



Supporting people emotionally in facing the climate reality

About Psychology for a Safe Climate

Psychology for a Safe Climate (PSC) is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2010 in Melbourne, Australia, to foster emotional engagement with climate change. PSC was founded in response to the lack of individual and community commitment to address the climate crisis.

As psychologists, counsellors, psychiatrists and other helping professionals, we aim to use our professional knowledge and skills to increase understanding and engagement with the psychological impact of climate change.

Recognising that emotions are often what leads people to act, it is possible that feelings of ecological anxiety and grief, although uncomfortable, are in fact the crucible through which humanity must pass to harness the energy and conviction that are needed for the lifesaving changes now required.

The Lancet: Planetary Health, July 2020

Our purpose is to support people in facing the reality of the climate emergency. We aim to build people's capacity to respond constructively to climate change by promoting and strengthening mental health and wellbeing.

We engage with those working on climate change, the caring professions, and the broader community.

Australia is facing a potential mental health crisis. Individuals with and without direct experience of climate change are reporting significant mental health impacts, with younger age groups being disproportionately affected. There are key roles for clinicians and other health professionals in responding to and preventing climate-related mental health burden.

Patrick, R et al, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, July 2, 2022

PSC has initiated the formation of a **Climate Aware Practitioners Network** to prepare and support Mental Health Practitioners to engage with the climate reality in their clinical work and in the community.

Young people and the climate crisis

Young people especially are acutely aware that they are heading into a highly challenging and unrecognisable future and report feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness because they are not in a position to mitigate climate change impacts.*

The youth climate movement's call for urgent political action is a response to the failure of global action relative to the scale of existential threat posed by climate upheaval. A 2021 study in the Lancet of 10,000 young people (16-25 years) from 10 countries, found that:

- 56% of surveyed young people said “humanity was doomed” due to climate change (including 50% of Australian respondents).
- 75% said the “future is frightening” because of climate change (76% of Australians).
- 39% said they were “hesitant to have children” (43% of Australians)

This study also reports a correlation between feelings of climate anxiety and government inaction on climate change with 58% of those surveyed saying that governments are betraying them. They note that climate distress is often grounded in relational factors with children often experiencing “an additional layer of confusion, betrayal, and abandonment because of adult inaction towards climate change”.**

As counsellors well know, when adults' duty of care fails young people, the psychological consequences can be profound. Counsellors need to be able to acknowledge their adult duty of care in relation to climate issues, professionally and personally, in order to adequately support young people towards healthy engagement with their climate affected future. This means recognising their own and other adults' responsibilities to collectively engage with and act on climate danger.

* Gunsari et al, 2022, Hope, coping and eco-anxiety: Young people's mental health in a climate-impacted Australia. *International Journal Environmental Health Research*.

**Hickman, C. et al (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *The Lancet Planetary Health*

Become a Climate Aware Practitioner (CAP)

As is so often observed, crisis creates opportunity. The opportunity that the climate crisis offers counsellors is to work with others - peers, clients and communities - to develop mental health understandings and practices anchored in a systemic worldview. The network of mental health practitioners can make a vital contribution through shared experiences and learnings based in acknowledgement of common vulnerabilities, connections and care.

CAP Professional Development Series

PSC has developed a Professional Development series aimed at a range of practitioners who support people of all ages who are distressed about the reality and impact of climate change.

- PD1: Engaging with climate change and eco-distress (2 hour Introductory Webinar)
- PD2: Reflections and responses to the climate reality (3 hour Experiential Workshop)
- PD3: Being present with climate distress – Applications to professional practice (3 hour Professional Practice Workshop)

Each event in the series builds on the learning in the earlier events. Participants can book for the whole series or for individual events within the series. However, workshops 2 and 3 require completion of earlier events in the series as prerequisites for participation.

Completion of all three PD events will enable practitioners to be recognised by Psychology for a Safe Climate as a “Climate Aware Practitioner”. This comes with the opportunity to be listed at the PSC website and to promote your services via PSC in order to reach people in the community who may benefit from the support you provide.

Being part of the CAP Network enables you to develop knowledge and skills to provide effective services for people who are distressed by the climate reality. We provide opportunities for CAPs to connect, collaborate and learn from each other. You will be able to participate in professional development and peer support activities with others in the network who share your concerns about the impact climate change is having on individuals, groups and communities.

Workshops, Seminars, Climate Cafes and Talks

PSC offers a variety of workshops on developing self-awareness, self-care and communication about the impact of climate change. These are tailored to the context and needs of the participants. We also offer shorter, participatory seminars which provide opportunity for psycho-educational learning. See the list below for some of the workshops we offer.

