

# On the Road to Resilience: Navigating Ecological Grief in Conservation

Future Leaders in Conservation Webinar Series - Part 1

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[https://tucsonaudubon.org/bird\\_profile/rufous-hummingbird/](https://tucsonaudubon.org/bird_profile/rufous-hummingbird/)

# Introduction & Land Acknowledgement



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How do we define eco-anxiety and ecological grief?

How is ecological grief experienced in conservation work?

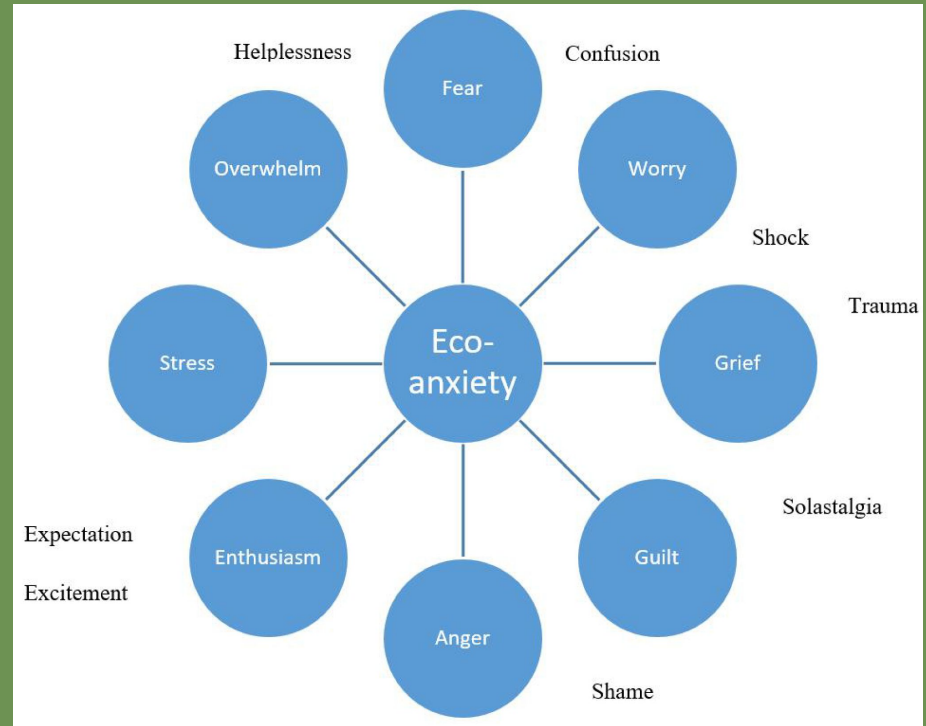
How do we cope with these challenging feelings and remain meaningfully engaged in our work?



Mountain Plover photo by Michael Wunder

# What is eco-anxiety?

“Challenging emotions, experienced to a significant degree, due to environmental issues and the threats they pose...it is an understandable reaction to the magnitude of the environmental problems that surround us.”



# What is ecological grief?

- Emotional responses to ecological loss and destabilization and its impacts
  - Includes grief for ecological loss
  - And grief for personal, social, political losses that ripple out
- Ecological grief arises from acute and incremental loss
- Ecological grief is disenfranchised

