



# Climate Emotions Toolkit for Educators: Activities



Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



## Index

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Mindful Moments for Climate Curriculum Teachers</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| Mindfulness Mediation Videos   | 1        |
| Mindful Moments: Quick Exercises   | 4        |
| <b>Student Activities</b>  | <b>7</b> |
| Teacher Notes for Student Activities   | 7        |
| Activity 1 Lesson Plan: Teflon & Velcro – The Brain’s Negativity Bias                                  | 8        |
| Activity 2 Lesson Plan: 5 Senses Grounding Practice  | 12       |
| Activity 3 Lesson Plan: See, Think, Me, We and Youth Climate Art                                       | 17       |
| Activity 4 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in New Jersey | 19       |
| Activity 5 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Ohio       | 22       |
| Activity 6 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Michigan   | 26       |
| Activity 7 Lesson Plan: Environmental Identity Timeline  | 29       |
| Activity 8 Lesson Plan: Social Hierarchy   | 34       |
| Activity 9 Lesson Plan: Circles of Action  | 39       |
| Activity 10 Lesson Plan: Climate Change Solutions and You  | 42       |

## Copyright

© 2025 The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation and Climate Mental Health Network. The materials published in this guide, including text, images, and illustrations, are protected by copyrights, trademarks, service marks, and/or other proprietary rights and laws of the United States or other countries. You may download or copy the Content of this guide for personal, professional or classroom use, provided that you keep intact all copyright and other notices contained therein, credit the source material appropriately and adhere to the terms & conditions set forth by the producer of the relevant material. Educator Climate Emotions Toolkit 2025 as a whole should be attributed to The National Environmental Education Foundation ([neefusa.org](https://neefusa.org)) and the Climate Mental Health Network (<https://www.climatementalhealth.net>).



# Mindful Moments for Climate Curriculum Teachers

These simple practices are easy and quick ways to bring ease into your teaching day. We've created mindfulness practices tailored specifically to support educators teaching about climate change. The more we practice mindfulness, the easier it becomes to stay grounded and calm, even during the challenging moments of supporting students in climate education and the emotions that come with it. These exercises were developed by [Leslie Davenport](#) for Climate Mental Health Network and the National Environmental Education Foundation.

## Mindfulness Meditation Videos

### Mindfulness Meditation: Presence, not Perfection

Embrace the journey of self-acceptance. Leslie Davenport guides you through a practice focused on acknowledging where you are, bringing your best, and understanding that you are enough without demanding perfection from yourself.

**Presence, not Perfection**  
*A mindfulness meditation for climate educators*  
created by Leslie Davenport  
for Climate Mental Health Network and National Environmental Education Foundation  
Duration: 5 minutes

[YouTube Video: Presence, not Perfection \(Duration: 5 minutes\)](#)

### Mindfulness Meditation: Sources of Strength

Tap into your inner power. Leslie Davenport helps you draw on your inner force, enabling you to show up fully and confidently for your class.

**Sources of Strength**  
*A mindfulness meditation for climate educators*  
created by Leslie Davenport  
for Climate Mental Health Network and National Environmental Education Foundation  
Duration: 5 minutes

[YouTube Video: Sources of Strength \(Duration: 5 minutes\)](#)





### **Mindfulness Meditation: Part of a Growing Community**

Reflect on your role as an educator: Leslie Davenport guides you to feel empowered as a classroom leader.

**Part of a Growing Community**  
***A mindfulness meditation for climate educators***  
created by Leslie Davenport  
for Climate Mental Health Network and National Environmental Education Foundation  
Duration: 5 minutes

[YouTube Video: Part of a Growing Community \(Duration: 5 minutes\)](#)

### **Mindfulness Meditation: Sustaining Ourselves**

Prioritize self-care and balance. Leslie Davenport channels the importance of maintaining self-care and balance, helping you sustain your well-being amidst daily challenges.

**Sustaining Ourselves**  
***A mindfulness meditation for climate educators***  
created by Leslie Davenport  
for Climate Mental Health Network and National Environmental Education Foundation  
Duration: 10 minutes

[YouTube Video: Sustaining Ourselves \(Duration: 10 minutes\)](#)





## Mindfulness Moments: Quick Exercises

### 4-7-8 Breathing (2 minutes)

Breathwork is one of the most direct ways to shift our nervous system from a stress reaction to a relaxation response. This calming method can provide a significant shift in just a few moments.

- Find a comfortable place to sit with a relaxed and upright posture.
- With your mouth closed, quietly inhale through your nose to a mental count of **four**.
- Hold your breath for a count of **seven**.
- Exhale through your mouth, making a whooshing sound for a count of **eight**.
- Repeat the breathing practice three more times for a total of four breath cycles.



Pick a breathing pace that is comfortable for you.

Notice any changes in how you feel before and after the practice and know that you can bring any beneficial feelings into your classroom.



## On the Move with All Five Senses (5 minutes)

Mindfulness practices focus on where we put our *attention* and the quality of our *awareness*. Most of us spend a lot of time in our thoughts – rehashing things that have happened, and planning or worrying about what’s to come. This practice brings you firmly into the present moment. It’s lovely to do this in a beautiful outdoor setting, but it can be practiced anywhere.

- Find a place to walk where you will be uninterrupted.
- Begin walking at a slightly slower pace than you normally do but one that still feels natural and comfortable.
- Notice the sensations in your feet and legs with each step: heaviness, lightness, energy, pressure, tingling.
- There is no goal for experiencing a particular physical sensation, but rather simply noticing the sensations in your own body.
- After two minutes, expand your awareness into the setting and mentally note to yourself five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.
- Once complete, pause and notice any changes in how you feel.



## My Touchstones (1 – 5 minutes)

While there are many well-researched mindfulness tools, the best ones are those that get used frequently.

Jot down the practices that are most supportive to you, whether recently learned or very familiar.

Some possibilities are:

- ✓ A special song
- ✓ One of your gifts or strengths
- ✓ A moment of gratitude
- ✓ An inspiring quote
- ✓ Picturing a person that fills you with warmth and joy
- ✓ The memory of what called you to teaching



List yours here so they are easy to call on:

1.

