

INTRODUCTION

We know that the climate crisis is the biggest collective threat we face in the 21st century. In this year alone, we have witnessed a range of climate disasters and extreme weather events, such as the Siberian heat wave, the horrendous floods in Bangladesh, and the Australian, Amazonian and Californian bush fires.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also exposed the pre-existing inequalities in our societies. It has highlighted how the burdens of a crisis fall most heavily on marginalised, low-income groups. The climate crisis is and will be the same- the most brutal impacts will affect people in low-income, marginalised communities especially in the Global South (the so-called “developing nations”).

We are only living through the early days of the climate crisis. Things are going to get much, much worse in the future. If thoughts of the future keep you up at night, we want to assure you that you’re not the only one who is scared, anxious and overwhelmed. Your feelings are normal, moral and shared.

We have created this handbook as a resource for you to take action on these feelings and fears. It covers three areas. Firstly, the emotional side of climate grief. Secondly, accessibly explained facts and resources on climate change (hopefully with more sarcasm and humour than your average guide). Finally, and crucially, we talk about steps you can take towards climate activism. If you’re struggling to process these emotions, and don’t know where to begin in this panic, we’re hoping that this handbook will be a good start.

WHY IS THIS GUIDE SPECIAL?

What’s often missing in the climate conversation is the emotional aspect of confronting the climate crisis. As students, we are taught how to research facts and collect robust data to support our arguments. It is rare - too rare - for the conversation to steer towards climate emotions - the fear, anxieties and distress we experience while thinking about our future, or how rapidly the world is changing. While science and politics has exploded in mainstream climate conversations, the emotions underlying our reaction to the crisis have been left unexamined, or deemed unimportant. Climate emotions are often difficult to process and communicate. After all, it is much easier to look away from the abyss of climate panic and carry on with our daily lives.

This has a cost. When we ignore our difficult emotions they don’t just vanish. They lurk, they chip away at our sense of wellbeing, of safety. They undermine our morale and weaken our enthusiasm to work together, to work hard for a just, equitable future. That’s why this handbook talks about emotions before it talks about polar bears and molecules of carbon dioxide.

Because the writers and readers of this handbook are mostly students at the University of Manchester, we cover a list of societies and networks at university level. Beyond that, we look at what the University and the Manchester City Council are or aren’t doing about climate change, and what they could do if they were pressured by you and your friends.

Although international and national climate news is overwhelming, we also cover brief facts on climate science and international and national (UK) policy. The goal is to explain science and policy in a simple, accessible manner without all the jargon (and where we have used specialised language, we’ve included longer definitions in our glossary on page 52). But as we mentioned earlier, these topics are discussed only after we explore the emotional dimension of climate change. That’s our priority.

WHO ARE WE?

I'm a musician, music researcher and Master's student at the University of Manchester studying Ethnomusicology (that's basically the anthropology of Music). You might think that this has little to do with climate activism, and you'd be right- I would consider myself much more of a concerned citizen than an expert. I'm just an individual who's very frightened about climate change who's trying to do what they can to help at a local level!



MARION SMITH



POOJA KISHINANI

I'm a final year Politics, Philosophy and Economics student at the University of Manchester. As an aspiring policy maker, I'm interested in understanding the role of justice and equity in designing climate policy. Like Marion, I'm alarmed about climate change too, and this handbook is an attempt to channel my negative emotions into something constructive that benefits the wider student community.

We are also members of the organisation [Climate Emergency Manchester](#), a local group of volunteers trying to get better local policies, and better action on climate change in terms of energy, transport, food, democracy, among other areas. We're witnessing the positive effects of climate activism first-hand, and we wholeheartedly believe in making this movement as diverse and accessible to as many people as possible.

As hard as it may be to believe, we as authors of this handbook are only human- we make mistakes and fail a lot of the time! We certainly do not have all the answers (pro-tip: run away from anyone who claims to know it all!). We struggle to make sense of the mess in front of us: government inaction, big corporations infiltrating every aspect of our lives, mindless consumerism, etc. This handbook tries to bring together resources for students like us who are keen about climate action but may not know how to deal with setbacks along the way.

Our hope is that this handbook encourages you to examine your own emotional response to the climate crisis. We hope that it motivates you to start conversations around climate grief, and raise the topic with friends and family who may be unfamiliar with the concept. The resources may be useful for you to figure out how you can maintain morale, and persist even in the face of bureaucratic resistance. It contains practical advice for you to examine your own skills, and your groups' skills as well. After all, only when we are aware of our limitations can we know how we can improve.

No handbook can be exhaustive, and this handbook can never truly be "complete". There will always be more ideas, suggestions, comments, questions and improvements. That's why we strongly encourage you to get in touch with us at studenthandbook@climateemergencymanchester.net. Share your thoughts with us - let us know your thoughts on the handbook, and if we've missed something important (which we're sure we have somewhere!).

We hope that you find this handbook helpful.