

# Mental Health and Climate Resilience

August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025



# Mental Health and Climate Resilience

## **RECORDING**

**The webinar is being recorded and a link to the recording will be sent to everyone who registered within the next 24-48 hours.**

## **Questions**

**Please submit your questions in the Q/A box.**

## **Chat**

**Please remember to be respectful and civil in all chat interactions.**





## **An Open Clearing**

by Kim Tarman

O God of Vast Spaces,

May I be in heart, mind and soul that open clearing  
where any and all possibilities  
may enter, stay or pass through uninterrupted  
any hour of the day or night.

Whether they be clothed in terror or joy,  
may I welcome them with a heart receptive,  
invite them to stay with a mind thoughtful,  
and bid them farewell with a soul unclinging.

May I be that open clearing  
where both life and death can lie down together  
and rest through the night,  
where silence can sing her song unmuted, and  
where You can be seen dancing in every moment.

May I be that open clearing  
where courage gives winged flight  
to imprisoned dreams of liberation,  
where forgiveness bathes  
the scarred terrain of the soul  
with refreshment,  
where transformation takes root  
in the sweet soil of expectancy,  
spreading its seed with jubilant thanksgiving  
across the wild and waiting landscape,  
blossoming into grace.

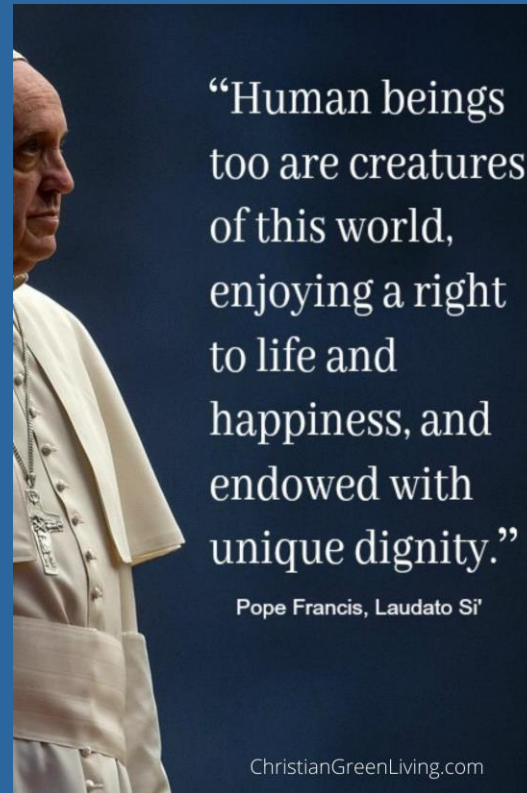
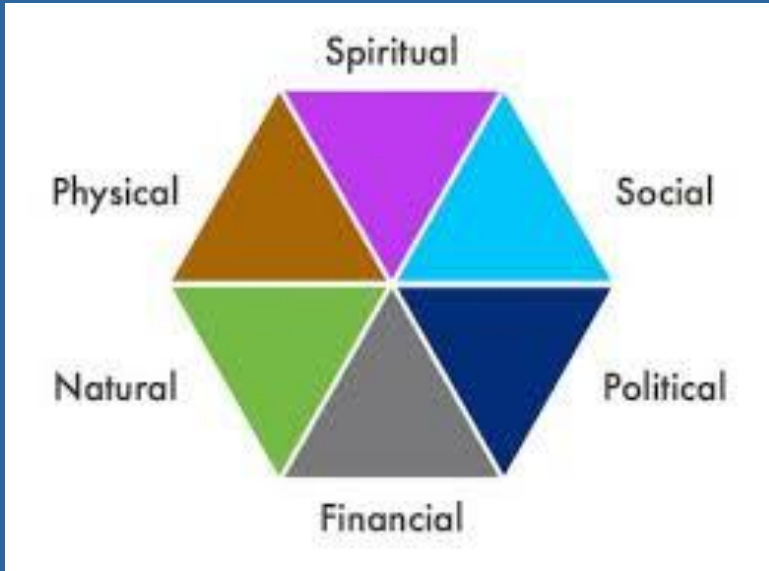
May I be that open clearing  
where compassion and hope, justice and  
understanding  
can gently land,  
where echoes of peace upon the earth  
ring gloriously across the heavens,  
where You breathe harmony and wholeness  
into all of Creation,  
a hallowed benediction  
upon all.

May I be that open clearing  
where You can do Your very best work.

Amen.

# Mental Health and Climate Resilience

## Catholic Social Teaching:



## Integral Human Development

## Ecology of Daily Life



# Mental Health and Climate Resilience



**Dr. Jyoti Mishra**  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry  
University of California, San Diego



**Sarah Newman** Executive Director  
Climate Mental Health Network

**Moderator: Paz Artaza-Regan, Catholic Climate Covenant**



UC San Diego  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

Center for  
Climate, Health  
and Equity



# Climate Mental Health Trauma & Resilience

*August 21, 2025*

Jyoti Mishra, PhD MBA  
Director, NEATLabs  
Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychiatry  
School of Medicine, UC San Diego  
Co-director, UC Climate Resilience Initiative  
<https://www.climate resilience.online/>

