From the Ground Up Series 1 Episode 6 Transcript - Ecoanxiety

00:00:05:11 - 00:00:22:23

Katie Williams

Welcome to From the Ground Up, a podcast by the UK Youth Climate Coalition. This is a podcast by and for young people who are passionate about climate justice and want to make a difference. In each episode, we'll be talking to young activists about a particular issue within the umbrella of Climate Justice they're passionate about, what it means to be an activist and what you can do to help.

00:00:23:23 - 00:00:53:07

Katie Williams

I'm Katie, and I'll be your host today. I'm joined by Elouise from the community working group and special guest Katie Hodgetts, who is the founder of the Resilience Project and a former member of UKYCC. We'll be talking about eco anxiety and young people, how to prevent burnout and how we as activists can look after ourselves and each other. As I'm sure some of you are aware, eco equality is a really important topic for young people.

00:00:53:16 - 00:01:15:10

Katie Williams

So many of us become overwhelmed or anxious or fearful, or even angry when we learn about the climate crisis and start to understand what it means for our future and for those already suffering the impacts of climate change. I first experienced eco-anxiety when I was a student studying engineering in 2015, and one of my lecturers showed us this graph of Arctic sea ice decline.

00:01:15:22 - 00:01:33:22

Katie Williams

And something clicked in my brain and I sort of went, Oh, this is happening now, is not it's not a problem for the future. It's a problem we need to sort out now. Whereas I think the way we've been taught about it at school really felt like, oh, this is a problem for the future. You know, in the future, climate change is something we need to sort out.

00:01:35:11 - 00:01:57:17

Katie Williams

But I was suddenly like, Oh, no, this is this is happening now. And no one seems to be that worried about it. And I remember becoming quite overwhelmed at the scale of the problem and feeling quite sad and quite frustrated that no one else seemed to be on the same page as me. And particularly at that time, it was before Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future Movement.

00:01:58:16 - 00:02:26:23

Katie Williams

It felt really isolating and I felt helpless. So I did what I do best. And went and read loads of books and tried to learn about what I could do as an individual, which led me to taking actions like trying to cycle more or eating less meat. And eventually that felt like it wasn't enough. And then sort of in 2018, 2019, the youth movement was growing and towards the end of 2019, I found UKYCC and started to get involved with activism.

00:02:28:11 - 00:02:54:21

Katie Williams

And, you know, I really found that being part of a supportive community of like minded activists has helped me feel a lot less alone with those difficult feelings. I do still struggle with the, you know, despair at the state of the world sometimes. And there is also the challenge. I think a lot of people at Activist Spaces find of trying to make sure you've got a good sort of work life activism balance and don't don't give too much of yourself to the cause and don't burn out.

00:02:55:23 - 00:03:19:23

Katie Williams

But having having people to share these difficult feelings with really makes a difference for me. So that's my journey with Eco-Anxiety. I'm going to talk a bit more about some of these topics in the rest of the episode. Both of our speakers have a great wealth of knowledge when it comes to activism and mental health, so I'm really excited to hear what they have to say.

00:03:21:05 - 00:03:30:12

Katie Williams

Welcome, Elouise and Katie to the podcast. Thank you for joining me today. It'd be great if you could just introduce yourselves to our listeners. Maybe Elouise you could go first.

00:03:30:14 - 00:03:45:14

Elouise Mayall

I'm Elouise, pronouns she/ her. I've been with UKYCC for about three years now, and outside of that I am an Ecology student mostly where I researched Reintroductions and rewilding of white stork at the moment, but I also do research in ecoanxiety that’s been something I’ve done in the past couple years..

00:03:46:06 - 00:03:49:17

Katie Williams

 and Katie.

00:03:51:00 - 00:04:31:11

Katie Hodgetts

Hi, Katie and Elouise. I am so excited to be on the UKYCC podcast. My name is Katie Hodgetts and I use she/her pronouns. At the moment I am the founder and director of the Resilience Project, which is an organization which is building a generation of resilient youth campaigners, particularly by creating peer support networks and structures. So young people have a place to talk about things like eco anxiety and burnout and mental health and resilience, which sometimes doesn't get as much of a voice in traditional campaign settings.

00:04:32:03 - 00:04:48:01

Katie Hodgetts

And the reason why I'm so excited to be here is because another title I hold is UKYCC Alumni. So I campaigned with UKYCC for about five years and have fond memories of this fantastic organization.

00:04:48:02 - 00:05:01:06

Katie Williams

Nice to have you back. So I guess to start with, maybe we could talk a bit about like how you guys got involved in climate activism. Like, what was your journey into activism?

00:05:02:19 - 00:05:03:23

Elouise Mayall

Sure, I can go first

00:05:04:20 - 00:05:18:22

Elouise Mayall

My Interest in climate definitely came after my interest in the natural world. So I went to uni, I started learning ecology, loved ecology and biodiversity, and was much more at that time interested in biodiversity loss and the humans impacts on the planet

00:05:19:21 - 00:05:31:14

Elouise Mayall

And through that route I started learning more about the climate crisis and how humans impacts in the wild that's more global scale than just the biodiversity and animals.

00:05:36:06 - 00:05:59:01

Elouise Mayall

And then that led to me being very, very Interested in some individual action. I think it's a very common starting point for people in climate change. So I became very interested in that zero waste movement to begin with, and I went vegan for lots of reasons, but climate was definitely one of them and after a while I found that the individual action wasn't enough for me, but also it was causing me some issues of actually Eco Anxiety, we’ll talk about that later.

