



**ISSU**  
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL  
STUDENTS' UNION

# The Cure to Anxiety is Action.

*An expert resource on coping with  
climate anxiety.*



## ***Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)***

The Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) is the national representative body for second-level school students in the Republic of Ireland. The ISSU aims to work towards an education system in which the views, opinions and contributions of students are respected and in which students are recognised as an official partner in creating an education that is centered around and caters best for students.

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## ***Foreword by the Sustainability Officer***

We are living in a time when the planet is facing one of its greatest challenges yet - climate change. As young people, we are inheriting this planet and the problems that come with it. It's natural to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and anxious about the future, but it's also an opportunity to take action. This resource, combined with the four others in this collection, were created with students in mind, to provide a space for them to understand and explore the impact of climate change and to empower them with knowledge and tools to make a difference. It's important to remember that although the problem of climate change can seem daunting, there is hope. With each small step we take, we can create a brighter future for ourselves and the planet. And together, as a generation, we have the power to make a real difference. So if you're feeling anxious about the future, know that you're not alone. This resource acts as a guide to help you turn that anxiety into action. You have the power to make a positive impact, the cure to anxiety is action.



*Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin*

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Sustainability Officer 2022/23

Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)

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# ***Chapter 1: What is Climate Anxiety?***

## **Definition of Climate Anxiety**

Climate anxiety is a growing concern among students and young people, who are the most impacted by the long-term effects of climate change. The awareness of the issue and its potential consequences is causing increased levels of anxiety and distress among students. As more and more information about the impacts of climate change becomes available, it can be overwhelming and difficult to process. Climate anxiety is a type of anxiety or distress caused by the increased awareness and concern about the impacts of climate change. It is a psychological response to the uncertainty and fear surrounding the future of our planet and the consequences of global warming and it is a valid and important concern. It is a completely understandable reaction to today's climate crisis. Climate anxiety can impact our mental health and well-being by causing stress, depression, and insomnia. It can also lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and fear for the future.

## **Symptoms of Climate Anxiety**

- **Fear and worry:** Climate anxiety often leads to feelings of fear, worry, and hopelessness. People may worry about the future of the planet and the impact of climate change on their own lives, their families, and future generations.
- **Helplessness:** Climate anxiety can also lead to feelings of helplessness, as if there is nothing that can be done to address the problem. People may feel like their individual actions are not enough to make a difference.

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- **Guilt and shame:** Some people experience feelings of guilt and shame about their own contributions to climate change, such as their carbon footprint. Some people may also feel like the actions they take are minimal compared to others.
- **Hopelessness:** People may feel alone in this and that they are the only people that care. It can cause feelings of frustration when they feel like their voice isn't being heard.
- **Sadness:** People can experience sadness when seeing the effects of climate change happen around them. People can see these effects in the media and see pictures on social media which can make them feel extremely upset.

## **Causes of Climate Anxiety**

Climate anxiety is a growing concern as people become increasingly aware of the effects of climate change and how it will negatively impact their lives. It is a type of anxiety that can be caused by worrying about the future of the planet, feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem, and feeling powerless to do anything about it. The causes of climate anxiety can be linked to a number of factors, including the media, social media, and personal experiences. Media coverage of climate change often paints a bleak picture of the future, with images of melting ice caps, wildfires, droughts, floods, and other disasters. This coverage can lead to feelings of fear and helplessness, which can contribute to climate anxiety. Social media can also have an impact, as people share stories, images, and videos about climate change that can be difficult to process.



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Seeing the effects of climate change in real time can be very emotional, and these emotions can lead to feelings of anxiety. Personal experiences can also be a source of climate anxiety. For example, if someone is personally affected by the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events or floods, this can lead to feelings of fear and worry. Similarly, people who live in areas that are threatened by climate change, such as coastal areas, may experience fear and anxiety about their future. Climate anxiety is an increasingly common feeling that arises when people become aware of the reality of climate change and the potential consequences that come with it. It is a feeling of fear, helplessness, and worry about the future of our planet, and the effects that climate change can have on our lives, our communities, and our planet.