This work is inspired by my previous & future generations



Because this is the duty of ALL generations 🙏





# The societal mental health burden is already ginormous!



**Only ~10**  
MH workers per  
100K population



**1 billion**  
living with MH  
disorders worldwide



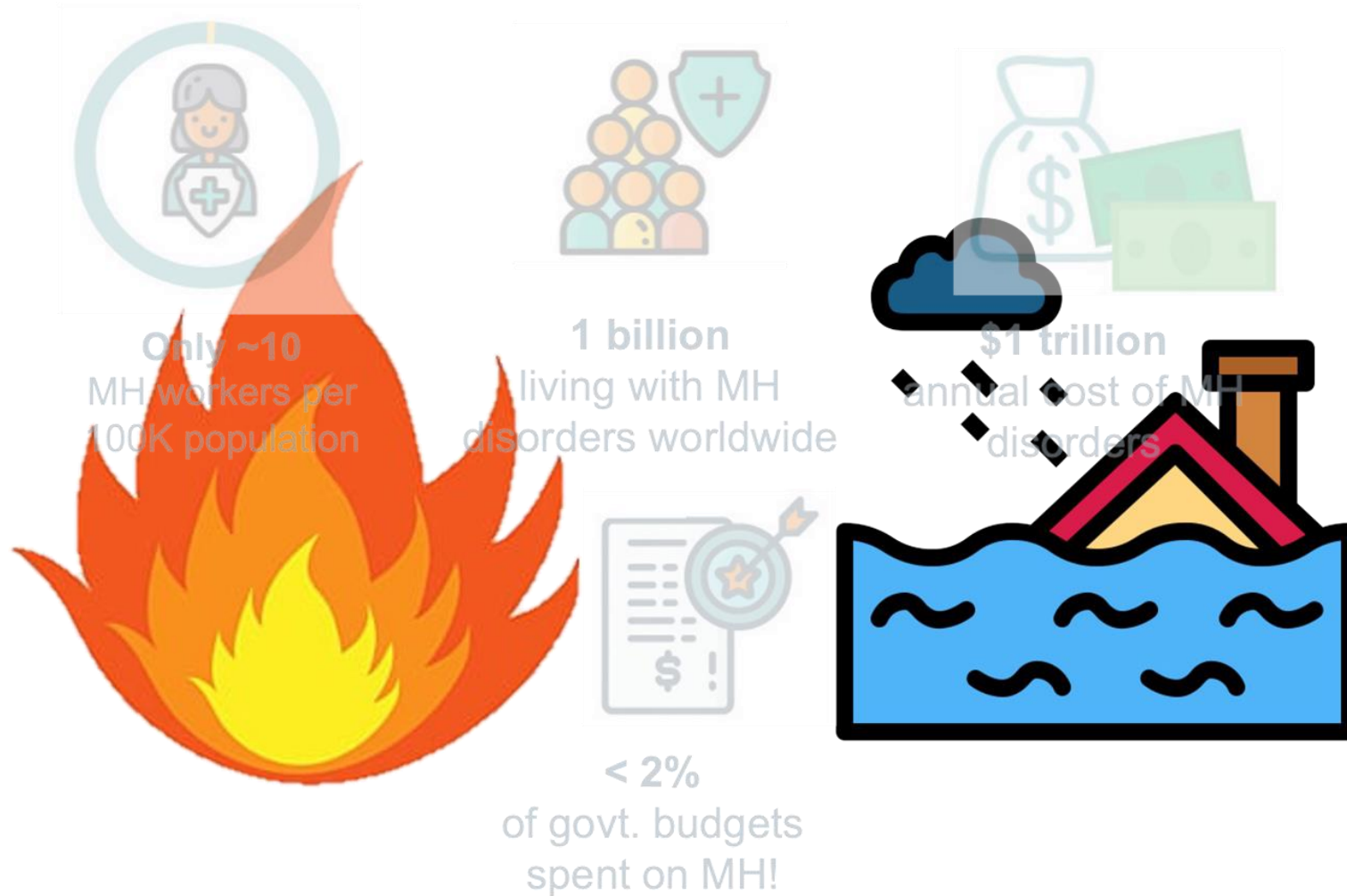
**\$1 trillion**  
annual cost of MH  
disorders



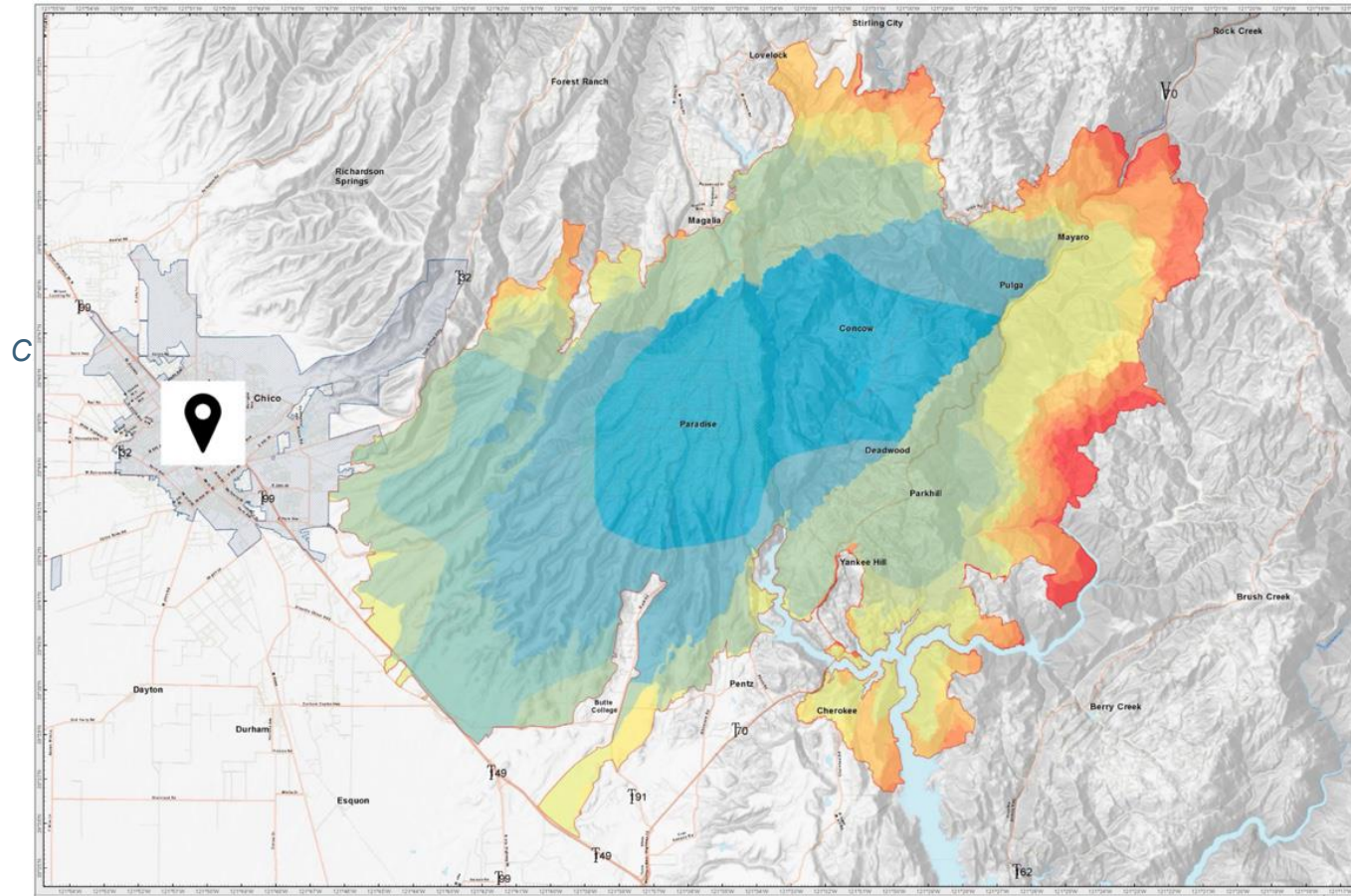
**< 2%**  
of govt. budgets  
spent on MH!



