



RESILIENT
ROOTS

ECO- ANXIETY

Guidelines For
Youth on How to
Reduce Eco-Anxiety



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UNDERSTANDING ECO-ANXIETY

Eco-anxiety is basically the stress or fear people feel because of climate change and the environmental damage being done to our planet. The term was first mentioned in the early 2000s, but it really started gaining attention recently as more people—especially young people—began to realize the scale of the problem.

The term is self-explanatory because it combines two words into one - eco, which we associate with the environment, and anxiety - which roughly means discomfort or uncertainty.

Eco-anxiety is not a medical condition but more of a natural emotional response to all the worrying news about global warming, natural disasters, and environmental destruction. Eco-anxiety can make you feel powerless, frustrated, or even guilty about what's happening to the planet. At the same time, it often shows how much you care and want to help.

The Resilient Roots project partners have found that among young people they work with, there is an increasing number of those who do not necessarily describe themselves as struggling with eco-anxiety, but rather express concern for the future of the planet. This is often the result of reading fatalistic announcements in the media and on television where headlines are coloured in red, pictures that show natural disasters and other similar things, which the human mind associates with danger.

UNDERSTANDING ECO-ANXIETY

As you have probably noticed, social network algorithms suggest more and more content on a certain topic after you "Google" the term, research it in search engines on the Internet and social networks. Since these algorithms are not logically conditioned most of the time, it is very likely that you will come across fake news but also unscientifically verified facts that can then increase concerns about the future of life on earth. For this reason, here we will present some guidelines to reduce this concern, and small actions that you can take to regain a positive view of the world and feel better and more optimistic about the future.



TURNING ECO-ANXIETY INTO ACTION

While eco-anxiety can feel overwhelming, the good news is that taking action—no matter how small—can help reduce feelings of worry and concern and make a real difference for the planet. When we focus on what we can do, we regain a sense of control and hope, which is key to managing anxiety.

Taking action works because it helps turn feelings of helplessness into empowerment. Instead of being stuck in fear, you can channel your energy into something positive, like planting trees, reducing waste, or supporting green initiatives. These small steps add up, and seeing their impact can remind you that change is possible. For example, even switching to reusable products or encouraging others to do the same can prevent a lot of waste. Knowing that your efforts are part of a bigger movement helps you feel more in control and less stressed about the future.

Getting involved also connects you with others who care about the planet, which is a huge help when dealing with eco-anxiety. Whether it's joining a local cleanup group, volunteering for an eco-project, or even chatting with people in online communities, you'll realize you're not alone in caring about the environment. Being part of a group working toward a common goal can be comforting and inspiring. It's easier to stay motivated and positive when you know others are striving for the same things.

TURNING ECO-ANXIETY INTO ACTION

Another way to ease eco-anxiety is to celebrate progress, no matter how small it seems. Sometimes the news can feel overwhelming, with constant headlines about disasters and problems. But focusing on positive stories—like how renewable energy use is growing or how people are cleaning up oceans—can restore your sense of hope. When you take small steps, like starting a recycling habit or influencing your school or workplace to go green, it's important to recognize those wins. Celebrating progress keeps you motivated and shows you that change is possible.

Finally, it's important to balance your efforts with self-care. Practicing mindfulness, taking breaks from climate-related news, or doing activities you enjoy can help you manage stress. It's okay to take a step back when you need to recharge—this doesn't mean you care less, but rather that you're building the energy to keep contributing.

Taking action isn't just about making a difference for the environment—it's also about helping yourself feel more positive and hopeful. Every step, no matter how small, shows that you are part of the solution. By turning eco-anxiety into meaningful action, you're not only helping the planet but also creating a healthier mindset for yourself. Together, these efforts build a better future, one step at a time.

SUGGESTIONS TO REDUCE YOUR ECO-ANXIETY

01

Stay informed about climate-friendly practices and share positive news about environmental progress with your peers.


