

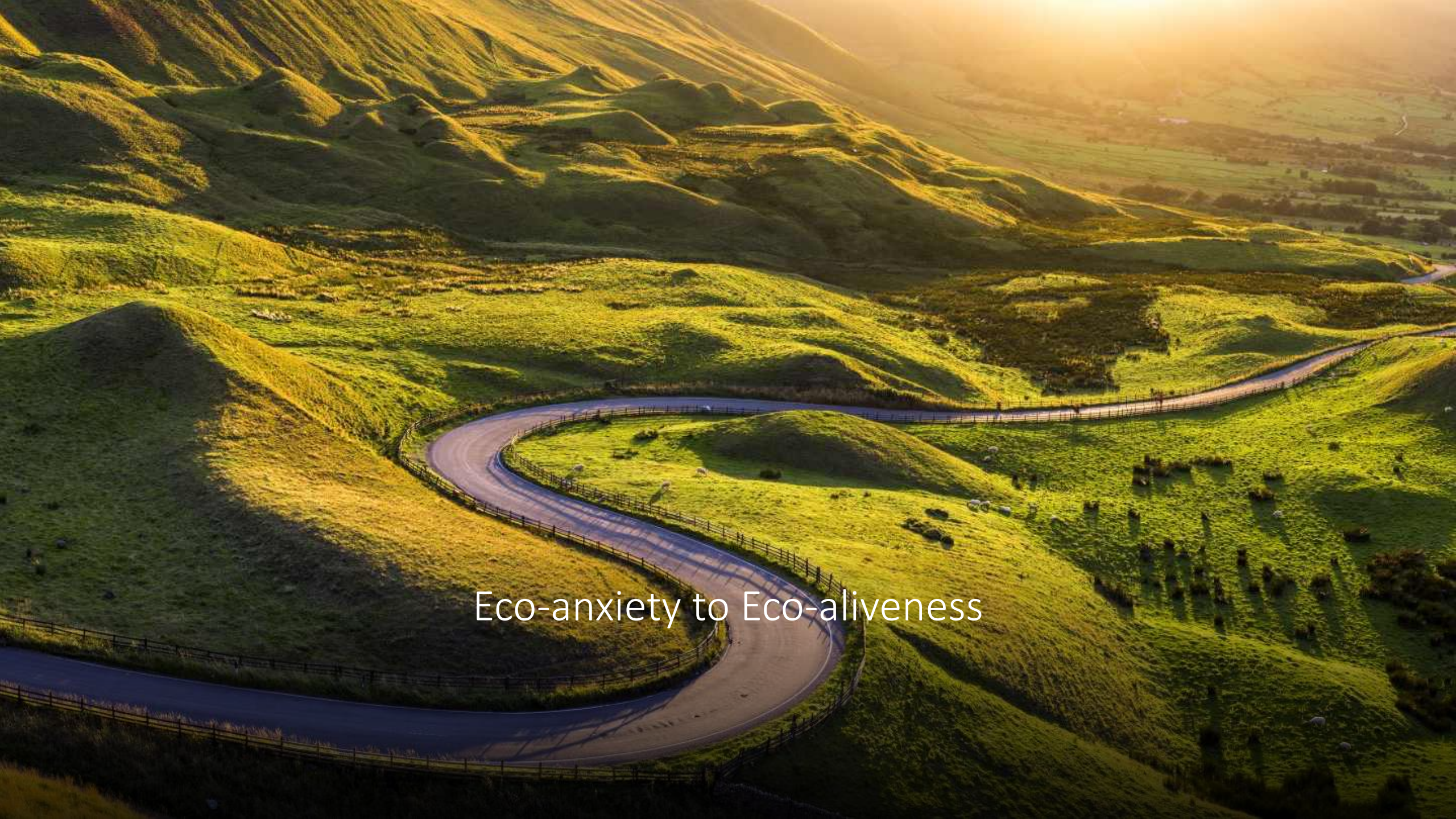
Climate Psychology Eco Anxiety Catastrophe or Transformation

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Eco-anxiety to Eco-aliveness

FACING DIFFICULT TRUTHS

Climate Psychology Alliance

Gus Speth US Advisor on Climate Change

- 'I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that within 30 years good science we could address those problems.
- But I was wrong.
- The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation.
- And we scientists don't know how to do that'



MACKAY
WORLD JOURNAL

BIODIVERSITY
COLLAPSE

CLIMATE
CHANGE

RECESSION

COVID
19

WE SURE
TO WASH YOUR
HANDS AND ALL
WILL BE WELL.

