
ADDRESSING AND COPING WITH CLIMATE GRIEF: A TOOLKIT FOR GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL USE

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This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organizations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of Fraser Basin Council staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Fraser Basin Council or the University of British Columbia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Background	1
Introduction	2
Facilitator Notes	5
Potential Guidelines for Support Group Contract	7
Climate Grief Support Group Frameworks	8
Climate Cafés	10
Climate Circles	11
Additional Considerations for Support Groups	13
Activities to Address Climate Grief	14
Icebreakers	15
Mindfulness Activities	18
Gratitude Activities	22
Eco-therapy Activities	24
Activities to Name and Address Emotions	26
Grief Activities	28
Grounding Activities	30
Additional Resources	32
Acknowledgements	35
References	36

PROJECT BACKGROUND

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

This report was created as part of the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Sustainability Scholars program. The Sustainability Scholars program is an innovative internship opportunity that matches UBC graduate students with sustainability partners to work on applied research projects that advance sustainability across the region.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy Wu is a graduate student at UBC's School of Population of Public Health (SPPH), pursuing a Master in Public Health (MPH). Judy's passion for environmental conservation and climate change action began at an early age, leading her to complete a BSc in Biology with a focus on ecology and conservation at UBC. Judy also has a strong passion for mental health advocacy and improvement of mental health support, particularly within young people. Through the Sustainability Scholars program and her studies, she has had the opportunity to combine her interests of climate action and mental health.

ABOUT THE PARTNER ORGANIZATION

This report was created in collaboration with Fraser Basin Council as a part of the BC Regional Adaptation Collaborative III (BC RAC). BC RAC is a partnership formed of the Fraser Basin Council, the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy - Climate Action Secretariat, and Natural Resources Canada. BC RAC aims to strengthen regional capacity and increase action to advance adaptation planning and implementation in local governments, Indigenous governments, and the natural resource sector. Fraser Basin Council's coordinator of the BC RAC program, Cait Murphy, served as Judy's mentor and partner contact during the Sustainability Scholars program.


LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report was written by the author who lives, works, and plays on the ancestral, unceded, and traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), SkwXwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔt (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk winding through a dense forest. The boardwalk is made of light-colored wooden planks and leads the eye into the distance. The forest is filled with tall, thin evergreen trees and lush green ferns. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day. A teal vertical bar is on the left side of the image, and a teal horizontal bar is at the bottom. A white rounded rectangle with the word 'INTRODUCTION' is overlaid at the bottom center.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION



Climate grief occurs when one observes or anticipates the loss of species, ecosystems, and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change.¹ Although grief is often part of the human experience, climate grief can differ significantly from other forms of grief. Climate grief is a form of disenfranchised grief,² meaning there is often little to no cultural support or social acknowledgement within the general public. As a result, few rituals or cultural practices exist to help individuals address and cope with their climate grief. Lack of acknowledgement in the general public can become a frustrating experience for those with climate grief, as they may struggle to find others in their life who they can relate with and receive support from. Climate change is also an on-going and long-term process, making coping and healing practices for climate grief particularly difficult as circumstances continuously change.

The purpose of this report is to provide a toolkit of activities that anyone may use to address and cope with climate grief. Engagement with these activities serves to build personal resiliency, such that participants feel supported and confident with their climate engagement, both personally, academically, or professionally. The activity instructions have been written to allow for group facilitation, however many of these activities may also be adapted for individual use.

The activities detailed in this report may be used in a variety of situations. Activities may be used in one-time climate grief events or workshops, as well as long-term climate grief interventions such as an on-going support group. The toolkit begins with a section that provides instruction on creating and holding a climate grief support group. Support groups can be implemented in various communities such as within one's peer group, workplace, or neighbourhood.

Activities may also be used in climate change work non-specific to climate grief. As feelings of climate grief are becoming increasingly prevalent within communities, inclusion of a climate grief activity may ease concerns when discussing climate change. However, it should be noted that certain activities within this report may not be appropriate for general climate change work. Participants in a meeting or workshop related to other climate change topics may have varying levels of engagement with climate grief. For instance, some participants may not relate to climate grief, while others may be feeling climate grief emotions but are not ready to address them.

INTRODUCTION

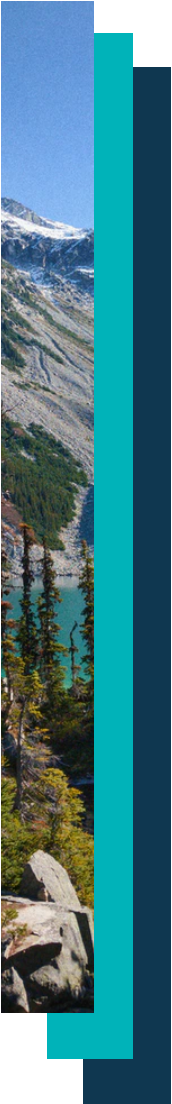
Due to this variation, it is important that facilitators choose or adapt activities to allow participants to engage with climate grief at varying levels.

Activities are sorted into 7 categories:

- Icebreakers
- Mindfulness Activities
- Gratitude Activities
- Eco-therapy Activities
- Activities to Name and Address Emotions
- Grief Activities
- Grounding Activities

Each category begins with a short introduction of the activity type, and is followed by an example activity which can be implemented in one's own group or individual climate grief work. Additional activities can be found at the end of the report in the 'Additional Resources section' (see pg. 32).

Content for this report has been adapted from a review of available resources online and in print, as well as from interviews conducted by the author with various climate change and climate grief practitioners. More information on the climate grief resources used to inform this report can be found in the author's other prepared report, "Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report."



A scenic landscape photograph featuring a large, calm lake in the foreground. In the middle ground, there are snow-covered mountains and a dense forest of evergreen trees. A layer of mist or low clouds hangs between the mountains. On the right side, a large pine tree branch with snow on its needles frames the scene. In the bottom right corner, a small orange kayak with two people is visible on the water. The overall atmosphere is serene and wintry.

