

Research Question: What are ways environmental activists can cope with the impacts of climate grief?

Background:

- Climate grief is a **widespread psychological response to ecological loss for changing climates** (see **Figure 1**)
- Climate grief matters because mass mobilization occurs in social movements. There are many angry people, and not enough direction to guide them
- Developing plans to understand and cope with climate grief can help with these emotional responses and create positive reinforcement, reframing our approach to climate change



Figure 1. Graphic of responses to environmental loss based on Richard Schiffman's *The Five Stages of Environmental Grief*. Emotions we feel in response to climate change are a cycle, not a problem with an easy solution.

Internship & Methods:

- Podcast miniseries on envir. education and communications for the *Common Caws for Sustainability Podcast* with UW Bothell & Cascadia
- Literary review of how climate grief impacts approaches to climate activism
- Guests were asked about coping with climate grief, ecotourism, social impacts, policy, etc.
- The answers were combined into one of **four** categories on how the individual can help based on the following environmental social activist roles:

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my site supervisors, Stephan Classen and Rachel Luther, as well as my faculty advisor, Kristi Straus, my family, and all my friends in and out of the PoE for their helpful advice, support, and endless kindness.



Environmental Activist Roles: ways individuals can cope with negative emotions through action



The Reformer: change in law by a community through voting or other means. Political campaigns, committee hearings, petitions. *"When young people consistently fail to show up to the polls, its no wonder why we don't have enough [climate policy]. Demand better, because we are capable of being better"* –M. Carmack



The Change Agent: citizen-based democracy to alert and educate the public on existing conditions that violate widely held values. *"We can have a conversation in the classroom about our shared experiences, and students know they are not alone. Being in a community makes the issue feel easier to tackle alongside others"* –L. Rubinsky



The Citizen: environmental citizens make a commitment to the common good, so others may do the same; sustainability at home and in public. *"The best thing a person can do is join your public library's advisory board, get involved with your school committee... There's a lot of local, individual things that can make a huge difference to a lot of people"* –R. Ameen



The Rebel: resist unjust social conditions to change status quo, often through activist organizations (see **Figure 2**) and events against climate issues. *"Action is a great antidote to despair. Getting involved in our local community, organizing an event or protest... Whatever way you can plug into this climate movement."* –N. Engelfried

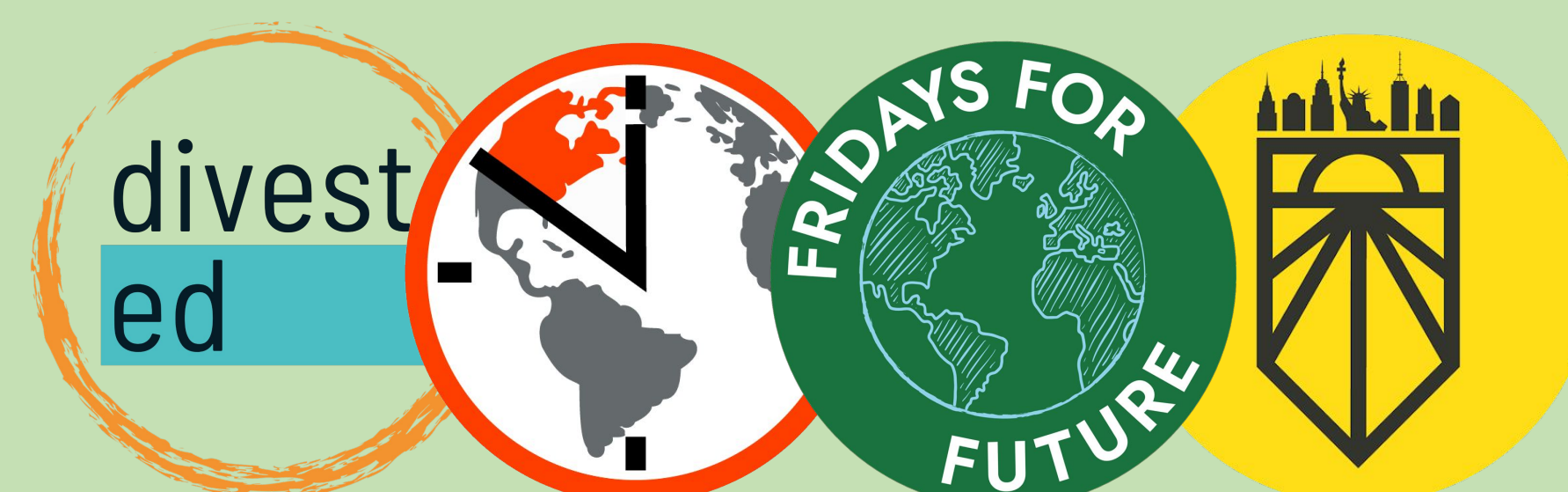


Figure 2. Icons from youth activist groups: *Divest Ed*, *Zero Hour*, *Fridays for Future*, and *Sunrise Movement NYC*

Takeaways:

- ✓ *Social connections and positive reinforcement* help individuals cope with changing climate by providing stable environment to heal and grow in
- ✓ *Hope* is the emotion that will drive systematic change –Grief, guilt, fear, and anxiety are valid emotions and have their place, yet we need sustainable goals
- ✓ *Problem solving* as a community combines coping with climate emotions and climate activism
- ✓ *Exposure to knowledge* of environmental history is a crucial aspect of coping with climate grief, illustrates the kind of future we can build towards (see **Figure 3**)

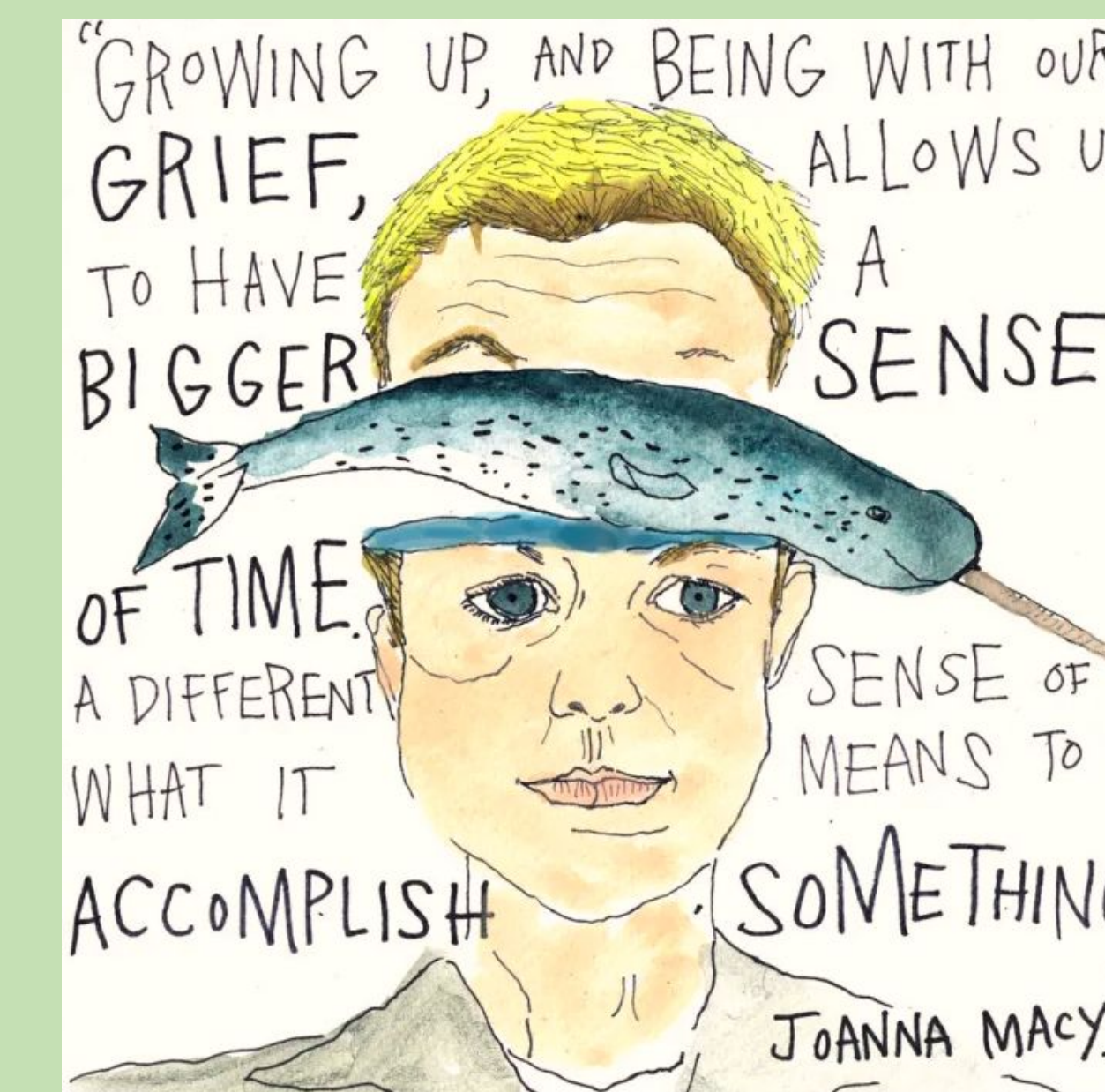


Figure 3 & 4. Frames from 'Climate Grief,' art by Perrin Ireland. Depicts how climate scientists cope with their grief and trauma by using everyday solutions, and how climate grief impacts the value and impact of our actions.

Implications:

- ✓ Happier stories show *younger generations* there is a future to be had and a world left to live in
- ✓ The podcast miniseries is a permanent form of educational stories for future generations, available to anyone to promote sustainability and connection
- ✓ Coping mechanisms will vary, but finding a supportive community and taking action in any way you can are the most effective methods to fight against climate grief