Climate anxiety can be a result of several factors, from the alarming news of climate-related disasters to the increasing uncertainty of what the future holds. It is a response to the reality of climate-related risks and uncertainties, such as sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and the lack of action by governments and other institutions to address the climate crisis. This can lead to feelings of frustration and hopelessness, which can contribute to climate anxiety. The feeling that nothing is being done to address the issue can be a source of anxiety, as people feel unable to do anything to help. Overall, climate anxiety can be caused by a variety of factors, including media coverage, social media, personal experiences, and inaction on the part of governments and other institutions. It is important to recognise the causes of climate anxiety and to ensure that people have access to the support they need to manage their anxiety.

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## Prevalence of Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety is a real phenomenon that has been growing in prevalence in recent years. This type of anxiety is caused by the fear of the future of our planet, and the increasingly dire predictions of experts regarding the future of the earth's climate. Climate anxiety can manifest itself in many different ways, ranging from feelings of helplessness, to a sense of dread, or even physical symptoms like nausea, headaches, and insomnia. It is a difficult reality to face, but it is important to recognize that climate anxiety is a real phenomenon and one that is increasingly affecting people of all ages, backgrounds, and locations.

As world leaders struggle to come to terms with the worsening effects of global warming, the public has become increasingly aware of the impending danger. This knowledge has resulted in an increase in climate anxiety among both individuals and communities. People of all ages are struggling to cope with the psychological and emotional burden of climate change. This feeling of dread and helplessness is often accompanied by a sense of guilt, due to the fact that most people are unable to do much to combat the effects of climate change.



The psychological effects of climate anxiety can be severe, leading to depression, anxiety, and even PTSD-like symptoms. It is important for those who are affected to find ways to cope with their climate anxiety, such as through therapy and support groups. Additionally, it is important for individuals to take steps to reduce their personal carbon footprint and to advocate for more climate-friendly policies.

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Above all, it is essential to remember that while climate anxiety can be overwhelming, it is also a sign that we are aware of the importance of protecting our planet. By working together, we can make a difference and ensure a better future for generations to come.

## **Impact of Climate Anxiety on Mental Health**

Climate anxiety is a term used to describe the fear and stress associated with the effects of climate change on our planet and its inhabitants. It is a form of environmental distress that can have serious effects on mental health. For example, people may experience depression, anxiety, and stress due to the thought of a climate-related disaster. They may be overwhelmed by the prospect of a future that is unpredictable and potentially catastrophic. The mental health impact of climate anxiety is increasingly being recognized. Research shows that people who worry about the effects of climate change on global health, society, and the environment have higher levels of anxiety and depression. They are more likely to report feeling helpless and hopeless about the future. People may also experience fear, guilt, and anger in response to the threat of climate change.



The psychological effects of climate anxiety can be significant and long-lasting. People may feel overwhelmed, helpless, and powerless to do anything to stop climate change. They may also be more prone to fatigue, mood swings, and difficulty concentrating. In addition, people may experience physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and difficulty sleeping.

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There are many ways to manage climate anxiety, including seeking professional help. Talking to a mental health professional can help to identify underlying issues and develop strategies to cope. Other strategies include mindfulness and relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and yoga. It is also important to have a support system of family and friends, and to stay connected with nature. Finally, it is essential to stay informed about the latest developments in climate science and participate in activities to help protect the planet.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, climate anxiety is a growing concern due to the increasing awareness of climate change and its potential consequences. It is a valid and important concern, and has serious impacts on mental health. Symptoms of climate anxiety include fear, worry, helplessness, guilt, shame, sadness, and hopelessness. It can be caused by media coverage, social media, personal experiences, and inaction on the part of governments and other institutions. It is important to recognize the causes and symptoms of climate anxiety, as well as to take steps to reduce its impact by seeking professional help and finding ways to cope. By working together, we can make a difference and ensure a better future for generations to come.



