

# Eco-Wellness Guide

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SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS  
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# Combating Eco-Anxiety

As we struggle to grasp the realities surrounding the current climate crisis and the urgency with which it must be addressed, many may begin to feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to find optimism in a scenario that seems so inevitably dreadful. If you find yourself wrestling with these thoughts, know you are not alone.

In fact, anxiety induced by the thoughts of environmental defeat has its own term recognized across the world: eco-anxiety. Eco-anxiety can be defined as “chronic discomfort brought on by an overwhelming fear of environmental disaster,” and is a prevalent issue for many people, not just those who work at the forefront of the climate crisis.

A 2018 national survey<sup>1</sup> expressed that almost 70% of people living in the United States are at least worried about climate change, while 51% of Americans feel “helpless” about it, reinforcing the idea that eco-anxiety affects a wide variety of people and has the potential to severely affect the overall wellness of the world and, on a smaller scale, Florida State University faculty, staff, and students.

While experiencing eco-anxiety may not be particularly pleasant, it is a responsible reaction to have regarding our world’s current climatic state, as it shows awareness of the environmental crisis we are all facing and has the potential to fuel environmental activism and individual change. The purpose of this guide is to acknowledge eco-anxiety and its prominence throughout society, while being able to discuss various ways to combat these feelings of doom and gloom and take a more positive, optimistic approach to climate-related issues.

Below are a few ways to take individual action, followed by some grounding techniques that are meant to help re-ignite our relationships with the very things that drive us to fight against climate change: the beauty and interconnectivity of Earth. Lastly, there is a topic titled “Community Involvement” that discusses taking the next step and working with others to fight for climate justice.

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<sup>1</sup> Leiserowitz, A. et al. (2018, Dec). Climate Change in the American Mind. Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. Retrieved from <https://climate-communication.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/>.





## Individual Methods of Change:

### **Sustainable Diets**

The Food and Agriculture Organization defines sustainable diets as “those diets with low environmental impacts that contribute to food and nutrition security and to the healthy life for present and future generations.” Though the topic of such diets can get complex, on a basic level, this can include anything from buying more products from your local farmers market (local sourcing) and reducing your plastic use when purchasing food products, to meal-prepping and making sure to always clear your plate to prevent food waste (portion control).

### **‘Slow’ Fashion**

Slow Fashion is a form of conscious consumerism, encouraging quality over quantity and, from an environmental standpoint, the use and creation/purchase of sustainable products that limit environmental impact. The term slow fashion was created in opposition to fast fashion, which refers to inexpensive clothing produced by mass-market retailers to follow rapidly changing fashion trends. Some steps towards slow fashion include shopping less frequently, buying less when you do shop, supporting vintage and second-hand businesses, avoiding fast fashion brands, and seeking out ethical and sustainable products and brands. Although sustainable clothing/material items may be a bit pricier, it is important to consider the cost-per-wear, what our funds are supporting, and how long our products will last.

### **Eco-Friendly Forms of Transportation**

While many people use motor vehicles to get them from place to place and complete their daily tasks, it is common knowledge that they are one of the leading contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. The Environmental Defense Fund estimates that one-third of the air pollution that produces smog in the United States is caused by automobiles. So, what does the implementation of eco-friendly forms of transportation look like in your daily life? The answer does not have to start with selling your car and biking to work everyday (which, if you do, is great). Instead, start small by choosing one day of the week to walk, bike, run, rollerblade, etc. to somewhere you would usually drive to. From there, you can decide which forms of eco-transportation work the best with your schedule, as well as how realistic it is to integrate them into your daily life.

Trailhassee – this website/app allows users to explore the various trails and greenways Tallahassee has to offer: <https://www.trailhassee.com/>



## **Breathing Exercises/Yoga Poses**

Active breathing can help bring awareness back to your body and physically increase the supply of oxygen to your brain, encouraging a state of calmness by stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system which is responsible for relaxing your body after experiencing stress or danger. Similarly, the practice of yoga (in which breathing plays a key role) promotes strength and ease while attempting to interrupt worry cycles and inspire self-growth. Both techniques can be extremely helpful in re-igniting our relationship to the Earth as the roots, history, and practice of yoga align with the principles of respecting and protecting the Earth and all its inhabitants. Likewise, yoga and breathwork are focused on re-grounding from the core, offering a way to clear the mind and re-direct thoughts.

### **Box Breathing**

1. Close your eyes. Count to four slowly while breathing in only from your nose (Ujjayi Breath). Feel your lungs expand as the air enters your body through your nose.
2. Hold your breath while slowly counting to four. Relax your jaw.
3. Begin to slowly exhale for four seconds. Feel your lungs compress as the air exits your body through your nose.
4. Repeat steps 1 to 3 at least 3 more times. If you have time, repeat for a full 4 minutes, or until calm fills anxiety's place.

