

# Eco-Emotion Lending Library Game

## Educator Guide

### Background

This activity explores the connection between climate change and mental health. Climate change has been identified as the dominant threat to modern health. (1) **Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially on their mental health.** Youth are experiencing feelings of helplessness, anxiety, grief, paralysis, and fatalism, as well as an increasing prevalence of psychiatric disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and suicide. (2,3)

Educators play a key role in promoting positive mental health for youth. **A majority of educators feel that the education system is not adequately addressing climate change, but do not feel that they have the knowledge or resources necessary to bring climate education to their classrooms.** (4)

**When discussing climate change, the goal is not to eliminate negative emotions but to manage them.** One of the priority strategies to help manage emotions is to provide spaces for youth to express their emotions, find community, and feel validated.(5) This activity will help you facilitate the sharing and validation of emotions in your classroom, while creating topical connections to curriculum expectations.

This activity is designed for secondary students, grades 9-12, and could be used in health, science, or language classes. The activity itself is expected to take 25-30 minutes, and the additional resources can extend the lesson by as much as is desired. **This kit provides everything needed to run the activity, and includes pre and post activity lesson plans, subject-specific recommended readings, assessment prompts, and mental health resources for afterward.**



Figure 1: Young Canadian Perspectives on Climate Change Related Anxiety (6)

**Lesson Goals**

1. Establish a space to express eco-emotions and create community amongst students
2. Validate eco-emotions and explore the relationship between climate change and mental health
3. Provide support and resources for students needing assistance managing eco-emotions

**Materials**

- 1 storage bin
- 1 educator guide
- 1 bucket
- 1 set of 20 laminated prompts
- 1 oven mitt

**Pre-Activity Lesson**

To begin, the educator must introduce the class to the “[Climate Emotion Wheel](#).” The wheel can be printed and distributed or projected on the board. The class can read over the emotions individually or collectively.

If a more detailed lesson plan is desired, we suggest the Climate Mental Health Network’s [Lesson Plan for Writing and Eco Emotions](#). Before the activity, it would be useful to watch this [trailer](#) and to read Reading A provided in Part One of the lesson plan.

**Climate Emotions Wheel**



Climate Emotions Wheel © 2019 by Anna Kavanagh, Ph.D. All rights reserved. Reproduction is permitted under CC BY-NC-SA. based on research by Paru Pihlakka: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-019-1464-4>

Figure 2: Climate Emotion Wheel by Climate Mental Health Network (7)

## Activity: Burning Questions

The activity “Burning Questions” is a musical-chairs style game with embedded prompts connected to the Climate Emotion Wheel. Students will share their opinion on each prompt by moving or remaining still. Students will have the opportunity to observe shared emotions amongst them and their peers. The expected duration is 25-30 minutes.

### Instructions

1. Arrange chairs in a large circle. The number of chairs must be one fewer than the number of students in the group. Select one student to be removed from the circle to be the *reader*, and have all others sit in the chairs.
2. The *reader* will read aloud one of the prompts from the bucket. All students who agree with the prompt must get up out of their chair, and race to sit down in a new chair. The *reader* must also race to sit in any chair. One student will be left standing, and that student becomes the new *reader*.
  - a. If racing in a circle is inaccessible due to space or mobility, have students raise their hands instead of sitting in a chair. The *reader* can now be selected by taking turns around the circle, instead of by competition.
3. Continue this cycle until all the prompts have been read.
4. When the prompts are completed, invite all students to sit in the circle. Invite the students to ask each other questions about the prompts they just heard. When a student is asking their *burning question*, they will wear the oven mitt. The oven mitt can be passed in a circle to give each student a turn to ask a question or can be passed to students who volunteer to ask a question.

### Post-Activity Discussion

Following the activity, a take-up discussion will be useful. We suggest working through Part 2, 3, and/or 4 of the Climate Mental Health Network’s [Lesson Plan for Writing and Eco Emotions](#). These lesson plans include teacher scripts, recommended readings, and sample discussion questions. The expected durations for Parts 2, 3, and 4 are 20-40 minutes, 12-20 minutes, and 15-30 minutes respectively.

If educators are interested in collecting student work; Part 2 includes reading with response questions, Part 3 includes the option to have students divide into smaller groups and record notes, and Part 4 includes instructions to write a narrative or persuasive essay about the environment and climate change.

## Recommended Readings By Subject

- Health and Physical Education
  - [The Unspoken Complexity of Self Care](#)
  - [Is humanity doomed? Young Canadians share how climate change is affecting their outlook](#)
  - [Exploring Climate Change and Mental Health](#)
  - [Climate Impacts on Health](#)
  - [Climate Change and Indigenous People's Health in Canada](#)
- Science
  - [Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet](#)
  - [Habitat loss, climate change, and emerging conservation challenges in Canada](#)
  - [Six ways climate change is affecting Canada](#)
  - [Climate change: Ontario Nature](#)
  - [Indigenous Knowledges and Climate Change](#)
- English
  - [This is the world being left to us by adults](#)
  - [Climate Literacy: The essential principles of climate science](#)
  - [Climate Change Fiction for Students and Teachers](#)
  - [The Lorax Revisited: A Modern Tale of Environmental Responsibility](#)
  - [First Hand: How Climate Change is Impacting Animals in the Canadian Arctic](#)

## Additional Mental Health Resources

- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [Jack.org](#)
- [Good 2 Talk](#)
- [Strong Minds Strong Kids](#)
- [Climate Mental Health Network](#)

