

# 5 Tips to Reduce Eco-Anxiety



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## **5 Tips to Reduce Eco-Anxiety**

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## Introduction

Thank you for downloading this report. It's my personal mission, and the mission of *Happy Eco News*, to help as many people as possible take positive steps to reduce their eco-anxiety. I believe when we have hope or optimism for the future, people will feel confident to make small changes in their daily lives. Those small changes multiplied by millions of people add up to large, positive societal shifts.

I am fortunate to have grown up in a family with eco-conscious parents who taught me a lot about living sustainably. They taught me that all the things I do make a difference for the planet. Whether I reduce the amount of plastic that comes into my home, or choose public transit over a car, in the long term, my small choices can make a big difference.

While my life has taken many directions over the years, I have never let go of my passion to live in harmony with the environment. That's why I started *Happy Eco News*. I believe that in order for people to do what is needed to fix the problems of today, they must feel hope and optimism for the future.

*Happy Eco News* was formed to show people that, despite a never-ending cycle of bad news about the environment, there are many good people doing good things. These are the scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, writers, activists and everyday people who are tirelessly working to protect and enhance the environment.

Their stories deserve to be told. No, they *need* to be told. The downtrodden masses who have given up hope need to know that there are good people doing good things. These good people will persist doing their good things until real change has occurred.

So, in the spirit of trying to help people who are suffering from this often-paralyzing concern about our planet, myself and the team at *Happy EcoNews* have developed the following report. (Note: While I'm credited as author, I'd like to shout out to my team for their tireless efforts in helping make this eBook a reality.)

We believe if you follow the 5 steps outlined, you will feel more positive about the future and what you can do to find relief. In time, you may even begin to take some small actions yourself and ultimately have a positive effect on the world, joining a global movement for good.

*Please note: We are not psychology professionals. The following report is not intended to replace professional psychological help. If you are in crisis, please contact your local healthcare professionals. A contact list is provided on the last page.*

## **What is Eco-Anxiety?**

In general terms, eco-anxiety means we consciously or unconsciously worry about the future of our planet. This underlying constant fear, associated with environmental damage or ecological disaster, can leave people feeling angry, anxious, and even depressed.

Eco-anxiety is often fueled by pervasive, negative stories delivered through mass media (newspapers, TV, newscasts, podcasts, videos, etc.) that constantly compete for our attention 24 hours a day. Marketing people and media producers have learned that bad news gets more clicks and views than positive stories, so there is a natural bias to distribute more negative news. As a result, it can be hard to untangle the thoughts and feelings associated with this near constant sensory overload.

Despite having lived through a global pandemic that has killed millions and left even more with permanent disability, in the background, the threat of impending environmental collapse lingers. The issues are constantly in the news and online – glaciers retreating and ice caps melting, ocean plastic in concentrated patches the size of countries, the die-off of bees and birds.

It's no wonder people are overwhelmed. It's completely normal to feel existential fear when confronted with an existential crisis. If you have been feeling this way, please know that you are not alone. Eco-anxiety, also known as climate grief, is now felt by millions of people around the world.

Thankfully, there are ways to reduce the helplessness and fear that many of us are feeling these days. In the following pages are a list of 5 easy things you can do, starting today, that can help you ease your eco-anxiety. They've helped us, and we hope they help you, too.

## **5 Tips to Reduce Eco-Anxiety**

### **1) Be kind to yourself**

Allow yourself to acknowledge your feelings of fear and grief. These feelings are a normal response to the situation. Everything is a learning process. If you are really passionate about the environment, and know where to begin, you will find a way to make choices that help you move forward.

In my case, I began with food. I reduced the amount of meat in my diet and eliminated processed foods and fast foods. I did not make the change overnight mind you. I did it over several years. I started by reducing the number of meals that included meat each week, and instead of consuming the processed foods in the cupboard, I made the conscious decision to eat a bowl of crunchy vegetables or nuts instead. I got the snack I craved, and the planet got one less bag of chips consumed, which was not only better for the planet, but for me.



Changing our habits is not something that can be done overnight. It's said that a new habit takes 30 days of constant action to take hold. However, as you take steps in the direction you want to go, you will find that your habits and lifestyle can have a positive impact on your mental well-being. It can be as simple as not eating meat one day a week like I did, or shopping at thrift or secondhand stores, getting a compost bin, or taking your car less and walking more.