### **Nadhi sodhana**

1. Close your eyes. Empty the air from your lungs.
2. Use the thumb of your dominant hand to block airflow from your right nostril, while inhaling through your left nostril only. Feel your lungs expand as the air enters your body through your left nostril.
3. Once you are full of breath/air, block your left nostril with the ring finger of the same hand, keeping your right nostril blocked as well.
4. Hold your breath for a moment.
5. Release your thumb and exhale through your right nostril only, making sure to exhale completely and pause before inhaling once more through the same right nostril.
6. Block both nostrils once you have inhaled on the right side and exhaled through the left side.
7. Perform up to ten cycles for up to 8 counts of breathing/holding, taking notice to how your body and mind respond to your active breath.

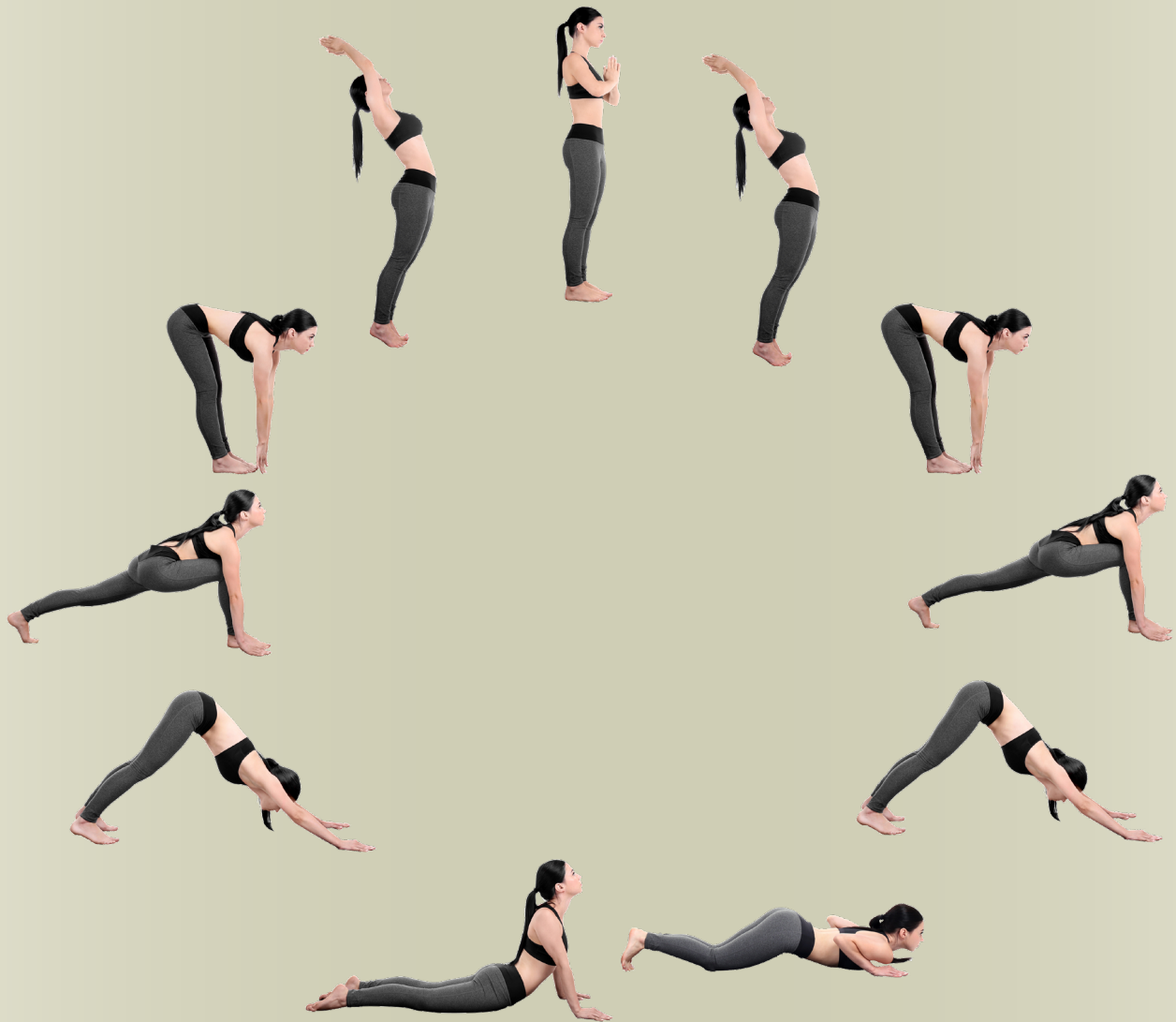




## Yoga Geared towards stress relief and calming anxiety

- Visit [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for “beginners, 15-minute yoga” to find classes meant to reground and regroup your body after experiencing stress/anxiety.

