

Talking to children about the climate crisis in a safe and empowering way

Mim Saxl,
Low Carbon West Oxford

XR Oxford Art-Science
Extravaganza, 28 September 2019



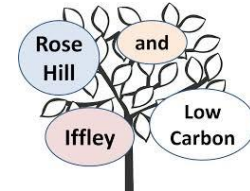
LCWO: Award-winning
community action group
started in 2007 after
West Oxford floods

Me: climate activist &
parent

The moment which 'got'
me

www.lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk

Kids Climate Action Network



**Leadership
in Global
Change**



**Oxford
Nurture
Education
Support &
Training**

plus others...

Kids Climate Action Network



To produce information
for children which is
safe, accurate and
empowering

To support the adults
who are working/living
with them

Avoid duplication &
maximise our impact

www.kidsclimateaction.org

Today...

Share my journey

Jo McAndrews, Ro
Randall, Caroline
Hickman & others

Draw on your
wisdom!

STAGE ONE...?

Fit your own oxygen mask first

Calm & grounded → Able to care & connect; creative; clear-thinking

Kids = Bluetooth speaker

BUT... time pressure!

“so much to do, so little time, we must slow down”

Matilda Leyser, Mothers Who Make

Priority: own resilience & stress regulation

STAGE ONE: YOU!

Fierce protection

Ground yourself

Gather the information you need

Who/what supports you? Seek/build a nourishing **VILLAGE**

STAGE ONE: YOU!

Body scan:	Sensations
	Images
	Feelings
	Thoughts

Horse stance

Hand on stomach & heart

Breath

New neural connections in 12 seconds!

GROUNDING EXERCISE

NAME 3 THINGS:



YOU SEE



YOU SMELL



YOU HEAR



YOU FEEL

BREATHE IN AND OUT

ALONE, THEN IN PAIRS:

Hello

Invitation to share how you are feeling

What support do you have? / Who/what is holding you?

How might you take steps (a first step) to make sure you have the support & information you need?

STAGE 2: RELATING TO OTHERS



Talking to kids:
should we even do it??

Ro Randall's work – 'Should we even be working with children about climate change?'

TALKING TO KIDS IS TEMPTING BECAUSE...

Influence when young

Get to parents – research published in *Nature* & associated press

Power of moral message – more media attention than geographical injustice - **it is tempting to use our psychological reaction to children to create a powerful message**

News articles... school strikes... EMERGENCY... 11 YEARS!

BUT SLOPPY ENGAGEMENT CARRIES RISKS...

Mental distress

Powerlessness

Burden

Coercion vs empowerment

MOTIVATION?

WHY WE NEED TO DO IT, AND DO IT WELL

Lack at school – US research: 65% teachers say it is not related to their subject