00:05:59:01 - 00:06:11:24

Elouise Mayall

And that led me to find more collective based action. I ended up in UKYCC, which I think for me right now is a really happy place. I’m really enjoying being in that space.

00:06:11:24 - 00:06:26:07

Katie Williams

Yeah, that kind of resonates with me. I think like I was very much like I started off like, Oh, I should go vegetarian or I should cycle everywhere. And then I was like, This doesn't feel like enough. I think. I think there's a lot of us kind of in the movement who have come in that way. What about you, Katie?

00:06:27:12 - 00:06:58:14

Katie Hodgetts

Yeah, similarly so. I always had, you know, a proximity to the climate crisis through learning about the polar bear on the melting ice cap in geography. And I felt sad for this polar bear that didn't really feel relevant to me. I just thought, this is bad. And then I started to learn about the the human face of the climate crisis and particularly the rife injustice within what is happening.

00:06:58:14 - 00:07:35:16

Katie Hodgetts

So particularly learning that a small handful of very powerful, wealthy, typically white old men were causing the devastation of lives of millions of people in the Global South and were jeopardizing the futures of my children and their children's children and really putting the whole world in jeopardy. I just could not get my head around the injustice of all of that and why on earth we were still talking about the polar bear when we weren't talking about, which is still important, but weren't talking about the systems of justice and oppression that

00:07:35:16 - 00:08:02:15

Katie Hodgetts

Intersect with something that I thought was just about the weather. So I got really, really angry and the anger made me feel quite isolated, actually, because I started getting angry with everybody else who wasn't doing enough, started getting angry with politicians, with my family and went down that individual route. I mean, it's it's helpful, but it can become very isolating when you start to feel really radical about your own life decisions.

00:08:03:00 - 00:08:25:23

Katie Hodgetts

It means that guilt and shame start being the tools in which you are trying to get people on your side. And I didn't feel like that was helpful for my ability to campaign or for my mental health. So I joined the UKYCC to try and find like minded people to share the ahhhs and ooohs and the gruuuus that come with being a campaigner and living in this time.

00:08:26:09 - 00:08:50:16

Katie Hodgetts

And I found that the magic of what can happen when you bring together a group of like minded people who are young and brave and keen spirited, and ever since, I've just fallen in love with collective organizing and in love with the power of what we can do in small to large groups.

00:08:50:16 - 00:09:19:23

Katie Williams

Thank you. Yeah, I think that's a really good kind of description of how I've felt kind of coming in. I think I felt that isolation as well when I was kind of first thinking about this stuff and then it was like, Yeah, I found the UKYCC sort of by accident. And then here I am and I feel like it's a very a supportive and welcoming space, which is really nice and it's really nice to have people to vent to when it feels like people in your life don't necessarily understand where you're coming from.

00:09:19:23 - 00:09:39:00

Katie Williams

So I guess the next question is for Elouise, who I kind of consider you as our sort of resident UKYCC expert on when it comes to Eco Anxiety because you've done some research in this area, so what do we actually mean by it? It's a word that gets thrown around quite a lot. What is it? What does it actually mean?

00:09:40:24 - 00:10:12:21

Elouise Mayall

So Eco Anxiety is a term, that’s definitely become much more common in the past years for sure and that's quite exciting. But It can also lead to a bit of the confusion as to what it is is and it’s also sometimes referred to as climate anxiety. So I might say that intermittently just out of habit as well. And sometimes, other times, it’s referred to as eco distress or there’s a very wonderful term Solastalgia, which is sort of a very old term used for it, for Eco Anxiety which is the feeling and kind of melancholy you feel about not the melancholy feel where home doesn’t really feel like home anymore, where it’s changed. And this was from ages ago, before Eco Anxiety was really a term and it’s been carried on.

00:10:13:07 - 00:10:38:10

Elouise Mayall

And so Eco Anxiety most simply, is the emotional, psychological distress caused from the climate crisis and it's more of an umbrella term. It doesn't just refer to Anxiety, it can be a whole range of emotions. So it can be it could be fear it could be sadness, grief or shame or guilt or numbness.

00:10:38:19 - 00:10:57:15

Elouise Mayall

It can be rage. And those different emotions will vary in intensity for different people. And for me personally, when I experience some high levels of Eco Anxiety it’s definitely shame and guilt are the ones that kind of creep up most. But then I have a very close friend in Nigeria adn for her it's rage that comes up in Eco Anxiety, so it can be very different for different people.

00:10:58:17 - 00:11:22:22

Elouise Mayall

But what's important to recognize i suppose in the more academic, scientific side of it is not a it's not like anxiety disorder and it's not a diagnosable condition. It’s sometimes referred to as either a practical or rational anxiety. So anxiety is just this feeling in the body that you get when something isn't quite right and your body is trying to protect you from something. It's uncomfortable and your body wants you to get out of that situation or those jitters and kind of uncomfortable.

00:11:22:22 - 00:11:44:15

Elouise Mayall

I kind of feel like electric feelings of worry, concern, it’s your body trying to say, this is bad and I don't like it, we should move out of this. And that's very normal and that’s meant to happen. And with something like climate change, that can be a very intense experience because there’s some threat that is huge and existential and very complex.

