

Climate Café



The aim of a Climate Café is to offer a safe, supportive, and inclusive space for community members to discuss feelings and thoughts around climate change. Climate Cafés can help decrease the climate-related anxiety and isolation people might experience, and they also offer space for people to share strategies for resilience and hopefulness.

This one-off program is designed for libraries of any size, including those with minimal staff and programming budgets, and can easily be adapted into an ongoing program.

Considerations

- A minimal budget for this program is required to cover facilitator's hours spent setting up and running program (approximately 2–3 hours).
- If your budget allows, offer light refreshments/snacks to participants for a more welcoming, comfortable experience.
- You might consider holding more than one Café if you discover that timing is an accessibility issue for some community members.
- Ideally, the Café will be held in a separate program room for participants' privacy and comfort. If this is not possible at your library, use the most quiet and private area available. You might also consider holding the Café in an outdoor space.
- If possible, create a reading list of resources that address climate anxiety (items from your collection, podcasts, documentaries, etc.) to offer to participants.
- If you have a larger budget, consider partnering with or hosting a facilitator from a local environmental organization.
- It is a great idea to pre-build your audience. Include invites at the end of existing programs at your library; invite local community groups (that do not necessarily need to have any environmental aspect to them); and go to Community Centres/Seniors homes/local hubs to make staff aware of your Café for their patrons. A personal invitation can often go a long way!

Preparing for the Café

TWO TO THREE MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Decide on a date and time for program.
- Begin preparing marketing materials (poster/flyer, handout, social media post, and/or online listing on your library's events page).
- Organize staffing – this program requires only one facilitator.

ONE TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- Facilitator to prepare discussion questions, and/or consider the suggested questions included below. You may not need to use any or all of them, but they are useful to have in your back pocket to prompt dialogue.
- Facilitator may find it useful to review some or all of the materials listed at the end of this document.



Suggested format (90 min)

INTRODUCTIONS (5–10 MIN)

Introduce yourself and the goals of the Café. Frame the discussion as a space for participants to share their concerns, worries, and experiences of the climate crisis, as well as an opportunity to share strategies for finding resilience and hopefulness. You might also mention that the discussion is not intended to be instructional or pushing people in any one direction, but rather to hear one another out.

You may also remind participants to use respectful language, to avoid interrupting when other are sharing, and that sharing is entirely voluntary.

ICEBREAKER (5–10 MIN)

Climate change and our anxieties around it are difficult topics to discuss, especially with strangers. Icebreakers can help participants get to know each other, and can be done either as one big group or in smaller breakout groups. In “Addressing and Coping with Climate Grief” Judy Wu offers many useful icebreaker question examples, such as:

Introduce yourself and tell us what brought you to this Café?

What is one thing you love about being alive on this Earth?

Talk about your favourite memory of being in nature.

CONVERSATION – PART 1 (25 MIN)

OPTION A

Conversation starter questions

- Facilitator can prompt dialogue with questions like:
- What concerns/frustrates/worries you about the climate future?
- What kinds of feelings have you been experiencing lately because of climate change?
- What helps you feel positive or hopeful about the future?
- People might not be comfortable sharing their personal feelings with strangers right away. One option is to offer participants paper and pencils to write for 10 minutes about one or two of these prompts and then come back together to discuss what they've written.

OPTION B

Show a short video, documentary (or excerpt)

- The NFB gives public libraries the opportunity to offer screenings of select recent films for free, such as *Losing Blue* (2023) and *The Magnitude of All Things* (2020). More information can be found at <https://events.nfb.ca/program/nfb-libraries>
- If your library already subscribes to Kanopy, the platform provides Public Performance Rights for many films, including *Oil, Water & Climate Resistance* (2023) and *The Ants and the Grasshopper* (2021).

OPTION C

Start with a podcast (or excerpt)

- Podcasts like *2050: Degrees of Change* and *What on Earth* (both from CBC), or *TED Climate* provide current, short and digestible episodes or segments that you could play to help get the conversation started.

BREAK (10 MIN)

- Offer a break about mid-way through (but avoid halting conversation to do so).
- Pose a question for participants to think about during the break, either from the suggestions in Option A or one that flows organically from the conversation.

CONVERSATION – PART 2 (25 MIN)

- Participants have now had a chance to think about the question(s) and comments raised before the break. If the conversation doesn't easily resume when you restate the question, ask for other thoughts or concerns.
- You may want to pose another question (one you haven't used from option A, for example) to propel the discussion.

CLOSING (10 MIN)

- Check-in with participants about questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions for how the session might be improved.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

ALA. *Leading Conversations in Small and Rural Libraries: Facilitation Guide*.

[Climatechange.cafe.org](https://climatechange.cafe.org)

Climate Therapy Alliance. (2019). *Emotional Resilience Toolkit for Climate Work*.

Wu, Judy. (2021). *Addressing and Coping with Climate Grief: A Toolkit for Group and Individual Use*.

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