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## **Chapter 2: How to cope with Climate Anxiety**

Climate anxiety is not something that should be taken lightly, it can impact people's mental health, is rife with uncertainty, highlights the importance of sustainability, and the protection of our planet. There is no planet B, after all.

If you are experiencing climate anxiety, it is important to take steps to manage your stress and find healthy ways to cope. Here are some tips to help:

1. **Stay informed, but limit exposure:** Staying informed about the impacts of climate change is important, but it is also important to limit exposure to information that is too distressing. Set limits on the time you spend reading about or watching videos about climate change. Try your best to focus on local things, such as projects or campaigns undertaken by local authorities to find out how people in your area are doing their bit! This can increase your motivation to get involved yourself.
2. **Get involved:** Take action to reduce your carbon footprint and to promote solutions to climate change. You can participate in local or online campaigns, volunteer with organisations working on environmental issues, or advocate for policy changes. You can also bring up this issue in your school, and talk about it with your green schools committee, or if your school doesn't have one, you could even take the initiative to set it up!
3. **Connect with others:** Joining with others to work on solutions to climate change can be empowering and can help you feel less isolated, it can allow you to voice your concerns and express your opinions and meet and connect with like minded people, who may share the same concerns as you, or to get support from friends, family, teachers and guidance counsellors in your community and school.

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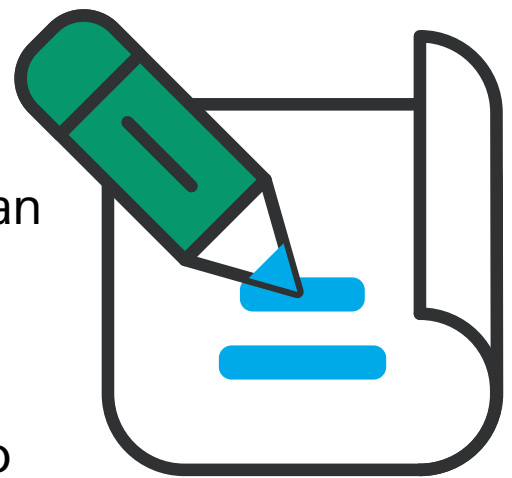
4. Take care of yourself: Practise self-care, such as exercise, meditation, or other activities that bring you joy, you can listen to music that you enjoy, and spend time working on your hobbies. Engaging in activities such as mindfulness colouring or keeping a welfare box, and looking into the different zones of regulation and how to cope with being in different zones has proven to help people! It's never a bad idea to go for a walk in nature, to get connected with your surroundings and remind yourself of the beauty of our planet, it can serve as a reminder that all hope is not lost, and it's not too late to protect and preserve our home.



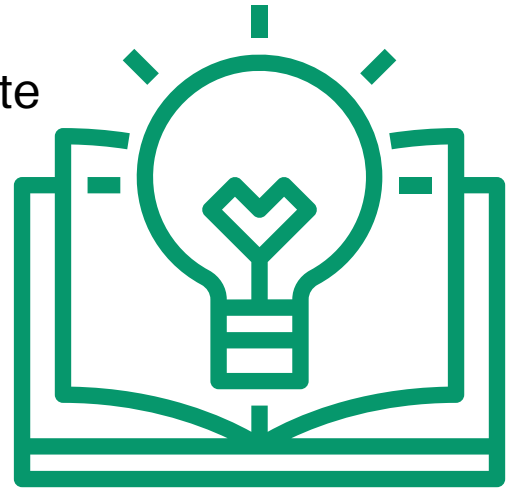
5. Find hope: Seek out positive stories and examples of people and communities working to create a more sustainable and resilient future. Looking at different campaigns and stories from all around the world is no harm, and it can ease feelings of hopelessness. Educating yourself on the ways young people and governments are dealing with climate change can be a huge relief. Positive stories and other people's past experiences can help you to cope with your own climate anxiety, while leaving happy and positive feelings along with the sense that all hope is not lost!