Taking your individual journey a step further, talking with your friends and family and posting your eco-activities on social media can be a positive outlet. It can help you have a sense of control on the climate situation, and your efforts can influence others to start making positive changes in their own lives. Society seems to look to social media influencers all the time, but we all have influence among our personal social circles.

Eventually, we can begin changing our identity from being an observer of others, to being a participant in the changes we want to see in the world. Gradually, we may even make the change from passive to activist. And that means there is reason to hope – and by taking positive steps in our own lives, it helps us cope with the larger issues.

When you look at the things you want to do to be more eco-conscious, what comes to mind? Perhaps make a list and work at it as you can, and over time, you will develop an eco-friendly lifestyle that aligns with your values.



## 2) Look for credible information

You have lots of choices. There is a lot of useful information on environmentalism outside of your social media feeds. Finding facts and statistics from reliable and trustworthy sources can help you understand environmental problems in context and choose which issues are actually worth being concerned about. For example, you can search for government studies, peer-reviewed articles, and reports supported by scientific evidence. Educating yourself is one of the most important things you can do to ease your eco-anxiety. Doing so will help you take control of the information you consume.

At the end of 2017, when I began the *Happy Eco News*, I had become acutely aware that most of the news I was seeing about the environment was bad. Social media and traditional news media were the leading sources. I wanted to know what was going on in order to be an informed citizen, but news articles from otherwise reputable sources seemed to focus on negative stories.

I also understood from my day job working in clean technology, that there were many people like me who were working on projects that were making a huge positive impact on the planet and environment. Where were their stories? Why were these promising carbon reduction projects not being shown? Where were the stories about activists lobbying and saving wild places in England, or inventors creating novel ways of preventing single-use plastic from entering the ocean?



I had seen these people and companies at conferences and industry events, but they were getting almost no publicity other than within their own small niches. I knew these stories were out there, so I decided to find them and share them with my own social circle. It was a small thing but it made me feel better, and in doing so, it empowered me to go further. As a result, I founded *Happy Eco News* in January, 2018.

I'm not saying we all need to change careers or even start a blog, but the act of changing our perspective can bring great rewards in terms of mindset and mental health. Rather than feeling depressed and hopeless about the environment, I feel like there is reason for hope. I now believe we will solve this problem.



We publish *Happy Eco News* on most major social media platforms and welcome your comments, likes, and shares, however, remember that it's important to disconnect from technology on a regular basis. If you are finding that an issue is overwhelming you, try to focus on something else for a while (preferably something that makes you happy!).

We all need time away from the onslaught of negative stories we see every day. Taking time for yourself is healthy eco-self-care, and just like any other type of self-care, it needs to be done regularly and with intent. It will not happen unless you take the steps to do it. So, turn off the phone. Go outside. Read a book. Or take a walk in nature. You will feel better for doing so.



### **3) Reconnect with nature**

Speaking of nature, no matter where you live, it's important to recharge your mental and emotional batteries with some daily outside activities. It can be something simple like spending time outside in your own backyard, stretching and doing some deep breathing. Alternatively, you might opt to ride a bike, paddle a kayak, hike, sit in a park or even on your balcony surrounded by plants and flowers. Any of these activities can help you feel relaxed and help shift your mindset to the life force that is contained within nature. This life force is present in any park and or green space any season of the year. A perfect way to let go of stress!

Time spent in a green space, even if it's just a small urban park in a large city, helps to connect with nature and to remind you why you care about the environment. Even 15 minutes in an area with green trees can help you to find calm and peace. Listen to the sounds of the birds, breathe in the cool air, and appreciate the freshness. Observe the light filtering through the leaves on the trees. Some people bring nature inside with them by carrying a small stone, dried flower, or other natural object to look at and touch, grounding them in moments when they feel overwhelmed or discouraged.



Shinrin-Yoku translates from Japanese literally to “forest bathing”. It's the act of going into nature and mindfully observing it in detail. This is not the same as hiking, or bird watching; you may walk through the forest and will often observe birds, but you may only travel a very short distance and the birds are only a part of the nature you will observe. A sense of calm and serenity will enter you as nature envelopes you in her embrace.

Time passes slowly as you find a sense of calm and peace and observe the green colours, the wind on leaves and the small creatures who live and make their homes there. Calm and peace are the opposites of anxiety, and after all, we evolved in nature as a part of it. Being detached from it is a human-made condition, and no matter how much we surround ourselves with technology and artificial environments, we cannot escape the fact that we are intrinsically connected with nature. That is why spending time in it and surrounded by it just feels good.

