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| Speak Up - KōrerotiaClimate anxiety15 January 2019 |
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| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM, 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.“Kia pai te whakatere i te waka, Kei pariparia e te tai, Ka monehu te kura nei.” This is a Māori whakatauki which means, “Steer the canoe with skill, lest the outgoing tide endangers the lives on those on board.” I’m your host Sally Carlton. Nau mai ki te hōtaka tika tangata, “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Te kaupapa o te rā, he climate despair and eco anxiety. Now this is something that was suggested to me as a topic for “Speak Up” - “Kōrerotia”; I must admit I had never heard the term a couple of months ago but now I seem to be hearing it absolutely everywhere. That could well be because I’m looking into it but I also think what’s happening as we speak, generally 2020 all the bushfires in Australia in particular but all the other events that are taking place at the moment have really, really triggered people’s worries. So this is a particularly opportune time to be talking about this issue. We’ve got five guests joining us today which is really exciting. Michael, perhaps we’ll start with you. If you could introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about yourself and why you’re taking part today.  |
| Michael | Thanks so much for having me here. So my name is Michael Apathy, I feel like I’m here carrying two streams or lineages almost. One is my professional work as a psychotherapist, so that means that my regular work day-to-day is to counsel people in a private practice and help them deal with their psychological difficulties related to all sorts of things, not just the climate. But my other cap I’m here wearing is as a climate activist, that’s mainly with Extinction Rebellion and that involves lots of actions on the street, civil disobedience and really trying to pressure for the change that we need to survive. Extinction Rebellion is an international organisation and we’re quite recent and we’ve got three main demands. Our first demand is that the government and media tell the truth about the climate emergency that we’re in - and that’s not necessarily to suggest some sort of conspiracy theory or that sort of thing, but that typically government and media aren’t telling the whole truth about the severity of the crisis we’re in. So we want people to tell the truth. The second demand is we really act on it so that’s to dramatically drop carbon emissions. And our third demand is beyond politics, so that’s really recognising that vested interests and lobbyists have really massively distorted our democratic system and that to get out of this mess we need participatory democracy. So that’s really a form of democracy that puts everyday people in charge rather than corporations and lobbyists.  |
| Sally | Great, I’m sure we’ll hear more about it as we continue. Mia, you’re here from School Strike 4 Climate. If you could tell us a little bit about yourself and your involvement.  |
| Mia | I am a member of the School Strike 4 Climate Movement in Christchurch and New Zealand. I was the National Secretary of the New Zealand group up until recently and I take a large role in organising the events down here in Christchurch.  |
| Sally | Wonderful, thanks so much. We’ve got Alicia Hall who is here representing an organisation called Millions of Mothers. I’m really interested in your perspective, Alicia, as a parent, and your views on climate and how that’s impacting children. Perhaps if you could talk to us about your organisation please.  |
| Alicia | Thanks for having me. We started off as a place to share anxiety and grief and to support the school strikes. We started just before the second one last year and we saw that there’s a space needed for people to take action in other ways and forms, especially those in caregiving roles and with other responsibilities. So we just wanted to show that behind the youth are their families and we’re not just behind them, we’re also standing with them.  |
| Sally | You set up, I think it was maybe in May 2019, was that as a result of the School Strike 4 Climate movement?  |
| Alicia | I think that was definitely a main driver. Myself and two other friends had been talking for several months and it got to a point where I needed to transform those feelings into action and I was really inspired by the first strike, we went along to that and the energy and the passion was incredible and really motivating and I’d felt like us adults needed to step up and be with the youth in this, not just putting the burden on them.  |
| Sally | We’ve also got Jackie Feather. Jackie, if you could please tell us a little bit about your role and the research that you’re doing.  |
| Jackie | Hello Sally, thank you for hosting this programme. So I’m a clinical and counselling psychologist and I’m also a member of the New Zealand Psychological Society and in 2014 our Society passed a remit at the annual conference and it was around a recognition that there was a place for psychology to be involved in the climate change issue. So part of this is that we developed a Climate Psychology Taskforce and we also have put out a position statement - environmental wellbeing and responsibility to society - so this is really in recognition that caring for the natural world is critical to our wellbeing. Can’t separate psychology and climate change because climate change is coming about through human behaviour and we want to do as psychologists whatever we can to ameliorate this issue and to help people who are struggling with eco anxiety.  |
