

## Living with the Climate Crisis

Living with the Climate Crisis aims to help people find their place in the collective project of responding to climate change. At its heart is a clear psychological approach, based on the following principles:

- climate change is distressing: people need support in coping with the difficult feelings that sometimes overwhelm them, and to explore ways to feel joy and satisfaction in a precarious world
- the best means to collective solutions is in supportive groups based in local communities
- people need support in finding their way to a variety of personal, political and community actions
- people need skills in communicating, both publicly and in personal situations

So Living With the Climate Crisis focuses on how to cope, how to find strength, how to find your place in the climate movement, and how to communicate well.

The pilot running in Oxford in autumn 2022 consists of one full day and seven two-hour meetings, as follows:

- Module One: Coming together and putting down roots (the full day, 22 October, Wytham Woods)
- Module Two: Making Wider Connections (three meetings, 3/10/17 November, evenings, location tbc)
- Module Three: Acting in the Eco-system of change (three meetings, 24 November/1/8 December, evenings)
- And a final wrap-up meeting focusing on finding balance (15 December, evening)

As well as attending the meetings, participants will receive two documents: a participants' guide, which includes summaries of the meeting contents, and space for reflective notes; and Living Lightly, a detailed set of advice notes on reducing your personal carbon footprint. We will invite you to work with each other in the meetings, and to form supportive pairs to help each other make the progress you want to make.

The programme has been written and designed by:

**Andy Brown**, an engineer with a background in the social sciences. Before retirement he worked in research for the built environment. He is a co-founder of the Carbon Conversations project and has been a life-long supporter of environmental causes.

**Dr Daniela Fernandez-Catherall**, a Chartered Clinical Psychologist (BPS) with particular interests in narrative therapy and community psychology. She is currently working with Cambridge Climate Therapists on the development of community practices to support people experiencing difficulties related to the climate crisis.

**Rebecca Nestor**, an organisational consultant, coach and professional facilitator who has recently completed a doctorate on the emotional experience of working in climate change organisations. Rebecca is currently a board member of the Climate Psychology Alliance and is chair of Low Carbon Oxford North. She will be one of the two facilitators for this pilot.

**Rosemary Randall**, a psychotherapist with a long history of involvement in the climate movement. She has written and published widely on the psychology of climate change. She

is co-founder of the Carbon Conversations project, a founder member of the Climate Psychology Alliance and is currently active with Cambridge Climate Therapists.

## **The meetings in more detail**

### **Meeting One: coming together and putting down roots**

In this full-day meeting we look at the difficult, painful feelings people have when they allow themselves to think properly about the climate crisis. We explore ideas of climate distress and climate anxiety. Questions of identity, values, conflicts with family and friends, experiences of grief, depression, sadness, guilt and shame are all considered. Most importantly, we emphasise that these responses are normal reactions to hearing bad news. They do not indicate that there is something wrong with you, although some people may need help in coping with them. We talk about what helps, identifying the key areas of reliable information; understanding and support from others; taking action; finding balance; and keeping talking.

The meeting also explores what you like and value about your roots, your heritage, your family and those who have taught you most in your life; your present life; your skills, abilities, strengths and values; your hopes, dreams and wishes for life; important people in your life; and the gifts that you have received and that you bring to others. We look at the storms that you have experienced and at what collective support the group members can offer each other for the storms we may face, including forming supportive pairs to meet outside the group meetings.

### **Module Two: Making Wider Connections**

Meeting Two: Talking with family, friends and colleagues

In this meeting we focus on everyday conversations where climate change sometimes comes up but is sometimes avoided because of the conflicts involved. We recall difficult conversations from our own lives, and share these within the group; and we offer a framework and some advice for thinking about them.

Meeting Three: Using your voice for change

In this meeting we look at how to use story-telling techniques to speak effectively about climate change, and how to frame our messages well for particular groups. We do some practice building up our stories and we invite you to work on your own stories.

Meeting Four: Pulling it all together

In this final meeting of Module Two we invite you to practise talking with friends and family, and try out telling your stories to each other.

### **Module Three: Acting in the Eco-system of change**

Meeting Five: The eco-system of change: personal impact

In this meeting, we look at personal carbon footprints and how to reduce them. We explore some of the numbers involved in order to see how to make a big difference most easily; and we talk about change, what makes change easy or difficult and how group members feel about making these kinds of changes.

Meeting Six: The eco-system of change: your wider impact

In this meeting we look at the different ways you can join together with others to make a difference, recognising that each person needs to find a place where they can flourish. We explore our webs of connection and how different these can be; the different kinds of skills we may be able to contribute; our feelings about being involved in political, community and workplace action; and how to target particular organisations we're connected to.

Meeting Seven: reflective practice

This meeting offers a process to explore participants' options for action, reflecting with the group on what might be possible for them.

### **Meeting Eight: Balancing your life**

In this final meeting we look back on the life of this group, share what it has been like for us and how we feel as it ends, and explore what might come next.