## Curriculum Links

### Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum

Grade Level	Strand Connections by Course
Grade 9	<b>PPL1O:</b> C3.2 [PS, IS]
Grade 10	<b>PPL2O:</b> C1.1 [PS, IS], C2.3 [PS, IS, CT]
Grade 11	<b>PPL3O:</b> C1.4 , C3.4 [PS, IS], C3.5 [PS, IS, CT]
Grade 12	<b>PPL4O:</b> C2.3 [PS, IS, CT], C2.4 [PS], C2.5 [PS, CT]

### Ontario Science Curriculum

Grade Level	Strand Connections by Course
Grade 9	<b>SNC1W:</b> A2.3, A2.4, B1.1, B1.2, B2.6
Grade 10	<b>SNC2P:</b> D1.1, D1.2, D2.7 <b>SNC2D:</b> D1.1, D2.9
Grade 11	<b>SBI 3C:</b> B1.2, E1.2 <b>SBI3U:</b> B1.2, C1.2, E1.2 <b>SVN3M:</b> B1.2, B2.4, B2.5, B3.1, B3.3, B3.4, B3.5, C1.1, C1.2, C2.1, C3.2, C3.5, D1.2, E1.2 <b>SVN 3E:</b> B1.2, C1.1, C.12, C2.1, C2.2, C3.1
Grade 12	<b>SBI4U:</b> E1.2, F1.1

### Ontario English Curriculum

Grade Level	Strand Connections by Course
Grade 9	<b>ENL1W:</b> A3.1, A3.2, A3.3, D1.2, D1.3
Grade 10	<b>ENG 2D:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 <b>ENG 2P:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8. 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5
Grade 11	<b>ENG3U:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 <b>ENG3C:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 <b>ENG3E:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5
Grade 12	<b>ENG4U:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 <b>ENG4C:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 <b>ENG4E:</b> Oral Communication 2.6, Reading and Literature Studies 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 4.2, Media Studies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5

## Assessment

The following prompts can be used to assess student learning. The students could respond to the prompts through 3-5 sentence “exit tickets,” formal written responses, or group discussions.

- Health and Physical Education
  - Describe a personal experience and how it caused or alleviated one of the emotions listed on the Climate Emotion Wheel. Based on your participation in the activity, do you think your peers also experience this eco-emotion?
  - Describe how climate change can play a role in mental illness. Name some strategies to manage eco-emotions and promote mental wellbeing.
  - Describe how climate change could also be connected to physical health. Consider injury prevention, addictions, infectious diseases, and healthy eating.
- Science
  - Reflect on a climate event you have learned about (an extreme weather event, a change in biodiversity, pollution, etc.). Name some of the causes of this event. Describe the eco-emotions that would be expected in the impacted community.
  - Describe a technology that causes or prevents climate change. Describe any advantages or disadvantages this technology has for the mental health of the surrounding community.
  - Reflect on the impact of climate change on local ecosystems. What eco-emotions are relevant to the surrounding community? How might the impact be different on Indigenous communities compared to non-Indigenous communities?
- English
  - Describe an experience of yours and how it caused or alleviated one of the emotions listed on the Climate Emotion Wheel. Based on your participation in the activity, do you think your peers also experience this eco-emotion?
  - Read one of the recommended readings linked above. What eco-emotions are demonstrated? Do you agree or disagree with the message of the piece? Why?
  - Consider a text read in class or a piece of media you have recently viewed. How is a connection or disconnection to the environment demonstrated? What eco-emotions are relevant to this piece?

## References

1. The Lancet Respiratory Medicine. Climate change crisis goes critical. Lancet Respir Med. 2023 Mar 1;11(3):213.
2. Boak A, Elton-Marshall T, Hamilton HA. The well-being of Ontario students: Findings from the 2021 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). [Internet]. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; 2022. Available from: <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdf---osduhs/2021-osduhs-report-pdf.pdf>
3. Abebe N. AMS Sustainability. 2022 [cited 2024 Jan 30]. Exploring Climate Change and Mental Health. Available from: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U63zOtPTPtIQ3vOcvJTgGJCuekaFsX-T/view?usp=embed\\_facebook](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U63zOtPTPtIQ3vOcvJTgGJCuekaFsX-T/view?usp=embed_facebook)
4. Schwartzberg P, Stevens J, Action KS. Canadian's Perspectives on Climate Change Education [Internet]. Leger for Learning for a Sustainable Future; 2022. Available from: <https://lsf-lst.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Canadians-Perspectives-on-Climate-Change-and-Education-2022-s.pdf>
5. Ford BE. Lesson Plan: Writing About Eco/Climate Emotions and Concerns [Internet]. Climate Mental Health Network; Available from: [https://www.climatementalhealth.net/\\_files/ugd/d424e1\\_d5f70c438d8d49cfa85f963ded0e8e4d.pdf](https://www.climatementalhealth.net/_files/ugd/d424e1_d5f70c438d8d49cfa85f963ded0e8e4d.pdf)
6. Law S. Is humanity doomed? Young Canadians share how climate change is affecting their outlook. CBC News [Internet]. 2023 Mar 7 [cited 2024 Mar 18]; Available from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/lakeheaduniversity-climatechange-anxiety-youth-1.6769928>
7. CMHN [Internet]. [cited 2024 Mar 18]. Resources | Climate Mental Health Network. Available from: <https://www.climatementalhealth.net/resources>
8. Galway LP, Field E. Climate emotions and anxiety among young people in Canada: A national survey and call to action. J Clim Change Health. 2023 Jan 1;9:100204.