



# Eco Anxiety to Eco-Action Educator Guide

## DEAR EDUCATOR,

Eco-anxiety is a relatively new term that you may have heard before. It sounds serious and even a little scary. While eco-anxiety is not an official diagnosable disorder, it is still very real. But what is it exactly? Eco-anxiety includes feelings of worry, fear, and even despair that someone experiences as a result of their exposure to the realities of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental problems.

We know that eco-anxiety impacts people of all ages—including myself and many of our Earth Rangers members who share their thoughts, feelings, and stories with us every day. And the reality is, eco-anxiety is a totally rational response to the real environmental challenges our kids see around them.

My advice to you is simple: do not feel afraid or intimidated by students' concerns. They are normal, they are reasonable, and you may indeed share them. The question is: what do we do about it? Well, I have good news: research conducted by Earth Rangers, Ipsos Canada, and leading climate change and mental health experts provides us all with tangible, effective, and fun ways to turn eco-anxiety into eco-action.

That is what this guide is all about.

Tovah Barocas  
President of Earth Rangers



## A Little Bit About the Research

In partnership with Ipsos Canada and leading experts, Earth Rangers conducted a scan of the global literature on eco-anxiety in children, as well as a survey in 2020 and again in 2023, to capture attitudes and actions around environmental issues by children (age 6-11) and their parents in Canada and the United States. Participants included Earth Rangers members, as well as non-members. Comparing the groups' results, we developed an Eco-Anxiety Index and an Eco-Action Index to better understand the impacts of Earth Rangers Programs and how we can take those insights and apply them to environmental education in the classroom.

### OUR 3 KEY FINDINGS

1. Some level of concern for the environment can actually be useful and healthy when it leads to environmental action.
2. Compared to other children, Earth Rangers members feel more concerned about the environment AND more empowered to take action.
3. Empowering kids means empowering the whole family.

To see the full data and analysis, download the white paper [Anxious for Action: Channeling Children's Environmental Concerns Into Empowerment](#) and [2023 Research Report](#).

# Remember This

## THE 5 E'S TO DRIVE ECO-ACTION

### 1. EMPATHY

Provide opportunities to discuss climate change and other environmental concerns. Help students develop the vocabulary and skills to identify and express their feelings about these issues.

### 2. EDUCATION

Offer opportunities to learn about climate change and biodiversity in an age-appropriate way, and to develop social-emotional skill such as team work, problem solving, and efficient communication, which are key to successful eco-action.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Engage in nature education such as outdoor learning. Spending time in nature helps to reduce feelings of stress and anxiety and contributes to overall wellbeing. It is also the chance to learn about and take action for nature.

### 4. EXCITEMENT

Make conservation activities and learning about the natural environment something for kids look forward to. [Share stories of successful environmental action projects, especially children-led projects.](#)

### 5. EMPOWERMENT

Support students in identifying, organizing, and carrying out environmental projects. Eco-action not only helps children deal with eco-anxiety, but also helps them develop the self-confidence needed to continue participating in and leading stewardship projects.

Kids' concerns about our environment are real. With the right support, so is their ability to act. From our study, we have created a handy framework so you can help transform eco-anxiety into eco-action!

## THE CHALLENGE IS BIG, BUT THE MISSION IS SIMPLE

The research is clear: for adults, the best way to help youth is by supporting them in taking eco-action.

Earth Rangers offers resources to translate this into classroom practice, such as [Homeroom classroom activities](#) and our [Earth Rangers Clubs program](#).

As an additional support for educators, Earth Rangers developed [the 5-week online "From Eco-Anxiety to Eco-Action" Micro Credential](#). This course helps equip educators to respond to children's feelings when discussing the environment and explores strategies to empower students to take action.



# Tips to Put Theory into Practice

Here are some easy ways to move from theory to action:

## 1. EMPATHY

- Don't be afraid to talk about negative environmental news stories, like floods or wildfires, in your classroom. Ask your students how they feel about these stories and validate those feelings.
- Do the same with positive stories, like new technology that decreases carbon emissions or an endangered species that is making a recovery. Try and tie in local context, when possible.
- Make environmental stories a regular part of students' day, so that children know these issues are important to adults as well and that their concerns are normal and accepted.

## 2. EDUCATION

- Raise awareness about environmental issues in an engaging and relatable way.
- Make sure to [include a next step](#) of [discussing what](#) actions they can take to help address it. Focusing on actions that they can do at their level develops their sense of agency.
- Offer fun social-emotional skill building activities, such as team work challenges which develop students' ability to work together and face environmental challenges together.
- Take advantage of the wealth of available resources, such as [Homeroom](#), and [Earth Rangers Clubs](#), to enrich your lessons.
- Focus on and have students brainstorm actions they can take to protect the natural environment.

## 3. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Engage in nature-based learning, indoors or outdoors, depending on your context.
- Foster a deeper connection to nature to spark a desire to protect the [natural environment](#).
- Get involved in or facilitate environmental action projects with your students, such as an [Earth Rangers Clubs](#) missions like [Rubbish Roundup](#) or [Swap Superstar](#).
- Make sure students have time to take a step back and reflect on how they have contributed to taking care of the environment.

## 4. EXCITEMENT

- Create opportunities for kids to see conservation and learning about the environment as fun and exciting through games, such as [Ways to Protect the Planet](#), or [Off We Go](#), and interactive activities, like [What a Peculiar Animal](#) or [The Magic Camera](#).
- Organize or get involved in school-wide environmental challenges and activities, such as the [Plastic-Free for a Week Challenge](#) or the [Tree Hugger Challenge](#).
- Be a role model for your students by sharing stories of what you've done.

## 5. EMPOWERMENT

- Foster student-driven eco-projects: support students in identifying a way they can contribute to protecting the environment, organizing a project, and carrying it out.
- Help students recognize the skills they have enabling them to contribute to positive environmental action through reflection activities.
- Create opportunities for students to teach others how to protect nature.
- Ensure students have the opportunity to share what they've learned and showcase what they've accomplished, for example, by making school announcements about their [Plastics Audit](#), showcasing their [Bird Feeders](#), or displaying their [Plastic-Free Portraits](#).



# How Earth Rangers Can Support You

Join the Earth Rangers Homeroom Community by [signing up for our monthly Homeroom Newsletter](#) which brings you fresh ideas, engaging classroom activities, and fun contests for your students!

Lead an Eco-club at your school by [joining the free Earth Rangers Clubs program](#) which offers all the resources and support you need to create and sustain a fun and impactful Eco Club.



Take the 5-week online [From Eco-Anxiety to Eco-Action Micro-Credential](#) which guides educators in developing the knowledge and strategies to help students transform eco-anxiety into positive action.

Share Earth Rangers with your students by hosting an [Earth Rangers Assembly](#), sharing the fun kid-focused [Earth Rangers Podcast](#), and encouraging your students to join the [Earth Rangers Membership Program](#) and protect the planet through engaging missions.

