

## Resources for Managing Eco-Grief

As a professional environmentalist and activist, I've spent my entire life open to the pain of knowing too much about what we're losing. I'm not alone. So many readers, colleagues, and friends have expressed similar eco-grief. Those of us who are a bit older miss the verdant, wild places of our youth that no longer exist. Meanwhile in younger people, climate anxiety and grief is skyrocketing. I suspect that nearly everyone who loves nature and values the beauty and richness of wild species and places carries some level of grief. We are the generations who understand what's happening but haven't yet been able to convince enough of our fellow humans to change course.

Here are some strategies for maintaining peace and hope in an ecologically damaged world:

Acknowledge the grief, anger, and depression. Some knowledge warrants depression. If you know how much we're losing, how many irreplaceable places are being destroyed, if you know how many animals are suffering, and humans as a result, and you are not emotionally and psychologically upset, something is wrong with you. You hurt because you care. You grieve because you love. The reason for the depression is that you know life is beautiful and sacred, and you are recognizing the destruction of the sacred. You feel grief, depression, anxiety from what is happening not because you're broken, but because you are human and longing for our species to do better. As Krishnamurti noted, *"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."* Rumi advised, *"These pains you feel are messengers. Listen to them."*

Appreciate the glorious and abundant beauty that still remains. This planet is still magnificent and glorious species and wild places still exist. Even the butterfly on a small tree in the grocery store parking lot is worthy of notice and appreciation.

Exercise your agency, take action wherever you can to protect the beauty that still remains and restore beauty that has been lost. Even if you may not know how to solve a gnarly problem, taking action, with heart-centered intention helps ease the grief and depression. We act, and if it proves to be insufficient, we reassess and try something else. It's key to act not out of anger and fear, but out of love and a sense of honoring the sacred. There is much that can be saved, and restored, and it is absolutely worth fighting for.

Exercise agency over your own mind. Meditation, mindfulness, unplugging and getting out into wild places is medicine.

Gather with like-minded people. I'm a firm believer in getting out of our media silos and having conversations with those who hold opposing opinions. However, when we are facing something as serious and heavy as the destruction of our living world, and the

future of our children, it's not worthwhile or healthy to spend time with people who refuse to believe science or the evidence right before their eyes.

Develop joy muscles. Joy is more than a momentary flash of happiness. Joy is the ability to demonstrate "hallelujah anyway", to see beauty and goodness beyond the darkness. Joy is the ability to stay open-hearted and appreciative. Joy can coexist with grief because joy understands that the depth of grief reflects the depth of love.

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Remember the awesome, regenerative power of this magnificent Earth. Nature is incredibly, heroically resilient. There are so many examples of healing and restoration taking place at this very moment. Rhinos are once again roaming Uganda for the first time in over 40 years. Coho salmon runs in parts of California are up tenfold. Nations of the world have come together to place 30% of the world's oceans into protected marine reserves. Earth can heal. Humanity can learn and evolve.