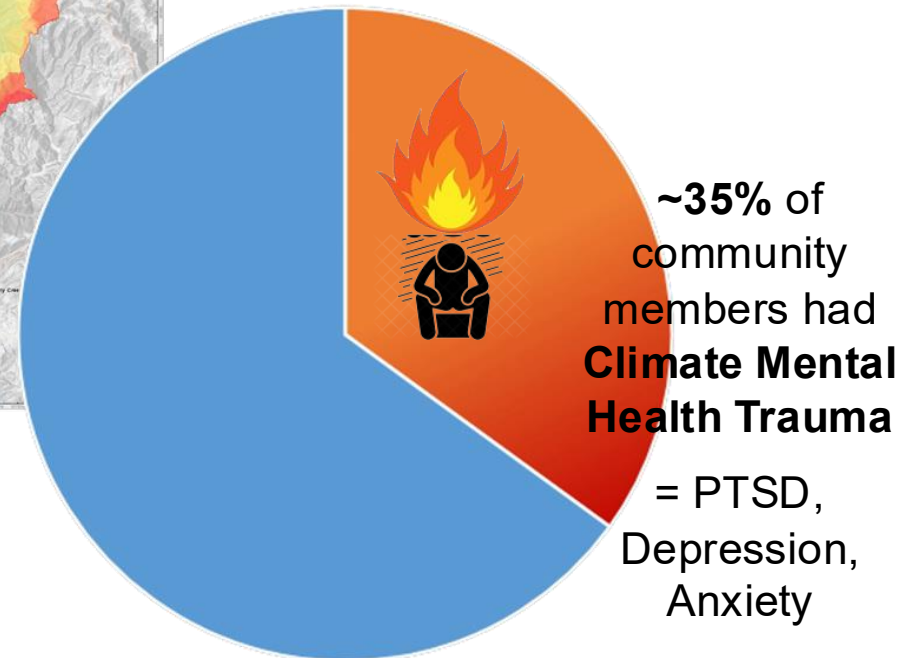
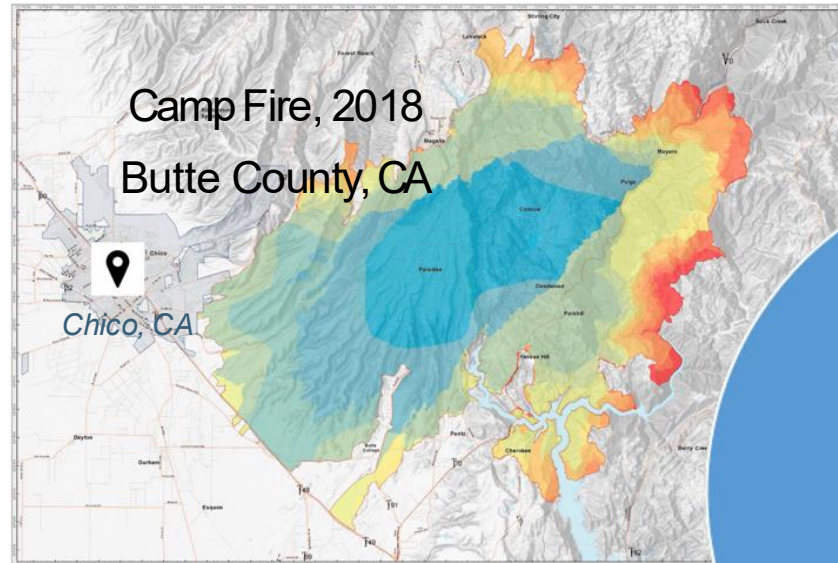
## Climate extremes **AMPLIFY** the MH burden



