

# When the World Feels Heavy

*On climate grief, eco-anxiety, and the completely reasonable urge to be furious.*

Climate grief – also called eco-grief or eco-anxiety – is the distress that comes from living through environmental collapse. It is grief, fear, and often fury. It is what paying attention feels like.

## You are not overreacting.

The distress is proportionate to the reality.

*Feeling this is a sign of being awake – not falling apart.*

Anger at the systems causing harm? Also completely legitimate.

## What it can feel like

### Grief & sadness

Mourning what is being lost – ecosystems, species, weather patterns, coastlines, the world as it was. This is real grief for real loss.

### Rage

Fury at inaction, denial, the gap between what we know and what is being done. Rage is one of the most appropriate and healthy responses available.

### Anxiety & dread

Persistent worry, difficulty switching off from climate news, hypervigilance about the future – especially for children and future generations.

### Guilt & helplessness

Feeling personally responsible, or that nothing you do is enough. The gap between the scale of the problem and individual action.

### Numbness & avoidance

Shutting down to cope. Not reading the news. Not letting yourself feel it. A protective response – but one that has its own costs.

### Solastalgia

Grief for a place you love that is no longer itself – the landscape of your childhood or home, changed beyond recognition.

## It can also show up in your body:

Disrupted sleep · Fatigue · Difficulty concentrating · Tension · Heightened startle response  
*These are normal nervous system responses to ongoing threat. Not signs of weakness.*

*Emma Sachsse Counselling acknowledges the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains as Traditional Owners of the land on which this practice operates. We pay respects to Elders past and present.*

# What actually helps

*(and what definitely doesn't)*

The goal isn't to stop feeling it. The goal is to carry it without being flattened by it — and to stay connected to what you actually care about.

## **Name it. Out loud, if you can.**

Grief needs language. "I am grieving the reef." "I am furious at inaction." "I am terrified for my kids." Naming it is not catastrophising — it is the beginning of being able to carry it. This is also what Cindy Chia's TED Talk is about (see below).

## **Find your people. This is not a solo sport.**

Isolation makes climate grief heavier. Find communities — local action groups, online spaces, people who share your values and your fury. Grief shared is grief made bearable, and collective action is genuinely better for your nervous system than doom-scrolling alone.

## **Let the rage point somewhere.**

Anger is energy. It is also information — it tells you what you value. The question is not how to get rid of it, but how to put it to work. That might mean advocacy, art, community, or simply refusing to pretend everything is fine. That's a legitimate choice.

## **Protect your capacity to keep going.**

Sustainable engagement means pacing yourself deliberately. Setting limits on news consumption isn't denial — it's resource management. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and the long haul needs you to still be here in ten years. Rest is not giving up.

RECOMMENDED WATCH



## **Giving validation and language to climate grief**

Cindy Chia · TEDxSaltLakeCity

[youtu.be/vt2CHR-CId4](https://youtu.be/vt2CHR-CId4)

*On naming the emotional toll of the climate crisis — and why language matters.*

## **Working with this in therapy**

Using ACT and Schema Therapy, we can hold difficult feelings without being controlled by them, clarify values, and act from a grounded place.

## **Emma Sachsse Counselling**

AMHSW · MSW · B Psych (Hons)  
Neurodivergent-led, neuroaffirming practice in Gawler SA. Anxiety, depression, identity, ADHD, AuDHD, trauma.

***You are not broken for feeling this. The world is hard right now. You are paying attention.***