### Stress relieving yoga poses:





## Eco-Art/Poetry

Art comes in many different forms and fashions and is a great outlet for self-expression and healing. Below is a poem written by Wendell Berry, a famous writer and poet who doubles as an environmental activist and farmer, that touches on feelings of environmental despair and how to combat them, followed by a mad-lib version of the poem and various artistic prompts meant to promote creativity, a sense of relaxation, and a reconnection to the Earth.

### The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

### The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Wild Things by Wendell Berry & \_\_\_\_\_

When \_\_\_\_\_ for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in \_\_\_\_\_ of what my life and my children's lives may  
be,  
I go and lie down where the \_\_\_\_\_  
rests in his \_\_\_\_\_ on the water, and the great  
\_\_\_\_\_ feeds.  
I come into the \_\_\_\_\_ of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of \_\_\_\_\_. I come into the presence of \_\_\_\_\_.  
And I feel above me the \_\_\_\_\_  
waiting with their \_\_\_\_\_. For a time  
I rest in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world, and am free.





## Writing Prompt: A Love Letter to the Earth

1. Grab something to write on/with. You can get as creative with it as you please – don't be afraid to throw some paint in the mix!
2. Go to your favorite/nearest outdoor area and take a comfortable seat in the grass, or as close to the ground as you feel comfortable.
3. Take a moment to observe and appreciate your surroundings, beginning to think about why the area you chose is so special to you and what it means to be able to designate this time to enjoying the outdoors.
4. As you sit and observe, start to single out each of your five senses.
5. Start with sight, then continue with touch, hearing, smell, and finally taste. Do not worry – not every one of these senses must be fulfilled in some grand way. The point of this portion of the exercise is awareness.
6. Keeping each of these experienced senses in mind, grab your writing utensil and take to paper.
7. Begin your love letter to the Earth. Start your letter with “Dear Earth,” and try and incorporate all five of the sense you gave awareness to throughout the page. Think about how the Earth supports and provides for you and the ones you love.
8. The letter can be as long as you want but try and make it at least a paragraph (once you start writing it will be harder to stop than you originally may have thought).
9. If you have not done so already, start at least one sentence with the words “Thank you for . . . “
10. Once you have finished the bulk of your letter and are prepared to finish, sign the bottom with one final word of regard (Sincerely, Love, Best, etc.) and your name.
11. Finally, add whatever final touches you wish to and place the letter somewhere that is easily accessible.
12. Now, if you ever experience an overwhelming amount of eco-related anxiety, you can return to this letter (or make a new one) and remind yourself why you love the Earth you are fighting to protect.





# Community Involvement

Community involvement is the power to bring measurable change, inspiration, and innovation to whichever communities you choose to partner with and operate in. Especially in relation to the climate crisis, community involvement first means letting others (especially those in local power) know that you think taking climate action is pertinent. Community involvement is the first step in igniting bigger change, change that has the potential to positively affect the beast that is the climate crisis. Said involvement can take many different forms from voting, to attending commission meetings, writing letters to public figures, and/or getting involved in organizations who do environmental/sustainable work.

## Voting

Every election represents an opportunity for change, an idea that is pivotal in deciding the future of the Earth's environmental security. The ability to vote is an opportunity to voice your opinions regarding various topics, also allowing you to reflect on your own morals and beliefs, eventually deciding based off what policies and representatives you either do or do not align with. While the presidential elections are what most people automatically think of following the word 'vote,' there are other state, county, and city elections that you can take part in that deal with everything from choosing representatives to approving or declining policies.

## Commission Meetings

The Commission considers new regulations, advisory opinions, and other issues/topics relating to public matters. Commission meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for citizens of a given community to provide input related to said public matters. As with what has already been discussed, attending meetings such as these is a great way to kick-start your environmental interest/action, as they are extremely informative and many relate, in some way, to environmental issues. Commission meetings also help create informed citizens and voters.

### Florida Voters Registration

- <https://registertovoteflorida.gov/home>

### Leon County Supervisor of Elections

- <https://www.leonvotes.gov/>

### City of Tallahassee Commission

- <https://www.talgov.com/cityleadership/city-commission.aspx>

### Leon County Government

- <https://www2.leoncountyfl.gov/coadmin/agenda/>







## **Organization Involvement**

As students attending a large university, there are so many opportunities to get involved with campus organizations, as well as general community organizations. By being involved in organizations that promote sustainability and environmentally minded ideals, we can expose ourselves to a new realm of knowledge, and in turn, possibly pass that knowledge on to others who might care to listen.

FSU has been able to grow a community of student organizations that are committed to the education and advocacy of environmental issues. These student groups are responsible for starting the conversation about these environmental issues of growing significance. Through student run organizations we can join with like-minded people who share similar passions and hopes for our environment's future and get more involved with the larger Tallahassee community through partnerships and local opportunities.

