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Media Release – For Immediate Distribution

Climate change and potential action plans are currently in the news, and many young people (and adults) are feeling inspired and motivated towards positive change. However, a growing number of children/adolescents are exhibiting “eco-anxiety” and experiencing significant levels of distress, hopelessness, and helplessness. A 2017 report from the American Psychological Association titled “Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications and Guidance (<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf>) highlights many of these newly emerging concerns

What is “eco-anxiety”?

- Relatively new cluster of symptoms in which the person experiences chronic, severe fear of environmental destruction/disaster.
- No official clinical definition yet - solastalgia is the distress changed by environmental change
- Still needs much more research, but small studies emerging – one US study (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00958964.2011.602131>) found that 82% of children ages 10-12 in the study expressed strong feelings of fear, sadness and anger about environmental problems, and the majority shared apocalyptic pessimism about the future of the planet.
- May be fears of immediate climate-related issues such as floods, hurricanes, wildfires etc.
- May be longer term fear of impending global disaster, may question what future world will look like, may express futility/hopelessness
- Feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability related to climate change

How to talk to kids/teens about it?

- Ask them what they already know about climate change
- Explore their feelings of empowerment vs helplessness to make a difference
- Listen to and validate their fears. Don't dismiss or downplay them, or they may misinterpret your protecting them as apathy or inaction
- Help them to identify the positive things people are doing to make things better
- Make sure you understand what is happening yourself – make it a learning process together

What can you do to help?

- Avoid watching excessive media reporting of extreme weather events/natural disasters
- Empower your family – work together to donate to an environmental cause, participate in tree planting activities, plant a garden, make small household changes using less electricity, recycling more, using reusable bags etc.
- Spend time outdoors in nature (which is helpful in treating all forms of anxiety/depression)

Media interviews with a Psychologist on this (or other topics), can be arranged by contacting Dr. Janine Hubbard at 682-0235 or janine@janinehubbard.com