideas with you when you play the Climate action game.

## Climate action game

	Mitigation	Psychological and social resilience	Preparation	Response and recovery
<p><b>4. Advocacy</b></p> <p><b>Change the system!</b> <i>(Grassroots influence for top down change)</i></p>	<p>Writing to government and corporate decision-makers encouraging the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy and advocating for a just transition for workers and communities.</p>	<p>Educating politicians about the mental health impacts of climate change; and lobbying for government resources to support resilience initiatives.</p>	<p>Supporting politicians and businesses that promote sustainable, regenerative, local economies.</p>	<p>Talking with local politicians and people working in government about declaring a state of emergency and seeking funds for recovery efforts covered by insurance.</p>
<p><b>3. Community solutions</b></p> <p><b>Let's do it ourselves!</b> <i>(Grassroots action)</i></p>	<p>Embracing community gardens and farmers markets to reduce food miles.</p>	<p>Taking action to feel productive and reduce eco-anxiety such as a community tree planting day, beach clean-up.</p>	<p>Hosting market stalls and community events to raise awareness about preparation for climate-induced disasters.</p>	<p>Asking friends for help and forming working bees to clear fallen trees and make the place safe again.</p>
<p><b>2. Communication</b></p> <p><b>Talk about it!</b> <i>(Share info, ideas, feelings and actions)</i></p>	<p>Creating videos for social media that educate others and inspire action.</p>	<p>Sharing personal experiences and feelings about climate change with other people to receive support and help others not feel alone.</p>	<p>Raising awareness for what can happen in the future – climate predictions.</p>	<p>Sharing on social media the devastation of a storm; the actions needed to recover; and the resilience of the forest.</p>
<p><b>1. Personal action (start here!)</b></p> <p><b>Do it yourself!</b> <i>(Direct impact)</i></p>	<p>Eating a plant-based diet and shopping at local farmers market.</p>	<p>Adopting self-care tactics including meditation, getting out into nature.</p>	<p>Having fire season plans including clearing gutters, evacuation kit and plan.</p>	<p>Clearing pathways and fallen branches, repairing damage after storms and cyclones.</p>

\* Climate Action Game © The Joyality Project (2020)

# What's Important to Us?

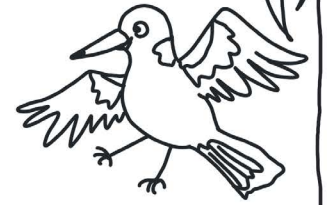


Guiding principles to weave through our actions in the Climate Action Game.

## After the Game

What's one idea for an action that sparked my interest, or got me inspired? Maybe one I'd like to get involved with ... or even start?





