The Climate Cares Guided Journal

A presentation about its aims, its design, our pilot research study into its effectiveness, and our plans for the future

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Presentation outline





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The lack of support for people who care about the climate.



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The climate crisis is unavoidably **upsetting.**



The climate crisis is distressing for many reasons.

For example, learning about the climate crisis means **altering your expectations of the future**, **acknowledging the reality of preventable injustices and tragedies** occurring around the world to human and non-human nature, and **navigating any guilt or responsibility a person feels about their contribution to the crisis** (1).

Moreover, the crisis can bring up **intense feelings** (such as worry, sadness, guilt, anger and overwhelm) which can be hard to cope with, leading to both **mental health impacts** and **feelings of paralysis** that prevent effect action to address the climate crisis (2).

Lawrance et al (2021) Briefing paper: The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing
Lawrence et al (2021) Young Persons' Psychological Responses, Mental Health and Sense of Agency for the Dual Challenges of Climate Change and a Global Pandemic



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Without appropriate support in the climate crisis mental health outcomes and proenvironmental action suffer.



Mental health suffers

Whether experiencing climate-related impacts directly or observing them overseas, the crisis evokes a wide range of distressing feelings that can eventually **disrupt daily life** (1).

Indeed, many people find that the more they learn about the crisis, the more overwhelmed they become.

Pro-environmental action suffers

At the moment, it is all too common to hear stories of people who find the climate crisis to overwhelming to think about - and thus not engaging in meaningful pro-environmental action. **Disengaged** people 'stop before they start', not knowing how to leverage their skills to help.

Even people taking environmental action more regularly such as climate activists or environmental professionals feel their action is ineffective or otherwise unsustainable too. Engaged people are 'burned out', overwhelmed and disilusioned by the scale of the impacts predicted to occur and the inaction they see around them (2).

1. Diffey et al (2022) "Not about us without us" – the feelings and hopes of climate-concerned young people around the world 2. Pihkala (2019) The cost of bearing witness to the environmental crisis: vicarious traumatization and dealing with secondary traumatic stress among environmental researchers



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Young people's mental health is particularly vulnerable in the climate crisis.



Young people around the world are...

Even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (and even in the relatively climate-safe United Kingdom) young people were more concerned about the climate crisis than COVID-19 (3).

The care young people have about the climate crisis often leads to **a** wide range of wellbeing impacts including disrupted sleep, difficulties planning for the future and relationship issues (4).

- ERENCES 1. UNICEF (2021) The climate crisis is a child rights crisis
 - 2. Barford et al (2021) Young people and climate change
 - 3. Lawrence et al (2021) Young Persons' Psychological Responses, Mental Health and Sense of Agency for the Dual Challenges of Climate Change and a Global Pandemic
- REFI 4. Diffey et al (2022) "Not about us without us" – the feelings and hopes of climate-concerned young people around the world



• acutely aware of and vulnerable to climate-related impacts (1) • likely to live with climate impacts for the longest time, • seldom in positions of power where they can enact change, • crucial to long term efforts to address the crisis (2).

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STOP

It doesn't need to be like this!

It is possible to support mental health and environmental action in the climate crisis.

It is possible to maintain strong mental wellbeing while remaining engaged with the climate crisis (1, 2, 3).

We can help people to...

- understand and cope with their climate-related feelings
- find meaningful ways to channel their environmental concerns into action and help them find genuine reasons for hope

1. Wray (2022) Generation Dread 2. Macey (2012) Active Hope 3. Hamilton (2022) Alchemizing sorrow into deep determination



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We can disrupt the pervasive cycle of overwhelm, and create a virtuous cycle in its place

The cycle of overwhelm

The climate crisis continues as people are unsupported to help address it.

> Caring, concerned people become overwhelmed. burned out, and are forced to

disengage.

Action to address the crisis remains ineffective. The unique contributions individual people can make are lost.



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climate crisis.

<u>A virtuous cycle for people and planet</u>

The climate crisis is addressed with proportional action and creative solutions from all parts of society.

> People are supported to cope with the feelings they have.

People understand and are supported in the unique role they play in addressing the

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journal.