# Mental Health impacts of California's Deadliest Wildfire



## Mental Health impacts were observed at the Community wide level





Significant and persistent Cognitive impacts were also observed



**HIGH  
Distractibility**

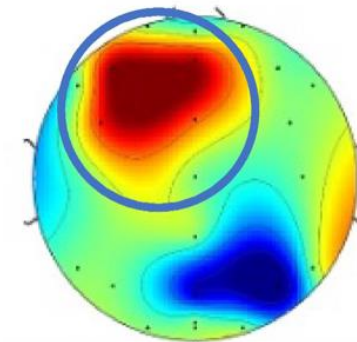


**POOR  
Decision-making**

# For the first time ever, brain impacts of wildfire exposure were revealed

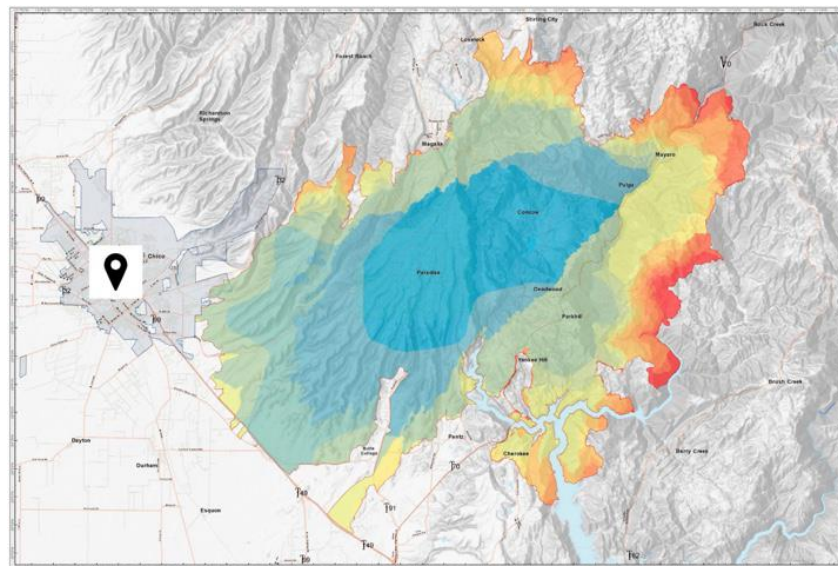


🔥 FIRE BRAIN 🧠



Fire-Exposed vs.  
Not Exposed

These climate impacts usually hit already vulnerable communities



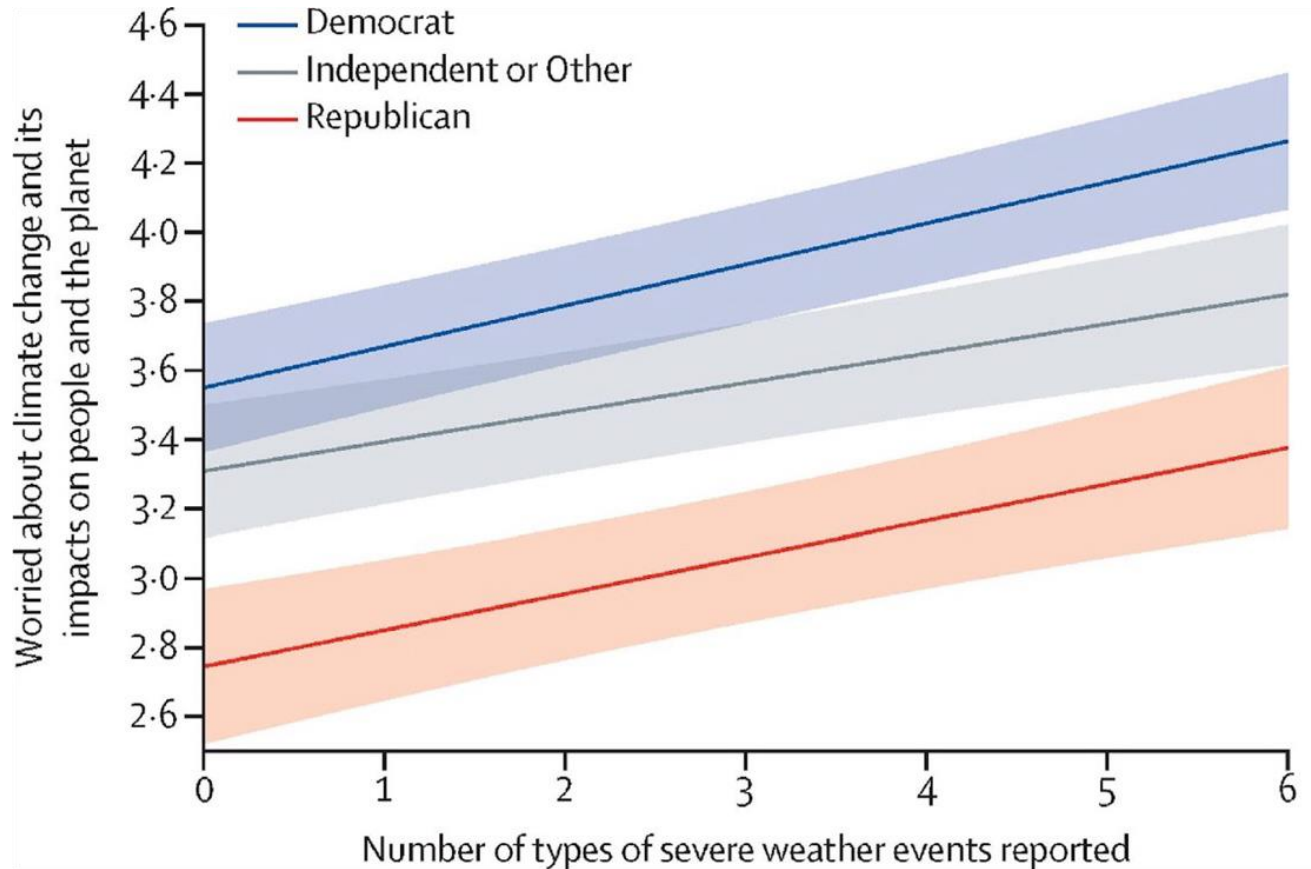
2022 Health Outcomes – California



Health Outcome Ranks 1 to 14 15 to 29 30 to 44 45 to 58



## Widespread Climate Distress, esp. in Youth



~85% youth were moderately or extremely distressed

# The Coming Age of Climate Trauma

Three years after a devastating wildfire, a California community faces another crisis: PTSD, at worst, by increasing their exposure to the rest of us?

- ❑ Climate Trauma exacerbates the mental health burden and is associated with poor and persistent mental health symptoms, as well as poor cognition and brain function.
- ❑ Climate trauma adds another layer of disadvantage for the communities that face the worst of climate change and have done the least to cause it. These are the communities that already deal with high levels of (non-climate) trauma. **We must address this “Climate Gap”.**