FACILITATOR NOTES

FACILITATOR NOTES

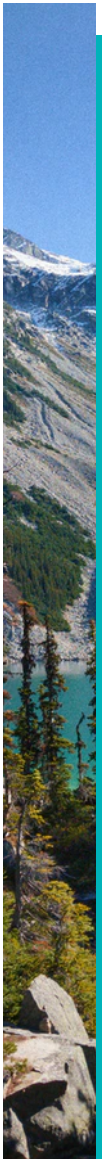
As activities that address climate grief are often emotionally taxing for participants, it will be important for facilitators to create and foster a safe environment to address and feel their emotions. To do so, facilitators will need to work to create both a physically and emotionally safe and open space.

PHYSICAL SPACE

Set-up is important when creating a physically safe and open space. For instance, facilitators may choose to arrange chairs in a circle or semi-circle to allow all participants to see one another. They may also choose to close all doors to ensure discussions are kept private to participants in the room. Facilitators can also encourage the use of other areas to increase participant comfort. For example, for activities that require self-reflection or small group discussions, facilitators can highlight use of the entire room. This allows individuals the choice to use different areas of the space (e.g., corner, middle, back, hallway, outside).

EMOTIONAL SPACE

A critical aspect of creating a safe and open emotional space is directly linked to the presence and responses of the facilitators. Facilitators should respond to participants with empathy and compassion, setting the tone for the session and workshop. It may also be beneficial for facilitators to go over group guidelines or a 'support group contract' at the beginning of the session. Use of a team contract is important to establish boundaries and trust among the participants. A list of guidelines that may be considered in a support group's contract is listed on the following page.

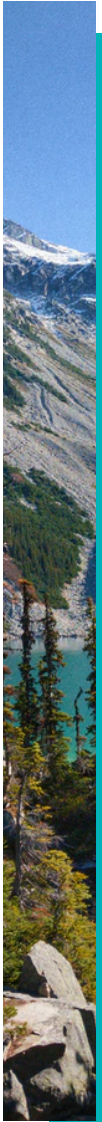


FACILITATOR NOTES

POTENTIAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORT GROUP CONTRACT

- **Being respectful to other participants and one's self**
 - Giving full attention to whoever is speaking
 - Not judging others or one's self on emotions and experiences
 - Not talking over other participants
 - Using "I" statements when speaking to others
 - Sharing the air and area with other participants
 - Silencing and putting away cellphones
- **Ability to leave the session at anytime if one is feeling overwhelmed with the understanding that:**
 - A facilitator will come and check on you if you do not return to the session for a pre-determined period of time
- **Acknowledgement that this group is meant to discuss feelings of climate grief, and not a group to discuss or debate the occurrence of climate change**
- **Reminder that the work done in session is confidential and participants should not share the experiences or personal stories of others outside of the group**
 - "Take what you've learned, leave what you heard"

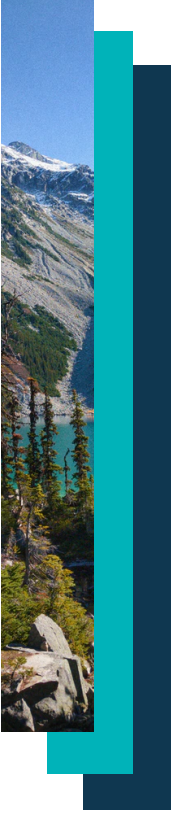
It may also be beneficial for facilitators to ask participants if they would like to add to the team contract. In the situation when a guideline is crossed, facilitators may refer back to the team contract to address the situation.



A close-up photograph of three hands of different skin tones (light, medium, and dark) stacked together in a gesture of support and unity. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers pointing upwards. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage. A teal vertical bar is on the left side of the image, and a teal horizontal bar is at the bottom. A white rounded rectangle is overlaid at the bottom center, containing the text.

STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP



Support groups can be an effective intervention for individuals experiencing climate grief. By holding space for participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns regarding the climate crisis, individuals may begin or continue to address and cope with their climate grief (see “Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report”). Additionally, as support groups gather participants with similar feelings, sessions may facilitate peer support interactions and relationship building. This is especially important for individuals who may not know anyone in their personal life experiencing climate grief.

There are various ways that one can organize a climate grief support group. This report will provide information on two commonly used group structures within the field of climate grief. It should be noted that these two frameworks only serve as starting points for those looking to implement a climate grief support group. Depending on situational context, the frameworks may be modified, altered, or combined to establish alternate formats that are most appropriate for the context of the group.

STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: CLIMATE CAFÉS

CLIMATE CAFÉS

Climate Cafés are a type of support group modeled off the Death Cafés (see Climate Café Case Study in “Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report”). The purpose of a Climate Café is to discuss climate change and associated feelings in a casual setting such as a coffee shop, library, or online meeting. Additional information on starting and promoting a Climate Café can be found [here](#).³

Intro (15 minutes)

- Time for participants to arrive and get settled
- Time for casual conversations among participants; facilitators should strive to create a welcoming environment for new participants

Check-in (30 minutes)

- Check-in can consist of roundtable introductions to the whole group, as well as a check-in question (see example of check-in questions in Icebreaker Activities on pg. 16)
- Facilitators may also choose to use check-in time for an icebreaker activity (e.g., Icebreaker Activity - Climate Change Town Hall on pg. 17)

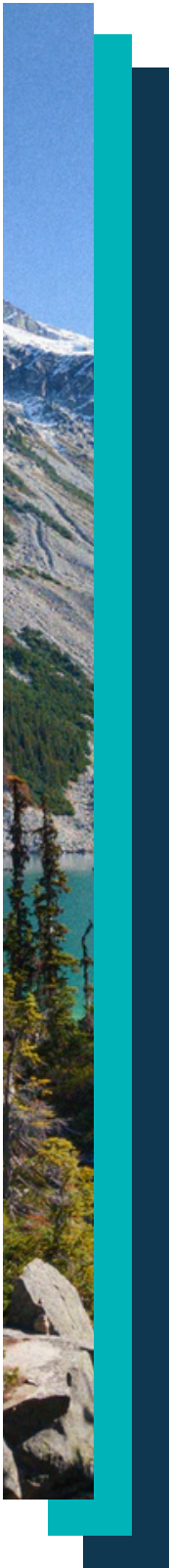
Action Steps (30 minutes)