00:11:45:00 - 00:12:06:03

Elouise Mayall

And it can feel like as an individual you haven’t got a lot of control of what's going on with. And so these feelings of distress can be really intense for some people. And that's another thing it can vary in intensity, such as mild and moderate levels of anxiety, or we can have very intense levels. We might be concerned for that persons wellbeing. And it can also change along that spectrum of intensity.

00:12:07:06 - 00:12:17:08

Elouise Mayall

That's a quick summary. I mean Katie would you like to add anything? I gave a sterile answer, there might be some elements you want to add to that.

00:12:17:08 - 00:12:39:24

Katie Hodgetts

I suppose the important thing to add, which I'm sure you'll come back to it and say again in a more expensive way, but if you're listening to this now and you think, Oh yeah, I get that, I feel all of these things and I don't know what to do with it. And I'm here because I have this problem, which is eco anxiety, and I'm at a loss to what to do.

00:12:40:10 - 00:13:15:02

Katie Hodgetts

Then I want to say very loudly, very clearly that eco anxiety is a rational response to an emergency. We are in a crisis situation and you are responding in a legitimate and valid way to a crisis. The people who are not responding in a way, the people who are deep in denial, the people who are deep in inactivity, the people who are deep in apathy, that is where there is a problem because they are not seeing clearly what is going on around us.

00:13:15:02 - 00:13:37:13

Katie Hodgetts

So Elouise and I both work in a space where we're here to in a way, we're here to celebrate your eco anxiety because it shows that you care, that you are listening. It shows that you're awake. It shows that you are invested in your future and everyone else's future. And everyone's now in the now happening now in the global south, in the global north.

00:13:38:08 - 00:13:57:22

Katie Hodgetts

So it's not something that we need to pathologize and we need to be careful around the language of fixing, because it’s also not something we need to fix. It's something we need to feel to enable climate action. But it's something that we want to make sure that we're not letting totally control our lives.

00:13:59:16 - 00:14:20:17

Katie Williams

Yeah, that's a really good point. Katie, I think kind of recognizing that it shows that you are an empathetic person and you actually care about the state of the world and you're kind of aware of what's going on. So, yeah, that's that's something to celebrate even though it is difficult and challenging and can make you feel horrible sometimes.

00:14:20:17 - 00:14:42:17

Katie Williams

Yeah. Going back to kind of Elouise, the research that you've done, I know you've been involved in research kind of looking at how how we kind of it impacts young people in different parts of the world. And I guess, yeah. Is there a difference between how it affects young people and old people? And also how is that represented across different, different countries that you've researched?

00:14:43:08 - 00:15:07:07

Elouise Mayall

Sure, so I have recently done some research with a wonderful psychotherapist, Carolyn Hickman, who Katie also knows very well and she took me under her wing to become a climate anxiety researcher, which I surprised at initially. But it's been really interesting and it’s improved own understanding of what this is and helped me manage my own eco anxiety a lot, by just understanding it at a deeper level.

00:15:07:19 - 00:15:33:05

Elouise Mayall

And we, along with some other wonderful psychologist psychotherapists, conducted a really big survey of 10,000 childrena and young people around the world, ages 16 to 25 and in ten different countries. And I’ll sum it up off the top of my head, maybe we'll try. We had France, Portugal, Brazil, the UK, Finland, the US, Australia, the Philippines, India and Nigeria. I don’t think that’s all but we’ll see.

00:15:34:14 - 00:15:57:02

Elouise Mayall

And the aims of this study was to see what the breadth and scale of Eco Anxiety was up to that point. This was published 2021 and up to that point you've got really, really good qualitative research with interviews and sort of more personal surveys at national levels, but nothing international at that scale. So we saw a gap we wanted to fill.

00:15:57:18 - 00:16:17:19

Elouise Mayall

And we found that there were really high levels of worry when you ask them. So we asked a series of questions and one of the main question was, how worried are you about the climate crisis? When you think of the climate crisis? What is that intensity of worry you feel and the vast majority of people, I think it was about 85%, said they either felt moderately worried or extremely worried about it.

00:16:18:03 - 00:16:48:16

Elouise Mayall

And that's the average across all these countries. And so that first shows like like, wow, this isn't just a worried well problem which sometimes gets thrown at Eco Anxiety that’s it’s only people in sort of wealthy countries that have time feel Eco Anxiety , it’s shown across the world that anyone can feel it, from countries with very different backgrounds and proximities to the devastation caused by the climate crisis. And then we looked at the data and we did see that there were different levels of climate anxiety within the participants.

00:16:48:24 - 00:17:21:06

Elouise Mayall

We didn't do statistical analysis for this initial study, there wasn’t space for it. But the worry was high in all the countries. But what we found is when we asked them, how does this worry about climate anxiety, If you it, impact on daily functioning? There were I think it was the Philippines had roughly 90% of people say that their daily functions are extremely impacted by it and daily functioning includes things such as like working, going to school, having fun, playing, maintaining relationships, very normal day to day things.

00:17:22:05 - 00:17:54:19

Elouise Mayall

And the second is the second highest maybe Nigeria and India and that shows that even though we are very good, I think most of us know that the climate crisis affects different countries spatially and also we've become more aware socially that the crisis is affecting different people. But also now there's an increase in the sense of psychological differences as well. Again, of those who probably happen to be a lot less to the climate crisis are going to have a lot more social impacts and psychological impacts to them.