? **Why:** Staying informed is crucial because knowledge empowers action. Understanding climate-friendly practices helps you adopt habits that reduce your carbon footprint (the amount of greenhouse gasses generated by everyday actions of individuals in a year), such as conserving energy or supporting renewable energy initiatives. Sharing positive environmental news helps combat eco-anxiety by highlighting success stories, such as breakthroughs in clean energy or reforestation projects. For example, the global shift toward renewable energy has already prevented millions of tons of CO₂ emissions. By spreading hope, you inspire others to join the movement, creating a ripple effect that amplifies positive change.

📅 **How Often & How Long:** Set aside consistent time, whether daily or a few times a week, to learn about sustainable practices and share positive environmental news.


🌸 **Examples:** Spread stories of successful environmental projects, like local reforestation efforts or renewable energy initiatives. Discuss these topics with friends, family, or peers to inspire action and hope.

02

Volunteer occasionally for local eco-projects (e.g., tree planting or cleanup drives).


 **Why:** Volunteering provides a hands-on way to combat environmental degradation and reconnect with nature. Activities like tree planting help sequester carbon, improve air quality, and reduce urban heat. For example, a single mature tree can absorb up to 48 pounds of CO₂ per year. Cleanup drives reduce pollution, particularly plastic waste, which harms wildlife and ecosystems. Additionally, volunteering enhances mental health by fostering a sense of purpose and accomplishment, which is vital for coping with eco-anxiety.

 **How Often & How Long:** Aim to participate in local eco-projects every few months, dedicating a few hours per event.


 **Examples:** Join community cleanups or tree planting initiatives in your area, such as local park cleanups or neighborhood beautification projects. You can also collaborate with schools, universities, or community centers to organize eco-friendly events.

03

Encourage small, sustainable habits like reducing single-use plastics and conserving water.


 **Why:** Small, consistent actions have a significant cumulative effect on the environment. For example, using a reusable bottle instead of buying single-use plastic ones can save hundreds of bottles per year, reducing waste in landfills and oceans. Conserving water helps prevent resource depletion and supports ecosystems dependent on freshwater. Even minor changes, like turning off lights when leaving a room, save energy and lower greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global climate goals. Encouraging others to adopt these habits amplifies the impact.

 **How Often & How Long:** Incorporate these habits into your daily routine (e.g., using a reusable bottle, turning off lights, or reducing water usage).


 **Examples:** Swap single-use plastic bags for reusable cloth bags when shopping. Be mindful of water consumption by turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, or using water-saving devices in your home. These small changes can easily become part of your day-to-day activities.

04

Join a local environmental group or online community to connect with others.


 **Why:** Community involvement fosters collaboration, support, and innovation. When you join a group, you become part of a collective effort, which can achieve larger-scale results than individual actions alone. For example, local environmental groups have successfully lobbied for policy changes, like banning single-use plastics. Connecting with others also provides emotional support, helping you process feelings of eco-anxiety while exchanging ideas and resources. Being part of a community makes sustainability feel more achievable and less isolating.


 **How Often & How Long:** Attend meetings or engage online at least once a month, or participate in discussions.

 **Examples:** Join local or online groups focused on environmental issues, like discussing community recycling efforts, or share eco-friendly tips with others in your network, such as how to start composting or reduce waste.

05

Start a small initiative, like creating eco-awareness content on social media.


 **Why:** Social media is a powerful tool for raising awareness, especially among younger audiences. By creating content, you not only educate others about environmental issues but also inspire them to take action. Viral campaigns can lead to significant behavioral changes, such as the global shift toward reducing plastic straw use. Your efforts can help debunk myths, highlight solutions, and foster a sense of community. Additionally, sharing positive stories can balance the often-negative climate narratives, providing hope and motivation.

 **How Often & How Long:** Post once a week or as needed; set aside 1-2 hours to create content during your free time.


 **Examples:** Share infographics about climate change facts or post videos showing simple eco-friendly DIY projects that others can try.

06

Engage in eco-friendly habits such as using public transportation or supporting sustainable brands.