- Open discussion time focused on ideas for climate action
 - Depending on size and context of the group, facilitators may choose to have a large group discussion, or split participants into smaller breakout groups
- Facilitators may also choose to provide more structure to the discussion by prompting groups with questions or providing an activity

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Closing remarks and comments
- It is recommended that facilitators offer participants the opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions to allow for continuous improvement and tailoring of the group

Total Time: 90 mins



STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: CLIMATE CIRCLE

CLIMATE CIRCLE

The Climate Circle framework takes a meditative and activity-based approach to climate grief support. Prior to the beginning of a Climate Circle, facilitators should arrange chairs in a circle, with facilitators sitting together on one side. The timing and structure of a Climate Circle only allows for a maximum of 16 participants. Additional information on starting and promoting a Climate Circle can be found [here](#).⁴

Intro (5 minutes)

- Informal welcome and time for participants to get settled into their chairs

Meditation (5 minutes)

- A bell or chime is rung to start the meeting with a 5-minute meditation or mindfulness activity
- The facilitators may choose from a variety of meditation or mindfulness practices; potential activities could include guided verbal meditations, meditation with a calming music track, body awareness mindfulness focus, etc. (see Mindfulness Activities on pg. 18 & 32).

Check-in (15 minutes)

- Check-in can consist of roundtable introductions to the whole group, as well as a check-in question (see example of check-in questions in Icebreaker Activities on pg. 15)

Small-group Exercise Introduction (10 minutes) & Exercise (40 minutes)

- The facilitators introduce the small group exercise (similar to Open Sentences Activity on pg. 27):
 - Participants are divided into groups of three
 - Each participant takes 10 minutes to speak to their experience relating to the climate crisis
 - The other two participants listen silently
 - The facilitators may leave this exercise open-ended, or may provide prompts for the groups such as:
 - “When you think about climate change, what do you feel?”
 - “What kind of feelings have you been experiencing lately because of climate change?”
 - “What do you love and appreciate about the Earth?”
 - “What do you feel you need to help take care of yourself when experiencing climate grief?”

STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: CLIMATE CIRCLE



CLIMATE CIRCLE

- After all three participants have shared, the group may engage in a 5-minute open discussion on their experiences of listening and sharing with one another

Large-group Discussion (35 minutes)

- After the small group exercise, the large group will gather back together for an open discussion about their experiences of the exercise
- The facilitators will guide conversation and ensure anyone who is looking to share is provided with the opportunity to do so

Conclusions and Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

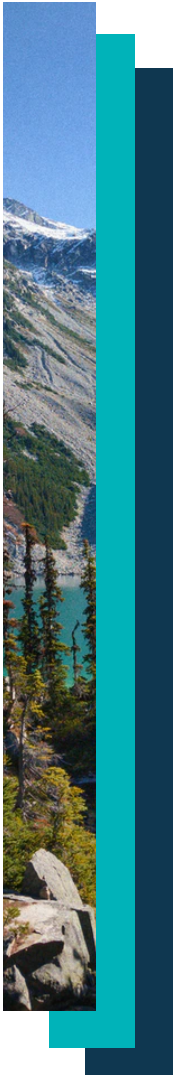
- A brief closing discussion is led by facilitators
- The facilitators may ask participants for any questions, comments, and suggestions they may have for future sessions
- The bell is sounded at the end of the discussion to signify the ending of the Climate Circle

Total time: 120 minutes

STARTING A CLIMATE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **As part of creating an inclusive and safe space, facilitators should consider asking participants to share their pronouns (e.g., she/her; he/him; they/them) during their introduction**
- **Depending on spacing and funding, facilitators may consider providing light refreshments for participants such as tea**
 - Other refreshments such as cookies or crackers may also be provided, however, solid refreshments should be reserved for the end to prevent distraction during the session
 - Facilitators may consider collecting donations to fund light refreshments
- **Facilitation of a support group is often an emotionally and mentally draining task**
 - If you are looking to start a support group, it may be beneficial to find a small team of like-minded individuals to share facilitation responsibilities
 - For instance, a group of four may allow for an alternating facilitating schedule (i.e., 2 facilitators per week)
- **As a support group facilitator, it will be important to engage in self-care activities to avoid further burn-out and exacerbation of climate grief emotions**



ACTIVITIES TO ADDRESS CLIMATE GRIEF



ICEBREAKERS

DESCRIPTION

Icebreaker activities are an effective method of beginning group events or sessions, particularly in settings where participants have not interacted with one another previously. Use of icebreaker activities such as name games, personal introductions, or other activities can begin to build connections and trust among participants, which will be especially important for climate grief work.

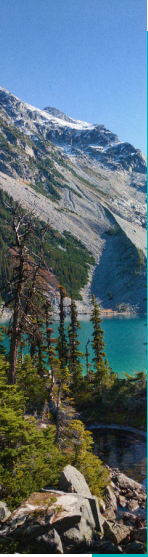
Icebreaker activities can be used to complement the group session and its activities. For instance, participants may be asked to share their reasons for attending the session (e.g., “What brought you to the group today?”), which can then be linked to later activities (e.g., **Open Sentences on pg. 27**). Alternatively, icebreakers can also be used as a contrast to the themes and activities for the rest of the session. For example, if the session is primarily discussion-based and participants are to be seated for the majority of the session, an icebreaker that involves movement may be beneficial.