Paul Hoggett 2019

- We are living in a time when a tragedy which is without precedent is unfolding in front of our eyes.
- We are witnessing catastrophic rates of species extinction and biodiversity loss, soil and ocean exhaustion and runaway climate change

Why Climate Psychology?

- Dawning of the Anthropocene age because of human activity through accelerated technological changes, growth in population & consumption
- Forced down new paths that have never been travelled before – no blueprint
- Technical, scientific, political & rational innovations & solutions need to be invested in
- But delusional if we think these are enough alone
- Because they are not being acted on, & still facing climate crisis denial
- Why? Political, social & economic explanations
- Psychologically it means facing painful difficult truths
- Looking at what lies underneath, facing the unknown
- Transformation rather than change
- **We defend against things that are unbearable or too big for us to comprehend as humans**

Conscious Mind

Subconscious Mind

Unconscious Mind

The Collective Unconscious

How are we responding to this cognitively & emotionally?

Emotional
climate?

Emotional bio-
diversity

- Eco-anxiety
- Grief & Solastalgia
- Hope & Hopeless
- Anger
- Blame
- Frustration
- Guilt
- Fantasies of rescue
- Apocalyptic Fantasies
- Avoidance
- Nihilism
- Despair



Solastalgia & Eco-grief

- Solastalgia is a particular form of loss and grief experienced in relation to the climate crisis. The term, coined by Albrecht, is defined by The American Psychological Association as the 'lived experience of negatively perceived change to a home environment.'
- Disenfranchised, disallowed & interrupted grief

Eco-anxiety

- We live with an awful uncertainty about whether we will take sufficient, sustained, effective action in time to reduce the spread of the more extreme impacts already appearing globally
- Congruent & healthy response to the reality we are facing
- The capacity to be in touch with external reality has long been regarded as an indication of mental health and conversely not having that capacity regarded as mentally unhealthy

Numbers specific to eco-anxiety

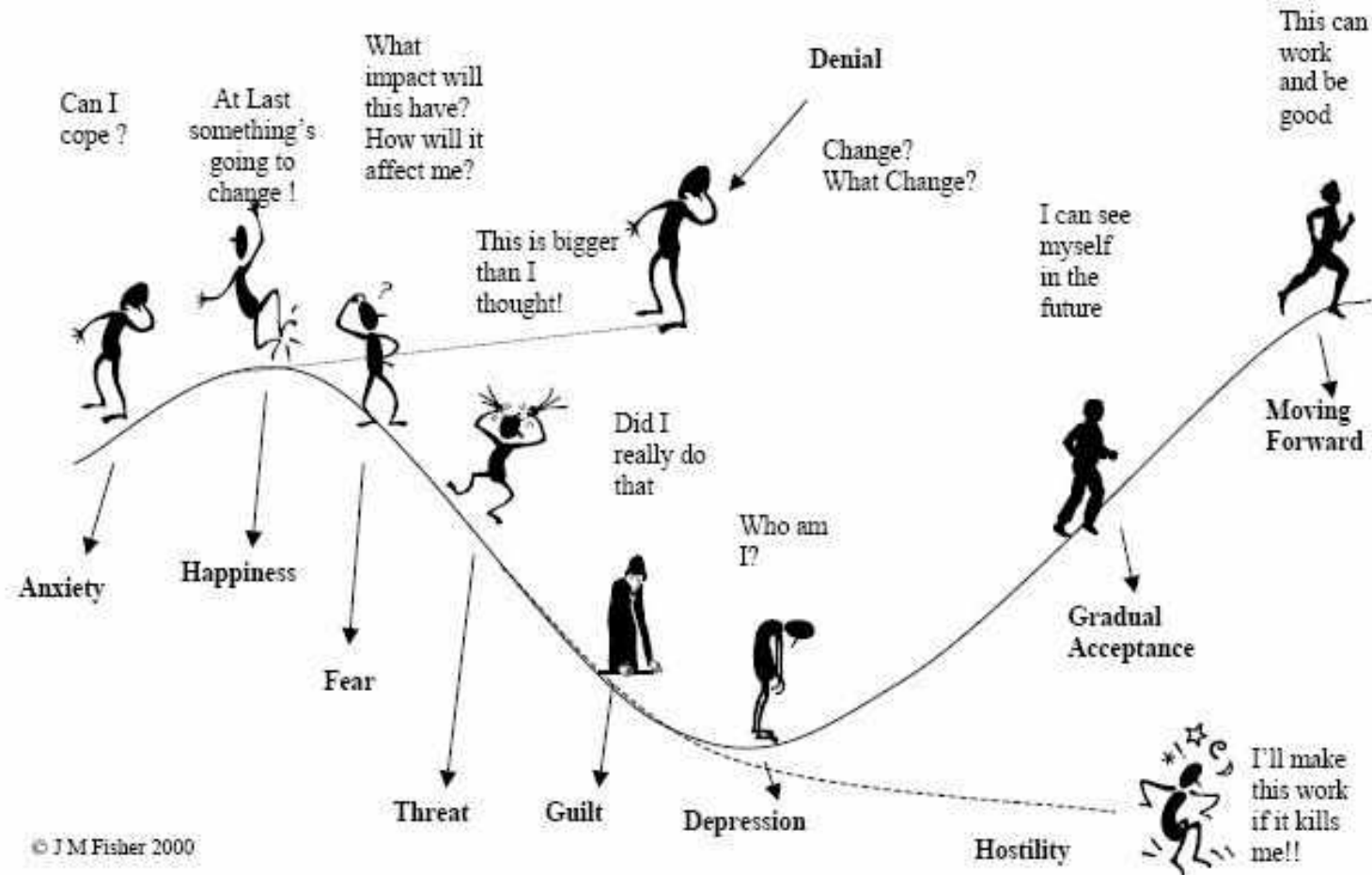
2020 YouGov Poll (Friends of the Earth) reported that 70% of 18-24 year olds more worried than in 2019