Our workshop program is founded upon an engagement with the psycho-emotional aspects of climate change. The workshops provide professional support and a safe, containing space for the expression and working through of these aspects. They are available to scientists, researchers, policy makers, activists and community members.

Processing the emotional impacts of climate change can lead to improved mental health and wellbeing, and foster greater engagement and more direct action.

By addressing the issues of emotional distress, grief and burnout, our workshops help those working in the climate field to have greater awareness of the emotional impact of their work and to understand the importance of self care practices. This fosters greater resilience and the ability to work more effectively with the support of collegial connections.

Workshops to support, nourish and foster reflection

- *Coming to grips with the climate reality* (3 hours)
- *Beating burnout: discovering your own resources to prevent burnout* (3 hours)
- *As the climate is changing, how are you?* (3 hours)
- *Coming back to life* (3 hours/ Full day option)

Climate Cafes

At our Café there is no guest speaker, no advice given, no call for action. Instead, you'll find a supportive, facilitated conversational space - held by one of our experienced mental health professionals - for people to gather and share thoughts and feelings in response to the climate crisis. Here you can voice concerns that may not be welcomed or echoed elsewhere in your daily life. You're invited to share with interested others how you're really feeling at this challenging time.

There may be laughter, there may be tears. There may be fear, there may be anger. Whatever you're feeling is okay and valued. And it's fine just to listen. Sharing, listening and being quiet together are all part of our Café. Your presence matters most, and you'll be warmly welcomed. This event is usually run over Zoom.

Your organisation or group may like a Café for your members only - either one off or regularly.

Seminars to educate, reflect and connect with others

We have conducted seminars and talks for groups as requested. Recently we ran an interactive webinar for Doctors for the Environment conference, workshops and talks for the RANZCP conference, and an interactive seminar for Climate for Change.

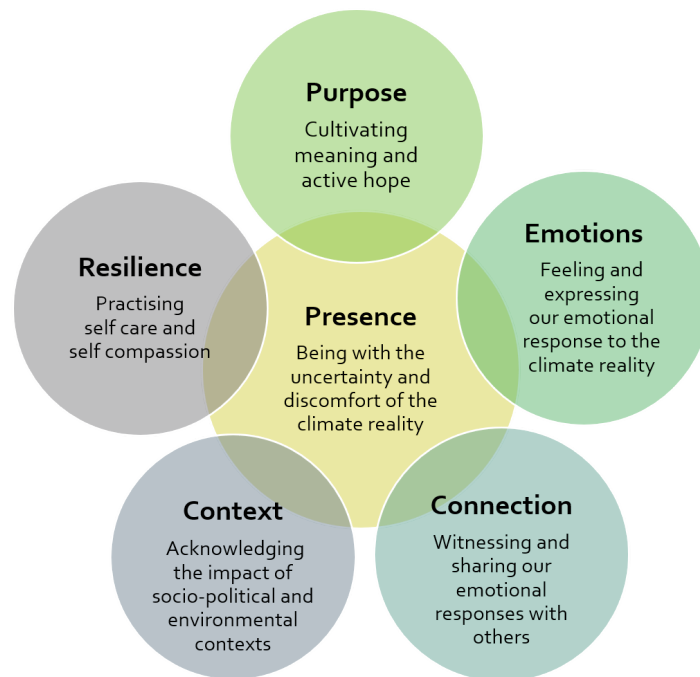
Feedback: We asked participants what they gained from our workshops.....

- The ability to be at peace with who I am and accept the path I am taking.
- Knowing that there are people of all ages and professions dealing with the same emotions and thoughts
- The value of expressing feelings
- How numbness is not a great strategy for self-compassion (or action)
- A chance to voice my emotions and concerns with less fear of judgement
- I am not alone – there are others who feel this way + experience similar things
- A reminder to take time for mindfulness and self-care and recognise the emotional toll of the climate crisis and activism
...understanding emotions and reactions in different ways
- Self –compassion – treat myself the way I treat my friends and family

More details: <https://www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/workshops/>

Contact us: info@psychologyforasafeclimate.org

PSC's Climate Support Model



Will you support our work?

Psychology for a Safe Climate is a registered not-for-profit charity, funded by memberships, grants, donations, and course fees, based on capacity to pay. We have a team of dedicated volunteer psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals, and employ 3 part-time staff.

- [Apply for membership](#)
- [Become a donor](#)
- [Become a Climate Aware Practitioner](#)
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Do you need support? <https://www.psychologyforasafeclimate.org/support>