It should be noted that icebreakers for groups that are meeting for the very first time should not be too emotionally or personally intensive. As participants are only beginning to learn about and connect with each other, participants may feel uncomfortable sharing in-depth emotions and thoughts.

For sessions that are occurring over multiple days, icebreakers can be used as a way for participants to share their learning, progress, or self-reflections based on previous sessions. As participants have already begun to build rapport and connections with one another, questions or activities that ask participants to share deeper emotions and greater personal reflection may also be more appropriate at this time.



ICEBREAKERS



DESCRIPTION

Icebreakers questions could include:

- “What is something that you learned/felt in the last session that has stuck with you?”
- “How have you been feeling since the last session?”
- “Have you noticed any changes in your emotion, actions, etc. since the first session?”

Icebreakers can take place all together within the larger group or can occur in smaller breakout groups. Smaller breakout groups may be beneficial for larger group facilitation to save time, while discussions all together allow all participants to hear from one another.

ICEBREAKERS

LENGTH

Recommended 5-10 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Anything that produces a sound loud enough to be heard by the group (e.g., Bell, clap, chime, etc.)

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

Climate Therapy Alliance (Pacific Northwest Chapter). Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work. [Internet]. [Publisher unknown]: Climate Therapy Alliance (Pacific Northwest Chapter); 2019 [cited 2021 Feb 28]. Available from: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c50ca089f87700f60a1b56d/t/5d96d9c4a6b84676db50ffc2/1570167236794/Emotional+Resilience+Toolkit+for+Climate+Work+\(v1.5\)+04Oct19.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c50ca089f87700f60a1b56d/t/5d96d9c4a6b84676db50ffc2/1570167236794/Emotional+Resilience+Toolkit+for+Climate+Work+(v1.5)+04Oct19.pdf)

CLIMATE TOWN SQUARE

- The group stands in a circle in an empty area
- The facilitator asks the group to walk around the area and mingle with one another
- The facilitator will create a sound (with a bell, chime, etc.) to indicate that participants should pair up
- The facilitator will provide a prompt to be shared within the partnership groups. Prompts may include “Introduce yourself and...”:
 - “Say why you are here”
 - “Express something about yourself, using just body language (no words)”
 - “Talk about a favourite memory of being in nature”
- Each person takes turns sharing in the pair
- The facilitator will create the sound again
- Participants say goodbye to one another and continue mingling until the next bell

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Participants should not be verbally communicating with one another whilst mingling
- Based on the question, the facilitator can vary the amount of time each pair is sharing
 - In-depth questions may require up to 1 minute, while shorter questions may only need 30 seconds
- The facilitator can tailor questions such that they relate to activities later on in the workshop
 - E.g., If a later activity is focused on concern for future generations, a prompting question could be “What can we do to benefit future generations facing the climate crisis?”

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

DESCRIPTION

The practice of mindfulness involves focusing on being fully present and aware of one's sensations and feelings within the moment, without interpretation or judgement. Over the past few decades, mindfulness practices have been incorporated into many therapies and mental health interventions as a strategy to address mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁵ However, regular mindfulness practices have also been found to be effective in addressing and decreasing heavy emotions related to daily life stressors and anxieties.⁶

Due to the large overlap between climate grief and certain mental health problems, adaptation of various mindfulness interventions to address climate grief have been found successful. For instance, health care workers working in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were observed to have reduced symptoms of anxiety and PTSD after completing a mindfulness intervention in comparison to those who had not (see Mindfulness for Mental Health Care Workers Case Study in “Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report”). Moreover, mindfulness practices have become increasingly popular in addressing feelings of eco-anxiety and solastalgia (see Work That Reconnects and Eco-Anxious Stories Case Studies in “Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report”), with participants noting mindfulness practices to decrease feelings of eco-anxiety whilst fostering a sense of hope regarding the climate crisis.

Mindfulness can be practiced in a variety of ways but is most commonly linked to meditation practices. Meditation practices can take on numerous forms including sitting meditations, body awareness meditations, and walking meditations. However, mindfulness practices may also take on alternative forms such as guided breathing exercises and guided imagery experiences. Although there exists mindfulness practices specific to climate grief and the environment, such as the Work That Reconnects' “Web of Life” activity (see pg. 32), general mindfulness practices may also be effective for climate grief.



MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

Approximately 5 ½
minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Various (depending on
type of exercises chosen
by facilitator)

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

Brandt W. *Becoming Present*. [Internet]. [Publisher unknown]: Work That Reconnects Network; [2017 Nov 17] [cited 2021 Feb 13]. Available from: <https://workthatreconnects.org/resource/becoming-present/>

BECOMING PRESENT

- **The facilitator will introduce and lead a multi-part meditation practice. Important points to mention may include:**
 - The purpose of the meditation is to become present in the moment through breath and body work, as well as silence
 - Participants are free to move to another section of the room or change their position to feel the most comfortable
 - Becoming distracted or losing focus during the meditation is common, even for those who practice meditation often
 - If you realize you are drifting focus, do not judge yourself, but try and focus back on the meditation instead
- **The facilitator will begin with a breathing exercise of their choice to help participants open themselves through their breath**
- **Potential breathing exercises may include:**
 - Square Breathing⁷
 - Roll Breathing⁸
 - 4-7-8 Breathing⁹
- **The facilitator will move onto a body exercise to help participants open through the body**
 - Facilitators are free to lead the body work as they please, however a guided script may also be used:
 - *“Stretch. Stretch all muscles, then release. Slowly rotate the head, easing the neck with all its nerve centers. Rotate the shoulders, releasing the burdens and tensions they carry. Behold your hand, feel the skin. Feel the textures of the world around you, clothing, arm of chair, tabletop, floor. Your senses are real; they connect you with your world; you can trust them.”*

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES



BECOMING PRESENT

- **In the last step, facilitators will invite participants to take a moment of silence**
 - Facilitators may choose to provide a reflective question prior to the silence, or they may simply invite participants to reflect on the bodily sensations they are currently experiencing

