

# From Climate Anxiety to Hope

Arthur Lyon Dahl

IEF Youth Team

# Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety comes from the vicious circle between climate change and mental health. How badly we feel interferes with our ability to build a better world. There are direct and indirect stressors in extreme events, both physical effects on health, and the stress of our awareness of what is coming. Even climate professionals suffer a psychological toll of outrage, depression, burnout, suppression and guilt, and need psychological help.

(Frontiers Forum presentation by Professor Britt Wray of Stanford University 28 April 2023  
<https://iefworld.org/node/1396>)

# Climate Anxiety

Climate anxiety is not a mental health condition but a legitimate reaction to sources of danger. It can lead to everything from panic attacks to avoidance, but also to pro-environmental behaviour and activism, such as by Greta Thunberg. It takes effort to align our actions with our values.

(Frontiers Forum presentation by Professor Britt Wray of Stanford University 28 April 2023  
<https://iefworld.org/node/1396>)

# Climate Anxiety

A global survey of 10,000 young people showed that 45% said climate anxiety interfered with daily life, 59% were very or extremely worried, 75% found the future frightening, 56% said humanity is doomed, and 39% hesitated to have children. They felt they have been betrayed by governments and lied to by leaders. The poor may also have climate concerns, but they also have more immediate priorities.

(Frontiers Forum presentation by Professor Britt Wray of Stanford University 28 April 2023  
<https://iefworld.org/node/1396>)

# How to protect mental health?

Professor Wray said we should apply win-win solutions: energy efficiency, active transport, green and blue spaces, reduce inequality, community cohesion, and governance based on trust, transparency and participation. Respect our anxiety rather than fight it. Work at the community level to build a sense of solidarity, community and belonging. Ecological grief and anxiety can be the start of a healthy response to climate change.

(Frontiers Forum presentation by Professor Britt Wray of Stanford University 28 April 2023  
<https://iefworld.org/node/1396>)

# The Bahá'í response

In the Bahá'í community we foster community cohesion, connectedness and participation, reduce inequality, build social capital with shared goals, while we undertake social actions including to address environmental problems where we live.

# The Bahá'í response

It is important to work against feelings of helplessness, such as by listening to people who have overcome adversity, or find meaning in suffering, just as the Bahá'ís describe the spiritual growth that comes from tests and difficulties. Even if doom comes, there is no such thing as too late. Baha'is have a vision of the ever-advancing civilization to come after the difficulties ahead.

# The Bahá'í response

This turns climate anxiety from a stressor to a resource. We can generate meaning and purpose to create the active hope that we need.



# International Environment Forum (IEF)

IEF is a Baha'i-inspired professional organization for environment and sustainability founded in 1997, with over 500 members in 85 countries. It is accredited by UN in the science/technology major group. It addresses:

- Interface of science and ethics
- Climate change and environmental sustainability
- Extremes of wealth and poverty, a just economy
- International environmental governance

It works for the fundamental systems change needed to transition to a sustainable society