| Sally | And Brian, the other Co-Convenor of the Climate Psychology Taskforce.  |
| Brian | Kia ora koutou. I’m Brian Dixon and Jackie’s already introduced me in terms of my role with her on the Climate Psychology Taskforce. I’m also a member of the Psychological Society’s National Executive. That executive is responsible for making sure that the kinds of things like the position statement that Jackie referred to are put into practice throughout the country in terms of support both within our profession but also for people in the community and education and support. Recently I was fortunate enough to join some 43 other representatives of psychological societies and organisations, national and international ones, in a summit meeting in Portugal organised by the American Psychological Association. And at that meeting, a declaration was formed between all of those organisations to address the roles of psychology in climate change issues and recognising both the human support side of things as well as also what actions and behaviour change, attitude change and policy changes are needed. Kia ora.  |
| Sally | Thanks Brian. OK just to kick start the discussion: The news at the moment seems to be absolutely crammed with stories of climate disaster most notably right at the moment as we’re talking is the bushfires in Australia, but massive flooding in Jakarta, we’ve just had the eruption on White Island last year, we had the big, big bushfires in the Amazon which had a lot of people up in arms as well. What are your reactions when you open the news and see these sorts of stories?  |
| Michael | Yeah looking at the news through particularly the second half of 2019 and now in 2020, I’ve been really horrified of what I’ve been seeing. The sort of events you’ve been naming and also the completely inadequate political responses to this has horrified to me.  |
| Jackie | I personally feel a whole range of emotions. When you’ve got the bushfires in Australia - sad and scared, worried about the people, the animals, the loss of the natural environment and wildlife. And you know, I start to think about New Zealand too, and are we going to get to the point where our bush is just so dry that we’re going to have fires as well. And hopeless. Overwhelmed.  |
| Sally | Are these sort of typical reactions that would fall under this idea of climate anxiety/climate despair? |
| Jackie | I certainly think they do. Anxiety is essentially the feeling of threat or fear of something, often future-focused, but it can also include feelings such as I’ve just described. Guilt and even anger and feelings of shame and blame. I personally think about colonisation and what’s it’s done to Australia and New Zealand and how we’ve put our natural environment at risk even though it wasn’t us personally, it was our culture that’s done this. And so there’s a lot of mix of feelings and I think that they all fall within the concept of climate anxiety/eco anxiety.  |
| Sally | Is it true, then, to say that climate anxiety is much like any other type of anxiety? It’s caused by some kind of a stressor - in this case, it happens to be the effects of the natural environment. Is that a fair call? Is it comparable to other forms of anxiety?  |
| Jackie | I think that it is a fair call because anxiety is really a physiological reaction, you know, in our body. It’s a reaction to threat but in this case it’s the source of anxiety is perhaps very different. In Australia for example, it might relate to the loss of one’s home or fear of that, loss of a community even, lives of families, friends. But in the case of eco anxiety it can also be more general: the loss of species locally and worldwide - billions of animals have lost their lives through the endeavours of humans - and it can also manifest as a kind of an existential crisis or dread like the fear of a loss of a whole way of life, for example, and maybe even our whole system, a capitalist system, neoliberalism if you like. Some people may fear this and resist or avoid these kind of ideas and other people, they blame the capitalist system. So it’s very complex. There’s a lot of sources of anxiety with this issue.  |
| Michael | I want to inject another point of view. I really feel that in a sense our climate anxiety isn’t caused for the most part by what’s happening with the climate but it’s actually caused by our *feelings* about that. And I know that might seem a little bit like semantics or picking at details but to me that’s actually a hugely important distinction because in a sense, if our anxiety is directly caused by the climate change and the devastation that brings, then in a sense to deal with our climate anxiety… it’s almost like the best we might hope for is just to moderate how much we’re paying attention, how much we’re kind of looking at that which is actually really restrictive solution if we all need to focus on this a lot to create transformative change. But if our anxiety isn’t directly triggered by the devastation that we’re seeing, if it’s triggered instead by our feelings about that - typically it’s anger and sadness - that actually offers a lot more possibility to us because then what I see a lot in other people and certainly in myself is that it opens the doorway. Once we actually let ourselves experience that grief or that anger, in a sense we don’t need to be frightened of it anymore so then our level of anxiety drops and that leaves us resilient and motivated and calm and ready to get to work.  |