00:17:55:17 - 00:18:16:14

Elouise Mayall

And so that was something that we really wanted to emphasize and study. That there may be these spatial differences as well. And the other main thing was that and this is not just the study, but from the work that's advised the survey, there is a difference between generations and how they experience Eco Anxiety, any age can feel it and any age can feel it intensely.

00:18:17:18 - 00:18:39:18

Elouise Mayall

But the emotions and the feelings that come up between the generations can vary a bit. And we often find in younger generations there's a sense of abandonment and betrayal that comes up much more frequently. The sense that they've been born into a crisis and now they've been given this responsibility to save themselves, but they've inherited the problem, and those that should be looking after them aren’t looking after them.

00:18:40:05 - 00:19:11:19

Elouise Mayall

And in the survey, we did explore this a bit by asking the participants what they thought about the government's responses to climate crisis. We gave yes or no response statements, and the vast majority said that they didn't think governments were looking after future generations. They didn't think that governments were responding in the light of science, the majority felt they were letting young people down and that, I think 60% or so thought humanity was doomed, so really heavy.

00:19:12:21 - 00:19:14:21

Katie Williams

How many was that? 60%?

00:19:14:24 - 00:19:46:20

Elouise Mayall

60%. And also that climate anxiety is also impacting some of the really important decisions that young people make. So four out ten said that they were hesitant to have children because of climate change. And so that just really emphasized, we got a lot of interest in this statement. That's not saying that we will or will not have children, but it's showing that in the decisions of this very important decision that anyone would have to make is that climate crisis is also being considered on top of all the other factors that make up the decision.

00:19:46:20 - 00:20:07:17

Elouise Mayall

And so it's really emphasizing this has a great impact on people's day to day lives and the decision to be make, and particularly children, young people with the sense of abandonment and betrayal that they’re experiencing, linked to that supports government betrayal. So there's definitely a power dynamic and kind of the social dynamics at play as well with those experiences of Eco Anxiety.

00:20:11:10 - 00:20:35:11

Katie Williams

Wow, that's a lot. Yeah. I mean it's a huge thing to kind of take on like how it how this issue impacts so many different people in so many different countries. But thank you for that synthesis of the study. That's very helpful. I guess maybe moving on from there, it would be good to talk about kind of how we can build resilience and look after each other.

00:20:36:07 - 00:20:45:21

Katie Williams

Which brings me on to Katie and The Resilience Project. So Katie, what is the Resilience Project? Tell us about you've talked a little bit about it already, but go on, tell us more.

00:20:46:20 - 00:21:27:01

Katie Hodgetts

Yeah, good question. Maybe I'll tell you a bit about the story of what led to the Resilience Project. And that story goes that I was working, campaigning with UKYCC and I had this very important year when I was coordinating an anti fracking campaign with a national group. And I really wanted to try and build a campaign that was different to the ones I've been in before, because prior to this I felt like, I've said this before, the guilt and shame kind of became this currency in our movement and lots of people were leaving the organization and they were stopping campaigning.

00:21:27:01 - 00:21:57:14

Katie Hodgetts

And it wasn't so much because of climate politics, but it's because of human politics that we weren't looking after each other. It was a culture of competition and the urgency narrative that that is legitimate. We need to act now. It is legitimate, but it meant that we were all working 100 miles per hour and it meant that we weren't resting and joy felt like we weren't worthy of it, we weren't deserving of it.

00:21:57:14 - 00:22:36:04

Katie Hodgetts

We had to work rather than to have any kind of fun or life. And I felt like lots of people were moving through these cycles of boom and bust. So coming into movement, getting re-energized, giving 100%, and then ultimately feeling so exhausted and burnt out that they had to leave the movement. So in this anti fracking campaign, we switched things up as a group and the way we shifted wellbeing from the periphery of what we were doing to the center of what we were doing and we really normalized the narrative that it’s okay not to be okay.

00:22:36:18 - 00:23:00:09

Katie Hodgetts

We normalize to the idea of speaking about how we feeling as well as ‘Have you done that press release?’ ‘Have you posted on Instagram?’ You know, and this was a really amazing campaign, the best campaign I think I've ever been involved with. And what we managed to create was so powerful because we're really leaning into each other as well as into our campaign.

00:23:01:02 - 00:23:10:24

Katie Hodgetts

And that really inspired the position of Wellbeing Officer and took on. And Katie, I think you are now the Wellbeing Officer Katie?

00:23:10:24 - 00:23:11:16

Katie Williams

Yeh I am, yeah.

00:23:11:19 - 00:23:39:09

Katie Hodgetts

From one Katie to another, which is fantastic. However, the problem with having a wellbeing is the wellbeing officer then takes on all the care work. Right? It shouldn't just be one person's responsibility. It should be, we need something that's more structural, something that is really challenging the narratives that exist in our spaces rather than the wellbeing officer coming in and then just sprinkling in wellbeing things on top.

00:23:39:18 - 00:24:07:13

Katie Hodgetts

So rather than just kind of like these surface workshops, which can be helpful, what we needed as an organization, what we need is a climate movement is a deep revision on how we relate to our work and how we relate to working groups. So following on from that,the youth strike happened in 2019. Millions of young people erupted into the streets and incredible protests started happening.

