

# ECO-ANXIETY: HOW DO WE COPE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES?

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## Context and Background

- Physical effects of climate change are intensifying, including increased temperatures and climate events
- Eco-anxiety is defined as "considerable distress caused by a significant degree of ecological crisis" (see fig. 1)
- 82% of US 10-12-year-olds indicate a need for support through reported feelings of anger, sadness, and/or fear about climate change
- To face the rising climate crises, we must find solutions to use within environmental education so students can manage their eco-anxieties while continuing to learn and take action



**Figure 1:** Diagram outlining the diversity of feelings closely connected with eco-anxiety. Adapted from Pihkala 2020.

## Research Question

**What approaches in K-12 environmental education are useful for alleviating eco-anxiety during the climate crisis?**

## Internship and Methods

- Partnered with the Friends of the Conservatory in a remote internship to create a curriculum (see fig. 2)
- Researched similar environmental programs
- Interviewed 3 environmental professionals
- Surveyed elementary school teachers
- Conducted a literature review on eco-anxiety

## Results

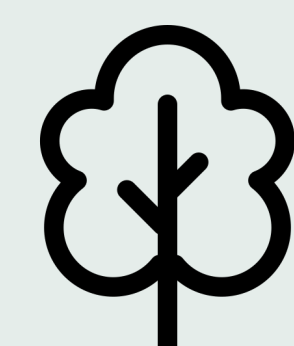
**Environmental education tools that support students' eco-anxiety include:**



**Adults as Role Models:** adults, specifically teachers, can act as role models to students by modeling communication and listening



**Learning Emotional Resilience:** students can develop resilience through practicing mindfulness and naming emotions



**Ecotherapy Through Education:** time in green spaces, outdoor education, and interaction with animals can be beneficial

## Interview with Climate Psychology Educator Leslie Davenport:

"The more we can help kids fall in love with the world... that's just going to grow them into conservationists because we tend to protect and care for what we love"



**Figure 2:** Volunteer Park Conservatory where students would be guided on a field trip on climate and biodiversity and engage in a form of eco-therapy.

## Broader Implications

- Environmental education can reduce anxiety, depression, and PTSD, as well as help students with ADHD focus and improve children's development
- Environmental education must focus further on age-appropriate resources, similar to the field trip curriculum I created

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