| Sally | It’s quite subtle, but an interesting and important distinction. I guess what’s interesting from my point of view, is climate anxiety isn’t necessarily caused by something that’s happening to you but it can be caused by seeing what’s happening to others. And that seems to me to be quite an interesting distinction to, perhaps, other forms of anxiety. I wonder about things like opening the newspaper and seeing all these stories - and the fact that council after council after council in New Zealand is declaring a climate emergency - these sorts of things are big news stories, they’re quite sensationalist, they can be really played up in the media if the media so wishes. That kind of thing can be, I suppose, fuelling people’s feelings of anxiety.  |
| Jackie | Yes I think it’s a good point, Sally, you’re making about the fact that there’s a lot in the media and in fact climate anxiety or eco anxiety that we’re talking about, there’s no actual clinical definition. These are actually terms that are widely used in the media but we don’t have an agreed clinical definition for them. In a way we’re kind of talking past each other when we’re talking about eco anxiety or climate anxiety even though we might all have some experience of it ourselves. The American Psychological Association defines eco anxiety as “a chronic fear of environmental doom.” So there’s one definition but that’s arguably… There could be other definitions, just as Michael’s pointed out, it depends on how we feel, what’s happening in our bodies. But certainly what’s in the media is fuelling these kinds of feelings.  |
| Sally | For Mia and Alicia, the non-psychologists, how does this feeling of anxiety manifest for you guys?  |
| Mia | It’s interesting because when you were talking about opening the newspaper and seeing different news stories about the climate and what’s happening, my reactions are usually just sort of not really surprised. It’s almost - not desensitised - but it’s just what I expect now and so that’s what I carry with me in my day-to-day life is that quite pessimistic view. Which sucks. And you know, you do have to find some ways to keep optimistic about it.  |
| Alicia | It’s actually quite complex, isn’t it? For me, my anxiety prompts me to act because I want to take the reason away and that is actually something that can be taken away. So it feels very different to other types of anxiety I’ve experienced before because it’s an external… Because part of it is the apathy or the lack of action or the learned helplessness that people seem to have around it. One of my biggest frustrations is people praising you for what you’re doing when really you want them to come on board and help and be part of it. And also, I’m really scared for my kids, I’m really, really scared for them. Like Mia said, it really sucks! It’s not fair and we need to start being way more responsible and acting because we have to act.  |
| Jackie | I think Alicia makes a really good point. These sort of movements like Millions of Mothers raise awareness and maybe the potential for anxiety but at the same time if we avoid this issue… Well, avoidance maintains anxiety, but actually, as Alicia says, if we get stuck in and do something - whatever it is, it doesn’t matter - if we do something, we’ll feel better. And if we all do something then things will start to change and I think that’s what we’re starting to see now. There’s lots of practical things that people can do that actually works as an antidote to anxiety.  |
| Sally | I think we’ll get into those actions as we move on. That seems to be the bottom line to what we’re getting at, I think, is taking action will help. We might just have our first song which is David Todd, ‘Where We Going to Go’ which is a song about climate change.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY DAVID TODD – WHERE WE GOING TO GO** |
| Sally  | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” and today we’re talking about climate despair, eco anxiety. We’ve heard that the New Zealand Psychology Society established the Climate Psychology Taskforce because they obviously felt something needed to be done. Jackie, are there similar institutions elsewhere around the world? Are we seeing these sorts of initiatives taking place elsewhere?  |
| Jackie | Yes definitely. Since about 2015 the World Health Organisation has recognised that climate change is the leading threat to global health in the twenty-first century. The American Psychological Association has declared climate change a core problem for psychology in the twenty-first century and we’ve already mentioned the New Zealand Psychological Association’s position. Actually I’d like to invite Brian to talk, perhaps, about the meeting he went to in Lisbon where there was a worldwide meeting with people involved in psychology and climate change.  |
| Brian | It’s interesting because probably the major movements are happening in the developed nations and we heard the voices of a number of people from the other nations who were present at our meeting in Lisbon about how they need help and support because they’re overwhelmed by what they need to do. There are movements, there’s the moment - I think it’s called Women of Colour throughout Africa - who are trying address - against a lot of political resistance, I might say - to develop support systems and also work on their governance in terms of policy.It was quite amazing just to hear how varied the responses have been and I think it’s beholden on us to actually assist, for instance, the Pacific Nations and the people in those nations to develop their own community resources to both address the human reactions, the emotional reactions, but also try to put in place good mitigation strategies as well.  |