2.

3.

4.



# Student Activities

## Teacher Notes for Student Activities

The following student activities are designed for students in grades 5-8. The goal of these student activities is to provide teachers with resources to use in the classroom to supplement their climate change curriculum to support students' climate emotions. While climate change is explicitly addressed in the Next Generation Science Standards in MS-ESS3-5 (performance expectations below), these resources are designed with teachers of all subject areas in mind because climate change, and [environmental education more broadly, can be connected strongly to all subject areas.](#)

## Next Generation Science Standards

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Performance Expectation</b><br><a href="#">MS-ESS3-5.</a> | Students who demonstrate understanding can...<br><b>Ask questions to clarify evidence of the factors that have caused the rise in global temperatures over the past century.</b> [Clarification Statement: Examples of factors include human activities (such as fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and agricultural activity) and natural processes (such as changes in incoming solar radiation or volcanic activity). Examples of evidence can include tables, graphs, and maps of global and regional temperatures, atmospheric levels of gasses such as carbon dioxide and methane, and the rates of human activities. Emphasis is on the major role that human activities play in causing the rise in global temperatures.] |
| <b>Science and Engineering Practices</b>                     | <b>Asking Questions and Defining Problems</b><br>Asking questions and defining problems in grades 6–8 builds on grades K–5 experiences and progresses to specifying relationships between variables, and clarifying arguments and models. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ask questions to identify and clarify evidence of an argument.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Disciplinary Core Ideas</b>                               | <b>ESS3.D: Global Climate Change</b><br>Human activities, such as the release of greenhouse gasses from burning fossil fuels, are major factors in the current rise in earth's mean surface temperature (global warming). Reducing the level of climate change and reducing human vulnerability to whatever climate changes do occur depend on the understanding of climate science, engineering capabilities, and other kinds of knowledge, such as understanding of human behavior and on applying that knowledge wisely in decisions and activities.   |
| <b>Crosscutting Concepts</b>                                 | <b>Stability and Change</b><br>Stability might be disturbed either by sudden events or gradual changes that accumulate over time.   |

These activities can be done in any order and can stand alone as single activities. Each activity has a teacher notes page and a student handout.



These activities are designed to fit a wide range of educational settings. If additional accommodations are needed to meet your students' learning needs, consider any of the following accommodations:

- Group brainstorming – On individual response questions, you can give students the option to first have students brainstorm in small groups to promote teamwork and help generate ideas.
- Creative expressions – Students can be given the option to speak or use art alongside or in place of writing their response.
- Technology – Use online tools like Padlet, Canva, Jamboard, and others to brainstorm group ideas in real time.






## Activity 1 Lesson Plan: Teflon & Velcro – The Brain’s Negativity Bias

This activity introduces students to the brain’s negativity bias and provides them with practical tools for dealing with negative emotions. You can encourage students to apply this technique towards their climate emotions, but you can also point out that this approach can be used in other areas of their lives. One suggestion is to preview this activity before teaching about climate change, and then having students complete the table and reflect on what they learned at the end of the lesson or sequence on climate change.

When students have completed listing and describing their negative and positive climate emotions, remind them of the goal of the activity – to practice countering negative emotions with 5 positive ones. Invite students to turn and talk to a classmate sitting next to them about their experience coming up with their list of emotions. If students are willing to share their reflections as a class, hold space for a reflective discussion.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 1: Teflon & Velcro - The Brain’s Negativity Bias (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can apply my understanding of negativity bias to counter negative thoughts and experiences with positive thoughts and experiences. |
| <b>Time:</b><br>15-20 minutes  |   |

### Accommodations:

If students are having difficulty coming up with five positive emotions or thoughts about the earth or climate, consider ensuring them that it can be difficult to counter negativity bias, but that it is possible. Provide them with some prompts to scaffold their brainstorming, such as, “What is a place you find beautiful or inspiring in nature?” or share some examples of environmental success stories that they could research. You could also share something that you find positive as a way to model the activity. Consider showing students the [Climate Emotions Wheel](#) if they need help brainstorming positive emotions.

### Extensions:

News media and social media often perpetuate the negativity bias. They use dramatic reporting to gain clicks. This can be its own form of misinformation that can fuel doomerism. A quote from this [UN Article](#): “That’s the news story. It’s a ‘start’ story ... a ‘yes’ story. It’s activism of ‘yes’ and it’s for journalists. It’s been too easy to write the scary stories.”

This could be expanded into a 5–10-minute search to find five Yes Stories and discuss how easy/difficult it was to find them, and how or if it shifted emotions. You can share [The Daily Climate Good News](#) as a resource if students are having a hard time finding Yes Stories.

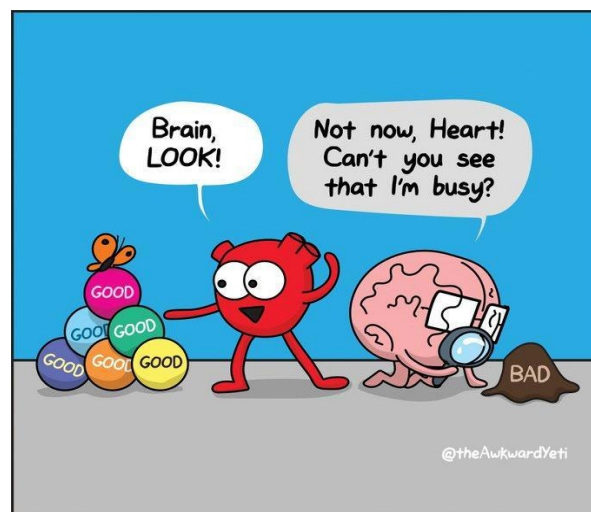


## Student Handout 1: Teflon & Velcro – The Brain’s Negativity Bias

**Name:**

When you learn about climate change, you might experience a wide range of emotions. All the emotions you feel are normal and valid. But, if those emotions become overwhelming and difficult to manage, there are many tools and techniques that can help promote resilience, feelings of hopefulness, and counter the negative feelings.

Did you know that our brains are hardwired to learn quickly from bad experiences and to ignore or learn more slowly from good experiences? This is called the brain’s **negativity bias**. Understanding the way our brains work allows us to take steps to counter our hardwiring.



