



Tool 1.3

Moving to reduce climate anxiety

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking care of climate emotions and trauma

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool can provide practical ways to address overwhelm, stress and anxiety for an individual or a group, either preemptively or when they arise. Most of the suggested activities will be most effective if practiced on a regular basis, as they help expand our own window of tolerance to multiple emotions over time. All activities can be done in groups or individually. As a teacher, you may want to practice them regularly so as to help you regulate your emotions. Once you know the activities well, it will also be easier for you to judge which activities to suggest to your students when a need arises.

Activity 1.3.3

Contemplative practices

Overview

This tool can provide practical ways to address overwhelm, stress and anxiety for an individual or a group, either pre-emptively or when they arise. Most of the suggested activities will be most effective if practiced on a regular basis, as they help expand our own window of tolerance to multiple emotions over time. All activities can be done in groups or individually. As a teacher, you may want to practice them regularly so as to help you regulate your emotions. Once you know the activities well, it will also be easier for you to judge which activities to suggest to your students when a need arises.

Curriculum linkage

Civics & Social Studies, Physical Education & Health.

Competences built

Emotional regulation, self-compassion, compassion, presence

Prep Work

Prepare by practicing for yourself regularly.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

General understanding of our inner lives and how they relate to outer action.

BASIC INFO

**Age range:**

6+

Duration:

From 10 minutes to 1-2 hours.
Regularity matters.

Group size:

Open

Level of difficulty:

Basic to advanced

Materials/space required:

Something to eat for the “eating with care” option.

Location:

The walking can be done outdoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Not necessarily. Mindfulness practitioners could be invited to lead some mindfulness practices.



Options in the activity

1. Walking on the earth
 2. Eating with care
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Option 1: Walking on the earth

Walking: Usually in our daily life we walk because we want to go somewhere. Walking is only a means to an end, and that is why we do not enjoy every step we take. In this exercise we do it differently. Walking is only for walking and for enjoying the wonders of life. You enjoy every step you take.

Possible instructions:

1. Please stand and find a bit of space around you. You may stand in nature or in a city or just simply in a room.
 2. Stand with your feet flat on the ground, allowing your body to be relaxed but upright.
 3. Notice the feeling of your feet connecting to the ground. Can you feel the ground supporting you?
 4. Feel the connection to the earth beneath you, the soil that sustains all life. Which parts of each foot are in contact with the ground? Take a moment to explore this, whether you are indoors or outdoors.
 5. Now, you are going to walk slowly—much slower than usual. You're not trying to get anywhere. There's nowhere to go, nothing to do. You are just walking to feel and sense each step. Instead of rushing through life, become aware of each movement, of the earth meeting you with every step.
 6. Start by lifting one foot. Notice how your weight shifts to the other leg as your foot lifts off the ground. As you move your foot forward, feel how it travels through the air. Then, let it touch down gently. Which part of your foot touches the ground first in your experience, and how does the movement travel through your foot? Which part touches the ground last? Notice how, with each step, you connect to the soil that gives life to trees, plants, and all living things.
 7. Continue walking this way, step by step, paying attention to all the small movements in your legs and feet. Notice the muscles working, the way your balance shifts, and even the sensation of your clothes moving with your body. If your thoughts wander, that's perfectly fine. Just gently bring your attention back
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to your feet and the simple act of walking. It doesn't matter how often your mind wanders; what matters is coming back each time, feeling the grounding presence of the earth beneath you.

8. Be aware of how, with each step, you touch the earth. Feel the connection between your body and the ground. Be aware how your feet make with each step a very gentle contact with the earth. Appreciate how gravity keeps you in contact with the earth, anchoring you in the present moment. The earth gives us a stable foundation, reminding us of the natural cycles we are a part of.
9. Take a few moments to notice other sensations. Can you feel a breeze on your skin or hear the sound of your footsteps? Maybe you're in nature and can smell the fresh air or hear the songs of birds. Open up all your senses, while keeping part of your attention on your feet touching the ground. Notice how nature engages all your senses, inviting you to slow down and truly experience each moment. Let's walk this way for a few more moments, enjoying the feeling of each step and the presence of the natural world around you.
10. Now, slow down even further and come to a complete stop. Close your eyes once more and take a moment to fully sense your body and your emotional state. Feel the steady, grounding connection to the earth beneath you. Imagine for a moment that your feet have roots reaching deep into the soil, providing you with stability and strength.
11. When you're ready, return to where you started and bring your attention back to the outer world. Slowly open your eyes and take a moment to look around. Can you still feel that connection to the ground beneath you? Has your perception changed, if at all? Notice the interdependence between you, the earth, and all living things around you.

Remember, you can walk like this whenever you need to feel more present, grounded, or connected to the natural world. You can also choose 2 or 3 occasions each day when you pay attention to your walking, using each step as an opportunity to reconnect with the earth beneath you.

For small children:

For younger children, you could turn this into a "slow-motion" practice. Ask them to move in slow motion, like astronauts on the moon or divers underwater. Alternatively, add a fun element by inviting them to imagine they're leaving footprints in the sand or snow with each step and describing what kind of footprints they're leaving behind. You could also use colored paint and large white



paper, letting the children walk slowly on the paper to see their color footsteps and the path they've made. Or let them walk side by side and no one is allowed to be faster than the other.