00:24:08:03 - 00:24:33:15

Katie Hodgetts

And it was interesting for me as a campaigner because I've been working with like 18 to 22 year olds and now I co-founded Bristol Youth Strike for Climate, where I Live. And I was now working with 13 year olds, 12 year olds, 11 year olds. And I couldn't believe that these young people, so young, they were coming into what I thought was a kind of broken movement for so many reasons.

00:24:33:15 - 00:25:07:10

Katie Hodgetts

I felt like it was broken for so many reasons. I felt like it wasn't really holding people to enable them to flourish it was coming in and chewing people up and then spitting them back out, ultimately coming in because they felt lonely and leaving feeling lonelier. And so in all of this and in all of my banging my head against the wall to get people to think about regenerative cultures of wellbeing, I myself burnt out because I was shouldering all of this work and felt really unable to do all of it.

00:25:07:20 - 00:25:46:18

Katie Hodgetts

And the perfectionist in me just, you know, just crumbled basically. And I had to take a year of campaigning and I had the financial privilege to afford therapy, which was really helpful for me and understanding, understanding how I'd got to this point of burnout, particularly because I was talking about wellbeing for so long. And the thing that just really came through for me in these experiences is that there really wasn't the support for me that wasn't behind a paywall, which means the support was wholly inaccessible.

00:25:47:15 - 00:26:12:05

Katie Hodgetts

And that's where the Resilience Project came from. Was this idea that what we need is peer to peer support. What maybe we don't need is more adults telling us what to do and more adults saying, you have a problem, seek professional help. Maybe. Actually, what I needed was a really supportive community around me that were like, Wow, I feel you.

00:26:12:11 - 00:26:40:09

Katie Hodgetts

I feel that too. How about I take this piece of work off your plate and then how about we go to the park afterwards and sit and make daily change and not talk about the climate crisis? That was the need for me. So the resilience project now we train pairs of young people from different parts of the UK and from not just different movements but different types of what it means to be an activist.

00:26:40:09 - 00:27:08:19

Katie Hodgetts

So we don't just we're not trying to say that direct action is the only way you can engage in the most legitimate. We also have young people who are in advocacy spaces or working in individual change, like really honoring every single aspect, and entry point to how we can engage with the climate crisis. And we train people in pairs to deliver an eight week resilience course in their local areas.

00:27:09:00 - 00:27:38:04

Katie Hodgetts

Or local movements, or with people who have shared identities. And through that, we build a community of belonging where we can feel seen, heard and understood about the emotions around all of this, the emotions around not just eco anxiety, but around burnout and around inter-generational trauma and how we relate to adults and how we relate to politicians and how on earth we're meant to make sense of all of this.

00:27:39:15 - 00:28:09:03

Katie Hodgetts

So essentially the Resilience Project does not come with these clear answers. So here is your five point plan on how to be resilient, because life's not like that. Life is too complicated, but what it does is it creates spaces where we can talk openly about how we're being impacted and we can talk openly with people that we trust and say, This is really hard and ultimately this is really hard and it's going to get harder.

00:28:09:03 - 00:28:23:11

Katie Hodgetts

So we need to be honest about that. But it's a little bit less hard when we have a constellation of support around us, and that's the ethos of what we do.

00:28:23:11 - 00:28:56:05

Katie Williams

Thank you for that. I think that was a really good kind of origin story, I guess, of how it came to be. And yeah, thank you for being so open about your experience because, yeh, talking about this stuff isn't always easy. And yeah, I guess what advice and Elouise you can chip in on this one as well, Like would you give to people who want to kind of create that more supportive culture either in their workplace or in the kind of campaigning groups or university or school or whatever?

00:28:57:07 - 00:29:25:03

Katie Williams

Because I think, yeah, when you were talking about like how we relate to each other as individuals and stuff, I think it's, you know, whatever kind of space you're working in, it's so important for like how we relate to each other and that's not what I’m trying to say. I think it's really important for us to be able to relate to each other on that level because I think, you know, like as a young person in the workplace, I think you work better with people when you kind of know more about them as a person and you kind of have that supportive relationship with each other.

00:29:26:01 - 00:29:30:09

Katie Williams

So I guess my question is how can we build that support?

00:29:30:09 - 00:29:37:16

Katie Hodgetts

Yeah, sure, really happy to take. Also I went on a ten minute monologue. Elouise, do you want to feedback first.

00:29:38:10 - 00:29:39:07

Elouise Mayall

No I really don’t mind at all. Go for it.

00:29:40:08 - 00:30:11:22

Katie Hodgetts

Yes, it's a really good question, Katy. I think that building these relationships, there is no quick fix. It does take work. The first piece of advice I would have is thinking about how you relate to yourself before you start thinking about how you relate to others. So one thing is thinking about what is your identity outside of climate activism and activism being a very broad term here, not just direct action.

00:30:12:12 - 00:30:39:22

Katie Hodgetts

But I think one of the reasons why I burnt out was I was over identifying with my activism and I forgot about Katy beyond UKYCC, and that was because of this urgency narrative. And I just felt like I needed to give everything. This was my work and I didn't realize that I was actually stifling my work. I was stifling my ability to campaign long term by giving absolutely everything.