Dr. Rick Hanson, a psychologist, describes the **negativity bias** as, “It’s like having a brain that’s Velcro for the bad, but Teflon for the good. And, we know what that’s like, every little bad thing kind of sticks to us, and all these good facts, good experiences, good moments, kind of wash through us like water through a sieve.”<sup>1</sup> One takeaway is that we need to make an active effort to counter negative thoughts and experiences, ideally with a ratio of five positive thoughts or experiences for each one negative thought or experience. Let’s take a few minutes to practice.

Some examples of positive climate emotions are:

- **Interest** - the desire to learn, know, or take part in something.
- **Empowerment** - the state of being empowered to do something: the power, right, or authority to do something.
- **Inspiration** - the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something.
- **Empathy** - identification with or sharing of another's feelings, situation, or attitudes.
- **Gratitude** - the feeling of being thankful.
- **Hope** - a feeling or chance that something will happen the way one wants it to.

<sup>1</sup> Hanson, Rick. “Velcro for the Bad, Teflon for the Good - Rick Hanson, PhD.” *Rick Hanson, PhD - Inner Strengths for Challenging Times*, 25 Oct. 2022, [rickhanson.com/velcro-for-the-bad-teflon-for-the-good/](http://rickhanson.com/velcro-for-the-bad-teflon-for-the-good/).



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Name one negative emotion or thought you have experienced when learning about climate change.</b></p> | <p><b>List and describe five positive emotions or thoughts you can think of that relate to the earth, climate, and the work people are doing to make the world a better place.</b></p> |
|   |  |






## Activity 2 Lesson Plan: 5 Senses Grounding Practice

This is a mindfulness activity that students can add to their mental health toolkit. This could be used in a variety of ways in class, such as introducing students to this tool proactively before a learning sequence, or at the end to check in and bring awareness back to the present moment.

You can read through the prompts on the Student Handout to guide the class through the exercise together. Feel free to add details that are appropriate for your surroundings and to take your time. Apply a [trauma-sensitive lens](#) when introducing and leading students in mindfulness activities, to provide a safe and inclusive experience for all learners.

If students are willing to share their reflections as a class after completing the activity, hold space for a reflective discussion.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 2: 5 Senses Grounding Practice (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can manage my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations to achieve goals and aspirations.  |
| <b>Time:</b><br>10-15 minutes  | *This is a <a href="#">Self-Management competency from the CASEL Framework</a> . See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as identifying and using stress-management strategies. |

### Accommodations:

Students who are unfamiliar with mindfulness activities may initially find this activity awkward or uncomfortable. This is a completely normal and valid response. Some accommodations that may help include allowing the student to sit in an area with fewer distractions, dimming the lights, or allowing the student to choose to do something else.

### Extensions:

This exercise could be completed by another body-based exercise and/or breathing exercise. To set up an embodied activity, share with your students that when a person encounters stress, their body responds in certain complex, physiological ways. This is called the stress response cycle. The stages include alarm, resistance, and exhaustion and should only last for a short time until the stressor is resolved. But, when stress is constant, the body is stuck in the stress response cycle and the nervous system doesn't get a chance to rest. Movement is one tool to help complete the stress cycle. Have your students try [“the doggy shake”](#) from climate psychologist Leslie Davenport. Or, try a breathing exercise like [five-finger breathing](#) that can relax the nervous system.



## Student Handout 2: 5 Senses Grounding Practice

**Name:**

When you learn about climate change, it is completely normal to experience a range of emotions, and all the emotions you feel are valid. As you encounter difficult or challenging emotions, there are many techniques and tools to help you feel more grounded and able to manage your emotions.

**Let's try this 5 Senses Grounding Practice together.** Here are some prompts you can use or listen to if your teacher is reading these aloud:

*Find a comfortable position and take a few moments to notice your breath. We are going to practice a 5 Senses Grounding Practice that you can use anytime you would like to feel more present.*

5

**Five things you see.** What are five things you can see around you? It could be a clock on the wall, a light, your pencil in front of you. Turn your head to look and observe 5 objects and mentally observe each one-by-one.



4

**Four things you feel.** Acknowledge four things you can feel around you. It could be the edge of your shirt sleeve, the feel of your desk, or the arm of your chair. Notice the objects' temperatures. Are any cool or warm to the touch? Notice the textures of the objects.



3

**Three things you hear.** What are three things that you can hear around you? Can you hear a fan, air conditioner, or heat running? Can you hear other voices? If you are outside or the windows are open, do you hear the wind, birds chirping, or vehicles driving by? Do you hear the sounds of a ticking clock or of your breath? Acknowledge these sounds.





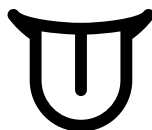
2

**Two things you smell.** Acknowledge two things you can smell. Do you notice the smell of objects near you, such as a pencil eraser? Or perhaps you can smell lingering food or beverage scents?



1

**One thing you taste.** What is one thing you can taste? Notice what the inside of your mouth tastes like, or take a sip of water or something else if you have a beverage nearby.



*Notice how you feel at the end of this activity. Return to the present moment.*

You can try this 5 Senses Grounding Activity any time you would like to feel more present. You can try this if learning about climate change brings up strong emotions. This is one tool that you can add to your toolbox to manage the thoughts and feelings you experience and stay present, aware, and grounded.




### Activity 3 Lesson Plan: See, Think, Me, We and Youth Climate Art

In this activity, students learn about art as a tool to inspire others to take climate action. The See, Think, Me, We activity is a Thinking Routine adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

See sample handout below.

Discuss student responses as a class.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Materials:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Student Handout 3: See, Think, Me, We and Youth Climate Art - digital or print copy for each student</li><li>▪ Access to the internet so students can view the student gallery. Or, print some example artwork out.</li></ul> |  <b>Learning Target:</b> <p>I can reflect on youth climate-inspired artwork and make connections from the artwork to my life and the global community.</p> |
| <b>Time:</b> <p>45-60 minutes</p>   |  |

#### Accommodations:

Allow students additional options for how they convey their responses: written, drawn, spoken. Giving students choice is a trauma-informed approach.

