

# Watt's Happening? #106

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## THE RISE OF ECO-ANXIETY

*and what you can do about it*



*Eco-anxiety is on the rise. Spending time walking in nature is one of the best ways to heal a troubled mind.*

The American Psychology Association has issued a new report detailing the mental health effects of climate change, calling them “far reaching.” I’ve felt it, this strange all-encompassing eco-anxiety, and I am sure many of you have too.

Let’s address it head on, have a look at it, what causes it, and see what we can do about it on a personal level.

### DOOM AND GLOOM

What causes eco-anxiety? To a large extent, I blame

the mainstream media, who specialize in bad news, catastrophe and hopelessness. There are massive and exciting changes occurring in response to our eco problems, but if ever they are mentioned, get ready for the negative spin. My main reason for writing this column is, in fact, to help fill this massive, glaring vacuum of good environmental news.

The natural human response to this never-ending doom and gloom narrative is a sense of “global helplessness” around issues that are “beyond our control.”

And a sense of extreme isolation. Am I the only one who feels this way? Doesn't anybody else care? How can the world just carry on with business as usual in the face of such massive impending catastrophe? Why am I being forced to go on, day after day, destroying my children's future because there are no options, no incentives, no help? Why aren't things changing, why don't our leaders LEAD?

## ECOLOGICAL GRIEF

The APA report details a rise in post-traumatic stress disorder from dealing with major life-changing weather events like fire, flood and drought.

We are tied to the land more than we think, probably at a cellular level. We lived very, very close to the land for the first half million years of our existence. The natural environment is very much a part of us. When we hurt the land, we too are hurt.

Whether it is the indigenous populations of Labrador watching their traditional way of life disappear as the weather changes, or farmers in drought-stricken Australia, ecological grief and mourning are widespread.

The result? Well, it's way too big for me to do anything about it, so it's best to just ignore it, (or deny that there's a problem in the first place!) and hope for the best.

But that doesn't work too well. The problems only get worse and the sense of anxiety and helplessness will only increase. But there are lots of things we can do instead of sticking our heads in the sand or grasping at the straws of denial.

## JOIN A GROUP, TAKE ACTION

Hopefully you have a few like-minded friends who are OK talking about this with you. Sharing your anxieties can help, but only if a plan of action results. Reinforcing each other's helplessness is not a good idea.

Before the conversation ends, make a conscious effort to discuss what you are going to do about the situation on a personal level, from finally starting to do that recycling at your home to shopping for the most fuel efficient vehicle you can find when its time to replace that old beater.

Joining a group is always a good move, preferably a local one, but supporting any environmental group will help. Personally I spend a lot of time volunteering with Dawson Creek's Peace Energy Renewable Energy Cooperative. I feel every hour is well spent, and I am working with a group of like-minded people, all dedicated to making the world a better place. This really, really helps me feel empowered, positive and not alone.

## ENJOY NATURE

Spending more time in the nature you are worried about will make a huge difference. It can be an evening walk in the park or a weekend excursion to the mountains, but make a habit of getting out there and in it on a regular basis.

Seek out flowing water, whether a little creek or raging river. Watch it, walk by it, sit next to it. It will help you.

Oh, and turn off all your devices (better, leave them behind) and get out there on your two hind legs and walk. You cannot connect with nature from the back of a machine or looking out of a car window. Sorry, not possible.

Walk, look, sit, listen. Heal.

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