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How and why we designed the

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Introducing the guided climate journal: the tool we developed to support wellbeing and sustainable action in the climate crisis

The Climate Cares Guided Journal is a beautifully illustrated introspective activity book containing activities to help people get in touch with, understand, and feel empowered by their climate-related feelings.

It provides a safe and regular space for people to explore their feelings, away from the critique of others and the echo chambers of online media.

The journal takes participants through an open-ended journey of reflection and self-discovery, containing personal stories and examples to ground people in the real-world, to remind them they are not alone in any of their feelings, and to let them know helpful resources are out there if they are struggling.





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Journal content

The content was determined based on the findings of previous research, expert advice, and a co-design process with our young advisors - who advised on its content, visual style and language.



The journal involves three powerful daily activities....

Daily check in

A chance to practice reflecting on your emotions, to practice gratitude, and to spot trends in emotions.





... covering four critical climate-wellbeing themes







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Crafted activities

A wide range of self guided journal activities designed to take between 5-10 minutes to complete.

Freeform writing

A space to express on your own terms, with quotes for inspiration and extra resources.

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"Your thoughts and you"

a reflective activity under the theme "Understanding how you feel"

Inspiration taken from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and rational emotive behavioural therapy (REBT).



Your thoughts and you

As you have probably noticed, our thoughts are not just internal', but significantly affect our emotional wellbeing and the way we act in the world. In today's activity, you'll practise becoming aware of this reality by observing how your thoughts about the future affect you.

When our thoughts are balanced and insightful, they can help us solve problems and make peace with difficult realities lowever, when our thoughts are based on lies or are skewed in one direction or another, they can cause unnecessary emotional pain (e.g. undue feelings of guilt or anger) and lead us to treat people cruelly. Our thought patterns can also become habits that we repeat over and over again, so you'll also spend a bit of time reflecting on some criteria you might be able to use to identify more helpful thoughts from less helpful thoughts.

"What you can and can't control"

a reflective activity under the theme "Taking care of yourself"

Inspiration taken from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

What you can and can't control

How much do you really have control over? How often do you get frustrated about things outside of your control?

In today's activity, you'll practise identifying the things you do and don't have control over. This is a skill that can help you in all areas of life - from finishing the projects you are working on to knowing when it might be helpful for you to slow down and rest. It will also help you avoid some of the pain that can come from trying to control too much.





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Click the images below for higher resolution copies.

WEEKONE -> DAY THREE -> Your thoughts and you

Whatever situation we're in, the thoughts we have can affect the way we feel and the way we instinctively want to act in response. Try becoming aware of this pattern by filling in the activity below.



In the table below, a group of students have tried to come up with criteria that distinguish 'helpful thoughts' from less helpful ones. Fill in the table below stating whether you agree with each characteristic they suggested.

Helpful thoughts are	Do you agree? Is this always the case?
- based on facts not opinions or feelings*	
ones that help you fix your problems*	
ones that make you feel good in the short and long run*	
_ focused on the positive"	
based on compassion and love for everyone involved*	

VEEK TWO -> DAY ONE -> What you can and can't co

In the table below, write a score based on how much control you have over each event.

Example: The day I was born	(Scal	no-contro		
The energy I wake up with each morning.	° 			s
What time I go to bed each day	° 			5
How much effort I put into my work	°			5
The way I talk to people	° 			5
How people respond to me	° 			5
Whether my family agrees with my values	° 			5
How I respond to my emotions	° 			5
Whether other people agree with me about the importance of climate change	°			5

Answer the questions below using examples from the left or things you think of yourself.

Can you think of anything you don't have much control over that you tend to focus on too much? Write your answer below, along with one or two benefits changing this habit might have.

Can you think of anything you have control over that you tend to focus on too little? Write your answer below, along with one or two benefits changing this habit might have.

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Examples of activities include...

"A world of your dreams"

an imaginative exercise under the theme "Envisioning a better world"

Inspiration taken from Brian Eno's and others' work on the links between climate change, art and imagination.

A world of your dreams

Far from being foolish or naive, imagining what a 'drean future' would look like can be a really courageous and useful thing to do. While it is helpful to remind ourselves that things aren't likely to go perfectly, it takes courage to admit that we'd like things to be different. We hope that completing and getting creative with this activity rewards you with new perspectives on how you might like to show up in the world and prepares you well for the final week of the journal.



