

WHY ACT NOW?

A high school philosophy session designed by Michelle Sowe, with material by Grace Lockrobin (Thinking Space UK) and Green Schools Ireland.

Resources needed

- Keynote slideshow with assumed knowledge
- Video of Greta Thunberg's TED talk (abridged)
- Hope vs. despair swing-o-meters
- For each small group, one set of 8 cards for the 'Hopeful or despairing?' activity
- For each small group, one set of 'Why Act Now?' cards

Assumed knowledge

See Keynote slideshow:

'Business as usual' places humanity at existential risk. At the current rate of emissions we are heading for a catastrophic 3 – 5 degree rise in global temperatures.

Dangerous feedback loops are already in operation, e.g.:

- ocean acidification
- die-back of forests
- thawing of Arctic permafrost
- melting of polar ice sheets

The following extreme events have already been recorded:

- heat waves
- wildfires
- typhoons
- water scarcity
- droughts
- desertification
- food scarcity
- coral bleaching
- sea level rise
- inundation of homes

Going beyond tipping points will cause irreversible chain reactions that will push climate change beyond human control. Hundreds of thousands (perhaps 5 million) people die every year from the impacts of climate change. By 2050 there will be 200 million (perhaps a billion) climate refugees

Threats to human security and social equality: Climate-related conflict and mass migration will disproportionately affect the world's most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations.

By 2030, Australia will be responsible for 17% of global carbon emissions if we continue 'business as usual'.

Staying within the global carbon budget gives us a 67% chance of avoiding a dangerous temperature rise of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

At the current rate of emissions, we have less than 6.5 years left before we exhaust our global carbon budget under a 1.5 degrees C warming scenario.

Introduction

Today we're going to be thinking about the climate emergency.

> **PLAY VIDEO:** Abridged video of Greta Thunberg's TED talk (5 min)

Part 1: Hope or despair?

This small group activity is designed by Grace Lockrobin

Hold up a 'hope vs. despair' swing-o-meter.

When you consider the future in light of the climate and ecological crisis, where would you place yourself (i.e. where would you place your emotional response) between hope and despair? (pair talk)
(2 min)

I've got some cards here with thoughts for you to consider in small groups. In each case, I'd like you to discuss:

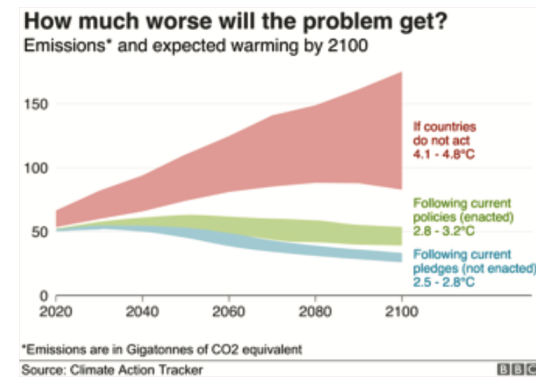
Why does this make you more or less hopeful or despairing?

Form small groups. Hand out sets of eight cards including the following stimuli:

Greta Thunberg (climate activist): 'By stopping flying you not only reduce your own carbon footprint but also that sends a signal to other people around you that the climate crisis is a real thing.'

School Strikes Placard: 'If you don't act like adults, we will'

Climate Action Tracker:



Carl Sagan (astrobiologist): 'Extinction is the rule, survival is the exception'

Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany): 'We must now agree on a binding review mechanism under international law, so that this century can credibly be called a century of decarbonisation.'

David Attenborough (science communicator): 'I think there is a stronger movement in this country and indeed worldwide - a stronger recognition of how important the natural world is than there has ever been in my lifetime certainly.'

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (American politician and activist): "Hope is not something that you have. Hope is something that you create, with your actions."

Ban Ki-moon, Former Secretary-General of the UN: 'Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security, and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.'

Part 2: Hope or despair? (Whole group discussion)

Display Greta Thunberg image and quote:

'I don't want your hope. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I do. Every day. And I want you to act. I want you to behave like our house is on fire. Because it is.'

Whole group discussion: (15 min)

Should we feel hopeful about the future?

Part 3: Why act now? (Green Schools Ireland activity)

I think we can agree: we need to take immediate and radical action on the climate and ecological crisis. But why, exactly? There could be many reasons. Which reasons do you find most compelling?

I'd like you to work with your group to organise these reasons for climate action into a column in priority order, with the most persuasive reason at the top, and the least persuasive at the bottom.

Hand out a sets of 'Why Act Now?' cards to each of six groups (approx 5 participants per group)

Small group deliberation (25 mins)

Report back & reflections (10 – 15 mins)