



3 Climate Emotions Coping Strategies

This was created by Anya Kamenetz, a journalist and advisor to the Climate Mental Health Network based on what researcher Maria Ojala identified as three strategies used to cope with climate emotions:

- Meaning-focused coping
- Problem-focused coping
- Emotion-focused coping

All of these coping strategies have their purposes and times. In fact, they are complementary to each other.



Meaning-focused coping

Meaning-focused coping is the mental reframing that we do in order to live with situations that can't be resolved quickly or completely, or by ourselves alone.

Author and researcher Britt Wray has written:

“Meaning-focused coping can allow us to get through almost anything and persist with at least some degree of positivity. Meaning is the ultimate existential tool.”

Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping means taking action, which may include political activism, the kind of work you do, or making individual sustainable choices. A 2022 Current Psychology study of US based young adults suggested taking action with others has a particular power to “buffer” the effects of climate anxiety and despair.



“Engaging in collective action may combat feelings of despair and helplessness and foster feelings of hope,” the researchers said. “Engaging in collective action can also result in feelings of empowerment and social support.”

Emotion-focused coping

Emotion-focused coping was defined as denying, distancing ourselves from, or suppressing climate emotions. Sometimes, that is necessary; we can't be staring at IPCC reports every minute of every day.

But emotion-focused coping can also mean something very different, almost the opposite: leaning into and experiencing the emotions themselves, without trying to change them and make them go away.