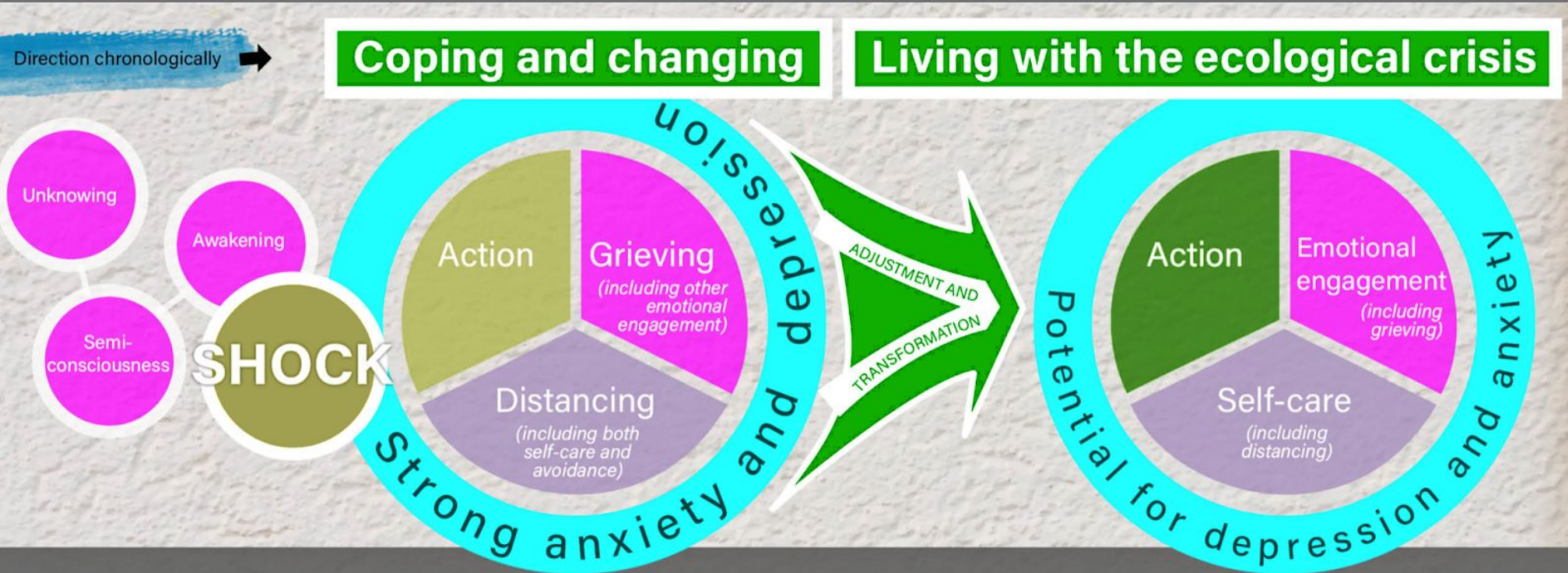


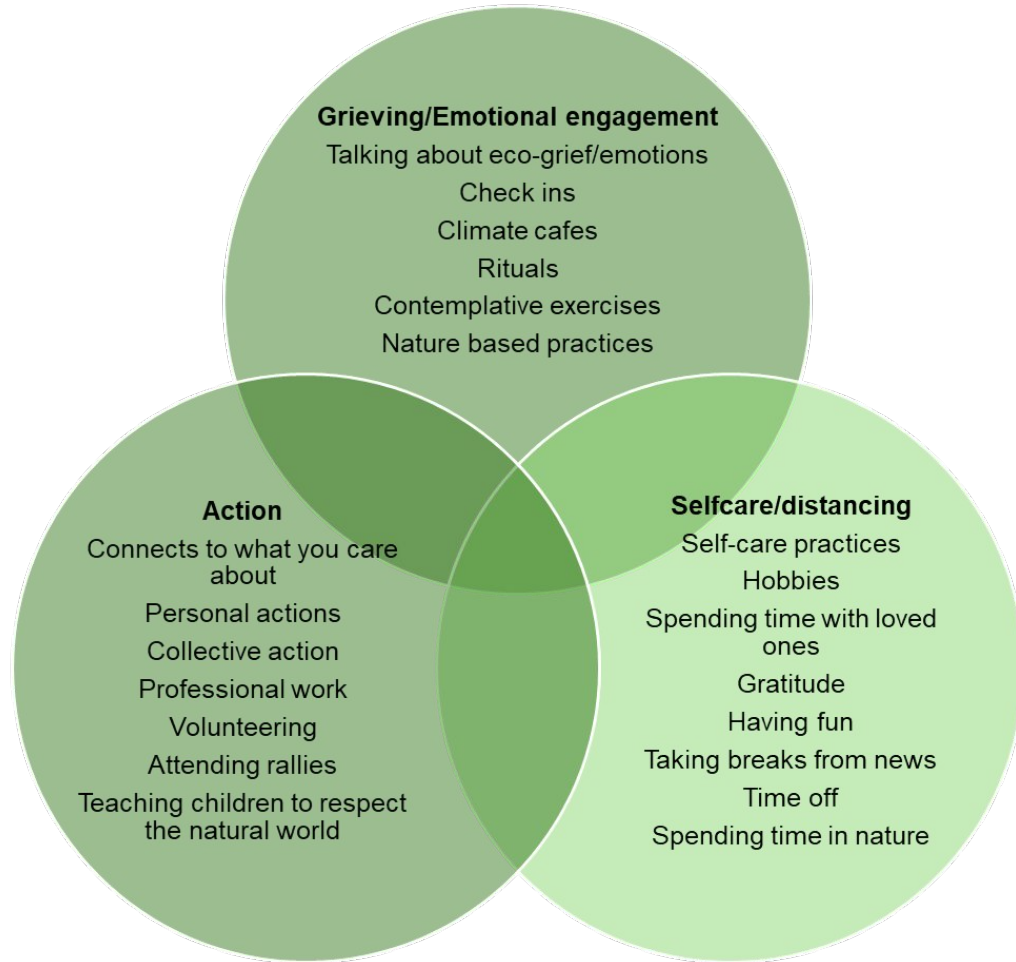
# Experiences of Ecological Grief in Conservation Work

“One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.”

“I was in no way equipped to deal with the potential extinction of my study species... In many places, no birdsong remained... The most difficult time was returning to a nesting site of the glossy black cockatoo which I knew well. I found nest trees burnt to the ground. Their plastic artificial nest hollows, built to encourage breeding, were a melted mess.” (Teixeira, 2020).

# Coping with eco-anxiety and ecological grief







“Active Hope is not wishful thinking.

Active Hope is not waiting to be rescued by some savior.

Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life on whose behalf we  
can act.

We belong to this world.

The web of life is calling us forth at this time.” - Joanna Macy

# Learning to live with our grief

- Connecting with others informally (e.g., coffee with friends), or formally (e.g., peer support groups/workshops).
- Moments of mourning/undertaking a project to honour loss
- Spending time in nature
- Pausing, resting, and recovering; what can feel like ‘doing nothing’ is just as important as action.
- Taking the opportunity for distracting and restorative activities unrelated to conservation or climate change
- Mindfulness, meditation, breathing and guided imagery exercises, physical activity
- Seeking solace in literature and music
- Support from community or professional services

<https://parks-parcs.ca/ecogrief/>

<https://www.biohabitats.com/newsletter/the-role-of-psychology-in-our-work/expert-qa-dr-john-fraser/>

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