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- **Length of time for each activity can be determined by the facilitator, however it is recommended that breath work exercises be 2-4 minutes in length, body exercises to be 1-2 minutes, and group silence to take place for at least 1 minute**
- **This activity is easily modifiable to the context of the group, as activities for breath, body, and silence can be adapted and swapped at the discretion of the facilitator**

MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

Approximately 5 ½
minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Meditation audio or
video audible by the
group

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

*A Meditation to Still the
mind.* [Internet].
[Publisher unknown]:
Eco-Anxious Stories;
[2020 Feb 18] [cited 2021
Feb 16]. Available from:
<https://www.ecoanxious.ca/library/a-meditation-to-still-the-mind/>

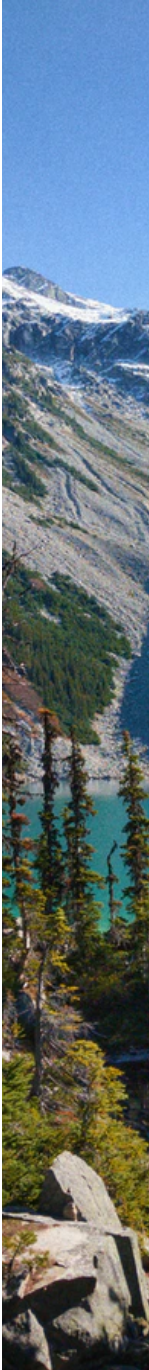
A MEDITATION TO STILL THE MIND

- **The facilitator will introduce the meditation practice. Important points to mention may include:**
 - The meditation is approximately 5 ½ minutes long
 - Participants are free to move to another section of the room or change their position to feel the most comfortable
 - Becoming distracted or losing focus during the meditation is common, even for those who practice meditation often
 - If you realize you are drifting focus, do not judge yourself, but try and focus back on the meditation instead
- **The facilitator will play the video or audio, ensuring that all participants are able to hear**
- **After the video has concluded, facilitators may invite participants to share their experience of the meditation**

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- **The video is available on YouTube or through the Eco-Anxious Stories website, and may be shared with participants for individual use. The video can be accessed [here](#).¹⁰**
- **Facilitators may also choose to use other guided meditation videos or audio clips based on the context of their group**
 - Guided meditations can be beneficial for those unfamiliar with meditation and mindfulness as they are able to focus on the narrator's voice and instructions
 - Groups with participants that are more familiar with meditative practices may prefer non-guided meditations

GRATITUDE ACTIVITIES



DESCRIPTION

Expressing gratitude is the practice of thankful appreciation for what an individual receives. Gratitude can be expressed for either material or non-material aspects of one's life. Material aspects may include items needed for survival such as food and shelter, while non-material aspects may include concepts such as relationships with family and friends or opportunities within one's life.

Previous research has found gratitude to be strongly linked with higher levels of happiness and more positive emotions.¹¹ Additionally, those who practice gratitude are more likely to fully enjoy good experiences, have better health, be better able to deal with hardships and adversity, and are more likely to build stronger relationships.¹²⁻¹³ The positive effects of expressing gratitude have been noted to be helpful in relieving distress and grief related to the climate crisis. As a result, interventions to address climate grief often involve gratitude practices (see Eco-anxiety Workshop, Work That Reconnects, and Eco-Anxious Stories Case Studies in "Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report").

Practices can be tailored such that participants are specifically expressing gratitude for the environment and natural world (e.g., "What are you most thankful for in nature/the environment?"). However general gratitude practices may also be effective in addressing climate grief, as they work to build overall positive emotions in an individual. There are numerous ways in which one can practice gratitude, including keeping a gratitude journal, following guided gratitude meditations, or simply naming or writing things that one is thankful for.

GRATITUDE ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

10 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Not applicable

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

Atkinson J. *Cultivating Gratitude*. [Internet]. [Publisher Unknown]: Jennifer Atkinson PhD; [date unknown] [cited 2021 Feb 2]. Available from: <https://www.drjenniferatkinson.com/practicing-gratitude>

CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

- The facilitators divide participants into groups of four
- Within each group, each member will have approximately 30 seconds to express gratitude for their day
- In the same format, groups members will go around and express gratitude for something in their community
 - Community may encompass family, friends, colleagues, or other members within one's community
- Lastly, participants will express gratitude for the entire planet
 - The planet can include people beyond one's community, animals, plants, other living beings, ecosystems, and locations
- After all group members have shared, the facilitators will hold a large group debrief
 - Facilitators may ask participants about their experience during the activity, common themes that may have arisen within the smaller groups, as well as how gratitude practices can be applied to social and environmental issues

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Not applicable

ECO-THERAPY ACTIVITIES

DESCRIPTION

Eco-therapy is an area of psychology that combines both physical and mental health with nature and the broader ecosystem. Eco-therapy can help with the healing and recovery of those with physical and mental illnesses,¹⁴ however, anybody and everybody can participate in ecotherapy activities to improve their wellbeing.

There are numerous types of eco-therapy methods including gardening and horticulture practices, eco-art activities, exercising within nature, meditation in nature, or simply spending time in a greenspace. Numerous research studies have found that time spent in greenspace, such as in parks or gardens, can reduce feelings of anxiety and increase positive emotions.¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Although eco-therapy can vary among activities, most eco-therapy sessions consist of a therapist or facilitator who leads a core activity within the natural world.

Eco-therapy may be used to address climate grief by building positive emotions associated with the environment and natural world, whilst working to re-create one's connection with nature. Although the use of eco-therapy to address climate grief has only begun to be explored, several organizations have begun offering more intensive eco-therapy interventions called 'Ecodharma Retreats' to address and heal climate grief (see Ecodharma Retreats Case Study in "Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report"). Ecodharma retreats are often characterized by a meditative or spiritual practice within nature and may range from a day to several weeks.