| Sally | So we’ve been talking about various international things that have taken place. We’ve obviously got School Strike 4 Climate, that’s a huge international movement. Extinction Rebellion again, international. Alicia, with your Millions of Mother, I know you are Wellington-based and you set it up in New Zealand but have you got an international following and international impact?  |
| Alicia | We’re part of a bigger global group. There’s Parents for Future, there’s Mothers Rise Up in the UK. There’s Mothers Out Front in the US. There’s so many parent groups out there that formed in the past few years that are coming together to work together to share resources and, I guess, take the word even further.  |
| Sally | So putting it out to all of you, then, who are involved to some degree in climate change movement internationally: How important is this international element?  |
| Alicia | I think it’s crucial because this is a global problem, you know, we’re all in this together. We’re all going to be impacted so we all need to work together to solve it and take in account all the different cultural barriers that might be standing in the way. And also we, in the Western world, are more responsible and that others are being more impacted or greatly impacted by our actions or inaction.  |
| Michael | The international response is hugely important for all of us who are taking part in this conversation right now that we’re having. We’ve got a huge amount of privilege to be sitting here and in a sense to be able to respond to these things on a global level and as part of international movements. I think there are groups of people who don’t, who need to be focused locally. Last year I was in New Mexico attending a climate justice conference there and I didn’t expect there to be a huge amount of talk about the nuclear industry at a climate justice conference but there was because the people of the southwest of the USA have been being poisoned by uranium mining and nuclear testing for so long so I think for those people, the indigenous people there, they’re focusing on local issues, that’s exactly what they need to be doing. But for all of us who can hold that global perspective, having the privilege to do so, I think it’s an ethical imperative, actually.  |
| Sally | If we go back to this idea of climate anxiety, how do we know that it’s a thing? Have people been coming to see you, Michael, in your clinic talking to you about it, for example?  |
| Michael | Yeah that’s quite an interesting question to me. I actually don’t get a lot of people coming to my private practice with their primary problem being eco anxiety even though even in my private practice website I have declarations really putting climate emergency out front as something that we believe in and in a sense welcoming those problems. So in a way I’ve been quite puzzled by that, given that there is so much coverage and I know anecdotally from other people and from myself, a lot of people are struggling with this. So I kind of asked myself, “Well why aren’t people presenting more with these issues?” and to try and understand that a bit better a few weeks ago I actually set up a public event and went to Botanic Gardens and set up there in a beautiful green space and just made it available, free counselling around the climate crisis from me, so people could come just for free rather than having to pay for private practice fees and actually there weren’t that many people who took up that offer even though it got a fair bit of exposure. So I don’t know exactly what… The theory I have currently is that because the climate crisis is such a massive collective group issue, people actually deal better with it and feel more drawn to deal with it in groups for the most part, that in a sense to deal with it one-to-one or just as an individual is kind of counter to the nature of the problem and that certainly fits with I’ve run processes and been part of processes which have involved very, very deep processing, you know, group processes, and I’m wondering if that’s kind of the way for us to go.  |
| Sally | That’s really interesting. Jackie and Brian, have you had any experience of it in a clinical sense?  |
| Jackie | Yes I have, I have a very small private practice, just half a day a week. The younger people, I find, will begin to talk about anxiety around what’s happening in the environment and sometimes that does turn out to be one of the primary concerns for them that’s driving their anxiety. And I also train psychologists at AUT and teaching on the counselling psychology programme there and our interns also report that there’s a rise in eco anxiety in the people that they’re seeing in the various agencies. I think Michael’s point about working in groups and community engagement is really important. We thinking about from a psychoanalytical / psychodynamic point of view, climate or eco anxiety involves emotional dissociation from the suffering that humans inflict on the environment and denial of our feelings related to this in order to alleviate mental distress - so in fact it may be that the anxiety is actually being manifest in many cases by some kind of dissociation or denial but beneath this there’s a lot of fear and guilt about our own carbon footprint and even a sense of some kind of apocalyptic dread. So I think if we can work together, the sort of groups that Alicia is involved in and School Strike 4 Climate and Extinction Rebellion, you know, we’re recognising that we can do things as humans and make a difference in the natural world.  |
| Sally | Mia, have you noticed through School Strike 4 Climate that different types of people have been getting involved? I mean as well as the young people, have you been encouraging others as well?  |
