

IF YOU'RE FREAKING OUT ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE (ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE A PARENT)...

<https://climateemergencymanchester.net/if-youre-freaking-out-about-climate-change-especially-if-youre-a-parent/>

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Trigger warning – this page includes 'big feelings', heavy shit, etc

Opinions expressed are those of the author.

“Uh oh!

Fear!

We can't go under it

We can't go over it

We've got to go through it”

(with apologies to Michael Rosen)

I remember the feeling now, the icewater creeping up my spine, the tussle between the lizard hindbrain telling me to run, and the human being reeling from what I was learning.

What am I describing? The mind-altering experience of realising just how deep a hole we're in. And of course, “we” includes you, and me, and...our children. How can you process the realisation that whatever future you had imagined for your kids, is gone, because global societies will either have to transform themselves in our lifetimes, such that they are unrecognisable from today's standpoint, or collapse.

You can reject the notion, pretend that the scientists must have got it wrong, that governments would surely be acting with speed and urgency if things were really that bad. But if you're reading this, you've probably already decided not to do that. Maybe like me, you're trying to go about your normal life, panicking inside. Maybe reading bedtime stories is an exercise in not crying in front of them. Does your partner understand? Your family and friends? If not, on top of everything else, you may be facing these feelings alone.

I'd love to be able to tell you that it's all going to be OK, that there are techno-fixes coming that will save us all, but that would be a lie. The CO2 we have already emitted commits us several decades of further warming, and that's before we consider that emissions are already at record highs. Deforestation continues apace. Extinctions mount up. Governments bury their heads in the sand.

So how do we cope? How do we live in these times? (1)

The purpose of this page is to share some of the writings, ideas and groups that have helped me and other parents to feel that the search for an answer isn't futile. It's divided into parts – things you can **do**, things to help you talk to your children about this, things to challenge your thinking (about all sorts of things – leave your preconceptions at the door!) and lastly, some people who may be able to help you more directly and interactively.

So why do this? Why put these links together, and publish them alongside political lobbying and movement building?

Because the efforts to ameliorate what is already happening, and what is still to come,

needs *everyone*. The longer we wait to act, the less control we have, and the worse things will be – for all our children, and the countless other living things we need to share this planet with. The hour is late, and we are not in a good way – but we must not give up; to do so invites all the worst outcomes that our predicament makes possible.

To take a quote from [@beccabluesky](#) on Twitter:

As someone on disability for depression for 15 yrs, I'm not sure there's any way to take ppl from living their everyday lives straight to "let's transform civilization no matter how difficult/uncomfortable/life-altering it might be to accomplish it!" without there being a period of despair, given How Bad We've Let This Get Before Launching Into Action.

However, if someone who's already been thru the "the window in which we can act to save millions of people's lives, and a livable governable planet for our children is closing" thing; if they can help "new" ppl thru the very emotionally difficult transformation of worldview that's necessary, I think ppl can "get thru" a) the despair faster and b) get activated faster.

(Taken from [here](#)).

I'd be delighted to hear if this page helps you in any way – and if there is anything that's helped you that you'd like me to add to it. I'd also be happy to publish essays, videos, musical recordings – or anything else recounting your own experiences in dealing with climate breakdown – particularly if you are a parent. You can reach me [here](#). (It goes without saying that invitations to purchase anything, or messages telling me that we are doomed and that we should all give up, will be summarily deleted).

(1) I'm painfully aware that there are literally billions of people around the world who's living conditions were harsh, dangerous and uncertain before climate change came along, whether that's down to war, poverty, other (non-CC) environmental issues, oppressive regimes – etc. This is addressed to people who are currently in a position of particular privilege – aware of the situation, but not (currently) fighting for their existence – and hence (at least in theory!) able to do something about it.

Calum McFarlane, July 2019

Things to do

This is purposely not divided into “personal” and “other” actions – I feel this is a false dichotomy. Personal actions can help inspire others, help us to feel we are less a part of the problem, and enable us to focus on the task at hand. If we have children, actions at a personal scale are an excellent way to model the right kind of thinking and discuss issues in a non-threatening way.

That said, in the developed world, we are all enmeshed in a system that makes a low-carbon existence damn near impossible. You cannot fix this as an individual. But large scale systemic change is desperately needed, and it will not come about without the involvement of many, many “concerned citizens” – so don't strive towards some sort of state of “carbon purity” – even if you could, it wouldn't help the rest of the world change.

[Climate breakdown, capitalism and democracy – Prof Julia Steinberger](#)

And here is her marvellous Audacious Toolkit:

[An Audacious Toolkit: Actions Against Climate Breakdown \(Part 1: A is for Advocacy\)](#)

[An Audacious Toolkit: Actions Against Climate Breakdown \(Part 2: D is for Divest\)](#)

[An Audacious Toolkit: Actions Against Climate Breakdown \(Part 3: I is for Individual\)](#)

[BBC Radio 4 “New Year Solutions” Podcast series – Food, oil, flying, cars, lithium and more...](#)

[The most important thing you can do to fight climate change is to talk about it – Katherine Hayhoe](#)

[Fantastic mini-beasts \(and how to revive them\) – Prof. Dave Goulson](#)

Things to read (or watch) and think about

Our normal day-to-day notions of hope and courage, guilt and blame, misfortune and good luck, get overturned when we start to understand the predicament we are in. The following essays are ones that have changed the way I think about our predicament, and how I respond to it as a parent, a husband, a brother and an uncle.

The fortunate in the “developed” world have not often had to worry about their survival, but for many this is their lived experience, or was so in very recent memory; [Climate Change Ain’t the First Existential Threat – Mary Heglar](#)

[I work in the environmental movement. I don’t care if you recycle – Mary Heglar](#)

[The big lie we’re told about climate change is that it’s our own fault – Mary Heglar](#)

[When Climate Change Broke My Heart and Forced Me to Grow Up – Mary Heglar](#)

[Ballad of the sad climatologists – John Richardson](#)

[Loving a vanishing world – Emily Johnston](#)

[Climate Despair’ Is Making People Give Up on Life – Mike Pearl](#)

And [commentary from Meg](#), who was one of the people interviewed

[Beyond Hope – Derrick Jensen](#) (and his very thought provoking [website](#)).

[The Miraculous Hope of Climate Realists – Erika Spanger-Siegfried](#)

[I’m an environmental journalist, but I never write about overpopulation. Here’s why. – David Roberts](#)

[Religion after the death of God? The rise of pantheism and the return to the source – Rupert Read](#)

The Politics and Economics of Climate Change (and all the other terrible things humans are doing)

[The A-Z of Green Capitalism](#)

[Inequality and the Ecological Transition – Jason Hickel](#) (and if you liked that, most of the essays on his [blog](#) are well worth a read)

[Kate Raworth – Doughnut Economics](#)

On talking to our children:

[How to talk to kids about climate change without scaring them](#)
[Supporting children in the face of climate change \(video\) – Jo McAndrews](#)

People who may be able to help

Climate grief, ecoanxiety, call it what you will, it's not something to be ashamed of. Here are some people who may be able to help...

[Matthew Painton – Life Coach](#)

[The Aching Heart Movement \(Facebook Group\)](#)