00:30:39:22 - 00:31:07:18

Katie Hodgetts

And it meant that I lost some of the outlets that I had for rest and joy. And rest and joy is so important. They are so fertile. So much grows from rest of joy. It's not just an additional activity. It's a productive activity in itself. Even though capitalism will tell you it's not productive, it is. So thinking around your identity outside of activism.

00:31:08:01 - 00:31:41:06

Katie Hodgetts

Also thinking about what narratives exist in your head when you're thinking about work. So thinking about some of the narratives being like, I can't stop, I cannot stop. I must give everything to this crisis. Or there is such a thing as a perfect activist, and I must be it. anyone who is not it is falling short. Everyone else ‘that colleague that is a hypocrite because they have a plastic water bottle’.

00:31:42:03 - 00:32:12:12

Katie Hodgetts

There's no space for grace or growing or learning when you've got such ironclad narratives like that. And it's those narratives which can lock you into perpetual cycles of burnout. So having a think about what narratives actually do I live by in my work that serve me and what do I live by that maybe don't serve me? And is there space for me to think about challenging these narratives and disrupting these narratives?

00:32:13:14 - 00:32:53:21

Katie Hodgetts

And I think doing that work first and general, just really understanding who you are is like the very crucial prerequisite to then working with other people. So at our Resilience Residentials, it's the headline is, it's a training residential for people to deliver circles, but more so it's this kind of deep personal development space where we're uncovering our own emotional awareness to then be able to support others who also need to develop their emotional awareness.

00:32:55:05 - 00:33:27:12

Katie Hodgetts

So that was a long answer there. Second piece of advice is just to think about these narratives, and I guess in a more broad sense is to start relating to yourself and to start supporting yourself in a way to be able to support others. And thirdly, my third piece of advice is that so much of this climate wisdom that we need to generate to be able to campaign in the long term, so much that comes from leaning into the climate crisis through an emotional lens.

00:33:28:05 - 00:33:53:13

Katie Hodgetts

So earlier I spoke about my entry to the climate crisis, which is politics, and it was anger. And I tried to shut that all down by doing as much campaigning and action as possible. I really didn't want to look at the emotions, it’s very very hard. And then when I started to challenge my narrative, that vulnerability was weak and I started to embrace the idea that vulnerability is strength.

00:33:54:07 - 00:34:26:13

Katie Hodgetts

That's when I started to really be able to process my emotions and better my campaign work and better my relationships and better the groups I was working with. And if you do want to develop your relationships with the people around you, we all know that vulnerability is crucial and it's important to find people you trust. Right. And not to go deep and vulnerable with everyone you meet, only unpack what you feel like you can repack afterwards.

00:34:27:09 - 00:34:49:12

Katie Hodgetts

But really being able to talk about how this is impacting is an art and it is a muscle and my God is it work and it is uncomfortable. But I really feel and the work of the Resilience Project shows that magic can happen when we start being really honest with each other about how we're feeling and the situation that we're living through and in.

00:34:51:17 - 00:34:52:11

Elouise Mayall

I think that was a stunning answer.

00:34:53:07 - 00:34:55:01

Katie Hodgetts

Anything from you Elouise?

00:34:55:16 - 00:34:57:12

Elouise Mayall

I mean, lots of points you kind of covered.

00:34:57:12 - 00:35:30:10

Elouise Mayall

I was just going to say some of the things like I think to me the most important part of particularly coping with Eco Anxiety is to rest. A lot of my own personal Eco Anxiety, again, similar to what you’ve mentioned, stems from a place of shame and guilt that I and I really ,even once I recognize that I had Eco Anxiety, which definitely helped me understand it, I still struggled with having it because I didn't want to have it for quite a while because I felt that I didn't deserve the luxury of feeling sad about something when I, in my sort of quite privileged position, will probably be fine, at least in the short term.

00:35:30:10 - 00:35:50:09

Elouise Mayall

And there are peers of ours that are really suffering at the moment. And so why do I get the luxury of wallowing in my fear when, as others say, I should be working all the time with this, this privilege that I have? And that was a very destructive cycle because you’re pushing the human body to really make, the climate crisis is such an aggressive space to be in.

00:35:50:09 - 00:36:11:03

Elouise Mayall

And there's only so much that you can take. And I ignored the signals that we should rest and this is all quite heavy. And I kept going and I didn't, I didn't want to have Eco Anxiety but for me. I mean, the way I managed it was similar to what you said was sort of changing the narrative around how I viewed the situation that was going on.

00:36:11:15 - 00:36:39:12

Elouise Mayall

And like I mentioned before, I study Ecology and think that’s my true love. And so I had a reflection about eco anxiety and why I was we struggling with this concept and really fighting it. And it made me think of my own understanding of how biodiversity works and really quick science lesson - biodiverse is really important because the more biodiversity and stuff there is in the system, the more resilience there is and the more resistant it is to any change, or disturbances that come along.

00:36:39:18 - 00:36:55:04

Elouise Mayall

Think of it as a really big web and the more connections you have in that web, the harder it is to push through. And that includes all the things that we don't like, like stinging nettles and wasps and like gross things. It's just all of it together is stronger than just trying to have this monoculture. So only positive emotions of all time.