#### Extensions:

An extension opportunity is to allow students the time to express their climate perspectives through art. It does not need to be expensive—consider using recycled objects and materials you have on hand to encourage a sustainable approach to artmaking.

You can also extend the activity by incorporating art therapy activities from the Climate Mental Health Network guide: [Creative Therapies for Climate Emotions](#).





## Student Handout 3: See, Think, Me, We and Youth Climate Art - SAMPLE

**Name:** SAMPLE

Youth around the world have turned their concern, worry, and experiences about the impacts of climate change into art that inspires people to help protect the earth. The Climate Kids Student Showcase highlights projects in a variety of mediums based on topics that are important to the artists. First, select an artwork or project that you would like to focus on from this gallery: <https://www.climatekids.org/student-showcase/gallery/art-of-change>.

Then, complete the “See, Think, Me, We” chart on the next page while you reflect on the artwork and make connections to your life and the global community. Finally, share your ideas and learn from your peers by engaging in a dialogue with your classmates.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1. SEE:</b> Look closely at the artwork. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.</p> <p>I am looking at the student art on a brown paper bag found <a href="#">here</a>. I notice that the student recycled a grocery bag. They colored on the bag, maybe using marker or paint or some other supplies. They colored all the way to the edges. They labeled the artwork “Recycle” and have images of sea animals like turtles, fish, and jelly fish. There also is something in the middle that might be an animal but it might be litter.</p> | <p><b>2. THINK:</b> What thoughts do you have about the artwork?</p> <p>This makes me think about the state of our oceans. I worry about how plastics affect the animals that live in the oceans. Plastics end up in the ocean and microplastics even end up in animals’ bodies. It also makes me think about warming ocean temperatures and the effect of that on marine life. How long will these animals be able to withstand the changing conditions of their home?</p> |
| <p><b>3. ME:</b> What connections can you make between you and the artwork? Does the artwork evoke any climate emotions for you?</p> <p>The artwork evokes feelings of awe and inspiration in me, marine life is so beautiful and unique. It makes me feel calm to think about swimming in the ocean. But, it also evokes feelings of concern and worry about the future of the ocean and all creatures that depend on oceans.</p>  | <p><b>4. WE:</b> How might the artwork be connected to bigger stories about the world and our place in it—such as climate change?</p> <p>Climate change affects every corner of the globe, and oceans are no exception. This piece is connected to stories about the need to take steps to make sure we are treating natural spaces responsibly.</p>  |





### Student Handout 3: See, Think, Me, We and Youth Climate Art

**Name:**

Youth around the world have turned their concern, worry, and experiences about the impacts of climate change into art that inspires people to help protect the earth. The Climate Kids Student Showcase highlights projects in a variety of mediums based on topics that are important to the artists. First, select an artwork or project that you would like to focus on from this gallery: <https://www.climatekids.org/student-showcase/gallery/art-of-change>.

Then, complete the “See, Think, Me, We” chart below while you reflect on the artwork and make connections to your life and the global community. Finally, share your ideas and learn from your peers by engaging in a dialogue with your classmates.



**1. SEE:** Look closely at the artwork. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.

**2. THINK:** What thoughts do you have about the artwork?

**3. ME:** What connections can you make between you and the artwork? Does the artwork evoke any climate emotions for you?

**4. WE:** How might the artwork be connected to bigger stories about the world and our place in it—such as climate change?






## Activity 4 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in New Jersey

This video from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) will introduce your students to students from Benjamin Franklin Middle School in Teaneck, New Jersey who talk about how they feel about the environment and what they are doing to take action.

Divide students into groups of 2-3 to discuss their individual response to each question. Have each group share out with the whole class.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 4: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in New Jersey (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. |
| <b>Time:</b><br>15-20 minutes   | *This is a <a href="#">Social Awareness competency from the CASEL Framework</a> . See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as building the capacities to feel compassion for others.    |

### Accommodations:

Use the closed captioning for the YouTube Video. Closed captions support students who are hearing impaired and students who are multilingual learners. Consider providing the transcript to students. If you are asking students to write their responses, consider allowing students to use a voice-to-text option or Google Translate.

### Extensions:

Your students may be inspired by the video in this activity to do a service-learning project to improve their local environment. You could use this activity to encourage students to brainstorm how to take action. Be prepared to foster this energy and motivation, encourage your students to start small—every action makes a difference. You may also look up local environmental organizations as an opportunity to bring in a class speaker.



## Student Handout 4: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in New Jersey

**Name:**

### Introduction

This video from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) will introduce you to students from Benjamin Franklin Middle School in Teaneck, New Jersey who talk about how they feel about the environment and what they are doing to take action.



[YouTube Video: Teaneck Creek, “Greening STEM in Action: Students and the Environment”](#)  
(Duration: 2 minutes and 07 seconds).



**Reflection Questions: Write your responses to these questions during or after you view the video. Then, discuss your reflections with a peer or your whole class.**


1. What emotions did you hear the students from this video name and experience? What about the students' experiences did you find relatable, and why?
2. As you viewed the video, what actions did the students describe that they took both individually and as a community to address environmental issues?
3. Imagine you want to create a better world with less pollution. What steps could you and your classmates take to work towards this goal?



## Activity 5 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Ohio

In this activity, students will view a video about a young person sharing their climate emotions and responses. This allows students to practice identifying climate emotions in a less personal way, by identifying the emotions that the young person in the video articulates rather than their own, to make it an emotionally safe access point in a group setting. It also develops the SEL skill of empathizing with others.

Divide students into groups of 2-3 to discuss their individual response to each question. Have each group share out with the whole class.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 5: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Ohio (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. |
| <b>Time:</b><br>15-20 minutes   | *This is a <a href="#">Social Awareness competency from the CASEL Framework</a> . See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as building the capacities to feel compassion for others.    |

### Accommodations:

Give students the option to write or draw their responses to have more choice in how to engage with the prompts, aligned with a neurodiversity-affirming approach. This could even be a visual timeline: (1) when you first became aware of climate change and your feelings (2) any relevant events where climate change has affected you and your feelings (3) times when you have taken action and your feelings about it (4) how you imagine yourself feeling 1-5-10 years out taking climate action that is meaningful to you. Or, give students the option to team up in pairs and discuss rather than writing. Giving students choice is a trauma-informed approach.