"Discovering your superpower"

a self-discovery exercise under the theme "Claiming your calling"

Inspiration taken from the 'Ikigai framework' and Project Inside Out.

Discovering your superpower

Many of us have received encouragements to change our habits for the sake of the environment: we're encouraged to buy a bit less and to reuse a bit more. But what if there's more we can do?

It may sound silly at first, but in many ways we really do all have our own superpowers. No, most of us can't literally fly, teleport or turn invisible on command. However, we do all have a unique combination of character traits. experiences, interests and skills which enable us to help the world in ways that no one else can.

We don't always need to 'fit the mould' or 'follow in someone else's footsteps' to make a difference. Indeed, often the things that make us different are our greatest assets.





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NEEK THREE -> DAY FIVE -> A world of your dream

Imagine you wake up in the year 2050 and everything has gone the way you desire. The social and environmental issues you care about en solved. Businesses, the Government and charities have all gether and your community now looks very different.





.....

WEEK FOUR → DAY ONE → Discovering

TRAITS

Your superpower is your

Fill in the table below to get to know your superpower better. If it helps, imagine a friend is describing you to someone you've never met

YOUR CHARACTER YOUR EXPERIENCES YOUR INTERESTS AND SKILLS What are you like? through and learned What gets you excited? Examples sports, music, video games, activism, How do you like to interact with other people? Examples studies or work, your research, reading, photography, busir eserved, outgoing, houghtful, bold, playful,

Part of what makes you unique are your environmental passions

Which particular areas of environmental action inspire you the most? Examples could include, for instance, encouraging renewable energy, making fashion more sustainable, reducing ocean plastic pollution, tackling food waste, supporting youth environmental activism, or educating people about the environment.

Pick one or two areas that you'd love to help contribute to (or issues that you'd like to see solved) and briefly explain why you chose your answers

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How did the project come about?

It originated as part of a <u>research</u> <u>project into mental wellbeing in the</u> <u>climate crisis</u>. There are very few support resources for young people out there, so we built a team to create our own, drawing on the experiences of other experts.

Who was our first edition designed for?

The journal was designed with and for young people aged 16-24 who care about the climate, but who either struggle to know how to help the climate or how to cope with the feelings the crisis evokes for them. People and adults of other ages may like the journal too.

Common questions



Visual designers, mental health professionals, researchers, climate change experts, external advisors, and our 10-person UK-based youth advisory group!





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Who led the project?

The **Climate Cares team**, a collaboration between the Grantham Institute of Climate Change, The Institute of Global Health Innovation and the Helix Design Centre at Imperial College London.



What has interest in the journal been like?

Environmental and mental health professionals, teachers, young people, and others (across the UK, Philippines, Caribbean, Spain and Argentina) have shown interest in the journal. The journal seems largely suitable across cultural backgrounds, with only minor language changes required.

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People need a safe space to reflect

A personal journal that people can keep to themselves provides a safe space where people can explore their climate-related feelings and views at their own pace.

Journaling supports mental wellbeing

The practice of journaling can have many mental health benefits. Many people around the world rely on it to process their uncomfortable feelings. The skill may thus help users to support themselves even after they 'finish' this guided journal.

Why guided journaling?

Guided journaling is a **reflective activity** where a person takes time to read info given about a subject, then write/draw in response to prompts and activities. It aims to help a person become more aware of their own feelings, values, and habits - as well as their potential to make change in their lives.



Many myths surround mental health, the climate crisis and their intersection. The guidance in the journal helps provide much-needed insights and tips. This is particularly important as climate change so often leads to heated discussions!



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It is a scalable and flexible tool

Guided journaling has many advantages. It is affordable, can be picked up by anyone at any time, and the activities within the journal can also be adapted to other contexts (e.g. group workshops).

A novel research tool

Finally, to researchers like us, the journal presents a unique opportunity to (with consent) learn more about the support young people want in the climate crisis, as journalers can anonymously share their answers with researchers for analysis.

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The co-design process

We place evidence and co-design at the centre of everything we do.

- Evidence: We develop our activities based on the findings of previous research, and the expert advice of climate change and mental health professionals from around the world.
- **Co-design:** We involve the users of the journal in its design and iteration, to ensure it is attractive, accessible and useful to its intended audience.

