



13 Things To Try When Children Are Sad About The Earth

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Grief is an inherent part of confronting the world's environmental crisis. Children today are exposed to this reality at a much younger age than before. They are feeling climate grief, and they are picking up on our grief. But parents, caregivers and educators don't have much support, space, or language for helping children process these emotions.



Recognizing eco-grief within ourselves and supporting children is essential for a healthy emotional life, strengthening our connections to ourselves, other people and the earth, and inspiring positive action. Below, you'll find some simple guidelines to help with this process.

When engaging with ecological grief and climate grief in practice, we recommend three basic ways and three basic modes:



By thinking (cognition)



Alone



With your body (somatics)



With one or a few trusted others



Creatively (arts, imagination)



In community

These resources are not a replacement for professional services when needed. In the US text or call 988 for a 24/7 crisis hotline and outside the US find emergency mental health numbers at findahelpline.com

1. **Get support for your own emotions.**
2. **Acknowledge their emotions:** "It's okay to feel sad, confused, or angry. You are not alone."
3. **Encourage open communication:** "Do you have any questions for me?" "I am here to listen."
4. **Play it out:** "Let's pretend we are snow bunnies missing the snow. What would you say?" Try using puppets or stuffed animals.
5. **Draw a picture together, of a memory, a place, or a feeling. Or use natural materials for an artwork.**
6. **Sing a song, write a poem.**
7. **Create a memory box:** Collect pictures, mementos, and meaningful objects related to what's been lost. This can help children feel a sense of connection to the experience they're grieving.
8. **Get outside:** Spend time in a park, forest, beach. Be quiet and listen to nature.
9. **Plant a tree** in honor or memory of a lost species.
10. **Create a ritual:** Make a grave marker and hold a funeral, giving a eulogy for something damaged; or light a candle for living things that suffer from environmental damage.
11. **Read a book together** about a character going through loss and coping with it.
12. **Use body expression:** Let your limbs sway, breathe deeply or slowly, make a dance; or find a safe space to let out furious grief, by pounding on pillows.
13. **Participate in community events:** Such as Remembrance Day for Lost Species on November 30th. If you belong to a spiritual community or congregation, explore options in your tradition.

Learn more about grief and build grief skills.

Parents: Know how to seek and receive support from peers and professionals.

Educators: make use of available resources at <https://www.climatementalhealth.net/education>

The Climate Emotions Wheel develops skills in observing different forms of emotions. This helps in observing and processing different forms of grief, but also in seeing how many different emotions can be related to climate/environmental issues and how these many resonate with grief. (E.g. guilt and sadness; anger and sadness; depression and sadness; hope/despair/hopelessness and sadness).

Download the Climate Emotions Wheel:
<https://www.climatementalhealth.net/wheel>

Parents resources:

<https://www.climatementalhealth.net/parents>