**Building Resilience -**

**Addressing Climate Mental Health Trauma**





## FOUR Personal Factors foster Resilience



Personal Resilient Belief



Mindfulness



Exercise



Family & Community Ties



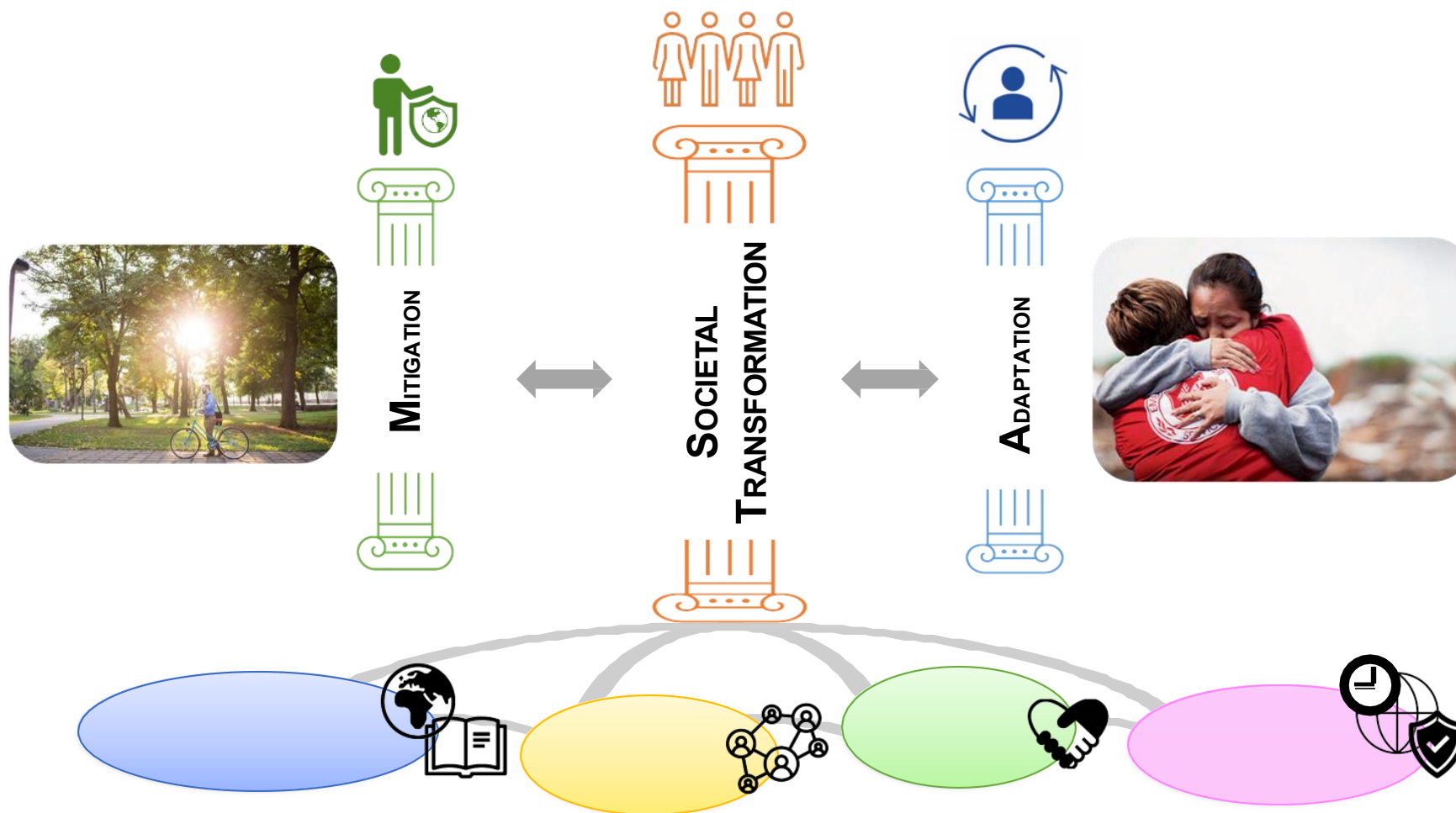
## Resilience via Nature Connection



## Eco-Therapy alongside Eco-stewardship in Communities

*Chico State & Maui Ecotherapy Programs*

# Building Societal Climate Resilience





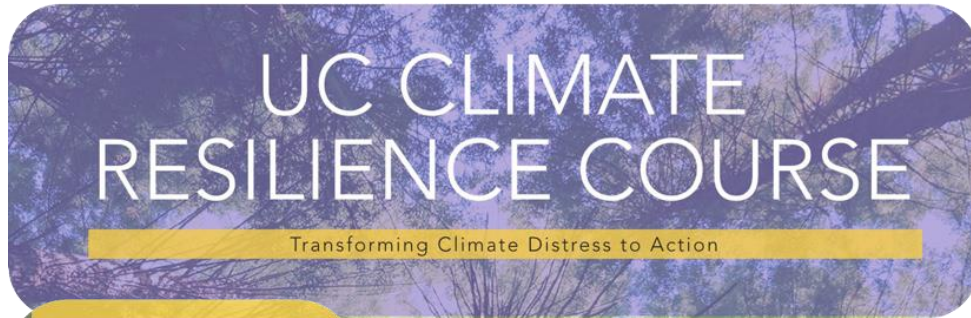


# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CLIMATE RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

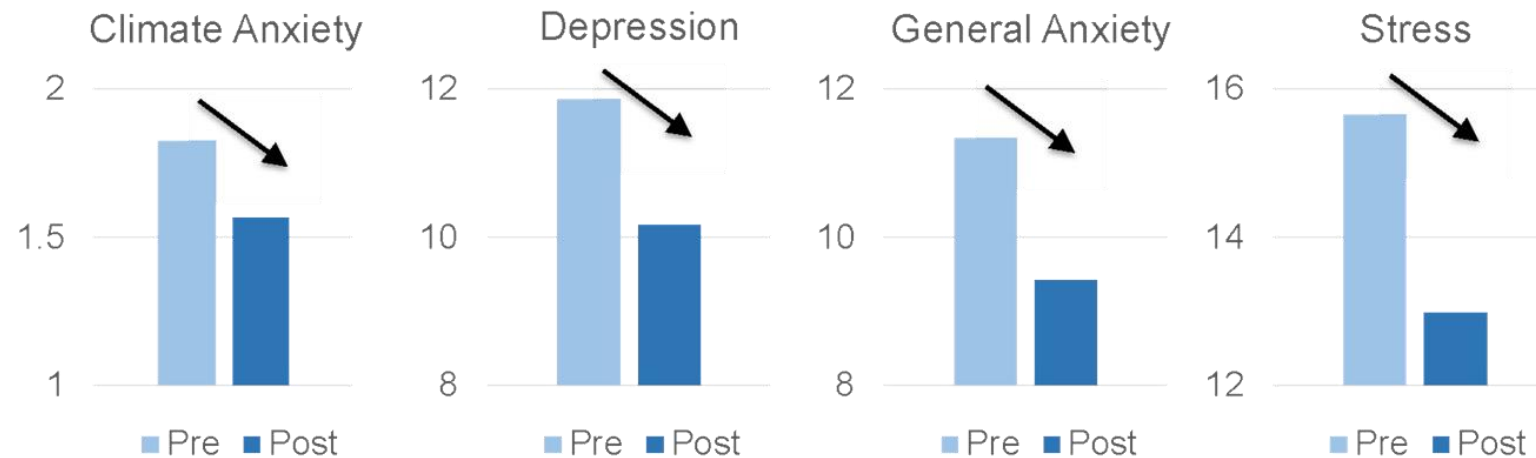
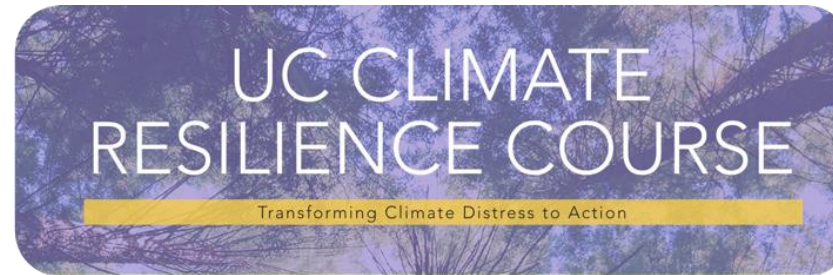
Transforming Climate Distress to Action



# Climate Resilience Education

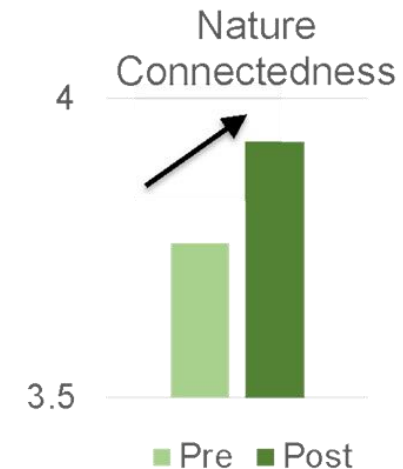
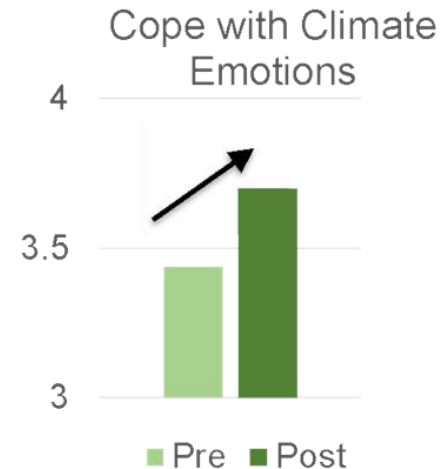
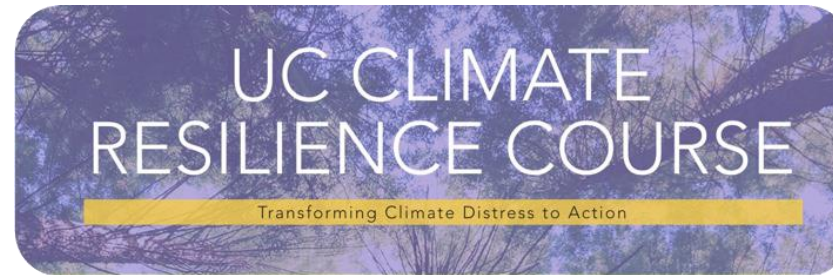