We designed our first version of the journal with and for young people in the United Kingdom (age 16-24). They helped inform and review...

- the aesthetics used in the journal to ensure it was attractive to young people
- the activity descriptions to ensure enough information was provided without seeming overwhelming
- the activity topics to ensure they were relevant to them
- the language used to ensure it was accessible

We have also begun working with people from other countries on iterations for other audiences (including the Caribbean, Spain and Argentina). So far, we have found that only minor language changes are needed between countries.



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RESEARCH AND 3 **USER TESTING**

Results from a small trial study on the Journal's effectiveness.



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Our trial of the journal with 40 young people during COP26

Overview

Due to our limited budget thus far, we have only been able to complete a small 40 person trial with UK young people aged 16-24 in October to November 2021. We would hope to secure more funding to conduct a larger trial / rollout in the future, perhaps with a community element (e.g. weekly meetings or an online discussion group added).

The young people who signed up to this study were already heavily interested in the climate crisis. Several of them selfreport their concerns about the crisis were increasing during due to COP26. The results of our trial study were thus influenced by COP26, but helped us to test its effectiveness as a support during a challenging time.

Research method

We collected data from surveys before and after the journal, a feedback workshop, and screenshots from select pages in the completed journals. We analysed the survey data **quantitatively** (with simple before and after comparisons due to our small sample size), and thematically analysed all qualitative data provided in the survey written responses and journal feedback sessions.

We collected a wide range of data (including based on metrics used in the climate and mental health academic literatures) on climate-related anxiety, daily distress, beliefs, agency and activism; general mental health, and feedback on the journal itself.



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Our trial of the journal with 40 young people during COP26

Demographic info

40 participants were sent journals at the start of a 6 week period after completing a 'pre-survey' assessing their current feelings and sense of agency in relation to the climate crisis. After the period, 22 participants attended a feedback workshop and 16 people completed a 'post-survey' similar to the pre-survey.





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Data collection during study





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Research findings

We broke down our results into three main themes. In the following slides, we include some of the quantitative and qualitative data we collected from our trial study relevant to each area.

Developing coping skills

Did we help people understand and cope with their climaterelated emotions?

Supporting meaningful climate action

Did we help people envision a better future and take action towards it?



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Wider feedback and areas to iterate content

What else did we learn about the journal and how can we improve it?

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Developing coping skills

Did we help people understand and cope with their climate-related feelings?

Background

Mental wellbeing in the climate crisis involves being in touch with difficult emotions, including sadness, anger, and worry. These feelings can be intense and cause distress, but in themselves are not signs of any mental disorder (1).

Developing healthy coping skills in the climate crisis means being in touch with the above feelings, but experiencing them at manageable intensity and having ways to cope with them when they do arise (2).

To achieve this, several activities in the journal focused on helping people to get in touch with these feelings, normalising these feelings, helping people to understand the relationships between their thoughts and feelings, and helping people understand ways they can better take care of themselves amidst the emotions that inevitably arise.

One major mark of success would be recording a notable decrease in the extent to which the disruption caused by their climate-related feelings (e.g. difficulty enjoying and engaging in normal life) reduces after completing the journal - especially in a cohort of participants like ours during a distressing time such as COP26, where climate-related concerns are at their highest (3).



2. Ray (2020) A field guide to climate anxiety: how to stay sane in a warming world

1. Hickman (2021) 'We need to talk about climate anxiety'

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3. Lawrance et al (2022) The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing: a narrative review of current evidence, and its implications

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Developing coping skills

Did we help people understand and cope with their climate-related feelings?

Prelimary results

Quantitative findings



After completing the journal participants reported many promising results, such as:

- reduced intrusive climate-related anxiety and worry about the future
- reduced felt personal culpability for addressing the crisis
- reduced distress caused by reading climate-related news
- reduced disrupted daily wellbeing from climate-related concerns
- increased ability to control their climate-related feelings enough to enjoy social situations or engage in work/study
- increased ability overcome feelings of guilt for personal inaction (which were inordinate originally)

Reflection

These preliminary results are encouraging for the sample of people trying our journal (people who were already very engaged with the crisis), especially during COP26 which would ordinarily be a very stressful time for climate-concerned individuals. That we were able to give useful coping skills and reduce distress without reducing overall levels of concern demonstrates that concern about the environment need not be accompanied by a decrease in mental wellbeing.



