

# Coping with eco-anxiety

February 24 2021, by David Bradley

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Climate change represents perhaps the biggest challenge facing humanity, therefore education has an important role to play in teaching students about how we might mitigate the problems but also how to cope with what might be termed eco-anxiety.

A team from Canada writing in the *International Journal of Higher Education and Sustainability*, suggests that part of a well-rounded university education must provide students with the tools with which to address the challenges presented by the environmental crisis we all face. Part of this education should show them how to be responsible eco-citizens but also give them the skills to become creative, solution-oriented thinkers. With such people entering adulthood and becoming the innovators and leaders of the future humanity might be able to cope with the acute problems and address the chronic problems facing climate and the environment.

Laura Sims and Marie-Élaine Desmarais of the Université de St. Boniface and Rhéa Rocque of the University of Winnipeg, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, suggest that educators "have a responsibility to create inclusive environmental and sustainability educational approaches that are enabling, emotionally supportive, engaging, and praxis-oriented." Their work focuses on the concept of [eco-anxiety](#) and how students might be taught to cope with such a problem in a positive and pragmatic way.

At the time of writing their paper, humanity was facing another major [challenge](#)—the COVID pandemic caused by a lethal coronavirus that emerged towards the end of 2019. The pandemic is still with us more than a year later. The team adds that the pandemic has taught us many lessons that can equally be applied to [education](#) for sustainability, inclusion, and eco-anxiety. "In living this experience, we have seen people come together, changing their lifestyles, and acting individually for collective benefit," they write. They add that the [pandemic](#) has shown us that "we can stop our destructive, consumptive path, if need be, at very short notice, and re-imagine other possibilities...we are strong enough, together, to face existential challenges."

**More information:** Laura Sims et al. Enabling students to face the

environmental crisis and climate change with resilience: inclusive environmental and sustainability education approaches and strategies for coping with eco-anxiety, *International Journal of Higher Education and Sustainability* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHES.2020.113059](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJHES.2020.113059)

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