# First Nations Contemplation

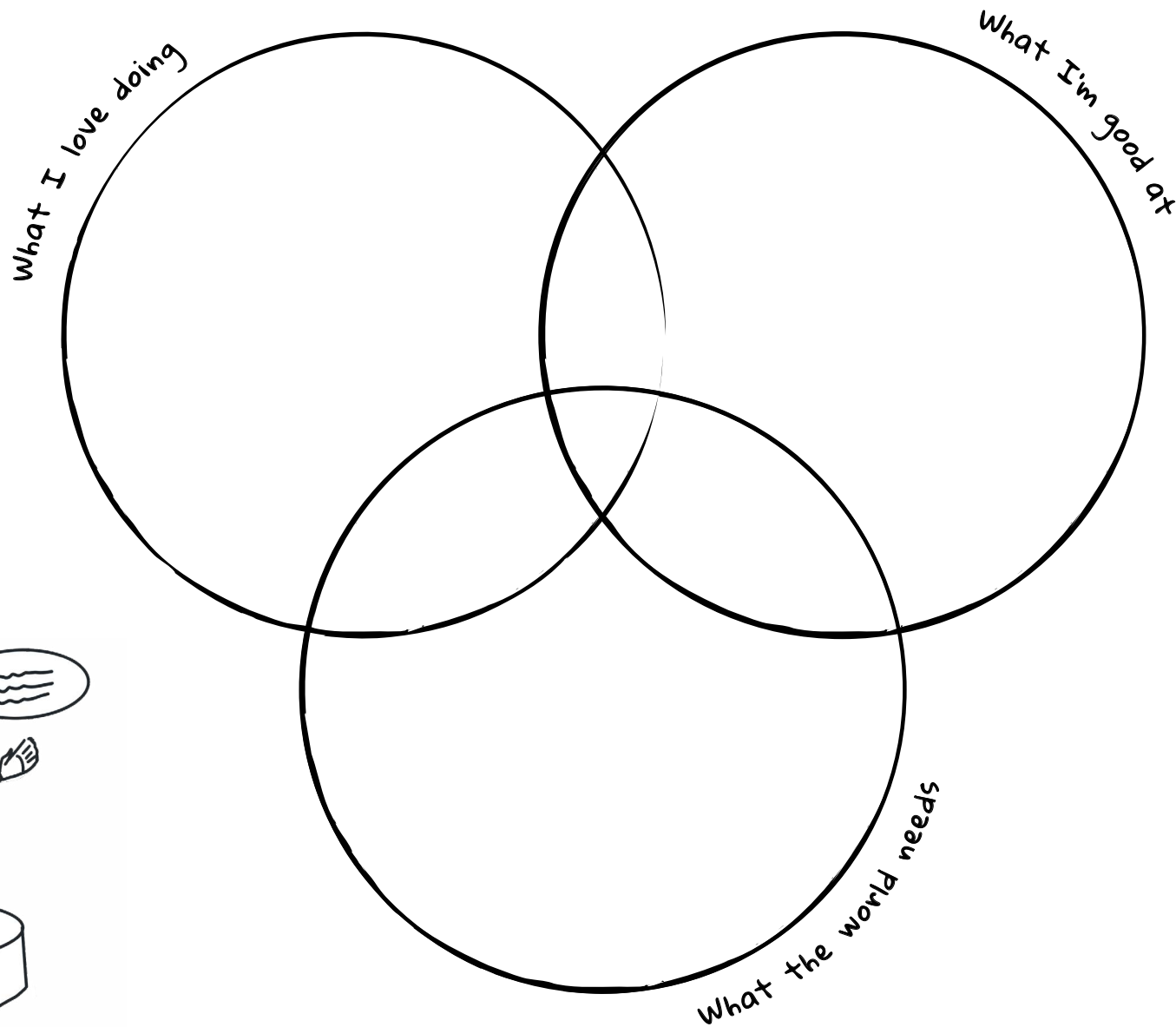
'Wetlands filter pollutants, provide habitat and adapt to environmental change to support many species. How can I learn from this to explore different ways of understanding climate action? How can I do this while recognising that people and communities have different capacities and responsibilities?'



# 3 Circles

The aim of this exercise is to find actions where these 3 circles intersect for you.

Finding actions that fall into this intersection are the ones that are likely to be fuelled by joy and purpose and most regenerative for you and the planet.



\* Inspired by the Japanese practice of Ikigai.



## Lesson 6:

# Nature Connection and Reciprocity

When we take time to connect with nature, whether it's by walking in a park, listening to birdsong, or simply sitting under a tree, we give our minds and bodies a chance to rest and recharge.

Studies show that being in nature has physical and psychological benefits like reducing stress, improving focus, and even boosting our immune system. Spending time connecting with nature can help us feel calmer, healthier and more alive.

Nature connection is more than just spending time outside. It's about forming a relationship with the natural world that helps us feel part of something bigger. When we build a connection to the earth, we start to see how every part of nature, including us, is interconnected.

However, not everyone has easy access to natural spaces. Urban environments, mobility challenges or other barriers – like financial resources, time constraints, safety concerns or a lack of welcoming spaces for certain communities – can make it difficult for some people to be in nature. In these cases, virtual nature experiences, tending to indoor plants, or even listening to recorded nature sounds can offer meaningful ways to connect with the natural world.

# ReConnect

What are the ways that I already connect with nature?



What gets in the way  
of me connecting  
with nature?



How could I overcome  
some of these obstacles?

After the Video

Are there other ways  
I would like to connect  
with nature?

## Nature Connection Benefits

- Reduce stress, anxiety, depression and improve overall emotional wellbeing
- Improve focus and creativity
- Better sleep, lower blood pressure, boost immunity and lower risk of chronic disease
- Reciprocal relationship and mutual benefits including wellbeing, health and regeneration of both the natural world and humans.