| Mia | So the most recent strike on September 27th [2019] was actually an intergenerational strike, so we were encouraging people from every generation. It wasn’t just a school strike, it was for everyone to come on board and we have definitely seen that before but we saw it the most on September 27th. There were families, there were children as young as two and three. There were heaps of students but there were so many people standing beside them as well and it’s just so important that we made that space for people to take action because I definitely think that a way for people to sort of tackle climate anxiety is to take an action like that which they know is on a global scale and know that it can actually make a difference and it is.  |
| Sally | I guess as well as young people - and in Alicia’s, case mothers or parents - and Brian, you’ve touched upon the fact that culturally and ethnically different people are affected - are we seeing groups that are affected more by climate anxiety than others?  |
| Jackie | I’d like to speak very briefly about a research project that one of my Honours students did and she interviewed five young people between 18 and 30 years but it was interesting the kind of themes that came out from that group because they’re a group that are concerned about environmental change. And the themes were lack of care, they were concerned that there was a lack of care from corporate, economic and government systems. Human survival and progress: so they were concerned that the push for human survival comes at a cost to the environment. Futility: so they also felt helpless and powerless and lacking in hope. Negative effect on feelings: fear, sadness, frustration, guilt, overwhelm, exhaustion. They had different coping mechanisms though that they talked about. So the negative ones of withdrawal and apathy but there were also positive coping mechanisms: getting into nature, lifestyle choices, seeking knowledge, optimism, humour and joining groups. So I think that as School Strike 4 Climate has demonstrated, it’s cross generations now and certainly as a grandmother I was very supportive of my granddaughter making her signs and going on the School Strike 4 Climate. So yes, I think although there are specific groups more affected than others, that they’re actually people across all generations and all ethnicities who are worried.  |
| Sally | Alicia, in your organisation, have you noticed that new parents find it any more worrying than parents of older children?  |
| Alicia | Good question. I think that there’s a lot of guilt wrapped around in that. Just that existential question of bringing children into this world now, it’s quite complex and we’ve had lots of discussions around it. And also not being able to do things because we’re wrapped up in raising our babies and our young children, that we’re not able to put the time and effort into making change or demanding this change so that’s another thing that gets thrown into the mix.  |
| Sally | I also know couples who are choosing not to have children because they’re so worried about what’s happening with the climate.  |
| Alicia | Yes, yes. That is definitely… I’m reading more and more especially articles about people being really public about making the choice not to have children because of climate. I mean, no one has to have children anyway, it’s not something that every human being needs to do, but yeah, there’s definitely more and more people making that choice not to have children or stopping at one. Maybe they wanted bigger families but they’re stopping at one child because they feel really anxious.  |
| Sally | Well we’ll have our second and final song. We’ve got ‘Texas’ by Mallrat which is a song you chose, Michael.  |
| Michael | I chose it because it’s not directly climate change related but it is talking about having a heart as big as Texas and I feel like that’s what we need to handle the climate crisis. And it’s also just a really warm song that can sometimes comfort me and reconnect me when I’m struggling with all of this.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY MALLRAT – TEXAS** |
| Sally  | Kia ora, this is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Today we’re talking about climate despair and eco anxiety. We’ve got Alicia Hall from Millions of Mothers, Dr Jackie Feather and Brian Dixon from the New Zealand Psychological Society’s Climate Psychology Taskforce, Michael Apathy, who is a psychotherapist and is involved in Extinction Rebellion, and Mia Sutherland from School Strike 4 Climate. Now, we’ve been talking quite a lot about what is climate anxiety and how do we know it exists. Do we have any sense at all of how many people we’re talking? I didn’t think so - Michael is here shaking his head. Presumably, though, we can safely assume the issue is going to get bigger as the climate continues to change. Would that be a fair comment?  |
| Michael | I think so.  |
