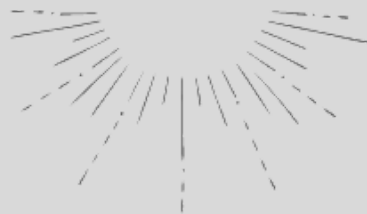


COP 26 ACTIVIST WELLBEING TOOLKIT



The Nest
MOVEMENT. MINDFULNESS. WELLBEING



WELCOME



I'M SARAH, I SPENT 15 YEARS WORKING IN ACTIVISM AND CAMPAIGNS AND I'VE BEEN WHERE YOU ARE. I STILL CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT CLIMATE JUSTICE AND STILL PLAY MY PART IN THE FIGHT FOR A SAFER FUTURE, BUT PARTS OF THAT WORK LEFT ME FEELING OVERWHELMED AND BURNT OUT.

NOW, AS A QUALIFIED WELLBEING COACH, I HELP PEOPLE THRIVE AND FULFIL THEIR PURPOSE TO DO GOOD, WITHOUT THE BURNOUT.

ARE YOU WORKING OR CAMPAIGNING AT COP26?

I know from experience that this can be the best gig in the world, but I also know, for some, it can be overwhelming, exhausting and anxiety inducing.

This mindfulness based wellbeing toolkit for COP26 activists offers you some simple ways to protect your energy so you can keep on saving the world - without burning out.



WHAT IS ACTIVIST BURNOUT?

Burnout can happen when you face long term physical, emotional or mental stress. For activists, this can be a result of the hugely emotive issues you are working with on a daily basis, or the amount of time and effort it can take to generate any movement or win on your issue, or simply that you have to spend all your energy trying to help others understand the gravity of the situation.

Some people can compartmentalise this stuff, others find that much harder. When you are constantly thinking about, talking about and are faced with the realities of these issues, particularly the climate emergency, it's essential you take care of your mental and physical wellbeing to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

If left unattended, this lack of self care can lead to exhaustion, feelings of stress and anxiety, lack of motivation, unhealthy coping mechanisms and can also lead to physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach issues.



WHAT IS CLIMATE ANXIETY?

Climate anxiety, or eco anxiety, is most prevalent among young people, but it is also particularly rising amongst parents of young children. A recent study* of 10,000 young people in 10 countries worldwide, showed that 59% of them are either 'extremely', or 'very' worried about climate change, and that it's making them 'feel sad, afraid and anxious'.

Learning about climate change and its impacts on people, animals and biodiversity can leave us feeling hopeless, helpless and fearful that we're too late or can't do enough to halt the most devastating impacts in time. We can feel angry that those in power are not doing enough. For some of us these feelings empower us to fight harder, for others it's too much and they shut it out. If you're reading this, it's likely you are the former, but whatever your reaction to the climate crisis, your feelings are real and they are absolutely valid.

*Hickman, C. et al. Preprint at
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3918955> (2021).*

PROTECT YOUR ENERGY

PRIORITISE SELF CARE

BREATHE

Putting yourself first
isn't selfish, it's
essential if you want
to do your best work.

STAY GROUNDED

BE MINDFUL

SELF CARE



Self care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

Eleanor Brown

**GET
ENOUGH
SLEEP**

**EAT WELL
+
STAY HYDRATED**

**MOVE
YOUR
BODY**

**SET LIMITS
ON YOUR
WORKING DAY**




**GET
ENOUGH
SLEEP**

I know this is a really tough one at an event like this and many of us go into it prepared to survive on little sleep, kipping on floors, sofas, late night planning and early morning briefings. But try to maximise sleep however you can, grab a little power nap, and get some rest at least. It really will have a huge impact on your physical and mental wellbeing, and your ability to sustain the duration of the event.

Tip: Bring an eye mask and ear plugs to help you switch off.

When you're on the go all day and working long hours, it can be really easy to forget to nourish your body in the same way you might at other times - grabbing something on the go, leaving big gaps between meals, and eating really late at night. Suddenly changing your eating habits can have a huge impact on your energy levels and nutrient intake leaving you more susceptible to illness and fatigue. Make sure you take time to stop and eat well - and don't forget to drink lots of water.

Tip: Carry some healthy, energy boosting snacks like fruit and nuts and don't forget your water bottle.



**EAT WELL
+
STAY HYDRATED**




**MOVE
YOUR
BODY**

Depending on your role at COP, you might be on your feet all day or you might be sitting in the same spot for hours hunched over a laptop. Either way, your body will probably soon let you know it's not happy. Try to be aware of how long you're in the same position and move your body with some gentle stretches, roll your shoulders, take a walk if you've been sitting.

Tip: Set a reminder on your phone each hour to remind you to gently move your body.

Working or campaigning at events like COP can result in LONG days (and nights). It is not weak to set limits or boundaries on your working day. Try not to compare yourself to others and what they seem capable of. You don't know their story and they don't know yours. We all have different limits and it's your responsibility to respect yours. Take breaks.