Use the closed captioning for the YouTube video. Closed captions support students who are hearing impaired and students who are multilingual learners. Consider providing the transcript to students. If you are asking students to write their responses, consider allowing students to use a voice-to-text option or Google Translate.



### Extensions:

There is an opportunity to expand this activity to make more explicit connections to climate and environmental justice. [STEM Teaching Tool Practice Brief 84: “Let’s Talk Climate! Bridging Climate Justice Learning and Action Across School, Home, and Community”](#) is a resource for you to further explore this topic. The student in this video mentions several facts that relate to climate and environmental justice, such as heat islands and equity. A quote from the video to highlight is, “Environmental justice is still an issue in Cleveland because our city continues to build many homes and institutions around our factories. We are a very heavy factory city and they are all centered downtown which is dominantly lived in by POC.” Consider introducing your students to a zip code activity such as this one from [Science Friday “Environmental Justice: Evaluating Zip Codes and Pollution Burdens.”](#) Another activity option is Clime Time’s [“Using Tree Inequality to Teach Climate Justice in Middle School.”](#)

[Another extension activity is for students to develop a plan or action they can take in their own communities to help combat climate change. You could share Project Drawdown’s Climate Solutions Library with students as a resource to begin exploring ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.](#)



## Student Handout 5: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Ohio

### Name:

This video from Action for the Climate Emergency will introduce you to Alana, a student from Cleveland, Ohio. Alana will share her experiences with climate change and how she has turned her climate emotions into climate action. As you view the video, reflect on your own experience with climate change, your climate emotions, and some ways you might be able to join your community in taking climate action.



[YouTube Video: “Climate Action in Ohio | Youth & Climate”](#)

(Duration: 2 minutes and 50 seconds).

**Reflection Questions: Write or draw your responses to these questions during or after you view the video. Then, discuss your reflections with a peer or your whole class.**

1. Alana says that growing up she was always aware of climate change. When did you first become aware of climate change?

2. Alana describes how she was in a “doomsday mindset” for a long time. How did you feel when you first learned about climate change and its impact on your community and other communities around the world?
3. Alana describes how she has taken action regarding the climate crisis. How does it make you feel to learn about young people taking climate action?
4. If you could have a conversation with Alana, what are some questions you’d like to ask her?






## Activity 6 Lesson Plan: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Michigan

This video is a moving account of a young person articulating their worries and anxieties about climate change. The intent of this lesson is to have your students practice identifying climate emotions in a less personal way, by identifying the emotions that the young person in the video articulates rather than their own, to make it an emotionally safe access point in a group setting. Identifying climate emotions of another is an opportunity to relate and contrast/compare with their own emotions.

The video does have a positive, solutions-oriented arc, ending with ways this young person copes. But, please preview this video to ensure it is age and developmentally appropriate for your students. The video is most appropriate for older middle school students rather than 5th and 6th grade students.

Introduce the Climate Emotions Wheel to your students as a tool to increase emotional awareness, validate climate emotions as a normal and adaptive response, and elicit coping strategies or “what helps.” To learn more about the development of the Climate Emotions Wheel, visit the [Climate Mental Health Network’s Resources page](#).

Have students share with an elbow partner their reflections after they’ve completed their responses individually.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 5: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Michigan (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. |
| <b>Time:</b><br>15-20 minutes   | *This is a <a href="#">Social Awareness competency from the CASEL Framework</a> . See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as building the capacities to feel compassion for others.      |

### Accommodations:

Use the closed captioning for the YouTube Video. Closed captions support students who are hearing impaired and students who are multilingual learners. Consider providing the transcript to students. If you are asking students to write their responses, consider allowing students to use a voice-to-text option or Google Translate.

### Extensions:

Consider using the [Climate Emotions Wheel Activity](#).



## Student Handout 6: Stories of Youth Experiencing Climate Emotions and Taking Action in Michigan

Name:



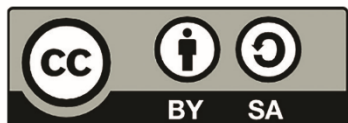
[YouTube Video: “Climate Anxiety in Michigan | Youth & Climate”](#)

(Duration: 3 minutes and 24 seconds).

1. This video from Action for the Climate Emergency will introduce you to Tori, a young person from Calumet, Michigan. While you watch the video, mark on the Climate Emotions Wheel (on the next page), or write down separately, the emotions you hear Tori articulate.
2. Tori describes how she deals with her emotions about climate change. Describe at least five ways someone can deal with difficult climate emotions (this can include the ideas Tori shares, or other ideas).



# Climate Emotions Wheel



Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



CLIMATE EMOTIONS TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS


Activities | 28



## Activity 7 Lesson Plan: Environmental Identity Timeline

This activity will introduce students to the concept of an environmental identity. To learn more about this activity and environmental identity as described by Dr. Thomas J. Doherty, check out [selfsustain.com](https://selfsustain.com) and [“Psychology and Nature III: Discovering Your Environmental Identity.”](#)

Be prepared that as students reflect on their life experiences and identities the activity may reveal losses or trauma. Also be prepared that some students may be reflecting on negative experiences and perceptions of the outdoors, especially cultural perspectives on the environment beyond a White-centric identity. For example, students of color face issues of safety and discrimination. The reflection questions aim to have students think about the way an environmental identity is shaped. While some of these responses may be very personal, Question 4 asks students to come up with questions they have about the concept of an environmental identity. Opening up this question for class discussion or small group conversations is a way to reflect on the uniqueness of an environmental identity and the many factors that shape it. You can mention to your students that identity is not static, and their future experiences with nature and the environment will continue to shape their environmental identity.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Student Handout 5: 7: Environmental Identity Timeline (digital or print copy for each student) |  <b>Learning Target:</b><br>I can understand my own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across context.         |
| <b>Time:</b><br>15-20 minutes   | *This is a <a href="#">Self-awareness competency from the CASEL Framework</a> . See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as integrating personal and social identities. |

### Accommodations:

Allow students to engage with the portions of this activity that feel emotionally safe for where they are at. Consider allowing students to be creative with their timeline and validating any emotions and reflections that arise through this activity.