# Climate Resilience Education benefits Mental Health





# Climate Resilience Education generates Collective Action & Community Cohesion



# Building Climate Resilience is a necessity and an opportunity for **Inter-generational Flourishing**



**Thank You**

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Climate  
Mental Health  
Network



# Webinar

# Mental Health and Climate Resilience

**Sarah Newman**

**| August 21, 2025**



# Hi! I'm Sarah Newman.



Founder and Executive  
Director, Climate Mental  
Health Network

# Pause. Breathe.



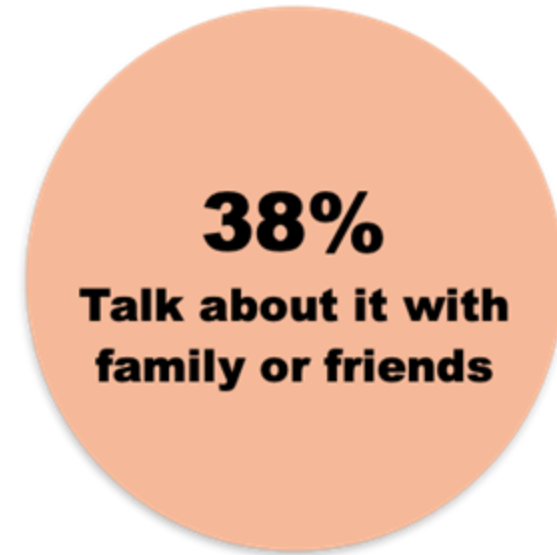
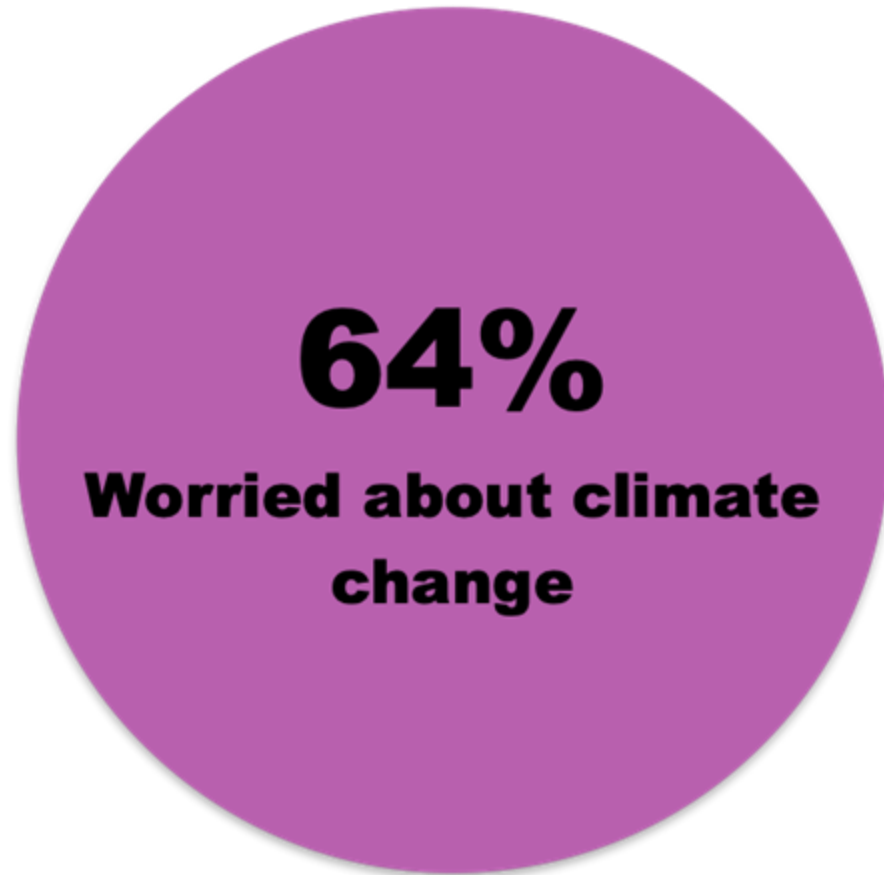
# Climate Emotions Wheel

*How does climate change make you feel?*





## Prevalence in U.S. Adults



## According to a study of over 16,000 Americans ages 16–25:

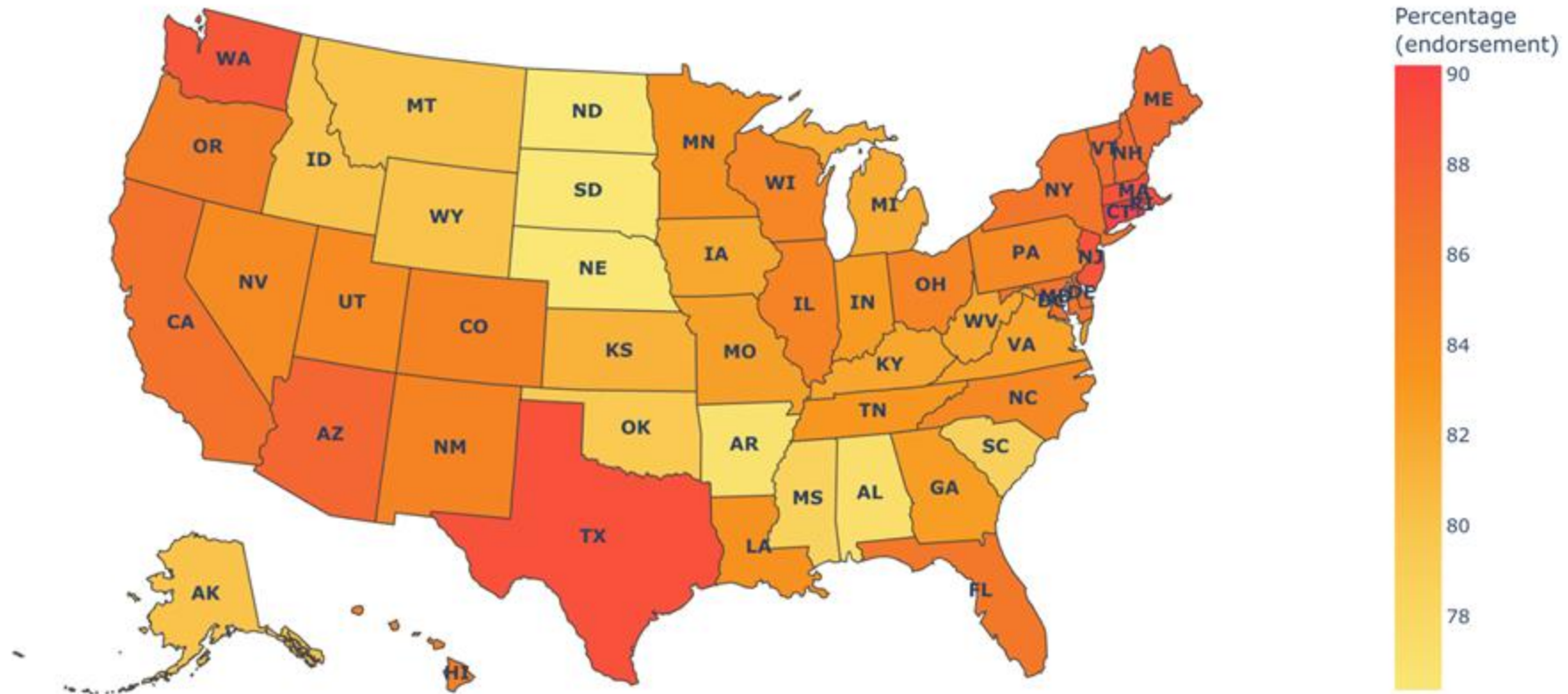
Percent (%) of adolescents and young adults who endorse the following question/statement:

How worried, if at all, are you about climate change and its impacts on people and the planet?