All over the place – posters, news, strikes

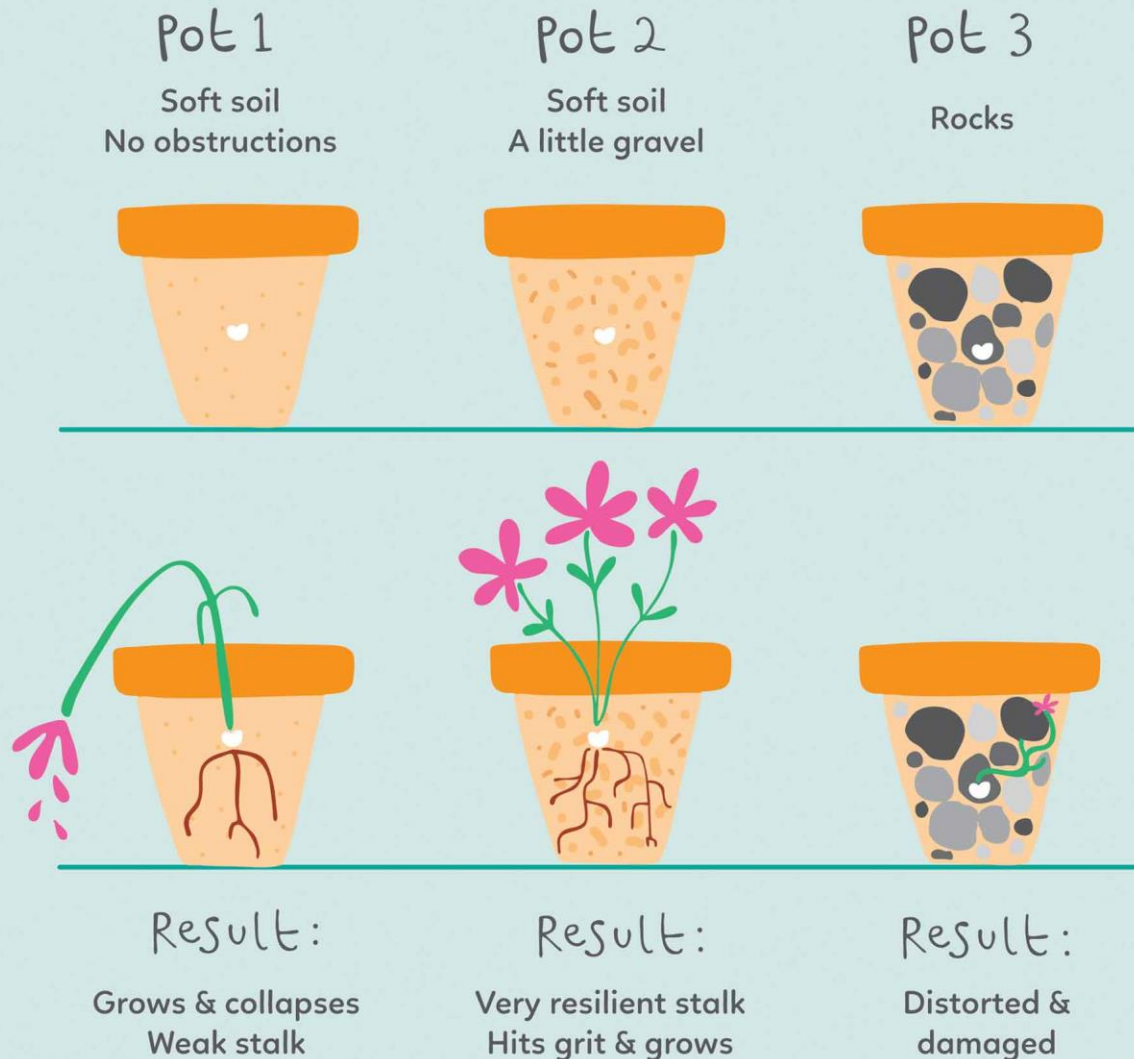
Kiddie whispers can be damaging → **provide accurate information which empowers**

They're asking and we owe them truth

Equip them for their future - Caroline Hickman's analogy...

How to talk to kids about climate change

Imagine the child is a seed in a pot, and what surrounds it is the information you give it.



“We need to prepare our children for what is coming, and we need to do it thoughtfully, wisely, kindly and playfully. That’s our job.”

Caroline Hickman, psychotherapist &
member of the Climate Psychology Alliance

GENERAL IDEAS

Self first

Draw on the village

Age- & child-appropriate

Link to their everyday & to accessible action – *“There is no better salve for anxiety than action”*

Empower, not exploit – motivation in check

Use the power of stories

Consent – extra complex in school context – START WITH QUESTION

NURTURE THAT NATURE CONNECTION

Avoid scary language & images – not just your own, **be mindful of what around**

STORIES

Humans overcoming **great** challenges e.g. ozone hole; Rosa Parks

Focus on inspiring people rather than doom mongering

Indigenous stories

Use books

Make them part of process: ask them to say what a good ending would be, get them to identify favourite characters who overcome the odds

Pre-7

FIERCE PROTECTION - NB parents: your *own* vulnerability

Resilience starts here – “you matter, you’re safe”

Village begins...

NOT climate; NATURE & SENSE OF WONDER

“you won’t protect what you don’t love and you can’t love what you don’t know”

Build relevant skills e.g. empathy, idea of consent

Lead by example & explain e.g. “we put this in the compost so that...”

Start small – look at a worm, rainbow

Have fun – Nick Cope, Formidable Vegetable Sound System...

Questions?

Ideas?

7 - 14

FIERCE PROTECTION

“Adults working on it”

“... but if you want to help” – child-friendly, accessible ideas; what do *they* want to do? → **support, facilitate**

‘Superpower’ – but don’t exploit

Lead by example; everyday life; verbalise

Open conversations with questions – what know already?

Break it down – basics e.g. climate vs weather; their language & world
e.g. plant & breath; carbon bathtub



WALK & CYCLE MORE
And if you need to go far, share your journey.

WHY?
Cars produce a lot of carbon dioxide. We get happier and healthier when we walk and cycle too. If we share the car or use buses and trains, we pollute the world less.

BUY LESS
LOOK AFTER WHAT YOU'VE GOT

WHY?
A lot of modern things are made of oil. For example, all plastic and many of the clothes you wear come from oil products. But one day, the metal and oil will run out. Think before you buy. Do you really need that new thing? It is better to swap or share with your friends than to throw them away and buy new.