 **Why:** Eco-friendly habits reduce individual contributions to environmental degradation. For example, public transportation emits significantly less CO₂ per passenger than private vehicles, reducing your carbon footprint. Supporting sustainable brands encourages companies to prioritize ethical practices, such as fair wages and eco-friendly production methods. Consumer demand has already driven industries to adopt greener technologies, demonstrating the power of collective choices. Adopting these habits shows that small, everyday actions can contribute to systemic change.

 **How Often & How Long:** Integrate these habits into your daily or weekly routine.

 **Examples:** Take public transit instead of driving or choose products from brands that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices, such as fair trade and organic materials.

07

Learn about practical, manageable steps you can take, such as reducing waste, composting, or switching to reusable products.


 **Why:** Practical steps make sustainable living more accessible and less overwhelming. Composting, for instance, not only reduces waste but also enriches soil, supporting agriculture and reducing the need for chemical fertilizers. Switching to reusable products helps combat plastic pollution, which affects 100,000 marine mammals annually. Learning these steps empowers you to make immediate, tangible contributions to environmental health, fostering a sense of control and progress in addressing climate change.


 **How Often & How Long:** Set up recycling systems during a weekend, then maintain them weekly.

 **Examples:** Start composting kitchen scraps or use reusable containers for food storage.

08

Participate in workshops or webinars on climate action to gain knowledge and confidence.


 **Why:** Workshops and webinars provide a structured way to learn about climate solutions and how to implement them. They often feature experts who share the latest research and actionable advice, equipping participants with tools to make a difference. For example, attending a composting workshop can teach you effective techniques for reducing organic waste. Gaining knowledge builds confidence, enabling you to advocate for change and inspire others. These events also foster connections with like-minded individuals, expanding your support network.


 **How Often & How Long:** Attend an event (workshop/webinar) in your local community every few months.


 **Examples:** Participate in a session or join a webinar on upcycling techniques.

09

Encourage your school or workplace to implement green practices (e.g., recycling programs).


 **Why:** Institutions have the capacity to drive significant change. Implementing green practices like recycling or energy-saving measures reduces waste and carbon footprints on a larger scale. For example, schools that adopt paperless systems save thousands of trees annually. Encouraging these initiatives sets a positive example, fostering a culture of sustainability. It also engages more people in the effort, multiplying the impact and normalizing eco-friendly behaviors in everyday life.

 **How Often & How Long:** Suggest it in class or during recess to friends. If you work, suggest it at a staff meeting. Repeat if necessary if others fall back into old habits.


 **Examples:** Propose implementing recycling programs or suggest a “paperless day” at school/work.

10

Take breaks from climate-related news to avoid burnout and focus on positive stories.


 **Why:** Constant exposure to negative news can lead to eco-anxiety and burnout, reducing your ability to act effectively. Studies show that taking breaks from stressful content improves mental health and boosts resilience. Focusing on positive stories reminds you that progress is possible and that your actions matter. This shift in perspective sustains motivation and helps you maintain a balanced approach to environmental concerns.

 **How Often & How Long:** Take daily or weekly breaks from stressful sources.


 **Examples:** Avoid doomscrolling (spending too much time online reading negative news, or those that make you feel anxious) for an entire weekend. Take a walk in the nearby park instead.

11

Seek support by joining a peer group focused on eco-anxiety or climate action—sharing your concerns can be healing.


 **Why:** Discussing your feelings with others who share your concerns fosters understanding and reduces isolation. Peer groups provide a safe space to express fears and frustrations, making them easier to process. Research shows that sharing emotions improves mental health and strengthens social bonds. Additionally, hearing how others cope with eco-anxiety can provide new strategies and perspectives, empowering you to manage your feelings and stay motivated.

 **How Often & How Long:** Meet live or online every week.

 **Examples:** Discuss climate concerns in a support group or exchange coping strategies with peers.

12

Engage in activism or volunteering to channel your feelings into impactful change.


 **Why:** Activism transforms feelings of helplessness into tangible action, providing a sense of purpose and control. Campaigns like climate strikes or petitions influence policymakers and raise public awareness, contributing to systemic change. Volunteering offers immediate results, such as cleaning polluted areas or planting trees. Both forms of engagement show that individual and collective efforts can drive meaningful progress, reducing eco-anxiety and fostering hope.