ⓘ Map does not support making statistical comparisons between states

Distribution of severe weather events (self-reported)

Select a severe weather event



# Major Study: Youth Emotions and Thoughts about Climate Change

- **85%** worried about climate change (**58%** “very” or “extremely” worried)
  - True across the political spectrum:  
**96%** of Democrats, **86%** Independent, **74%** Republicans worried about climate change
- **60%** said climate change makes them feel anxious, powerless, afraid, sad and angry
- **43%** said climate change impacts their mental health
- **38%** said their feelings about climate change negatively affect their daily life



# Major Study: Youth Emotions and Thoughts about Climate Change

- Majority of respondents said climate change will influence:
  - Whether or not they have kids
  - Where they live
  - Career and education choices

# Global Study: 10,000 Youth Worldwide (including the US in 2021)

- 75% said the future is frightening
- 59% extremely or very worried about climate change
- 40% do not want to have children because of climate change

# GEN Z MENTAL HEALTH: CLIMATE STORIES

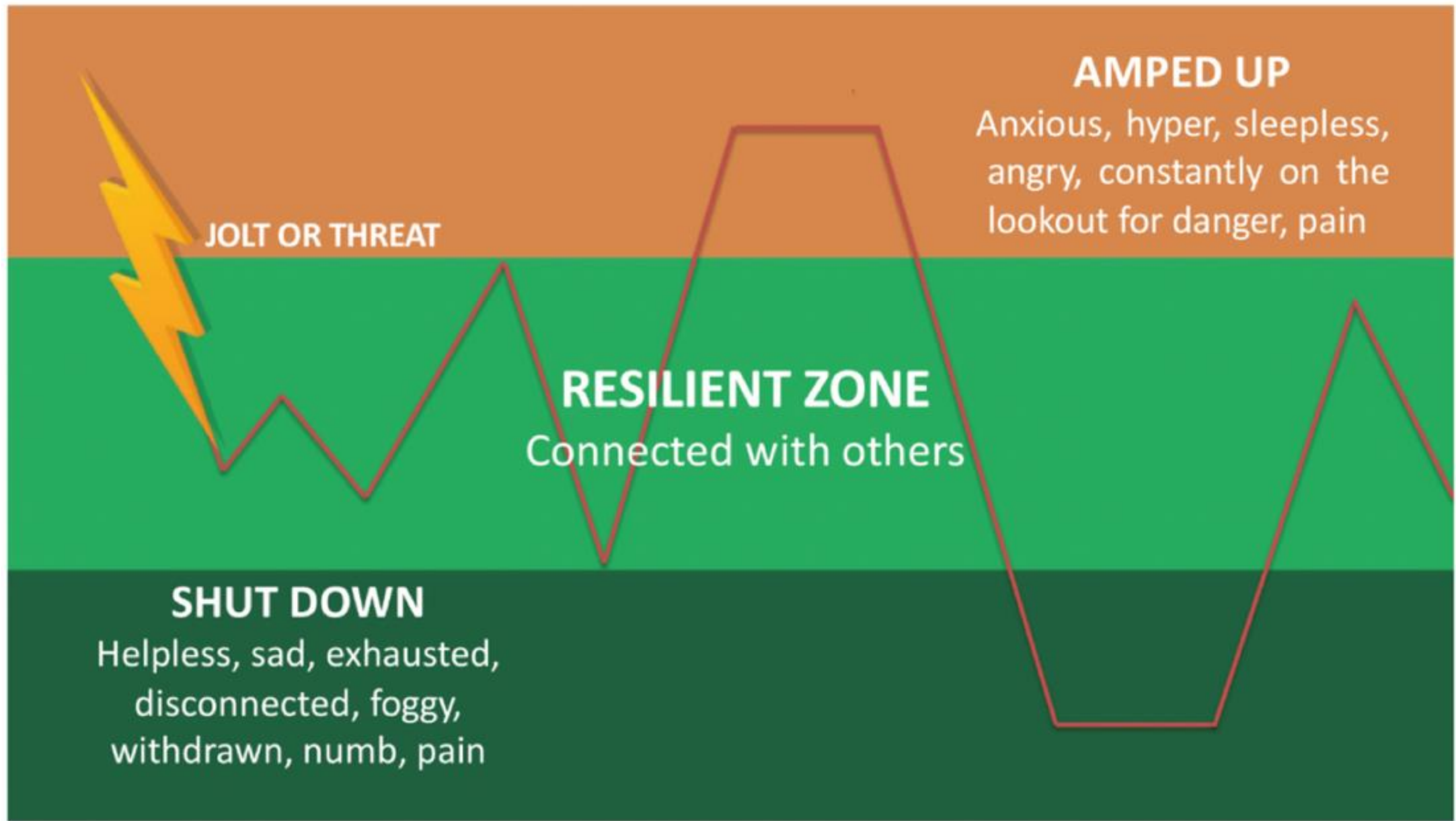




# Pause for Reflections



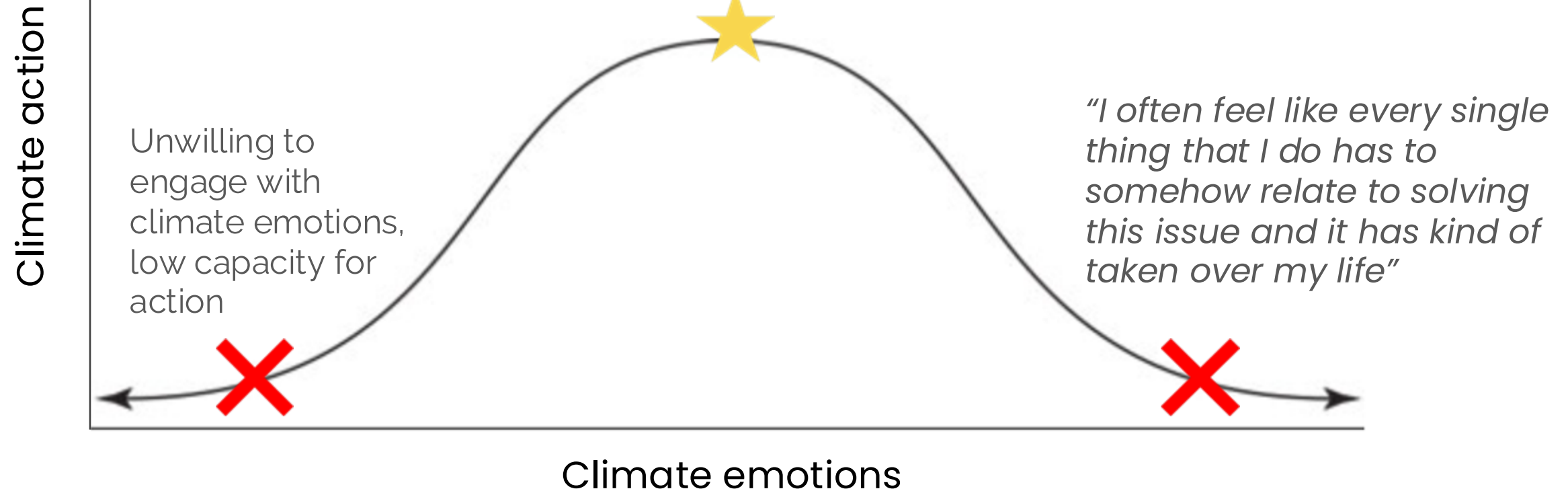
# Navigating Climate Emotions & Building Resilience





"Grief comes from a deep sense of **caring**. These emotions are a sign of our **connection to things that are beyond ourselves**— to other species, wild places, generations yet unborn, and to vulnerable communities that will be impacted the worst."

– *Britt Wray*



# Goal: Resilience

Cultivating the ability to **stay present, open, and empathetic** even as the world around us becomes more stressful and uncertain.

Expanding our capacity to **be with more**: more loss, more change, more complexity.

Maintaining our capacity for **positive emotions** like joy, wonder, and connection, even in the midst of difficulty.

Resilience isn't about suppressing negative emotions– it's about the capacity to function **effectively**, even in the face of **adversity**.



# Resilience is “ordinary magic”

- Extraordinary resilience has been demonstrated by people in wars, disasters, etc.
- Resilience doesn't stem from superhuman strength or rare traits, but from ordinary, everyday supports and capacities:
  - Close, caring relationships
  - Effective communities
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Emotional regulation
  - Finding meaning and purpose

# Building resilience

- We have the capacity for resilience
- How do we strengthen it?

# Negativity Bias





# Role of positive emotions in resilience

It's **not the absence of negative emotions**  
that characterizes resilience....

....but rather the **capacity to experience positive emotions**  
in the midst of difficulty.

# Positive emotions are protective

## Negative Emotions

- Worry, anger, anxiety, frustration  
→ Activate Sympathetic Nervous System
  - "Fight or Flight"
  - Increased heart rate, stress hormones
- ⚠ Prolonged activation can harm brain and body

## Positive Emotions

- Gratitude, joy, wonder, connection  
→ Activate Parasympathetic Nervous System
  - "Rest and Digest"
  - Calms stress response
- 🛡 Protects the brain from toxic stress

# Positive emotions broaden & build

## **Broaden**

Positive emotions—like joy, gratitude, and love—broaden our awareness. They help us:

- Think more creatively
- See more options
- Connect more easily with others
- Be open to new experiences

## **Build**

Over time, these broadened moments build lasting resources, such as:

- Emotional strength (better coping skills)
- Social connections (stronger relationships)
- Cognitive flexibility (more adaptive thinking)