Option 2: Eating with care

Eating: Multitasking while eating is a recipe for not being able to listen deeply to our body's needs and wants and seeing our interconnectedness. We have all had the experience of going to the movies with our bag full of popcorn, and before it is over, we ask who ate all our popcorn. However, eating can be a form of meditation—peaceful, nourishing, and grounding. It can become a meaningful habit in your daily life, helping you cultivate a deeper connection to the food you eat. Too often, we eat on autopilot, barely noticing the flavors or the act of eating itself. Mindful eating invites us to bring full awareness to this simple yet profound act and to increase understanding of the interlinkages between our diets, climate change and associated challenges, such as inequality and poverty.

Possible instructions:

1. Take a moment to simply become aware of your body. How are you sitting? Settle in, and take 2 to 3 deep breaths, letting go of any unnecessary tension in your body.
2. Now, take a small piece of food, something like a raisin, a piece of chocolate, a small piece of fruit, or a single forkful or spoonful of your meal. Start by holding it in your hand and looking closely. What do you see? Notice the color, shape, and texture.
3. Pause for a moment to consider where this food came from. It didn't just appear in your hand; there is a whole journey behind it. Think of the natural elements that contributed—the soil that nourished the plant, the sunlight that helped it grow, and the rain that gave it water. Reflect on the many hands involved in bringing this food to you—farmers, workers, transporters, and shopkeepers. Each step along the way was necessary for this food to reach you, from the fields to your plate.
4. Now, bring the piece of food up to your nose and take a slow, deep breath in. What does it smell like? Do any memories or thoughts come to mind related to that smell? It's okay to be curious. Notice if this scent evokes a sense of gratitude for the effort and natural processes that brought this food to you.



Consider the web of life that made it possible, from the living soil to the human hands that harvested and prepared it.

5. Next, slowly place the food in your mouth, but don't chew it just yet. Notice how it feels on your tongue. Is it cool, warm, soft, or hard? Now, begin to chew very slowly. Notice the flavors that start to emerge. Do they change as you continue chewing? Try to detect every small detail about the taste and texture. Think of the layers of nature's work and human care that went into creating these flavors.

As you keep chewing, see if you can notice the moment when you feel ready to swallow. When you're ready, swallow the food slowly, and pay attention to the sensation as it moves down your throat. Observe your breath as you swallow. Take a moment to notice how your body feels afterward. Does your mouth feel different? How about your tongue? Do you notice any aftertaste? Were you able to follow the path of the food as it traveled downward in your body, nourishing you?

6. Take a moment to once again feel gratitude for this food. Appreciate the earth, the sun, the rain, and the countless people who helped bring this nourishment to your hand. Often, we eat without being aware of all the effort and natural forces that went into providing us with sustenance. Let this moment be a chance to honor that effort and to acknowledge your connection to the cycle of nature that sustains us all. Also reflect on how this food relates to your environment and the resources that might have been needed to produce and bring it to you.
7. Take the next piece of food and repeat the entire process. Relax. There is nowhere to go, nothing to do—just be fully aware of how and what you are eating. Slow down and let this be an opportunity to reconnect with the earth, to feel the presence of the natural world in each bite, and to appreciate the living web that nourishes you.

You can practice this kind of mindful eating anytime, even if it's just for a few bites of your meal. It helps you stay connected to your body, the food, and the world around you, making the experience of eating more intentional, enjoyable, and meaningful. By being fully present, you not only nourish your body but also deepen your connection to life itself.



For smaller children:

For children, you can invite them to be a "food scientist," trying to uncover all the "mysteries" of food. You can also use sound, allowing them to chew for as long as they hear the sound. Encourage them to place the fork or spoon on the table while chewing, and only pick it up again once they have swallowed the food. Ask them to share their experiences after the exercise, fostering a sense of curiosity and playfulness. Alternatively, after swallowing, you can ask them to count to ten aloud before taking the next bite.

Please note that practices such as mindful breathing, eating, or walking, should be included as part of a daily/weekly routine/ self-care plan by learners to ensure that their emotional and mental health is enhanced and/or cared for on a continuous basis.

Dos and don'ts**Adaptations**

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

The above meditations were created in cooperation between the [Inner Green Deal](#) GmbH, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies ([LUCSUS](#)) and its [Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program](#). They are based on practices from the Mindfulness-Based Sustainable Transformation program, diverse Climate Leadership programs (e.g., developed for the European Commission, The UNDP Conscious Food Systems Alliance and the Inner Development Goals Initiative) as well as work with the Awaris GmbH and their resilience program.

Bristow, J., Bell, R., Wamsler, C. (2022) Reconnection – Meeting the climate crisis inside-out, policy report, The Mindfulness Initiative & LUCSUS. You can find the report and two online presentations of the report here: <https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/reconnection>



Wamsler, C., Osberg, G., Janss, J. et al. (2024) Revolutionising sustainability leadership and education: addressing the human dimension to support flourishing, culture and system transformation. *Climatic Change* 177, 4 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03636-8>

Wamsler, C. (2022) What the mind has to do with the climate crisis: Mindfulness and compassion as pathways to a more sustainable future. Essay written for the Mind&Life 35th anniversary, Mind&Life. See www.mindandlife.org/insight/what-the-mind-has-to-do/

Recording of an online event with Jon Kabat-Zinn that explains the role of mindfulness for climate action and sustainability, related science and education, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTUc_0GroGM

An overview of scientific research, policy reports, pod-casts and presentations on contemplative practices, mindfulness and sustainability can be found here: <https://www.contemplative-sustainable-futures.com/general-3-1>

For related **practices**, also check: <https://www.thelongtimeacademy.com/practice>



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