

Tool 1.2

Offering climate emotions checks

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking care of climate emotions and trauma

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool enables each student to start growing their emotional literacy as well as emotional regulation skills, so as to limit and better cope with climate emotions, including climate anxiety. It is critical for students and educators to check the level of anxiety, stress and overwhelm in the group, while providing simple practices to address some of the anxiety, stress and overwhelm on the spot. It helps to express emotions and release the tension surrounding them.

Activity 1.2.1

Climate emotions wheel

Overview

Getting to know the variety of emotions presented on the wheel can help learners and teachers put words on the emotions that are being expressed individually and in groups. The simple process of naming emotions can help learners and teachers navigate emotions better.

Curriculum linkage

Language/literature. Any discipline or class during which climate change is discussed.

Competences built

Emotional literacy, emotional regulation, empathy, compassion, self-compassion

Prep Work

Familiarize yourself with the [climate emotions wheel](#) and the [meaning](#) associated with each emotion in relation to climate change before introducing this activity.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

- Creating a culture of safety and care 1.1.1

Steps in the activity

1. Understanding the wheel
2. Using the wheel
3. Reflecting on the activity

BASIC INFO

**Age range:**

7+

Duration:

5-20 minutes

Group size:

Open

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

None

Location:

Open

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Step 1: Understanding the wheel

1. Acknowledge that it may be difficult to put words onto the emotions we feel in relation to climate change, and that simply putting work on emotions can trigger strong feelings and emotions. The latter are normal and should be welcome.
2. Introduce a grounding exercise (i.e. feeling the ground under our feet and experiencing its presence and support) as you introduce this activity, for learners to be able to support themselves, if need be, while exploring climate emotions.
3. Introduce the [climate emotions wheel](#) to learners, as a tool that covers a number of emotions they are likely to feel in relation to climate change, although it is a non-exhaustive list of emotions.
4. Highlight that learners may experience several emotions at the same time, and that they can shift from one emotion to another while exploring them and or/listening to others expressing their own climate emotions.

Step 2: Using the wheel

1. Give learners the opportunity to identify the emotions they are feeling at that moment.
2. Give learners the opportunity to express those emotions in writing, and/or with the rest of the group if they feel called to do so.

Step 3: Reflecting on the activity

1. Reflect collectively on how it feels to have more words to express different emotions with subtlety.
2. (Optional) Further explore emotions through literature and/other artforms to introduce how the arts can help live with and navigate various emotions individually and collectively.





Dos and don'ts

Do:

- Answer questions that can help learners better understand what the different emotions are about.
- Validate the variety of the learners' experiences, including the fact that some learners may not be feeling any emotion at all.
- Validate that it is normal to feel a variety of emotions while learning about climate change or taking action to address climate change and its impacts. Emotions are part of our life journey.
- Listen to learners who feel overwhelmed by the exercise, and/or express the need for additional support, and provide them with support to deal with dysregulation (see tool 1.1. Climate trauma/dysregulation first aid) and the information they need to access this additional support if needed (check activity card 1.1.1 - Creating a Culture of safety for more details).

Don't:

- Invalidate the emotions that are being expressed.
- Suggest that learners should strive to transform their emotions encompassed by the categories of 'sadness, fear and anger' to 'positivity', and/or that they can achieve this result by merely taking action.

Adaptations:

If your learners struggle with feeling emotions, you can start by sharing a personal story that highlights the emotions you feel when thinking about climate change. You can also invite learners who feel safe enough to share their emotions to do it with the class, for inspirational purposes. You can highlight that not feeling emotions is totally normal. Engaging with activity 1.2.3 (drawing symbols to express emotions), could also help the older students connect with how they feel.

If your learners struggle with choosing emotions on the climate emotions wheel, consider showing them [the emoji version of the wheel](#).

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.



References

This activity is adapted from the Climate Emotions wheel resources of the Climate Mental Health Network by One Resilient Earth.

- [Climate emotions wheel](#) by the Climate Mental Health Network in various languages.

Climate Emotions Wheel



- [Climate Mental Health Book List](#) curated by the Climate Mental Health Network.
- Pihkala, P. (n.d.). *A Guide To Climate Emotions*. Climate Mental Health Network. https://www.climatementalhealth.net/_files/ugd/be8092_ef3abbb96dd04130835b06eae6550b0e.pdf
- Pihkala, P. (2022). *Toward a taxonomy of climate emotions*. *Frontiers in Climate*, 3.



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