| Brian | That’s a very intriguing question and I want to just turn that around a little because we’re talking about anxiety, climate anxiety/eco anxiety in a negative context. Anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing. Millions of years of evolution have given us this emotional ability to respond and our concern and fear and worry about the future can also be incredibly motivating. We’ve heard from Alicia and Mia about the ways they’ve felt motivated by their concerns and worries and I think that really gives us a clue to what’s happening here. Worldwide people are getting worried, people are getting more worried, they’re putting pressure on their politicians, they don’t feel they’re doing enough. They’re concerned about places they live being affected. You know if you live in a coastal zone you’re almost certain to be affected over the next few years. If you produce food, for instance, dairy or crops, that’s going to be affected. It’s really important that people do feel some motivation to change, so my sense is that as we see signs of anxiety, it is important to do what Alicia talked about of actually feeling that action is important to take. Also the others are talking about collectively working together in groups and we’ve talked about international collaboration, those things are really, really important for people to be doing. In a way, I kind of hope that we see more, it’s a bit of a negative thing to say but more anxiety because we can actually encourage people to actually take more action.  |
| Michael | I’d just like to jump in and really agree with that, that anxiety isn’t necessarily a bad sign. I don’t think it’s good for people to stay stuck in high amounts of anxiety all the time but you know, if I’m counselling someone and we have a whole conversation for an hour and they never seem to get anxious, it probably actually means we’re not talking about anything that’s really deeply significant to them. I think often we can shift our relationship with anxiety: rather than just seeing it as something we need to get away from at all costs and never experience, we can see anxiety as actually a useful clue that we’re probably actually approaching something really, really significant. And that we don’t have to stay in that anxious place, that there are much deeper more powerful other motivating feelings like love and anger connected to a sense of justice that can motivate as well.  |
| Jackie | I’d like to really echo Brian and Michael as well, that anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing, that’s for sure, in this context or in any context, it wakes us up and according to psychotherapist Linda Buzzell, who has done a lot of work in this area, people go through certain stages as they wake up to what we call an eco anxiety and the fact of our environmental situation. It’s actually an understandable reaction to one’s growing awareness of climate change and the global problems that are resulting from the climate damage we’re seeing to the ecosystem. Of course it can move into very stressful states of anxiety such as panic attacks and obsessive thinking and loss of appetite and insomnia and so on and in those situations, the people really should be speaking to their GP and perhaps having a referral to a psychotherapist or a therapist or a psychologist. But if we can actually get into groups and start to work together, then that’s another way of ameliorating anxiety and it’s certainly giving us motivation to make a change. One of the things we’ve been talking about is the strong feelings that people are experiencing associated with this issue and I think probably the first step is to accept those feelings and not to think it is anything wrong with you. This is something that is going to bring up strong feeling so opening up to those and part of that is actually talking to others and being part of a group but being able to accept that we’re going to have these kind of strong feelings and be able to then bring ourselves back into the present moment and go, “Well OK, what can I do now?” And I’m drawing on a model called acceptance and commitment therapy which has got three main aspects that are open up, open to our feelings; be present, be present with them and with our situations; and then the third part, which I think we’ve been touching on, is do what matters. So think about what matters to you and Millions of Mothers is a great example because what matters to mothers is their children, their children’s wellbeing and their futures. Being involved in anything that’s going to help their children is going to help mothers feel better, too, so doing what matters. And School Strike 4 Climate is another example, any of these groups. I think it’s important, also - and here I’m drawing on mindful self-compassion - to be kind to ourselves. To realise we’re all in this together, it’s a common human problem that we’re facing and just to recognise our common humanity in this and the need to be kind to ourselves, that’s going to help us through this and humanity move to a hopefully new phase where we’re doing a whole lot better for our environment.   |
| Alicia | I have to fully agree with Jackie, one of our big projects this year is called Let’s Talk Climate and it’s to normalise talking about it but also it’s meeting people where they’re at and with compassion. We don’t have to know everything; I don’t know everything - I’m not sure I want to know everything! - but it’s more about leaning on each other more, being able to offload emotions on others that get it and think local and be involved. You don’t have to join a big climate group, you can be involved with your community. There’s so much going on it’s incredible and it’s really positive and I just think find your people and a space where you’re heard and you’re able to act in a way that you can rather than feeling the pressure to be like other people. Be you. Do you. Find your way.  |
| Sally | Actually Michael and I were talking about this before we started, was trust that there will be others who are doing the things that you’re not. So, you might be interested in one element, so pursue that interest, pursue what you’re good at and what you’re interested in - and trust that somebody else is doing the other things that maybe you’re not so interested in.  |
| Alicia | Yeah absolutely.  |
| Sally | Mia, what would be your top tips if someone want to get involved?  |