Tip: Try to take your breaks away from noise and busyness. Find a quiet corner to recharge in a way that suits you.



**SET LIMITS
ON YOUR
WORKING DAY**

And please remember to check in with those around you.

BREATHE

Breathe. This might sound obvious - but when we're rushing around or feeling a bit stressed we are rarely using our full breath capacity. This can have a huge impact on how we feel physically and mentally.

If you're short on time, take a moment to focus on your breath. Breathe slowly in for the count of four, pause, and breathe out for a count of 4.

**Check in with your breath.
Is it slow and deep?
Or quick and shallow?**

If you really need to slow down, this alternate nostril breathing technique can slow your heart rate, reduce anxiety, and generate a feeling of calm within minutes.



ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

Not as tricky as it sounds!

SIT COMFORTABLY, EITHER CROSS LEGGED ON THE FLOOR OR ON A CHAIR WITH YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE GROUND.

PLACE YOUR LEFT HAND PALM UP ON YOUR LEFT KNEE.

LIGHTLY REST YOUR RIGHT THUMB ON THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR RIGHT NOSTRIL (DON'T CLOSE THEM OVER YET), YOUR RING FINGER ON THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL AND LET YOUR INDEX AND MIDDLE FINGERS REST ON THE BRIDGE OF YOUR NOSE IN BETWEEN YOUR EYEBROWS.

FULLY EXHALE OUT ALL YOUR BREATH AND THEN CLOSE OVER YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL WITH YOUR RIGHT RING FINGER.

KEEP THE RIGHT NOSTRIL OPEN AND INHALE THROUGH IT DEEPLY. AT THE TOP OF THE BREATH, OPEN THE LEFT NOSTRIL WHILE CLOSING THE RIGHT AND EXHALE FULLY.


STAY IN THAT POSITION AND INHALE THROUGH YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL THEN AT THE TOP OF THAT BREATH, CLOSE IT OVER AND EXHALE THROUGH YOUR RIGHT.

KEEP SWAPPING THEM OVER JUST FOR 1-2 MINUTES INITIALLY. YOU CAN WORK TOWARDS DOING IT FOR LONGER AS YOU PRACTICE THIS TECHNIQUE OVER TIME.

breathe

STAY GROUNDED

In it's simplest sense, being grounded is to be centered and balanced, whatever is going on around you. This is important when your surroundings can easily become overwhelming.




Affirmations are powerful statements that help you challenge negative talk or beliefs.

Use whichever words you need to keep you where you want to be.



I AM OK



I AM SAFE



I AM GROUNDED

Connecting to the ground or earth through physical touch has lots of benefits and can really help bring us back to ourselves if we feel overwhelmed.

LAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR. FOCUS ON ALL THE POINTS OF YOUR BODY THAT ARE TOUCHING THE GROUND, SAFELY HOLDING YOU.

LITERALLY PUT YOUR HANDS ON OR IN SOME EARTH. TOUCH IT, SMELL IT, FEEL IT.

TAKE A WALK IN NATURE - NEAR WATER IF YOU CAN.

BE MINDFUL






Be aware of your emotions. Acknowledge them, process them, and let them go.

Bringing ourselves into the present moment is the best way to alleviate anxious feelings. One of the most powerful ways to do this quickly is to use our senses to notice what's around us. Try this exercise any time things are feeling a bit out of control and it'll bring you right back to the here and now.



**CLOSE YOUR EYES AND TAKE SOME DEEP BREATHS
THEN OPEN YOUR EYES AGAIN.**

NOW BECOME AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS:

-  **5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE**
-  **4 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR**
-  **3 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH**
-  **2 THINGS SMELL**
-  **1 THING YOU CAN TASTE**



FINAL WORDS...

I HOPE THIS RESOURCE HELPS YOU STAY WELL AMONGST THE INCREDIBLE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF COP ACTIVITY. REMEMBER, YOUR WORK IS VITAL - AND SO ARE YOU.

I WISH YOU A HEALTHY, HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL COP EXPERIENCE. HERE'S HOPING THOSE IN POWER LISTEN UP SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

MY PARTING THOUGHTS...

- **CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES, NO MATTER HOW SMALL.**
- **IF YOU ARE A LEADER, I URGE YOU TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE. YOUR ACTIONS HAVE MORE OF AN IMPACT THAN YOU KNOW.**

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES,
SARAH**

Sarah Catnach is a qualified Wellbeing Coach and experienced meditation and mindfulness facilitator. Her wellbeing business 'The Nest' offers mindfulness based coaching to individuals who might be struggling with overwhelm, anxiety, lack of self care on a stressful schedule, or to those looking to go deeper into their purpose or vision to better their lives - whether personal or professional. Services are also available to teams in the workplace who wish to prioritise their wellbeing as a way of boosting productivity and retention - particularly those in high burn out roles and sectors.

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