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Quotes and comments



Many participants reported qualitatively that the journal helped them to find peace with their difficult climate-related emotions.

"The journal was very helpful during COP26 as I tried to process what had happened without feeling so angry about it."

"The journal was useful for me during this period [COP 26] as it prompts me to at least come up with a few things that I'm grateful for every day."

"I used to feel quite deflated that my actions were too small to make a difference. But now I think that every little helps, and it makes me feel better about myself and climate change if I'm being proactive about it!"

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Background

2 Supporting meaningful climate action

Did we help people envision a better future and take action towards it? With all the '<u>climate doomism</u>' that pervades social media, people often feel that the crisis is inevitable, that there is nothing they can do to help, and that there's nothing better in the future worth fighting for. The grief caused by these narratives is extremely hard to bare. Restoring a healthy desire for change and hope that change is possible is crucial for personal and planetary wellbeing (1). Before beginning to act in the face of the climate crisis, people need to believe that a better future is possible and that it is worth fighting for (2).

At an individual level, people often need support to build confidence and identify areas they can help to make a meaningful difference in the climate crisis (more than just recycling coffee cups!) The journal also aims to help people understand the unique potential everyone has to help address the climate crisis, beyond the ways people usually talk about that ultimately only reduce the individual's footprint (2).

1. Lawrance et al (2022) The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing: a narrative review of current evidence, and its implications 2. Macey (2012) Active Hope

3. Force of Nature - <u>www.fon.xyz</u>



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2 Supporting meaningful climate action

Did we help people envision a better future and take action towards it?

Prelimary results

Quantitative findings



Again after completing the journal participants reported many promising results, such as:

- **decreased** belief that the crisis is inevitable regardless of human efforts to stop it
- **increased** the belief that their behaviours and actions could make a difference
- **increased** the belief that they were capable to take climate action
- **increased** their excitement to help environmental causes through work or activism efforts

We were not able to test for statistical significance with such a small sample, but the results are promising nonetheless.

Reflection

Many people who care deeply about the climate crisis struggle to believe that the crisis could still be addressed, that a better future is possible, or that they are capable of playing a meaningful role in addressing the crisis. It was encouraging to us that the journal built the participants confidence in their own and humanity's collective ability to address the crisis without minimising the unavoidably systemic nature of the climate crisis.



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Quotes and comments



Participants reported both increased desire to take action and increased confidence doing it.

"I feel more confident doing climate action now. It's shown me there are lots of different types of activism and ways to get involved."

"The journal helped to give some feeling of agency and power, we don't need to just freak out. We do have the power to change things internally [within our lives] and externally [the world around us]"

"One major thing I'll take away from this is that we shouldn't give up hope. It's easy to feel defeated when you see the news, but that doesn't stop you from organising in your local area."

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Want to know more?

For researchers and others wanting to know more about the results shared here and the wider data we collected from our sample group, contact our team at <u>climatecares@imperial.ac.uk</u>



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3 Wider feedback and areas to iterate content

What else did we hear about the journal and how can we improve it?

Wider feedback

Quick stats from our post-survey (16 respondents)



13 people (81%) would recommend the journal to a friend.



13 people (81%) learned more about their values in life from the journal, displaying the benefits of the activities within the journal in addition to emotional wellbeing and climate action.



13 people (81%) grew to appreciate taking time to slow down and focus on self reflection, taking the practices beyond the 4 week journal.



12 people (69%) felt that the journal gave them hope that a better future is possible.



11 people (81%) believed the journal gave them tools to improve their wider emotional wellbeing.



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Wider feedback

iterate content

What else did we hear

about the journal and

how can we improve

and areas to

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it?

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Wider feedback

Quotes and comments

"It was fantastic. I'd genuinely pay money for a journal like this to use full time. It's made me think a lot about how I feel in general, and more specifically to do with climate."

> "I love exploring the intersection of activism and mindfulness two things which might seem like they are each other's opposites."



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"My favourite things were the structure, so having a daily check in/reflection, an activity, and then free-form writing was really comforting and helped development over time."