### Extensions:

Consider having students keep their timelines and revisiting them later in the year.



## Student Handout 7: Environmental Identity Timeline

### Name:

Your identity is unique to you, it is what makes you who you are. It includes aspects such as your values, memories, experiences, race, gender, ability, skills, favorite music, and religion. It also includes your environmental identity<sup>2</sup>. Your environmental identity is the part of your identity that describes your relationship with nature and the environment.

Let's explore your environmental identity so that you can better describe and express this important part of your identity. The timeline below represents your life. On it, begin to list important experiences and life events related to nature, the outdoors, and other species. You can include anything that is important or memorable to you about the natural world. Feel free to add color, pictures, or doodles.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Did you have a place that was very important to you?
- Did you have any special relationships with animals or pets?
- Did you spend a lot of time outdoors with family or friends?
- Were there topics about the environment or nature that you remember learning about when you were younger?

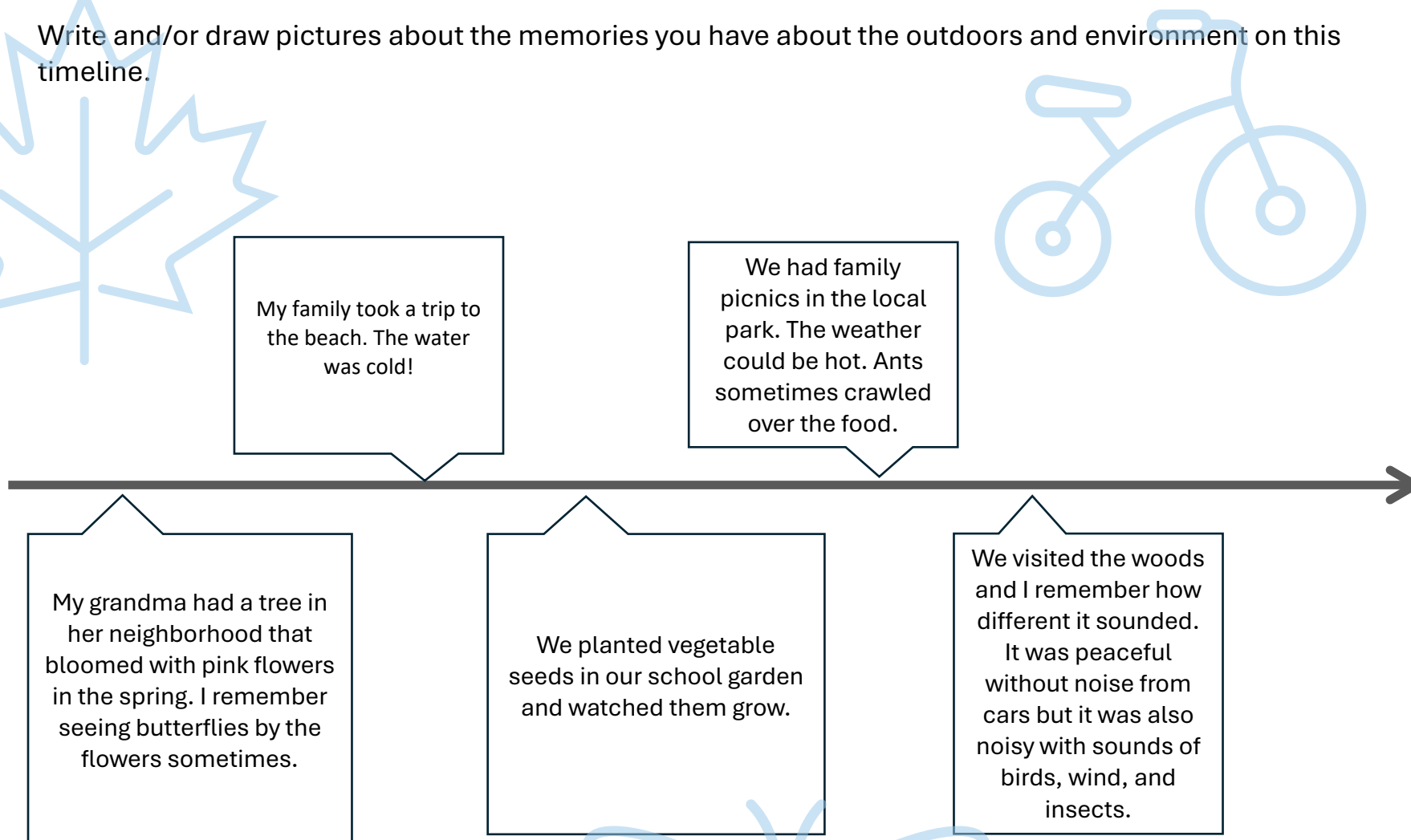
---

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about this activity and environmental identity as described by Dr. Thomas J. Doherty, view [selfsustain.com](https://selfsustain.com) and "[Psychology and Nature III: Discovering Your Environmental Identity.](#)"



## Environmental Identity Timeline- SAMPLE

Write and/or draw pictures about the memories you have about the outdoors and environment on this timeline.





## Environmental Identity Timeline

Write and/or draw pictures about the memories you have about the outdoors and environment on this timeline.





### Reflection Questions:

1. When you were younger, did you enjoy spending time outside? Do you enjoy spending time outside now? Why do you think that is?
2. What were some of your memorable nature experiences growing up? Why do you think they are memorable to you?
3. What are some of your favorite places? Do any of those places include nature? Why or why not?
4. Each person's environmental identity is unique and shaped by many factors. What questions do you have about the concept of an environmental identity?



## Activity 8 Lesson Plan: Social Hierarchy

This activity builds on the idea that it takes many kinds of people to make and sustain a healthy community. In light of climate change, old roles and values may need to be redefined or even replaced so that new roles can emerge that reflect the values (e.g. justice and equity) of an evolving community without leaving other members behind.