6. Start small: Remember that every 0.1 degree counts. Every 0.1 degree increment of avoided warming will help to limit how intense the damage is. While bold action is needed, the little ways in which you can contribute add up, and show that you really are making a difference! The smallest things such as turning off the lights whenever they are not being used, or instead of just unplugging something, turn off the switch, switching to energy efficient light bulbs, which not only provide the same amount of brightness as a regular bulb, but also use less electricity. You can encourage your family and friends to recycle more, start keeping a compost bin, and be conscious when it comes to food waste. Try not to give in to fashion trends, keep your old clothes, and sometimes pre loved clothes can be the best ones :)

7. Create your own climate plan!: It doesn't have to be anything too complicated, make a list of all of the things that you believe are causing you climate anxiety, and write down what you can do about them. This is a great way to ease climate anxiety as it can help you see how you can contribute and really make a difference, don't look at the problems as something foreign, break them down into smaller, more manageable issues that you can do something about, and then do it! You can also encourage friends and family by sharing your climate plan with them, this can help to get everyone involved and even raise awareness, you will realise there is so much you can still do!



8. Educate yourself: While it is important to educate others, it remains even more important to first acknowledge that you could have climate anxiety, it is even more important to educate yourself on the causes, and even solutions of this. Accessing and reading resources such as this one, can help you to isolate issues that may be troubling you or others and find helpful and effective ways to cope with climate anxiety. It is a real issue and can cause significant problems, and being educated can help to find solutions that work for you, and ways for you to get involved and soothe these feelings, if you have them.



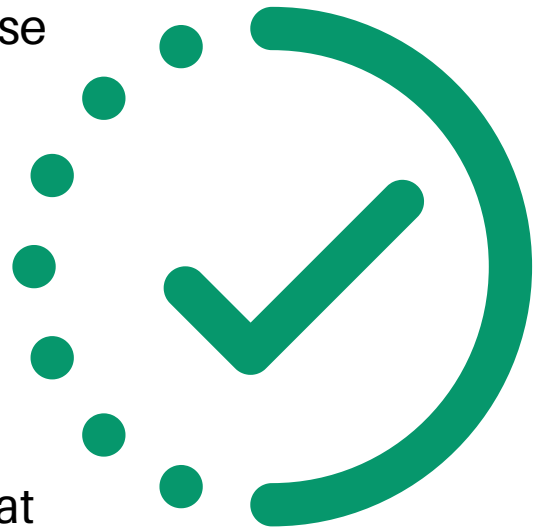
9. Don't invalidate your feelings: As it has been said before, climate anxiety is a real issue, and so if you believe you might be feeling this, it can be of utmost importance to address it, and to accept it. It's nothing to be ashamed of, being concerned for our home is normal, after all. There are ample resources available to help you, don't be afraid to research, find what works best for you!

10. Lead by example!: advocate for change, take action in your school, you can start off by reaching out to your school's green school community, you can join the committee, or if your school does not have one, you can take the initiative and ask for one to be set up. There you can voice your concerns and it can help ease your anxiety by adding to the personal satisfaction of you taking action yourself!



## **Chapter 3: Progress Is Key**

How to Monitor and Adjust Your Plan of Action for Optimal Results is designed to help you maximise the success of any plan you undertake. This chapter will discuss why progress monitoring is essential for achieving your desired outcomes, the various methods that can be used to track progress, and how to adjust your plan of action when needed. Additionally, it will consider other important factors that must be taken into account when formulating a plan. Having the right attitude and the right tools are essential to ensure that you are making consistent progress and achieving the best possible results. With a plan of action that is designed to monitor progress and adjust when necessary, you can achieve success more efficiently and effectively. This chapter will offer guidance on how to leverage progress monitoring and mid-course corrections to reach your desired goals.