00:36:55:19 - 00:37:20:11

Elouise Mayall

And it made me kind of reflect on the fact that my Eco Anxiety, like I said before Katie, is the sign that we care and my rage is a sign that I care, my sense of justice. If I got rid of those elements myself, maybe I get rid of my eco axiety, but I wouldn't be a stronger person for it. I would be less myself. And so recognizing that there's these darker feelings that we can have doesn't mean they should be there and that’s balance.

00:37:20:11 - 00:37:41:14

Elouise Mayall

And they're important and they make one able to better engage in such a volatile space that is the climate crisis and climate activism. And all I need to do is not fight their presence which is just manage them. And then learn when it is time to take a step back, this is definitely a marathon, not a sprint and putting in everything and burning out too soon isn't helping me.

00:37:41:14 - 00:38:05:21

Elouise Mayall

It isn't helping the others or the planet that I care about. I think another thing maybe is what won't help eco anxiety, a slightly different angle. There's a lot of wonderful stuff out there about how to, using language to solve or cure your eco anxiety is to do more action. And I maybe want to put a flag out for that, it’s not true.

00:38:05:21 - 00:38:31:02

Elouise Mayall

You mustn't pathologize eco anxiety at any point, it’s not a disease, it’s a sign that you care. It’s a perfectly rational feeling and even people trying to put out resources with the best of intentions. This terminology is very unhelpful because (a) it suggests something's wrong with you and (b) there's a suggestion you can cure it by simply doing more and whilst for many people, including myself, that anxiety can lead them into doing more climax activism.

00:38:31:03 - 00:38:51:15

Elouise Mayall

That's great. It isn't a linear relationship where the more you do, the better. And that is again leading to the burn out that I talked about in the past. And so being just careful when you see those narratives as well around a cure for eco anxiety is to work your way out of these feelings is just not it, and should be taken as a caution as well.

00:38:53:07 - 00:39:22:05

Elouise Mayall

Yeah, I agree with Katie. Probably the most thing that can help is having that sense of collective support, that constellation of people who can really hold you and can understand you most in distress, particularly if you haven't got those people in your everyday life. Eco Anxiety can be very isolating if those aren't relating to your experiences. And so online or through a climate activism group or even just some friends that also can hold space and that is incredibly helpful and supportive.

00:39:22:17 - 00:39:44:24

Elouise Mayall

And even if you don’t have the answers, just having such a shared understanding and kind of collective collective understanding and support and community network is really helpful and can support us. Continuing what is a very long journey with climate activism and there isn’t a quick solution to this is things and it requires constant and maintained work.

00:39:47:16 - 00:40:11:17

Katie Hodgetts

Always I thought was such a great answer and I loved so much what you said about emotion, about biodiversity and translating the value of biodiversity that we see around us into the value of emotional biodiversity. And I really resonated as well with what you said about, gosh, everywhere ever I see the cure for Eco Anxiety is do action.

00:40:11:20 - 00:40:14:09

Katie Williams

Yeah, I was just thinking that I was going to comment on that too.

00:40:15:18 - 00:40:38:02

Katie Hodgetts

As someone who is yeah, someone who's working the burn out space, I just see that and think Ah! But yeah, just to, to kind of feedback to what we're saying about narratives and just think about what you said about, you know, that the idea of your immediate response is to do more activism or to suppress emotions and to just keep going.

00:40:38:13 - 00:41:09:16

Katie Hodgetts

We're talking about these individual narratives, and I think we also just need to name these metanarrative of capitalism, of white supremacy and of patriarchy, which will slow really push into our minds these narratives of suppressing emotion and doing more work and our value being equated with status and doing. So, I just want a name that, so that if you listen to this podcast and think, Right, I'm going to challenge all these narratives and then you find yourself doing repeat behaviours.

00:41:09:24 - 00:41:34:23

Katie Hodgetts

Give yourself grace. We live in an incredibly imperfect system, and it's very, very hard to do anything else. But imperfection, it is work. It does take a while, which is why I think the emphasis on community is so important and creating a community that really fosters a sense of it being okay to learn and to grow and be imperfect, to make mistakes.

00:41:34:23 - 00:41:59:21

Katie Williams

Thank you for that and thank you both for this, we’re kind of coming towards the end of time. So I'm going to end with a couple of questions that I kind of like to end with. The first thing being, we've talked about quite a lot of heavy stuff today, like talking about feelings is hard and tiring sometimes. So I would end with, what gives you hope?

00:41:59:21 - 00:42:10:04

Katie Hodgetts

It gives me hope. The youth movement gives me hope. And living in Bristol gives me hope, I love Bristol. UKYCC gives me hope.

00:42:11:01 - 00:42:15:12

Katie Williams

Nice answer, I like that. Elouise?

00:42:15:12 - 00:42:55:02

Elouise Mayall

I have very similar answers to Kaite. The diversity and joy I’m seeing and the youth movement is really, really helpful. I really recommend people being aware and not just doom scrolling and looking at all the good work that's come out in all the different angles. A climate crisis is a multifaceted problem, requires a multifaceted answer, and so even I’m here, I’m kind of the eco anxiety, biodiversity loss and youth side, there's so many other different angles that are being worked on and it's really exciting and inspiring to see all the different types of activism that is coming out in the really creative ways which people on attacking from all these different levels and I think linking back to Katie, there isn’t one way of being an activist, there isn’t one way of really solving the problem.

00:42:55:02 - 00:43:07:21

Elouise Mayall

And I'm very much for the more respect to the diversity of solutions is better and yeah, just learning about the news things that are coming up is really exciting and gives me hope.

