



# CAN I PROCEED WITH HOPE IN THE FACE OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

## PREP FOR THE SESSION

### *Overview*

This resource unpacks the issue of **Climate Anxiety** through the lens of **Hope**.

### *At-a-Glance:*

This resource offers a way to engage with climate anxiety through the lens of hope. It draws upon personal feelings and experiences and prompts us to consider both the passive and active dimensions of hope. It presents a key concept in Jewish thought and practice that raises the connection between emotions and actions and asks us to consider the benefits and risks of starting with one versus the other. Learners will have the opportunity to create hope tools and share them with another. It concludes with an opportunity for learners to identify one action they can take in the face of climate anxiety, and to think of ways to bring that action to scale.



### Time Estimate:

40 minutes



### Materials Needed:

- [Hope Tools Compass Handout](#)
- Pens and paper for Make Meaning and Take Action section



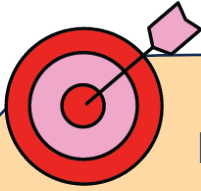
### Best Uses:

- For teens and young adults
- As a full group
- To create a practical tool for personal use



This resource was created as part of M<sup>2</sup>'s Values in Action Environment Fellowship, generously supported by Micah Philanthropies. For a full list of Fellows in the inaugural Fellowship cohort, [click here](#).

# LET'S GET STARTED



## FRAME THE ISSUE

### *Read the following for context and grounding:*

In a world of countless challenges, climate change poses a unique threat. While the degradation caused by the escalating crisis directly affects individuals, communities and nations around the world to differing degrees, the overall existential and emotional impact is one that is felt widely.

67% of people say they experience negative emotions due to climate change. That number rises to 84% of 16 to 25-year-olds being at least moderately worried about climate change, with 59% very or extremely worried; this is the age range who will bear the brunt of the consequences.

Climate anxiety is distress, fear, anger or tension related to the adverse effects of climate change on the planet and those who dwell upon it. This shows up in our daily lives as layers of compounding stress, questions around choices, guilt about actions, and worry for the future.

The anxieties can make us freeze. Or they can mobilize us. The direction we take will depend upon our own negotiation of what feels safe and what feels risky.

Where we find ourselves within this matrix depends on how we view our own capacities towards making change. In the exploration below, we will be given an opportunity think deeply about how the value of hope impacts our responses.

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### *Facilitator prompts the group: [select 1-2 questions if time is limited]*

- How does climate change affect your daily life? Where do you see its impact? Name two specifics.
- Have you ever felt climate anxiety? What do you believe spurred it or caused such emotions to arise? Describe one or more instances.
- When faced with climate anxiety what is your most natural response?

10 min





## EXPLORE THE VALUE

5 min



Exploring the value of hope can offer a path for contending with our climate anxieties. Hope, as an aspiration, is an optimistic state based on an expectation of positive outcomes. While there is a reality on the ground, hope offers a space to imagine the ideal and consider the possibilities of what it would take to get there.

Real change creates real hope, and real hope creates real change. It is a positive feedback loop, but it does not come out of nowhere.

The key question for us to explore is whether hope is something we wait for in order to make change, or does actually making change bring about hope? Where do we start? What are the benefits and risks on both sides?



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### *Facilitator prompts the group:*

- Consider the following statements: (1) Hope brings about change. (2) Change brings about hope.
  - Which one speaks more to you? Why?
- What are the risks of acting on feeling of hope? On the flipside, what are the risks of waiting for hope in order to act?



## ANCHOR IN JEWISH WISDOM

### ***Read for context:***

The connection between actions and feelings - which one leads to the other - is a central theme that comes up in Jewish law, thought and practice. The question of activating hope to make change, or making change to activate hope fits into this framework on a personal level when we think about the threat of climate change.

Often, it is the small step and behavioral changes taken by individuals which ultimately can change realities on the ground. But what drives us to take those steps and make change? Do we need hope in order to do so, or does doing so bring about more hope?

An idea that can help us navigate this tension is reflected in the Medieval Jewish text, *The Sefer HaChinukh* ("Book of Education," Spain, c.1255-1285), which clearly details the 613 commandments of the Torah and explains the reasons behind them.

In his introduction, the anonymous author explains that he wrote the book to "awaken the hearts" of his teenage son and his peers, hoping to foster in them a sense of connection to the commandments.

### **In a key passage of the work, the author writes:**

***Acharei hapeulot nimshachim halevavot* - "after the actions follow the hearts."**

**What this means is that our personalities and our emotions are shaped by the actions we take.**

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### ***Facilitator prompts the group:***

- Why do you think this works? What is it about actions that impact the heart?
- How does this statement influence the way you think about "hope" as a force for change?
- What pulls us in the direction of waiting for our hearts before taking climate action?

10 min





## ACTIVITY

***Read for background:***

### **Creating a Hope Compass:**

The exercise below offers us a way to think about hope in the context of climate change, and to create our own hope tools. By identifying specific actions that have the potential to “make the heart follow” it is a way to explore the question – does hope follow action or does action follow hope?

Consider what it might mean, when thinking about our responses to the climate crisis, instead of looking for hope (passive), to create hope (active). What mobilizes us? What stands in our way?

Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to use the graphic to create your own Hope Compass. The Hope Compass is a way to generate ideas about what makes you feel hopeful.



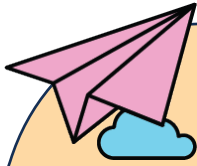
- Follow the paths starting from “Example of hope tools” and move your way clockwise around the compass. Following the prompts, try to come up with at least one “hope tool” to use as you build your own capacities for hope in the context of climate change.

***Once complete, gather in groups of 2-3 and compare your hope tools and the obstacles you face.***

10 min



8 min



## PROMPT ACTION

### ***Read the excerpt below:***

Action is an antidote to despair – and climate action is one way we can directly combat climate anxiety, while also positively contributing to a growing base of solutions to take on concrete global environmental challenges. Actions – no matter how seemingly small - are expressions of hope. And while the scope and complexity of the crisis is massive, no one expects any one person to solve the climate crisis, but each of us can rise as climate activists in our own way.

### **One Action to Scale:**

#### ***Facilitator prompts the group:***

- What is one way you feel that you could act on climate? What positive impact would it yield?
- What would be needed to scale such actions – locally and perhaps even globally?
  - Use blank paper to sketch out what it would look like for you to take one action and scale it to a larger audience.
- Have you heard any stories of success or uplifting happenings in nature or environmental movements? Please share to engender a greater sense of possibility among us all!



## CLOSE WITH INTENTION

In the conversation we just had, we took a personally sensitive issue in today's world – climate anxiety – and explored it through the value of hope. Such an entry point allows for balanced assessment of our own emotional reactions to climate change, and offers ways to integrate actionable practices into our lives as a way of mitigating the anxiety. It concluded with an opportunity to think about how to bring individual actions to scale. We hope that you are now equipped with actionable items and a plan to move from stages of anxiety to action.

***Go around the room and ask everyone who wants to, to respond to the prompt below:***

- Before today's conversation, climate anxiety for me felt like ... now it feels ...

3 min