What is your favourite way to spend time outdoors? When was the last time you did that activity?





#### **4) Get involved with like-minded people**

As humans, it's in our nature to want connection. When stressed, some people will crave more connections with people. Others may isolate themselves. That's why it's important to find a community of like-minded individuals who are on the same eco-path as you; a group where you can safely express and share your thoughts, emotions and concerns of eco-anxiety. Considering pandemic restrictions, many groups will meet outdoors. If you are someone who'd rather not meet that way, there are plenty of online spaces to connect if you are not ready to meet in person.

You can also get involved with your local government in a variety of ways. In fact, ask around or search online, and you will likely find that many eco-conscious people are friendly, welcoming and a wealth of information. Before long, you will soon have a list of groups and organizations that want and need volunteers in a variety of ways.

These actions will allow you to be more involved in real-world, right-now discussions to help lessen some of your anxiety. Being involved can also increase optimism and hope, and there is nothing better than a day of physical activity outside to make you feel like you have accomplished something worthwhile.





The power of individuals coming together can go a long way to help you feel more motivated.

But it doesn't have to just be cleaning up or physical work, you can join protests for the issues that you are most concerned about. You can join political parties to help elect representatives who make climate change a priority. You can vote with your pocketbook by buying green products and services from companies that can prove they are sourcing fair, sustainable and equitable products from their own supply chains.



## **5) Do not feel ashamed**

Maintaining a 100% sustainable lifestyle is hard, and it's okay to slip up. Nobody is perfect! You do not need to carry the weight of the climate crisis on your shoulders. It's a global effort. We suggest making choices that make sense to you; make decisions and take actions that fit with your values and lifestyle.

An important rule of thumb is do not compare yourselves to others! Just like comparing ourselves to the beautiful person who posts inspirational photos on social media, we often compare our own lives with what someone else is doing and think we are not doing enough. It's not healthy, and it's not productive to do so. We cannot all be Greta Thunberg or Leonardo DiCaprio. The actions we take can be very individual to each person and they are all valid and good. What is right for me might not be right for you. We all have different reasons for wanting to make changes and live a different way and we cannot let others determine our path toward doing our part. The important thing is to try and do something.

The best way to approach your eco-goals is to start small, build on success, and eventually the new way of living will become your new normal. The decisions you make to live in a way that is better for the planet are not sacrifices, they are *choices*. Choosing to live in a more sustainable way simply means that you place higher value on sustainability.



Eventually, your self-identity will begin to change. You will increasingly identify as an environmentalist or eco-activist, and it will feel good. It will feel right because you are taking action instead of passively letting the actions of others influence and even control your behaviour and the future of the planet.

Be encouraged and inspired by all the positive changes that have come out of environmental activism. Stay up to date with positive environmental stories, new technologies and laws that are being enforced around the world to protect the planet.

And remember, there are many good people doing good things in the world. Banks are divesting from fossil fuel, governments are legislating new environmental protection laws, trees are being planted, and science is developing new ways of providing the power and resources that society needs. Whatever part you play, we applaud you for your efforts.

This is how we build a global community of forward-thinking eco-action-takers!



### **Conclusion – Know when to get help**

Eco-anxiety is real. It's normal, and it can affect your mental health and well-being. Do not be ashamed to reach out for support if you are finding it difficult to go about your day-to-day activities. We hope these tips will help you find peace as you work in your own life for positive change.

There is professional help and many online and community-based resources available to help and guide you at this time. A few are listed below.

Canada: [Mental Health Support: Get Help](#)

USA: [CDC Mental Health: Treatment Resources](#)

UK: [Mental Health: Access Support](#)

Australia: [Mental Health Australia: Need Help?](#)

The [Good Grief Network](#) can provide assistance in the form of a 10-step program designed to help people deal with climate grief by donation.

These are challenging times we live in, but I believe that we are at the beginning of a new awareness and way of living in the world. Times are difficult right now, there is no doubt. But if we all take a few small actions now, we can make the future cleaner and ensure a healthier future for all.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to email me at [grant@happyeconews.com](mailto:grant@happyeconews.com).

I answer all emails myself, and will be happy to help you if I am able.

Sincerely,

Grant Brown  
Founder, *Happy Eco News*

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