



Strengthening climate resilience



14 Strategies for dealing emotionally with the climate crisis

Resilience or mental resilience is the ability to cope with crises and to use them as an opportunity for development by drawing on [...] resources.

- Wikipedia

The following strategies have already helped many committed people to grow personally from the climate crisis. Simply reading through them will probably have little effect:

Therefore, take the time to write down your personal answers.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF FEELINGS

- o Understanding feelings: Often it is important not to pathologize feelings. On the contrary: not having feelings or suppressing feelings would be unhealthy.
 - o Difficult feelings are a prerequisite for the motivation to change something.
 - o Feelings are the precondition for being human.
 - o The prerequisite for emotional acceptance is to be able to recognise and name the feelings and to feel competent enough in dealing with them - not to be too afraid of them.
- ⇒ **Can I recognize fear and other feelings as a meaningful response to the crisis?**

2. PROCESSING OF FEELINGS

- o Processing of e.g. anger, fear, sadness, helplessness, powerlessness and despair in the case of extinction of species, forest fires, animal suffering, natural disasters, environmental destruction, ...
 - o The processing of feelings is healthy and important.
 - o This is a cultivable skill (e.g. through mindfulness exercises).
- ⇒ **What are my feelings about the climate crisis and how do I deal with them?**

3. ENGAGEMENT

- o Engagement helps against helplessness & connects with like-minded people.
- o Engagement enables the experience of empowerment.
- o Commitment creates meaning through a value-oriented life.
- ⇒ **What exactly do I want to do? How do I want to get involved for a better future?**

4. FRIENDSHIPS

- o Do not process the climate crisis alone! Friendship (which also comes about through commitment) helps people to feel less alone and powerless and to feel connected and supported.
- ⇒ **With whom do I feel connected? With whom can I talk about how I feel about my commitment and the climate crisis? When?**

5. CRISES AS OPPORTUNITIES

- o Crises as an opportunity for personal development: to become the best version of oneself. As a chance to lead a happier, because value-oriented life.
- o Example: Crisis as motivation to spend more time in community instead of consumption.
- ⇒ **What do I want to learn, how can I grow (beyond myself) in the crisis?**

6. MEANING & VALUES

- o Lead a meaningful, value-oriented, ethical life.
- o E.g. be a role model, do less work, spend your time wisely or make more donations.
- ⇒ **What values do I want to live by? What meaning do I want to give to my life?**

7. GRATITUDE

- o Thankfulness for what you have, instead of worries about what might go wrong and instead of a one-sided negative focus.
- ⇒ **What am I thankful for now, given the climate crisis?**

8. SELF-CARE

- o What do I do to compensate and switch off? What does sustainable commitment look like to me? How many days off per month do I need to regenerate? How much sport, exercise, appointments, hobbies, ... would I like to include in my everyday life?
- o See also the *10 pillars of self-care** for stress management & burnout prevention and the *19 tips for healthy sleep**.
- ⇒ **How do I want to take good care of myself so that I don't burn out?**

9. HEALTHY ABILITY TO DISTANCE ONESELF

- o not dealing *exclusively* and *permanently* with negative things is part of self-care.
- o Example: Do not read (climate) news every day. The dose makes the poison.
- o The right measure is an art, otherwise it tips over into avoidance and repression.
- ⇒ **What do I want to do less/more in the future to set myself apart appropriately?**

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10. HEALTHY MODESTY / HEALTHY ACCEPTANCE OF REALITY

- o The most famous self-help motto in the world (Serenity Prayer) is:
May I have the courage to change the things I can change,
the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.
 - o You can only do your best and make sure that even as a small cog in a larger structure you at least turn in the right direction.
 - o Healthy humility and acceptance of one's own limits. Attitude of a healthy "not knowing" - e.g. not knowing what is best for everyone or how to achieve it.
 - o You cannot save the world alone. To complain about this would be denial of reality, self-torture or self-pity. If everything went the way I would like it to, that would be called dictatorship.
- ⇒ **Do I want to accept (in addition to my commitment) that my influence on the world has limits and that not everything always goes as I see fit?**

11. MINDFULNESS (INSTEAD OF CATASTROPHISING)

- o Mindfulness helps not to lose yourself in the head and get into the heart.
 - o Mindfulness is a wisdom competence and can be specifically cultivated.*
 - o Learning to distinguish brooding and worries from conscious planning:
 - o "Is what I am thinking right now actually helpful?", "Don't believe everything you think".
 - o Competently deal with the feelings behind the thoughtful brooding & worrying: "Allow feelings, let thoughts flow". This helps not to get into the head cinema (catastrophising) and to have more energy for the here & now.
- ⇒ **How do I cultivate mindfulness so that I lose myself less in worry & brooding & take good care of my feelings?**

12. HOPE INSTEAD OF HOPELESSNESS

- o It serves no one if you burn out or drown in despair.
 - o Some forms of hope are appropriate: For example, that the social movement for climate justice grows, that the balance of power changes, that there can be positive surprises. The danger is to cling to hope out of fear, so that hope becomes avoidance behaviour and we cannot develop our full strength (see following point).
- ⇒ **What is a reasonable hope that gives me strength?**

13. HOPE-FREE INSTEAD OF FALSE HOPE (TRUST, COURAGE & LOVE)

- o Trust and courage instead of hope or hopelessness.
 - o In the light of the scientific evidence, it seems too late for certain forms of hope. The alternative is to promote confidence in order to deal with uncertainty in a more relaxed way.
 - o Accepting that things not only always get better, but that deterioration is possible: "We need courage not hope".
 - o Being hope-free instead of hopeless: radical acceptance without attachment can release fear and release energy for wholehearted commitment. Commitment with dedication and acceptance of possible consequences instead of desperately fighting.
 - o The path to acceptance usually involves feeling intense feelings that one would prefer to avoid,
- ⇒ **What can I do concretely to develop more confidence and thus courage?**

14. SELF ACCEPTANCE INSTEAD OF SELF CRITICISM (=BAD CONSCIENCE & GUILT)

- o Cultivating self-compassion instead of self-pity: being a good friend to yourself instead of criticising what you should have done better. (Should have, should have, ...)
 - o Disempower the inner critic and inner driver and recognise them as old, automatic, unhelpful patterns.
 - o See, for example, guided meditations* on self-compassion.
- ⇒ **What would a wise, good friend tell me if I suffered from the climate crisis?**

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