



Framing Environmental Issues and becoming a climate leader for mental empowerment

Facilitating Discussions and Creating Solidarity- Teacher Guide

To learn more about these activities, please read the [Climate Mental Health Activities Introduction](#)

Activity Summary

Talking about emotions related to climate change can help youth to process emotions, move on, and develop trust and connection with others through shared solidarity. In this lesson, students will discuss their thoughts and feelings about climate change with others, and learn how to reframe some of their thoughts. Consider teaching the Emotions Wheel and Active Listening activities before this in order to help students develop language and discussion skills.

Instructional Overview	
Grade Level	Middle School - College
Instructional Time	15-30 min
Learning Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be able to identify and explain emotions related to climate change. To be able to understand someone else's perspective by listening to and summarizing what they said. To be able to develop positive relationships by sharing similar thoughts and feelings with others.
Social-Emotional Learning Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students identify and explain their emotions, understand their partner's thinking, offer support, communicate effectively, and develop positive relationships (CASEL Core Competencies: Self-awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills)
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Self-care Listen and validate feelings Join and create community connection Use social, emotional, and positive coping skills Move through grief
Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Board to write down question prompts
Sources and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work Strategies for managing climate change discourse for classrooms in which teaching climate change may be controversial: https://cleanet.org/dev/clean/literacy/tools/controversy.html

Instructional Process



1. Set up a “safe space” by setting up norms with the group. Consider: inviting feelings, keeping what is said confidential, using “I” statements, practicing self-care (like stepping out of the group if needed), using listening skills, being curious and open-minded, demonstrating empathy and compassion, etc.
2. Have students get into pairs or small groups. One student is the listener, and the other(s) is the respondent(s). Students will discuss the following prompts:
 - What have you been feeling lately related to the climate, the environment, activism, and the future?
 - What makes you angry, scared, or apathetic about the future?

Have each person talk about their feelings related to the grief and loss of climate change. Each student should be given five minutes to talk and answer questions. Respondents should list emotions and thoughts that come up off the top of their heads. The other individual should listen attentively, say “Thank You”, and then seek to understand their partner’s perspective by summarizing what their partner said, stating “What I hear you saying is....” The listener should repeat the question to get the speaker to talk more, or move on to the next question.

3. To build solidarity within the group, ask the group if anyone would like to share out their personal feelings with the larger group (not their partner’s).

Optional:

For older students, listeners can also ask the following questions to help the answerer reframe their thoughts to try to make them more helpful and realistic.

- Is this thought helping you right now? What is something you can focus on right now that would be helpful?
- Is this [negative] thought 100% true? How can you replace this thought with a more realistic thought?

The instructor should model an example:

Answerer: I am so worried that my house will burn in a wildfire.

Listener: Is this thought helping you right now? What is something you can focus on right now that would be helpful?

Answerer: I can make an emergency to-go kit and educate my community about how to reduce wildfire risk.

Answerer: All of humanity is doomed.



Framing Environmental Issues and becoming a climate leader for mental empowerment

Listener: Is this thought 100% true? How can you replace this thought with a more realistic thought?

Answerer: The future on this planet will look different from what it looks like right now.

Closure

Facilitate a Group Reflection around healing and coping: What is a way that you take care of yourself? What do you love about the world? What gives you hope for the future? Consider following this activity with the Visualizing Past and Future lesson to shift to a hopeful focus.