### Directions:

- Hand out or allow students to select a card.
- Have students take turns sharing what their index card says with each other and their ideas on how the job is impacted by and related to solving climate change.
- Students will then discuss the importance of each profession as a group and organize themselves in order of importance.
- Classmates may help generate ideas about how the job relates to climate change.
- Most groups will attempt to form a line.
- The best answer is a circle where no one person is more important than another for each person contributes something of value to the wellbeing and success of the group. Students will be examining each job/profession through the lens of solving the climate crisis.

Debrief: Establish ground rules for keeping the conversation positive. Then debrief this activity based on student comments. Some topics you may want to explore include worldview and values; equity and power; and civic engagement and social responsibility.

### Materials:

- Student Handout 8: Social Hierarchy (digital or print copy for each student)
- Print the table of jobs/professions and cut into individual job cards, or create a set of index cards with different jobs/professions on them. See the Jobs/Professions chart in the following page for suggestions. If you need more, substitute specific types for one generic role (e.g. biologist, chemist, physicist = scientist, etc.)

### Time:

20 minutes



### Learning Target:

I can understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

\*This is a [Social Awareness competency from the CASEL Framework](#). See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as building the capacities to feel compassion for others.



### Extensions:

If your students are receptive to learning more about green jobs, you could explore the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) as a class or individually to learn what education is required for various jobs. Another resource is [Black Faces in Green Spaces](#), a guide that introduces youth the many jobs in the forest and conservation sector through the lens of Black professionals currently working in the sector.



## Jobs/Professions

|                    |                |                |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Actor              | Artist         | Athlete        |
| Author             | Banker         | Business owner |
| Caretaker          | Carpenter      | Chef           |
| Climate researcher | Dancer         | Doctor         |
| Engineer           | Electrician    | Farmer         |
| Historian          | Inventor       | Janitor        |
| Judge              | Land developer | Lawyer         |
| Librarian          | Mayor          | Mathematician  |
| Mechanic           | Mortician      | Musician       |
| Nurse              | Pilot          | Plumber        |
| Police officer     | Programmer     | Realtor        |
| Religious Leader   | Reporter       | Scientist      |
| Singer             | Teacher        | Truck Driver   |





## Student Handout 8: Social Hierarchy

### **Name:**

Today, you will participate in a class activity that explores the value of individuals and their respective roles in contributing to the wellbeing of each other and the success of a community. Keep in mind your past class discussions of climate change and its impacts. You will receive an index card with a job/profession listed on it. You and your classmates will attempt to organize yourselves in order of importance of each role.

### **Before starting, reflect on this question.**

When solving the climate crisis, what jobs and professions do you think are most important? Why?

### **Job assigned to me:**

What does this job entail?

How might this job be impacted by and relate to solving climate change?



**After your class wraps up the activity, reflect on these questions and debrief as a class.**

What was the process of reaching consensus like as a group during this activity? Did your group reach consensus, why or why not?

When solving the climate crisis, what jobs and professions do you think are most important? Why?



## Activity 9 Lesson Plan: Circles of Action

This activity was developed by [Project Zero, a research center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education](#). The goal of this activity in the context of student climate emotions is to combat feelings of helplessness by identifying actions that students can take within their own spheres of influence. This exercise can help highlight opportunities for positive impacts on climate change, being mindful to not frame the topic as burdening young people with the sole responsibility of solving climate change and its impacts.

From Project Zero:

“This routine fosters students’ disposition and motivation to take action in personal, local, and global spheres and prepares them to weigh courses of action and their consequences.

This routine can help students to develop their sensitivity to opportunities to influence their environments, their capacity to do so in effective, informed, and responsible ways, and their motivation to take actions over time... A mismatch between calls for global citizenship and students’ perceptions of their own capacity to act can stifle motivation to engage. This routine helps students learn to recognize that actions can have multiple scopes (small-big) and occur in multiple spheres (personal-local-global).”

This activity is very well-suited for using whiteboards or large paper in small groups. Students could work together to complete the concept map. Another option is to provide sticky notes to students and to have students add their ideas to a class map of the Circles of Action. You could draw it on the front whiteboard.

After students have completed the chart, engage them in a debrief conversation. Did they generate any new ideas through the exercise? Are they feeling inspired, motivated, frustrated, confused, etc.?

### Materials:

Student Handout 9: Circles of Action  
(digital or print copy for each student)

### Time:

20-30 minutes



### Learning Target:

I am able to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

\*This is a [responsible decision making competency from the CASEL Framework](#). See the Framework for additional ways to support student development of this competency, such as reflecting on one’s role to promote personal, family, and community well-being.

**Accommodations:**

Students can have the option of verbally describing their circles of action.

**Extensions:**

There may be an opportunity to introduce students to local organizations and green careers through this activity. Consider inviting a speaker from a local environmental education organization to speak to your students about their path and their own “circles of action.”

You may also engage students in the question, “What are the barriers to students’ capacity to take action at various levels?” This could become an opportunity to research those barriers.





## Student Handout 9: Circles of Action

**Name:**

What can I do to contribute to solving climate change...

**In the world?**

**In my  
community?**

**In my inner  
circle?**



Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



**CLIMATE EMOTIONS TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS**

Activities | 41




## Activity 10 Lesson Plan: Climate Change Solutions and You

In this activity, you will help your students reflect on their own skills, abilities, and interests and brainstorm tangible actions they can take to contribute to climate change solutions and make a difference.