Global Action Plan (2020) 1:3 teachers seeing high levels of climate anxiety in students & 77% students say that thinking about climate change makes them anxious

Royal College of Psychiatrists (2020) Advice for parents & carers

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/eco-distress---for-parents-and-carers>

The Process of Transition



Fight
Flight
Freeze

Defenses

- Regression – falling back into an early state of development (less demanding & safer)
- Denial
- Splitting – Primitive defense – harmful & helpful impulses are split off and unintegrated (frequently projected onto someone else). All good/all bad with no room for ambiguity or ambivalence
- Acting out – direct expression of an unconscious wish or impulse without conscious awareness or the emotion that drives the behaviour
- Disavowal
- Wishful thinking – making decisions according to what might please others/fantasy rather than based on reality or rationality

Facing multiple uncertainties

- The intensity & scale of the climate crisis prompts us to look carefully at how people (adults & children) experience uncertainties
- And uncertainties are always experienced unequally
- It is insufficient to just tell people to follow advice without listening to and discussing their questions & concerns
- Science & facts need to be balanced up with equal attention to feelings
- Bear Hunt model – helps understand the need to go through difficulties rather than avoid them
- Learning to welcome, tolerate & reduce uncertainty

So what can we do psychologically?

Feelings First

Internal & External Activism

Feel, Think, Breathe, Understand, Act

Eco-anxiety transformed

- *Eco-understanding*
- *Eco-empathy*
- *Eco-compassion*
- *Eco-courage*
- *Eco-community*
- *Eco-awareness*
- *Eco-connection*
- *Eco-belonging*
- *Eco-meaning*
- *Eco-care*
- *Eco-aliveness*



Healing:

- Strengthen ecological connection (nature & self in relationship)
- Use experience of trauma (climate change as a traumatic event)
- Build emotional intelligence/resilience (depression, fear, anxiety, sadness, melancholy, grief, desperation, anger)
- Understanding of psychic pain in order to both help people deal with ecological disasters already happening, and contribute to meaningful solutions
- Global empathy & action (global connection)

Psychosocial Solutions

- Face our denial
- Come to terms with our irrationality (human)
- Get under the surface of our feelings
- Make a place for feelings in technical solutions
- Confront narcissistic entitlement
- Needs vs wants
- Grieve what we have done & lost
- Understand and confront apathy in a realistic way (CC is not distant from us – optimism bias)
- Loss of old ways of living (and defensive shells)
- Examine, understand & repair our relationship with the natural world

Such as:

- Climate Psychology Alliance
- Heal Rewilding
- Community, pack, clan, support
- CPA Website & Handbook
- Podcasts
- Climate Cafes
- Carbon Conversations
- Become an Earth Protector (Polly Higgins & Ecocide)
- Parent support groups
- Support School climate strikers
- XR/activism
- Deep Adaptation Forum
- Challenge anthropocentric world view
- Art & theatre & creativity
- Joanna Macy Groups – The work that reconnects



The truth is.....

- To live fully in the world means to also feel the anxiety that goes with the territory of being a vulnerable human being