00:43:09:15 - 00:43:24:03

Katie Williams

Thank you. And just while I've got you both. Is there anything else you want to promote? Like ask people to follow on social media or anything or any ways that people can support the work that you're doing.

00:43:24:03 - 00:43:26:14

Elouise Mayall

Urm, maybe no. Don’t follow me on social media.

00:43:27:12 - 00:43:28:21

Katie Williams

That’s okay.

00:43:29:16 - 00:43:32:06

Elouise Mayall

Maybe, if people want to, If you're interested to learn more about eco anxiety I would recommend either, of course, looking at Katy's project and I’m sure you’ll talk more about that, but also looking at the work by the Climate Psychology Alliance. And they're very, very good resource If you want to learn more about it. There are a bunch of professional psychology and psychiatrist psychotherapists who really are researching and trying to understand this, and so it’s a good place to get any information, even for young people or for parents or teachers.

00:43:56:24 - 00:44:08:22

Elouise Mayall

They have so many resources of how to tackle this and incorporate different ways which we can kind of learn and manage this situation.

00:44:08:22 - 00:44:41:24

Katie Hodgetts

Yeah. Echoing Climate Psychology Alliance, they also provide three free therapy sessions, psychotherapy sessions for young people. So you are feeling really triggered by this conversation, which is totally legitimate to be doing so. Then if you don't have someone in your immediate support, immediate facility for support, I'd recommend getting in touch with CPA. I would also love to plug, recommend I suppose, the Resilience Project.

00:44:42:04 - 00:45:14:13

Katie Hodgetts

So we're on Instagram @ourresilienceproject and we run annual training residentials where ,as I mentioned, we train young people to deliver these resilience courses in their movements or areas. And then also if you have any very, very wealthy parents, grandparents, friends, the youth movement needs resourcing and we don't talk enough about that. So please donate to the Resilience Project.

00:45:14:13 - 00:45:48:02

Katie Hodgetts

You can do so via our website and also please donate to other youth movements, amazing youth movements like Fridays for future, like youth and nature, like the Fridays for future MAPA, most effective people and areas, and of course the UK Youth Climate Coalition, UKYCC. Because I'm only doing what I'm doing now through the power and support that UKYCC has given me for the past five years.

00:45:49:16 - 00:45:56:17

Katie Hodgetts

And I'm also on social media. @KTClimate. So if you have any thoughts on this.

00:45:57:00 - 00:46:06:12

Katie Williams

Gutted that you've got that tag.

00:46:07:17 - 00:46:14:18

Katie Hodgetts

Yeah. Sorry. Katie's for climate, that can be our collective Instagram handle.

00:46:14:18 - 00:46:16:11

Katie Williams

All right. Thank you both so much.

00:46:16:17 - 00:46:20:21

Katie Hodgetts

Thank you Katie, Thank you Elouise.

00:46:21:02 - 00:46:29:10

Katie Williams

Yeah, it's been really fun.

00:46:29:10 - 00:46:53:01

Katie Williams

I hope you've found that conversation helpful. I always find that speaking to both Katie in Elouise reminds me of the importance of taking time to rest, recharge and reconnect with ourselves, and also that it's perfectly normal to have an emotional response to the climate crisis. I particularly love Louise's idea of emotional biodiversity. It's actually quite normal and healthy to experience a whole range of emotions, even even the ones that are challenging.

00:46:54:02 - 00:47:11:16

Katie Williams

But if eco anxiety is affecting your day to day life, it's important to seek support and find ways to cope with it. Katie's also highlighted the need to make space for joy in the movement. And yeah, I think she's completely right. We need to remember that although the work is important, we should be able to and we deserve to have some fun along the way.

00:47:12:21 - 00:47:33:24

Katie Williams

This episode is coming out just after COP27 and in the run up to Christmas. So I just wanted to take this opportunity to remind anyone listening, especially if you're active in the climate movement, to take time to rest and reflect on how you're feeling and how you might want to focus your energy going forward. It can be really hard to take a step back, but it's a really good way to come back feeling refreshed and re-energized.

00:47:35:14 - 00:47:52:02

Katie Williams

Another thing Katie mentioned just at the end there is the need for funding in the youth movement. This is something that UKYCC does need help with from time to time. We are a volunteer run NGO and we need to fund things like sending a team to COP, operational costs, like running a website and email accounts and any costs associated with our projects.

00:47:52:18 - 00:48:18:10

Katie Williams

If you'd like to make a donation to UKYCC, you can find a link on our website. This is also the last episode of the series, so thank you so much for listening to the episodes we've done so far. We'll be back in 2023 with a new series. Watch This Space. Thanks for listening to From the Ground Up, a podcast by the UK Youth Climate Coalition.

00:48:18:21 - 00:48:39:22

Katie Williams

Our guests today were Elouise Mayall and Katie Hodgetts. Your host was Katie and our music is by Nick Battle. To learn more about our work, follow us on social media or go to UKYCC.com. To learn more about the work of the Resilience Project, Follow them at Our Climate Resilience on Instagram. To learn more about Eco anxiety or if you need support, look up the Climate Psychology Alliance.

00:48:40:05 - 00:48:45:18

Katie Williams

At ClimatePsychologyAlliance.org and check out the resources in the show notes.