However, eco-therapy activities can also be designed to be implemented on a shorter time scale, such as within a single-day workshop. It should also be noted that many of the activities detailed in other sections of this report (e.g., icebreakers, mindfulness activities, grief activities, etc.) may be adapted to take place outside to add an element of eco-therapy into the work.



ECO-THERAPY ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

The original recommendation for this activity is 1 hour, however the length of activity can be adapted to the needs of the workshop.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Notebook/paper
- Writing utensils
- Bell/chime

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

This activity requires that the meeting space of the session is close to a greenspace, such as a park, garden, or forest.

REFERENCE

Atkinson J. Outdoor Activity. [Internet]. [Publisher Unknown]: Jennifer Atkinson PhD; [date unknown] [cited 2021 Feb 12]. Available from: <https://www.drjenniferatkinson.com/outdoor>

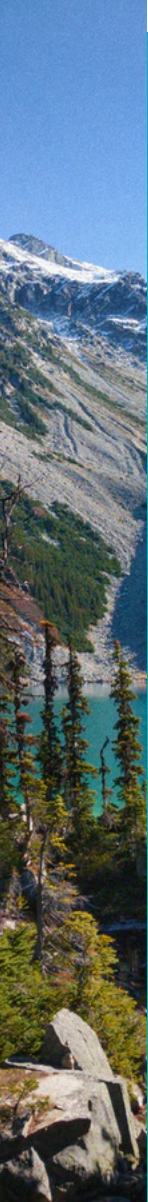
OBSERVING AND WRITING IN NATURE

- The facilitators will invite participants to enter into the greenspace and settle into an area where they feel comfortable
- Participants will spend a pre-determined amount of time observing and their environment
 - Participants are encouraged to practice mindfulness and gratitude during this time as well
- The facilitators will sound a bell or chime to signify the end of the observation period and the beginning of the writing period
 - Participants are to write about the things they observed earlier (e.g., sounds, smells, sights, sensations, etc.), and feelings that emerged during their observation
- To bring participants back together, facilitators will sound the bell again
- Facilitators may hold a group discussion on participant experiences and reflections during the observation and writing pieces
 - If comfortable, participants may even choose to share their writing with the rest of the group

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Instructions should be given prior to participants dispersing within the green space
- The facilitators should encourage separation of participants as they find their space
 - Participants should not be close enough that they are able to converse with one another

NAMING AND ADDRESSING EMOTION ACTIVITIES



DESCRIPTION

Addressing and labelling emotions related to climate change is an important first step in one's journey to coping and healing from climate grief. As the climate crisis is often associated with overwhelming feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, worry, and concern, naming emotions provides an opportunity to pause, reflect, and make relevant choices regarding one's emotions.

Once someone has deeper understanding of their emotions, they may begin to address and cope with them. Oftentimes, individuals may try to avoid or suppress heavy and painful emotions, but taking the opportunity to name, feel, and connect with climate grief emotions can help one manage and prevent heavy feelings and stressors from compiling.

There are a variety of strategies that can be employed to help participants begin naming and addressing their climate grief. However, facilitators should keep in mind that these activities may be highly emotionally-taxing. Additionally, participants will vary with their willingness to engage with emotions and climate grief within a public space. Thus, it is important that facilitators provide sufficient instruction and notification of the potential emotional outcomes of these activities, as well as provide avenues to those needing to take a break. For instance, facilitators can remind participants that they are welcome to leave the area, do a breathing exercise, or partake in any other activity that would make them feel most comfortable.

NAMING AND ADDRESSING EMOTION ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

The original recommendation for this activity is 30 minutes, but can be adapted for shorter lengths based on the needs of the workshop.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Timer/bell (optional)

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Prompts to be prepared ahead of time

REFERENCE

Brandt W. Open Sentences. [Internet]. [Publisher unknown]: Work That Reconnects Network; [2017 Nov 26] [cited 2021 Feb 2]. Available from: <https://workthatreconnects.org/resource/open-sentences/>

OPEN SENTENCES

- Participants are paired with one another and sit face-to-face
- Speaking does not begin until the practice begins
- Partners are designated as A or B
 - To maintain silence leading up to the activity, partners can tap different body parts or use other physical signals to determine A and B designations
- The facilitator reads out an unfinished prompt
- Partner A repeats the prompt and finishes it with their own thoughts and reflections in the time allotted
- Partners can switch after each prompt or after a series of prompts (at discretion of the facilitator)

POTENTIAL PROMPTS

- "Some things I love about being alive on Earth are..."
- "A place that was magical (or wonderful) to me as a child was..."
- "What I appreciate about living in this time of global crisis is..."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- The listening partner is to stay silent and attentive as their partner shares
 - This can be emphasized during the introduction of the activity
- The facilitator can provide time cues to let participants know when to begin wrapping up
 - E.g., "Take 30 seconds to wrap up"
- A small bell or other sound can be used to indicate the ending of a prompt before the next one is read
- A video walkthrough of the activity by Joanna Macy can be found [here](#)¹⁶

GRIEF ACTIVITIES



DESCRIPTION

Grief activities are focused on acknowledging and grieving loss resulting from climate change. This may include grieving the loss of biodiversity, eco-systems, and one's home environment, as well as grieving for future losses and generations.

By acknowledging what has been lost, participants may begin to process and heal their grief. There are numerous ways in which one can appreciate, respect, and remember what has been lost. Activities may include verbal discussion or writing. For instance, if a home environment has been lost, participants may choose to describe or write about the location and its significance to them.

Another method to addressing loss is through art. Shrines or memorials are often used in other grief practices, serving as a physical reminder to what has been lost. Facilitators may choose to hold a shrine or memorial building workshop that allows participants to take their shrine or memorial home. The construction of a shrine or memorial can also be therapeutic, adding to the process of healing. If deciding to implement a shrine or memorial activity, facilitators may also consider using an eco-therapy approach by using natural materials found within the environment. However, it should be noted that materials for such an activity should only be used if collection of materials is allowed in that area and if the materials are found on the ground.