### **Why Track Progress?**

Tracking progress also allows you to measure your progress against your goals and objectives. This means that you can more easily adjust your strategies as needed to reach your desired results. Additionally, tracking progress provides you with valuable data that can be used to analyse and evaluate your performance. This data can be used to inform future decision making and goal setting. Furthermore, tracking progress can help you stay motivated and inspired by showing you the progress you have made and helping you stay focused on the end goal. Finally, tracking progress can also be used to evaluate the impact of your efforts and make sure that you are making the most of the resources at your disposal.



## How to Track Progress

The best way to track progress is to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures, such as tracking the number of tasks completed or the amount of money saved, provide a numerical measure of your progress. These measures can be tracked over time and used to create charts and graphs that provide insight into how well your plan is working. Qualitative measures, such as surveys and interviews, provide a more subjective measure of progress. These can provide valuable insight into how well your plan is working, as well as any potential challenges or areas for improvement.

In addition to using quantitative and qualitative measures to track progress, it is also important to set milestones and goals.

Identifying specific goals and milestones gives you something to strive for, providing the motivation to keep working towards your plan. Additionally, having a timeline can help you stay on track and ensure that tasks are completed in a timely manner.

Monitoring progress on a regular basis is also essential in order to identify any potential issues or areas of improvement as they arise. Regularly assessing progress enables you to adjust your plan as necessary, ensuring that you are able to achieve your objectives. Finally, it is important to celebrate successes and acknowledge any improvements made. Doing so will help to keep morale high, motivating you to continue working towards your goals.



## **Adjusting Your Plan of Action**

Once you have tracked your progress, it is time to adjust your plan of action as needed to ensure that you are on track to achieve your goals. Start by identifying any areas of your plan that need adjusting. This could include anything from increasing the amount of resources allocated to a particular task to changing the timeline or scope of a project. Make sure to assess the impact of the changes you are making, to ensure that they are feasible and practical. Once you have identified the changes that need to be made, you can begin to make them. This could involve adding or removing steps, changing the timeline, or shifting the focus of the project. You should also consider how the changes you make will affect the other components of your plan, to ensure that everything is in sync.

Additionally, assess the potential risks that could arise from the changes you are making, and come up with strategies to address them. Finally, make sure to monitor your progress to ensure that the changes you have made are having the desired effect. Regularly assess your plan of action and make adjustments as needed, to ensure that you are on track to achieve your goals.

## **Other Considerations**

In addition to adjusting your plan of action, there are a few other considerations to keep in mind.

Firstly, make sure to keep an open mind. Be willing to try different approaches and be open to new ideas. Don't be so stuck on a particular way of doing things that you miss out on potentially better options.

Secondly, be flexible. Things change and unexpected events can occur, so be prepared to adjust your plan of action as needed. This may mean making changes to the timeline, the budget, or the scope of your project.

Finally, be persistent. Don't give up if something doesn't work the first time. Keep making adjustments, tracking your progress, and tweaking your strategy until you get the results you want. By having the right attitude, the right mindset, and the right tools, you can achieve success.

## Conclusion

By following the tips outlined in this chapter, you can ensure that you are monitoring and adjusting your plan of action for optimal results. Progress tracking and adjusting your plan of action are essential for achieving your goals, and it is important to keep in mind that no plan is set in stone. It is important to be flexible and open to change and improvement. It is also important to have realistic expectations about the time and effort it will take to reach your goals. With the right attitude, tools, and approach, you can create and follow a plan that will lead to the best possible results. This could include setting realistic and achievable goals, breaking down these goals into smaller tasks and then tackling them one by one. You should also be prepared to evaluate your progress and make changes to your plan if necessary. Finally, try to stay motivated and focused on your goals and remember that success takes time and hard work.





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