TURN DOWN THE HEAT
PUT ON A JUMPER

WHY?
Heating houses produces a lot of carbon dioxide. If we feel cold, we can put on an extra jumper and we can turn off the radiator and lights when we are not using a room, and turn the TV off standby when we are not watching it.

PROTECT NATURE & PLANT MORE TREES

WHY?
Many plants and animals could die because of climate change. We need trees because they suck in carbon dioxide and give out oxygen, which we need to breathe. Planting trees and looking after the animals around us help animals struggling to live. Hedgehogs and swifts are a good thing to look after. It is a good thing to have a lot of fun!

Wondering what one little person - LIKE YOU! - can do about...

CLIMATE CHANGE?

The good news is, grown ups are busy working on it. But, if you want to help out, there are lots of things we can ALL do.

Here are **6 THINGS** We can ALL start trying to do **TODAY**

CLIMATE CHANGE FACT BUSTER

The **climate** is the usual weather in a place. One way to think about the difference between **weather** and **climate** is today, the **weather** tells you what clothes you need to put on in your wardrobe. For example, Scotland has a wet **climate**, so you need some good waterproof gear, but the **weather** on any day can still be sunny, cold or rainy so you might wear a hat and shorts.

The **climate** of the world is changing and the Earth is getting warmer. We call this **global warming** or **climate change**. So how do we know the **climate** is changing?

Arctic Sea Ice

34 2012

rivers of ice) in high are also melting. These the same glacier over 79 of the ice has melted. y, glaciers melted slowly, summer, so rivers flowed as the glaciers disappear, dry up in the summer.

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TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS & TAKE ACTION

WHY? WHY? WHY?

A lot of us feel scared about climate change, as well as sometimes feeling sad, confused, excited... all sorts of feelings; so, talk to your families and friends about it. You can persuade them to make these changes too! You could make notices for the playground, ask your parents to walk you to school or write to your MP.

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TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS & TAKE ACTION

WHY? WHY? WHY?

A lot of us feel scared about climate change, as well as sometimes feeling sad, confused, excited... all sorts of feelings; so, talk to your families and friends about it. Maybe they'll want to make some changes too! You could make notices for the playground, ask your parents to walk you to school or write to your MP.

THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

FIRST tick what you will try THIS WEEK.
NEXT WEEK, check how well you did.



	THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK
ACTION	CAN YOU TRY TO DO THIS?	DID YOU DO THIS?
1. Cycle, walk or take the bus to school, instead of using a car		
2. Try a week without meat or at least a few days!		
3. Borrow something you need and don't have this week, or lend something to someone else so they don't have to buy		
4. Put on a jumper if you feel cold instead of turning up the heating - you could even ask if you could turn your heating down a little at home		
5. Enjoy nature in some way, like going for a walk in a park. Plant a seed, water it and watch it grow		
6. Talk about climate change to your family or friends - or write a letter to someone about it		

Produced by Low Carbon West Oxford, in partnership with Rose Hill & Ilffley Low Carbon and LEAF, with funding from the Low Carbon Hub.



THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

Here are some things you might like to try

FIRST tick what you will try THIS WEEK.
NEXT WEEK, check how well you did.

Don't worry if you didn't! We can't do everything and you can always try again.



	THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK
ACTION	CAN YOU TRY TO DO THIS?	DID YOU MANAGE?
1. Cycle, walk or take the bus to school, instead of using a car		
2. Try a week without meat or at least a few days!		
3. Borrow something you need and don't have this week, or lend something to someone else so they don't have to buy		
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lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk & kidclimateaction.org

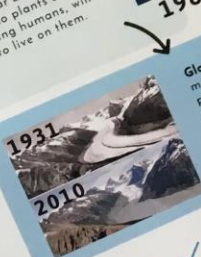
Design by Lisa Madsen



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The **climate** is the usual **weather** in a place. One way to think about the difference between **weather** and **climate**: the **weather** tells you what clothes you need to put on today; the **climate** tells you what kind of clothes you need in your wardrobe. For example, Scotland has a wet **climate**, so you need some good waterproof gear, but the **weather** on any day can still be sunny, cold or rainy so you might wear a hat and shorts.

The **ice caps** at the North and South Poles are melting into the sea. This picture shows the ice at the North Pole in 1984 and 2012. In less than thirty years, a lot of ice melted. Even more has melted since then. As the ice turns slowly into water, the **sea level** slowly rises. It means that some low islands are starting to disappear under the sea. Soon, no plants or animals, including humans, will be able to live on them.