### Directions:

- 1) Provide each student with a copy of the student handout, Climate Change Solutions and You.
- 2) Introduce the topic. Tell students that it is important and empowering to channel climate emotions towards solutions. Tell them that today the focus is on identifying what tangible actions each can take.
- 3) Show students this video from Global Weirding with Katharine Hayhoe called “I’m only a kid, I can’t do anything about climate change...right?”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsLL9WC-2cQ>. Before showing the video, introduce Katharine Hayhoe by letting the students know that she is an atmospheric scientist whose research focuses on understanding the impacts of climate change on people and the planet. The video is 6 minutes and 58 seconds. If you are short on time, begin the video at timestamp 2:57. **Tell students to jot down notes from the video on their Venn diagram in the “What work needs doing?” section.** Here are some key points from the video relating to the Venn diagram.
  - a. 3:28 Work on reducing the energy that we use and the amount of waste that we produce and helping our family or our school or our community do that too.
    - Changing out the older inefficient lightbulbs for LEDs
    - Reusing our water bottles instead of using disposable ones
    - Eating lower down the food chain, less meat, more veggies.
    - Opening the windows instead of running the air conditioners
    - Apply for money to put solar panels on the roof of your school
    - Paint the roof of your school white to save on air conditioning. Learn more about how to green your school and save money at [greenschools.net](http://greenschools.net).
  - o 4:25 Talk to people about climate change.
- 4) After viewing the video, discuss as a class key student takeaways and ideas they jotted down.
- 5) Direct students to independently work on the rest of the Venn diagram.
- 6) After a few minutes, ask your students to turn to a classmate and share their ideas for their climate action.
- 7) To wrap up the activity, ask a few groups to share out. You could write these ideas on a large piece of paper or section of the whiteboard that you could leave posted to remind students of their climate action.



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p>Student Handout 10: Climate Change Solutions and You (digital or print copy for each student)</p> <p>Computer and display to show students the YouTube video.</p> | <p> <b>Learning Target:</b></p> <p>I can identify my skills, abilities, and interests to make a difference and contribute to climate change solutions.</p> |
| <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>15-20 minutes</p>  |   |

### Accommodations:

### Extensions:

The Climate Venn Diagram could become a larger activity. You could pair a visioning exercise to elicit agency/empowerment, creativity/imagination/hope—some version of imagining a better future, what it looks like, and the changes that happened to make it possible. See here for one example of a collective visioning exercise: <https://www.spiritinaction.net/blog/collective-visioning-exercise-1/>.



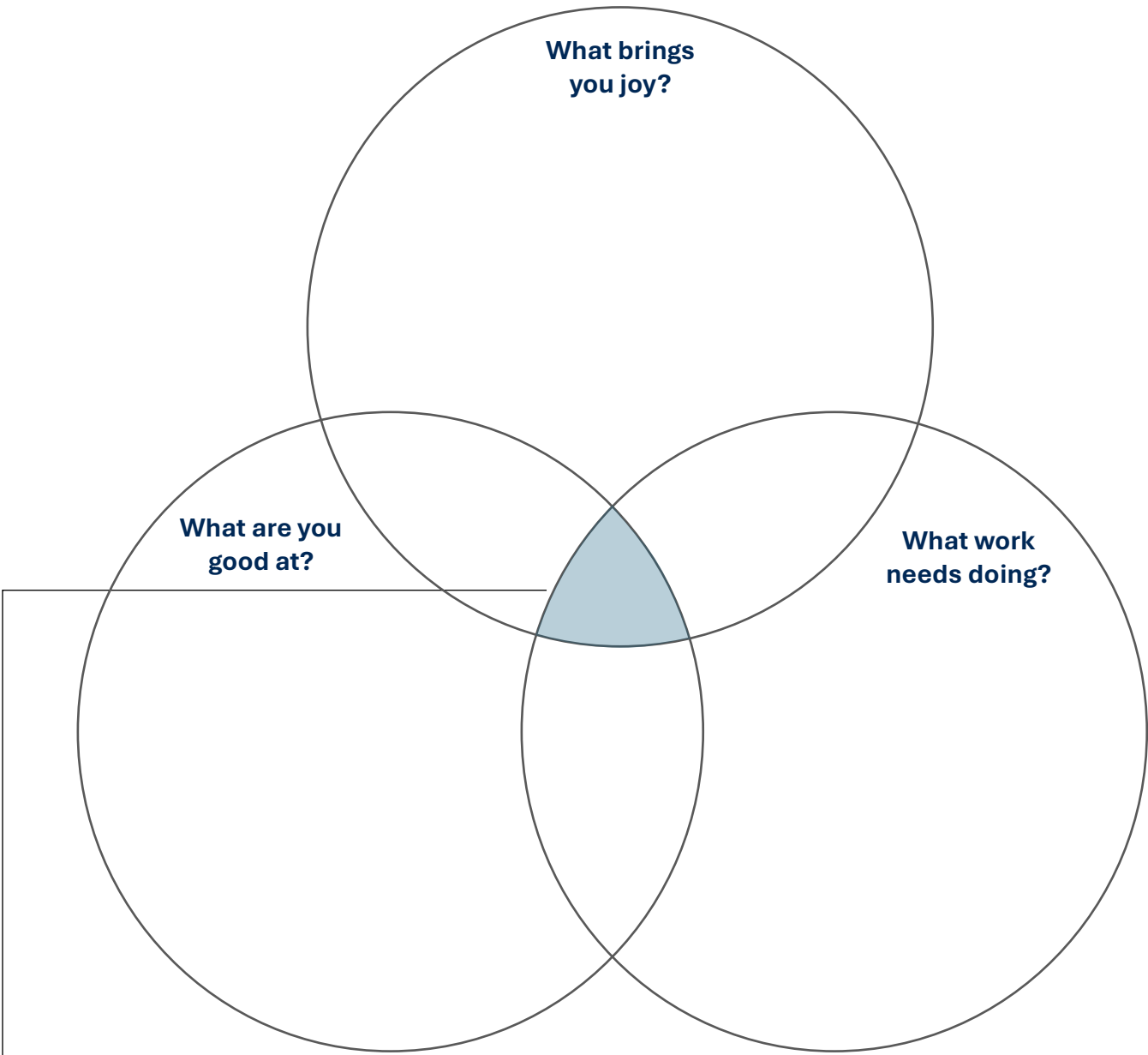


## Student Handout 10: Climate Change Solutions and You

**Name:**

Each person has unique skills and talents to contribute to climate solutions. Today you will identify how you can use your skills, talents, and interests to make a difference. The Climate Action Venn Diagram ([Ayanaelizabeth.com/climatevenn](https://Ayanaelizabeth.com/climatevenn)) is a tool to identify ways to contribute based on your unique gifts.





**Your climate action!**



Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



**NEEF** National  
Environmental  
Education  
Foundation

**CLIMATE EMOTIONS TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS**

Activities | 45