How do I feel  
when I connect  
with nature?



# My Nature Place

Nickname:



Write a poem, list of words, draw a picture of the place  
or use colours to describe/express your feelings.

# Letter from Gaia

Imagine the Earth could speak to you.  
What do you do you think it would say?

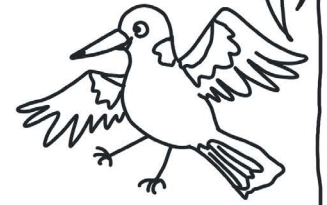
Dear .....

This is your Mother Earth and I want to tell you ...



With all my love,  
Your Mother Gaia

*\* Letter from Gaia practice inspired by John Seed.*



# First Nations Contemplation

'Wattle trees and their pollinators thrive in a symbiotic relationship. How can I learn from this to find inspiration in nature's reciprocal connections? How can I, even in the face of environmental challenges, practise a similar reciprocity with Country?'



# Harvesting Insights



What are the main benefits or takeaways that I've received from these lessons?

How can I take these lessons into my life, share them with others and the world?



What do I think, and how do I feel, about climate change at the end of my journey through A Climate of Change?  
(Write or draw.)

## Further Resources

### Lesson 1

Climate Change Resources (n.d.) [Youth](https://climatechangeresources.org/youth/), accessed 15 October 2025. <https://climatechangeresources.org/youth/>

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Resources](http://www.forceofnature.xyz/resources), accessed 15 October 2025. [www.forceofnature.xyz/resources](http://www.forceofnature.xyz/resources)

[The Joyality Project](#) (2015) *The Joyality program: Toolkit for empowerment, connection and conscious action*, accessed 21 November 2025. <https://thejoyalityprogram.org/>

### Lesson 2

Yoga International (n.d.) [Soothe your nervous system with 2-to-1 breathing](https://yogainternational.com/) [Video], *Yoga International website*, accessed 15 October 2025. <https://yogainternational.com/>

### Lesson 3

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Do I have eco-anxiety?](https://www.forceofnature.xyz/eco-anxiety-quiz), accessed 15 October 2025. <https://www.forceofnature.xyz/eco-anxiety-quiz>

### Lesson 4

Australian Youth Climate Coalition (n.d.) [Homepage](http://www.aycc.org.au), accessed 22 October 2025. [www.aycc.org.au](http://www.aycc.org.au)

Seed Mob (n.d.) [Homepage](http://www.seedmob.org.au), accessed 22 October 2025. [www.seedmob.org.au](http://www.seedmob.org.au)

### Lesson 5

Force of Nature (n.d.) [Community](http://www.forceofnature.xyz/community), *Activating a global community of change-makers*, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.forceofnature.xyz/community](http://www.forceofnature.xyz/community)

Gasch R and Reticker-Flynn J et al. (n.d.) [Youth activist toolkit](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf), *Advocates for Youth*, accessed 22 October 2025. [www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf)

Glanznic K (2024) [Rising up](http://www.risingup.tv) [Film], accessed 22 October 2025. [www.risingup.tv](http://www.risingup.tv)

### Lesson 6

[AllTrails: Hike, bike and run](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/alltrails-hike-bike-run/id405075943) [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/alltrails-hike-bike-run/id405075943>

[iNaturalist Classic](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/inaturalist-classic/id421397028) [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/inaturalist-classic/id421397028>

[SkyView® Lite](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/skyview-lite/id413936865) [mobile app], Apple App Store, accessed 22 October 2025, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/skyview-lite/id413936865>

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The Joyality Project (2015) [The Joyality program: Toolkit for empowerment, connection and conscious action](http://thejoyalityprogram.org/), accessed 21 November 2025. [https://thejoyalityprogram.org/](http://thejoyalityprogram.org/)

The Joyality Project (2020) [How on Earth: Youth leadership training in climate resilience](http://www.joyality.org/how-on-earth), accessed 21 November 2025. <https://www.joyality.org/how-on-earth>

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Macy J and Johnstone C (2022) *Active hope: how to face the mess we're in with unexpected resilience and creative power*, New World Library.

Glanznic K (2024) [Rising up](http://www.risingup.tv), Hompag, accessed 16 December 2025. [www.risingup.tv](http://www.risingup.tv)

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