Glaciers (rivers of ice) in high mountains are also melting. These photos show the same **glacier** over 79 years. Most of the ice has melted. Until recently, **glaciers** melted slowly through the summer, so rivers flowed all year. But as the **glaciers** disappear, some rivers will dry up in the summer.

As the Earth gets hotter, more water evaporates from the sea and turns into storm clouds. So in some places there are huge **floods**. In other places, all the water dries up and less rain falls. Areas with too little water could become deserts. People who live in these places have to leave their homes and become **refugees**.



CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE?

It is normal for the Earth's **climate** to get hotter and then cooler - we know it has done this throughout history. But in the last hundred years, temperatures have risen faster than normal. The red line in this graph shows the temperature of the world. It goes up and down, but goes up steeply after 1950. The blue line in the graph shows the levels in the air of a gas called **carbon dioxide**. The more **carbon dioxide** there is, the hotter the world becomes.

About 200 years ago, the first steam engine was invented. People started using steam trains and steamships. At first, it wasn't a big problem, but by the 19th century, it was. The more **carbon dioxide** we put into the air, the hotter the world becomes.

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Greenhouse gases act like the glass roof of a greenhouse. In a greenhouse, the sun shines through the glass and its heat is trapped inside. **Greenhouse gases** work like a greenhouse roof. They trap the heat of the sun round the Earth, so it gets hotter.



Methane is another greenhouse gas. Animals like cows and sheep produce **methane** in their farts and burps. Nowadays, there are more cows, pigs and sheep than ever before because more people eat meat, and these animals are producing a lot of **methane**. Rotting rubbish produces **methane** too.

THE CARBON BATHTUB METAPHOR

The **atmosphere** is a layer of gases around the Earth, where the **methane**, **carbon dioxide** and other **greenhouse gases** collect and cause the **Greenhouse effect** and climate change. Some people compare our Earth and its atmosphere to the water in a big bathtub. They call it the 'carbon bathtub'.



Have you ever run a bath so that it has got too full and overflowed onto the bathroom floor? How naughty! This usually happens with the plug in the plug hole, but you can also do it without the plug in, if you run the tap too fast enough. Now imagine that the bath is our Earth and its **atmosphere**. The water coming out of the tap is like the **carbon dioxide** we make by doing things like burning **fossil fuels** and cutting down **trees**. The water is coming out of the tap too fast! The **plughole** is like the **trees** and **oceans**. They naturally take in **carbon dioxide**. The trouble is that they can't cope with all the **greenhouse gases** that we are putting into the **atmosphere**. The water is going out too slowly. So the bathtub is overflowing.

Questions?

Ideas?

14+

FIERCE PROTECTION – look for anxiety; nurture connection; teach self care

VILLAGE!

Facilitate, empower, support, inform – **help them find their contribution and help them get the information they need to take action safely**

Qs to help them develop critical thinking e.g. media

Beware of burden – teens more able to conceptualise e.g. human extinction than younger children

Playfulness

Questions?

Ideas?

In small groups:

Challenges & scenarios

What challenging? E.g. nuances; qs from little ones

How to prepare?

Ideas / avoid...

How connect to everyday & empower?

Family-friendly activism

Don't leave anyone behind - not everyone can/wants to strike

Closing 'disclaimer'

Ok to get it wrong

Google = your friend

'Parenting' as activism

Remember the village

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF – show them what it means – **that in itself is a radical act**

Close

Help us get KidsCAN materials out there – lesson plan, assembly, pamphlets and more...; written version of talk ‘Rules of Engagement’; overview to every school

2 events for teachers & educators coming up

Ideas/resources always very welcome

Add your email for slides and/or to join LCWO newsletter

Thank you for listening!

Teaching, geography and the climate emergency

NOV

11

Mon



TEACHING, GEOGRAPHY & THE CLIMATE

5:00 pm

MARTIN EVANS, Professor of Geomorphology,
University of Manchester

MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 5pm

Lecture Theatre, Oxford University
Centre for the Environment,
South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3QY

enquiries@eci.ox.ac.uk

Prof. Martin Evans: Chair of the A Level Content Advisory Board
Geography panel 2014–2015 & Chair of the Conference of
Heads of Geography in Higher Education 2016–present

No parking, fully accessible, free, public welcome.

📍 LECTURE THEATRE

Primary & EY teacher training with Jo McAndrews: Supporting children in the face of ecological crisis

NOV

12

Tue

🎫 Tickets

9:30 am



📍 FLO'S - THE PLACE IN THE PARK

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