| Mia | Also like, just go for it. I feel like a lot of people see the people who organise the climate change strikes, or who are heavily involved, and it’s like the perfect people who do no wrong to the climate and are super intense about it. But really we’re just people who stepped up because we saw the opportunity and we kind of felt like we had to. So I’d really encourage everyone to get involved. On Facebook there’s all the emails to all the different regional organisers for School Strike 4 Climate New Zealand and there are so many groups out there like Extinction Rebellion who are also catering to a market of people who would like to be involved in a climate movement so there are so many opportunities if School Strike 4 Climate isn’t really your thing then I really encourage you to just get on social media, have a look around, get in touch with some people and they’ll be able to push you in the right direction.  |
| Sally | It certainly seems like we’ve been saying getting involved in a group is very beneficial, you can feel like you’re doing something, you’re also connecting with people who share the same worries but also the same motivations. Have we got any final comments? Have you got anything coming up that you’d like to promote or anything you think we haven’t yet said?  |
| Michael | Since you asked, I would like to promote something. So April this year should be a massive month for climate action. Certainly I know School Strike 4 Climate will be doing a lot during that time, Extinction Rebellion will be certainly doing a lot of actions, and hopefully it can be a really powerful month of response around the climate and one where hopefully all of these different organisations can work together and collaborate so that it gets massively into our consciousness. So I want to put the word out for that and I’m sure it will be a time that stirs up a lot of feelings and a lot of climate anxiety so hopefully it can be a time for healing and connection and listening as well as being out of the streets.  |
| Alicia | We have an open letter at the moment that is calling for cooperative politics but a formal agreement between all the parties to keep climate issues at the forefront. The Zero Carbon Act, it’s a grey area, it’s too grey. So we want the parties to actually formally agree to work collaboratively on climate issues to keep progressing it forward, not the stop/start, a new government comes in, they change it. We need to keep going forward so we have an open letter that we’d love for people to sign and also we’re seeking logos from groups, organisations and businesses supporting this as well. We need a cross sector of society showing that we’re all in this together and we want our politicians, the people we elected, to do their jobs.  |
| Brian | There are a number of things that we’re doing which could be of interest to people. Probably our Facebook page is the best place for finding the resources. So for instance things like how to talk to children about climate issues, what kinds of actions people can be taking. Also the Australian Psychological Society has tremendous resources that they’ve developed for the public and for people working with and supporting others. But I’d also like to say that we’ve talked quite a bit about working in groups but it really is important for us to also encourage people to take individual actions that they can. Every little bit helps. If somebody plants a tree today, that’s really important for tomorrow. Taking the bus, walking where people can, writing a letter to parliament about the kinds of laws, supporting MPs who are wanting to see better support around climate change issues, all of these things are incredibly important with the individual or in our families, in our homes.  |
| Sally | Just one final question as well. So Christchurch, along with other cities in New Zealand, has recently declared a climate emergency, what does it actually mean now that the City Council has committed itself to doing and how is that likely to impact what we’re talking about?  |
| Mia | It’s really helpful that they’ve done that because it means that we have a standard that we can hold them accountable to. So they have said, we think that this is an emergency, we believe that we should be taking action and in the cases where they might not do that we can say well you yourself has said that you think that this is a big issue so why aren’t you doing more. So really it is about keeping them accountable and keeping them on the track of action rather than just seeing business as usual.  |
| Michael | And I think, ultimately, what it ends up being - if it’s kind of empty or really significant - depends on us, we the people. If we push the City Council and ECan [Environment Canterbury] to really act on that in a meaningful way, they will, and it will be a deeply significant thing. If we don’t, it will get left as a declaration that has had a little bit of an impact but is not adequate.  |
| Sally | I guess it comes back, doesn’t it, to taking action? Well I’d like to say thank you so much, kia ora koutou. This has been a really, really intense and wide-ranging discussion. I’ve certainly learnt a lot and I hope that whoever is listening to this has also learnt a lot and is inspired to take some action that we’ve all been suggesting. Just to finish off we have one final song which is a song called ‘Sing for the Climate,’ which was recorded in 2012 and they had tens of thousands of people in Belgium singing this song about the climate and it’s very uplifting and very powerful. So a nice way to finish up with this idea of taking a stand.  |
|  | **MUSIC - SING FOR THE CLIMATE** |