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3 Wider feedback and areas to iterate content

What else did we hear about the journal and how can we improve it?

Areas to iterate journal content

Tweaks we want to make to the journal's content

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, but there are a **few tweaks we want to make** to the journal based on our preliminary findings.

1. We will change one activity which involved use of the internet, as many participants reported that they liked the "offline nature" of the journal activities. 2. Add more resources and links to organisations working in the climate space 3. Add more specific details of how to get more involved in climate action - recognising that there are numerous barriers to involvement (e.g. financial, cultural, educational).

Since so far we have only been able to do a small pilot study due to limited resources, there are still some things we want to keep and eye on, and review with young co-designers and journal users. For example, we are interested in understanding more about the experiences of participants who didn't report improvements in different metrics (e.g. climate anxiety, climate agency) or who enjoyed the journaling experiences less.



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Where we could go from here, with the right partners.



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Where have the journal activities gone already?

Since developing the journal, many parties have been interested in our work.



We worked on climate-emotion activities for schoolchildren with the Natural History Museum.

We worked on Hold This Space, a digital reflection platform with Common Vision and Force of Nature.



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We've even had our work featured in a BBC podcast episode - but we need resources to take this project further and reach the people we know it could help

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We need support to take this journaling project further and reach people who need help the most.

Many people have asked us if they can buy copies of the journal, but we don't have a supplier who can sell people copies.

Many non-profit organisations have been interested in securing large numbers of copies for use with their members and practitioners, but we don't have the resources to provide these ourselves.

We would love to be able to offer the journal to people from a wide-range of backgrounds, particularly:

- schoolchildren and young people learning about the climate crisis through social media
- climate change professionals thinking about the crisis every day
- mental health professionals encountering climate-related feelings in their professional practice
- people of all ages concerned about the climate themselves, but struggling to cope and/or find meaningful ways to make a difference
- anyone else interested in this climate-related work



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What do we hope to work on next?

We are open to exploring any partnerships that enable us to get the material the journal into more people's hands.

Publishing the journal	Working with philanthropists and other organisations to distribute the journal (e.g. student groups or the NHS)	Embedding the into other clima mental health / education prog
Starting journaling groups or workshops, embedding 'community' within the intervention	Creating accessible resources for emotionally intelligent climate education	Research proje (e.g. using the journ research tool or in intervention evaluat studies)



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journal ate / grammes

Iterating the journal for different audiences

(e.g. people from other countries, frontline communities, climate or mental health professionals, or children)

ects nal as a ation

Other forms of content

(e.g. podcasts, features on meditation apps, exhibitions, digital platforms)

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If you're interested in our work, please get in touch!

If you share our vision for a world where people concerned about the climate crisis are supported both emotionally and in their climate action, we'd love to hear from you.

Reach out to us at climatecares@imperial.ac.uk.



Our team at the COP26 conference in Glasgow.



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Our team

The Climate Cares team is a collaboration between the Grantham Institute of Climate Change, The Institute of Global Health Innovation and the Helix Design Centre at Imperial College London. We are made up of climate, mental health and design professionals and have a international network of advisors and young person's advisory groups in the UK, Caribbean, and the Philippines.



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Further reading

- Cabán-Alemán, S. Clayton, L. Verdeli, and H. Berry (2021) "Global climate change and trauma"
- Clayton, S. (2020) Climate anxiety: psychological responses to climate change
- Hamilton, Jo (2022): "Alchemizing Sorrow Into **Deep Determination**"
- Lawrance, E., R. Thompson, G. Fontana, and N. Jennings (2021) Grantham Institute Briefing paper: The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Hickman, C. (2020) We need to (find a way to) talk about ... Eco-anxiety"
- Macey, J. (2012) Active Hope

- Marks, E., C. Hickman, et al. (2021) Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survev
- environmental crisis: vicarious traumatization and dealing with secondary traumatic stress among environmental researchers Mental Health Finland
- Pihkala, P. (2019A) The cost of bearing witness to the • Pihkala, P. (2019B) Climate anxiety, report for MIELI
- UNICEF (2021) The climate crisis is a child rights crisis • Van Valkengoed, A. and L. Steg (2019) The psychology of climate change adaptation
- Verlie, B (2019) Bearing worlds: learning to live-with climate change



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