



The manifestation
of climate anxiety
in supervision

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what is climate
anxiety?



Client Story

55 % of people in the UK felt
that climate change had
negatively affected their mental
health to varying degrees.

Joint survey by YouGov and BACP
2020



10,000 Young people across 10 countries:

75%: The future is frightening:

31% (UK 28%): Governments can be trusted

45%: feelings about the climate affected their daily lives.

56%: they think humanity is doomed.





Disavowal

Climate journeys

Some people describe a journey with distinct stages

Epiphany ➡ Immersion ➡ Action ➡ Crisis and resolution

The moment of waking up to the issue

Finding out everything you can. Feeling very distressed and often overwhelmed.

Throwing yourself into action as a solution and making changes – politically, at work, in your community, in your personal life

Urgency and over-commitment can lead to burnout. Reappraisal of what is personally possible leads to a more personally sustainable level of action.

Other people describe remaining overwhelmed by difficult feelings and finding little comfort in action

A process akin to grief

Four tasks

Accepting the reality
of the crisis.

Working through the
painful emotions,
mourning what is lost.

Adjusting to the new
environment

Choosing a path of
action, reinvesting
emotional energy

Dilemmas:

- Defenses can be present in either supervisor or supervisee
- Climate Anxiety can be shared or stronger in supervisor
- Client or supervisee knowledge can affect supervisor's life
- Climate Change as the elephant outside the room. Who is responsible for bringing it in?
- Clinical perspective or healthy response?
- Inter-dependence undermines power dynamics
- Limits of individual therapy. A collective problem needs a collective container.
- Limits of experience
- Limits of our theories (anthropocentrism, individualism/ privatization of suffering, lack of psycho-social perspective, western colonial perspective etc.)

Client Story 4 groups:

1. Supervisor distressed about climate change. Supervisee seemingly unaware of climate emergency, frequent flyer. Not interested in the issue.
2. Supervisee wants to know if and how to talk about climate change with clients. Can they initiate the conversation – and if so how?
3. Supervisee sees client with eco distress, but pathologises their symptoms and sees it as an avoidance to address their personal issues.
4. Your supervisee is a climate activists. They ask you lots of questions about your position and voiced discomfort with hearing that you took a flight.



Climate Psychology Alliance

Climate Cafes

Therapeutic outreach

Handbook

Member days

“Explorations into Climate Psychology

“Hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on
the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky.

It is an axe you break down doors with in an
emergency.

Hope should shove you out the door ,
because it will take everything you have to
steer the future away from endless war, from
the annihilation of the Earth’s treasures and
the grinding down of the poor and marginal.

To hope is to give yourself to the future – and
that commitment to the future is what
makes the present inhabitable

Rebecca Solnit