Grief activities are similar to activities that name and address emotions in that they can be emotionally-taxing for participants. It is important that facilitators foster and provide a supportive environment when engaging in grief activities.

GRIEF ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

This activity may be adapted for various lengths of times. If working with a bigger group, multiple bowls of water can be used in small groups to decrease the time of the activity.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Large bowl
- Water

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

Brandt W. Bowl of Tears. Work That Reconnects Network. [Internet]. [Publisher unknown]: Work That Reconnects Network; [2017 Nov 26] [cited 2021 Feb 7]. Available from: <https://workthatreconnects.org/resource/bowl-of-tears/>

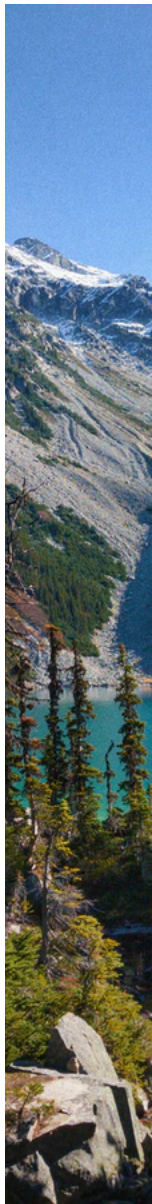
BOWL OF TEARS

- The facilitators will fill a third of a clear bowl with water
- The facilitators will place the bowl in the center of a circle on a floor or table – the water represents tears for the world
- All are invited to come to the bowl as they are moved
- Participants may dip their hand and let the water trickle through their fingers while sharing, “My tears are for...”
- After everyone has shared, the group can move to a garden, body of water, or other natural area to pour the water out
- The group may say something like “Our tears for the world are the tears of Gaia” while pouring the water

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Not applicable

GROUNDING ACTIVITIES



DESCRIPTION

Grounding exercises are an important practice when closing any work that involves expressing and sharing heavy emotions. The purpose of grounding is to decrease strong, overwhelming emotions or racing thoughts to allow participants to feel present within the moment. To do this, grounding exercises focus on bringing one back into their body or physical surroundings, rather than continuing to focus on thoughts within the mind.

As climate grief work often involves activities that address fears, worries, and anxieties related to the climate crisis, it will be important for facilitators to ensure participants are brought back from heavy emotions and feel comfortable leaving the session.

Grounding exercises can involve breath or movement work, focus on the five senses, or use of external stimuli such as cold water. For instance, facilitators could lead a breathing exercise or stretching session, or ask participants to focus on something they can see, hear, or touch within their immediate surroundings. Grounding can also take place collectively by initiating a group discussion on an alternate topic (e.g., “What will you do tonight as a self-care practice?”).

When facilitating grounding exercises, it may be beneficial to provide participants with multiple grounding exercises. Participants may then choose which exercise would be most effective for themselves.

GROUNDING ACTIVITIES

LENGTH

5 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

Not applicable

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable

REFERENCE

How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation.

[Internet]. Vancouver, BC: Anxiety Canada; [date unknown] [cited 2021 Feb 27]. Available from:

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/how-to-do-progressive-muscle-relaxation/>

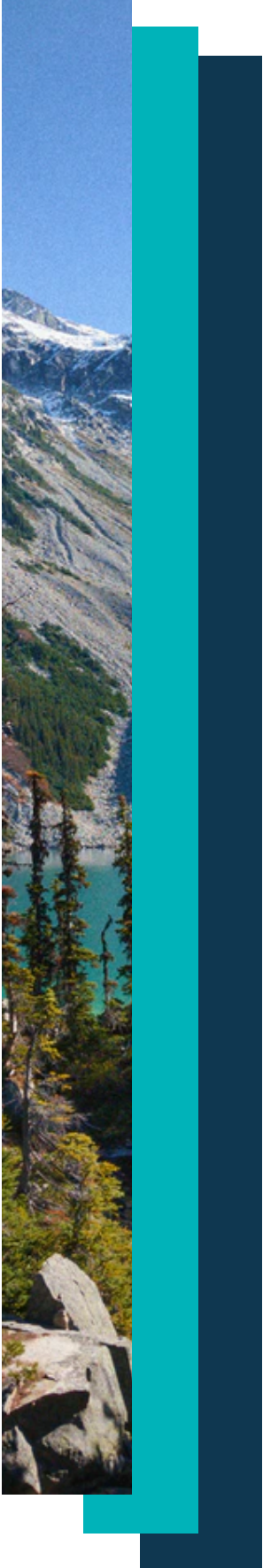
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Facilitators will guide participants through a progressive muscle relaxation exercise:
 - "Tense and relax each muscle group from head to toes, one muscle group at a time. Tense for 5 seconds, then let go and allow the muscles to relax all the way. As you relax, think of words such as 'relax,' 'calm,' 'unwind,' or 'loosen.'"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- An in-depth guide to tensing of the different muscles groups can also be narrated by the facilitator. The guide can be found [here](#).¹⁷

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



ICEBREAKERS

Name Drawings:

An activity to garner personal reflections through drawing and art, to be shared with the rest of the group. Available [here](#).¹⁸

MINDFULNESS

Becoming Present through Breath, Movement, Sound, and Silence:

An activity to encourage participants to turn to the breath, the body, and the senses to help relax and tune in to the wider currents of knowing and feeling. Available [here](#).¹⁹

Breathing Through:

An activity to teach participants to breath through the bad news, rather than bracing ones self against it, allowing one to strengthen their sense of belonging and remain alert and open when encountering media and news. Available [here](#).²⁰

The Web of Life:

A spoken meditation that encourages participants to envision connecting their body to the vast network of life. Participants are encouraged to stretch out during this activity. Available [here](#).²¹

Mirror Walk - Solo Practice:

A walk to awaken sensory awareness and encourage a fresh sense of gratitude for life. Available [here](#).²²

GRATITUDE

Introductions to Gratitude:

An activity that encourages participants to share aspects of their life and the Earth that they are grateful for. This activity may also be used as an icebreaker. Available [here](#).²³

A list of general gratitude activities may also be found [here](#).²⁴

ECO-THERAPY

A list of general eco-therapy activities can be found [here](#).²⁵

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NAMING AND ADDRESSING EMOTIONS

VERBAL-BASED ACTIVITIES

Rapid Feelings Check-in

A brief check-in activity that allows participants to express their emotions related to climate change with one another. Available [here](#).¹⁸

Widening Circles

An activity that serves as an opportunity for participants to express their thoughts and views, as well as to take on the perspectives of others. Available [here](#).²⁶

NON-VERBAL ACTIVITIES

Spectrum Line of Ecological Emotions

An activity that uses a spectrum to allow participants to express their emotions in a non-verbal manner. Available [here](#).²⁷

ART-BASED ACTIVITIES

Sculpture Creation

An activity that uses clay or dough to help participants express their emotions in a visual manner. Available [here](#).²⁸

Imaging with Colours and Clay

An activity that also uses clay, as well as coloured pencils and markers, serving as another method for participants to express their climate grief and emotion through art. Available [here](#).²⁹

WRITTEN ACTIVITIES

Spontaneous Writing

An activity that encourages participants to express their emotions through a spontaneous writing practice. Available [here](#).³⁰

Free Writing

An activity that encourages participants to identify with a climate grief term (i.e., eco-anxiety, eco-grief, solastalgia, etc.) and reflect upon it. Available in the Eco-Anxiety: From Worry to Action case study in “Programs and Interventions to Address Climate Grief: A Case Studies Report.”



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Letter From the Future

An activity that asks participants to write from the perspective of someone from the future, allowing participants to reflect upon one's current actions and practices, and to provide encouragement for current generations from an alternate perspective. Available [here](#).³¹

GRIEF ACTIVITIES

Cairn of Mourning

An activity that asks participants to share an object with the group that represents something they are mourning. Available [here](#).³²

Despair Ritual

An emotionally intensive activity that invites participants to express their sorrows, and create emotional solidarity within the group. Available [here](#).³³

GROUNDING ACTIVITIES

A list of general grounding activities can be found [here](#).³⁴

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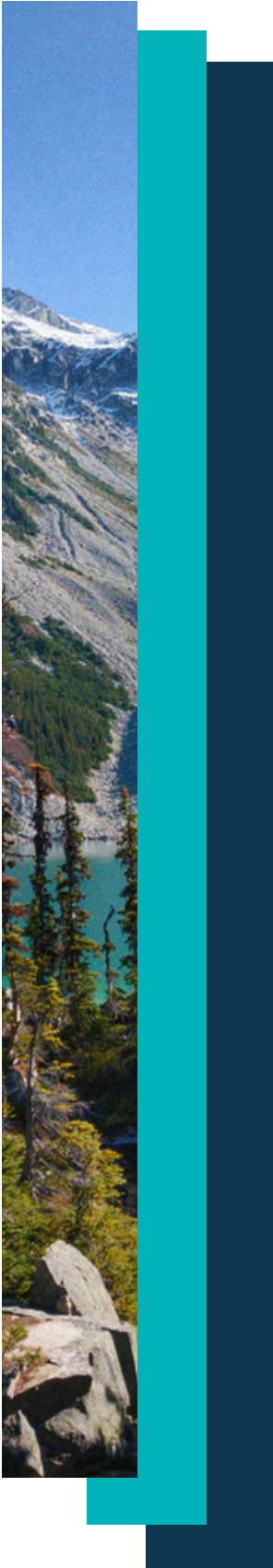
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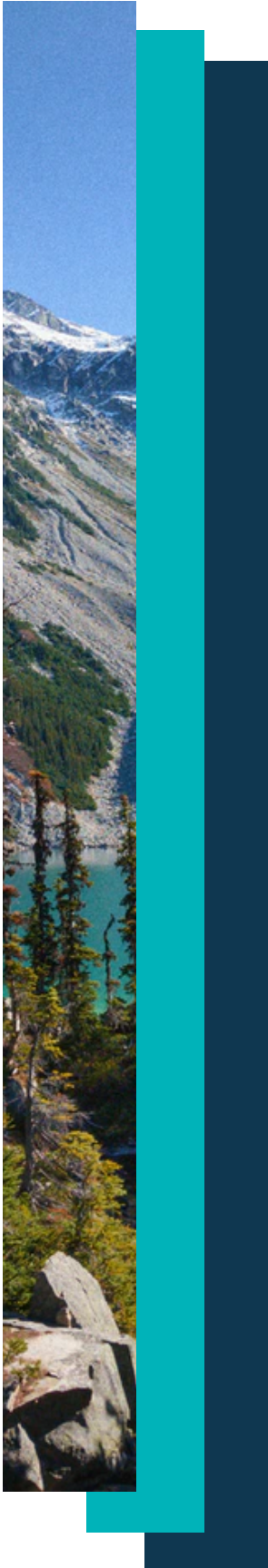
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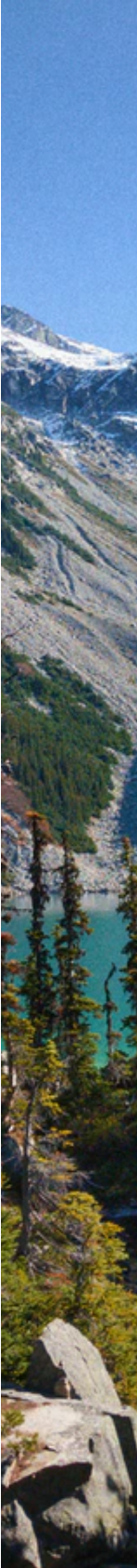
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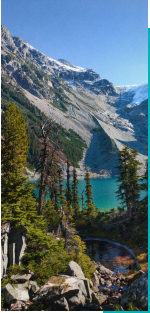


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