



## Climate anxiety running rampant among youths: How you can help

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**Editor's note:** For more coverage of the 2022 AAP National Conference & Exhibition, visit <https://bit.ly/AAPNationalConference2022>.

Chronic fear of ecological doom.

That's how the American Psychological Association defines anxiety over climate change. And it's rampant among youths.

In a recent [survey](#) of 10,000 teens and young adults in 10 countries, 59% reported being very or extremely worried about climate change, and more than 45% said their feelings about climate change negatively affect their daily life.

While there is much that we can and must do to minimize the risks associated with climate change, there is also much that we can and should do to help children cope with anxiety associated with the climate crisis," said David J. Schonfeld, M.D., FAAP, director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

To help pediatricians screen and support patients in day-to-day practice, Dr. Schonfeld and Rebecca Philipsborn, M.D., FAAP, will present a session titled "Understanding Climate Anxiety and What Pediatricians Can Do" (S2216). It will be held from 9-10 a.m. PDT Saturday, Oct. 8 in rooms 251-252A of the convention center.

Climate anxiety in children can manifest itself in myriad ways. Youths may have fear about present and future risks and harms from climate change, anger over the failure of humans to respond to the climate crisis and sadness about the impact of climate change on people and the planet, said Dr. Philipsborn, assistant professor of pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and a member of the AAP Council on Environmental Health and Climate Change Executive Committee.

Dr. Schonfeld said many reactions from climate anxiety are similar to adjustment reactions from other crises such as mass shootings in schools; increasing recognition of racial, ethnic and other social inequalities; inflation and associated financial concerns; the pandemic and increasing political polarization.

"The cumulative effect of these crises accentuates the level of distress. Fortunately, many of the approaches for dealing with climate anxiety can be applied effectively to these other crises as well," said Dr. Schonfeld, a member of the AAP Council on Children and Disasters Executive Committee and Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

During the session, Drs. Schonfeld and Philipsborn will provide practical advice on how to talk to and support youths with climate anxiety and adjustment difficulties from other crisis events. This advice also can form the basis of anticipatory guidance for parents and other caregivers on how to support their children.

"Climate change affects our patients, and pediatricians are part of the solution," Dr. Philipsborn said. "By integrating screening for climate anxiety in our course of practice, we can refer patients appropriately and connect them to youth groups engaging in climate change. We can also elevate the voices of children and our patients and raise awareness for this problem."

*For more information on the National Conference, visit <https://www.aapexperience.org>. View the conference schedule at <https://www.eventscribe.net/2022/AAPexperience/>.*