 **How Often & How Long:** Join a "green" NGO that advocates sustainability and participate in its actions when they are organized...


 **Examples:** Participate in campaigns advocating for changes in society.

13

Practice mindfulness or relaxation techniques to help manage stress.




 **Why:** Mindfulness reduces stress by helping you focus on the present moment, rather than dwelling on fears about the future. Techniques like meditation have been proven to lower cortisol levels, improving overall well-being. Relaxation practices also enhance emotional resilience, enabling you to face environmental challenges without feeling overwhelmed. Incorporating these techniques into your routine creates a foundation for sustained action and mental health.

 **How Often & How Long:** Practice daily for 10-20 minutes.

 **Examples:** Meditate while listening to nature sounds or practice deep breathing when feeling stressed. There are a lot of sources on Youtube.

14

Work with local organizations to advocate for systemic change, such as government policies on green transition.

-  **Why:** Systemic change addresses the root causes of environmental issues, creating long-lasting solutions. Advocacy efforts, such as lobbying for green transition policies, can lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. For example, government incentives for solar power have dramatically increased its adoption worldwide. Collaborating with organizations amplifies your voice, making it more likely to influence decision-makers and achieve impactful results.
-  **How Often & How Long:** Every year, local committees receive proposals from citizens, associations, and institutions in their area, so be sure to compile a list of your proposals once a year and send it to your local committee.
-  **Examples:** Attend local meetings about green transition policies or write letters to decision-makers advocating for green initiatives.

15

Celebrate small wins in your personal efforts to reduce environmental impact, recognizing the positive steps you're taking.

? **Why:** Acknowledging progress reinforces positive behaviors, making them more likely to stick. Celebrating small wins also boosts morale and provides motivation to tackle larger challenges. Recognizing your efforts helps counteract feelings of inadequacy or guilt, shifting your focus toward the positive contributions you're making. This mindset fosters optimism, resilience, and a greater commitment to sustainability.

📅 **How Often & How Long:** Reflect once a week or once a month; take 5-10 minutes to journal or share achievements.

🌸 **Examples:** Write about your success in reducing energy use or share milestones, such as using reusable bags for a full year.



A BRIGHTER FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Eco-anxiety can often feel overwhelming, especially with the weight of global environmental challenges on our shoulders. However, it's important to remember that no action is too small when it comes to making a positive difference. Every effort you make, from simple everyday choices to larger, more impactful projects, plays a part in shaping a better, more sustainable future for the planet. As young people, you are part of a generation that is not only aware of these challenges but also actively stepping up with creativity, passion, and determination to find solutions. Your actions, whether adopting sustainable habits, inspiring others, or collaborating with like-minded individuals, hold the power to drive meaningful change that can benefit future generations.

The good news is that progress is already happening. Renewable energy sources are becoming increasingly widespread, ecosystems that were once threatened are being restored, and communities around the world are uniting to protect the environment for both people and wildlife. These successes serve as reminders that change is possible, even when the problems seem insurmountable. With enough dedication, collaboration, and innovation, the biggest environmental crises can be addressed, and the world can begin to heal.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Remember, you don't have to face these challenges alone. One of the most powerful tools at your disposal is connection - connecting with others who share your values, focusing on the solutions that are working, and drawing strength from those who have walked the path before you. Taking time to celebrate even the smallest victories, whether it's cutting down on your plastic use or advocating for local environmental policies, helps reinforce the idea that progress is real and that your efforts are contributing to a larger global movement.

The future is still unfolding, and it is far from written. With your energy, ideas, and care for the world, you're helping to shape it into something vibrant, hopeful, and full of possibilities. Each small step you take adds up, and together, we can create a future where sustainability and thriving ecosystems are the foundation of our world. The future is bright, not because it's easy, but because you are actively building it with every action you take. Keep going, keep believing, and remember: Every action counts, and your dedication is part of the transformation we all want to see. Together, we have the power to create a world that's not only sustainable but truly thriving for generations to come.