- Physical health (reduced stress responses)

Let be. Let flow. Let in.



# Let Be: Facing Grief

**What am I feeling?**

*Observe the feeling with openness and curiosity. Name it.*

**What does it feel like in my body?**

*Notice where and how it shows up.*

**What is this feeling trying to tell me?**

*What message does it have for me?*

**Can I accept and embrace it?**

*"Befriend what hurts." These feelings are normal, valid, and shared by many.*

# Let Flow: Dealing with painful feelings

**Do I want to hold onto this feeling, or let it go?**

*Letting go doesn't mean forgetting about the problem, and unrelenting negative feelings can have a toxic effect.*

**What can I do to let this feeling flow?**

*Breathe, exercise, call a friend.*

# Let In: Opening the door to the positive

## **Gratitude**

*What am I grateful for? What is good right now?*

## **Meaning and Growth**

*Has the climate crisis spurred any positive changes, in yourself or the world?*

## **Connection, Action, and Hope**

You are not alone.  
Connect with  
your community.





# It Is Not All Doom and Gloom - There Is Hope:

For 75% of 12,000 university students in 32 countries, **climate anxiety leads to positive environmental behaviors and actions.**

A US study found that **collective climate action** helped to **buffer climate anxiety.**

Source: Cunsolo, A., Harper, S. L., Minor, K., Hayes, K., Williams, K. G., & Howard, C. (2020). Ecological grief and anxiety: The start of a healthy response to climate change? *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(7), e261–e263. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(20\)30144-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30144-3); Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, R. E., Mayall, E. E., Wray, B., Mellor, C., & van Susteren, L. (2021). Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey. *The Lancet. Planetary health*, 5(12), e863–e873. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00278-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00278-3)  
Source: Schwartz, S.E.O., Benoit, L., Clayton, S. et al. Climate change anxiety and mental health: Environmental activism as buffer. *Curr Psychol* 42, 16708–16721 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02735-6>

The climate distressed are more likely to act and are willing to take more action.

“volunteer your time to an organization working on global warming: 52% (experienced climate distress) vs 24% (experienced no distress at all) ... support an organization engaging in non-violent civil disobedience: 50% vs. 18%”

Source: Ballew, M., Myers, T., Uppalapati, S., Rosenthal, S., Kotcher, J., Campbell, E., Goddard, E., Maibach, E., & Leiserowitz, A. (2023). Is distress about climate change associated with climate action? Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.  
<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/distress-about-climate-change-and-climate-action/>

A large, abstract teal shape in the top right corner of the slide, resembling a stylized wave or a partial circle.

“peer support and a sense of belonging act as salves to burnout”

“The stronger the sense of belonging ... the better their mental health, physical health, and level of flourishing.”

Source: Conner JO, Greytak E, Evich CD, Wray-Lake L. Burnout and Belonging: How the Costs and Benefits of Youth Activism Affect Youth Health and Wellbeing. Youth. 2023; 3(1):127-145.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3010009>

# GEN Z MENTAL HEALTH: CLIMATE STORIES





Takeaway:  
Share a word,  
reflection, idea,  
or  
thought.





Climate  
Mental Health  
Network

# THANK YOU. CONNECT WITH US

@ClimateMentalHealth | ClimateMentalHealth.Net

