



Parent & carer information sheet

★ Talking with children about environmental issues



★ "Eco-anxiety" and children



Issues and concerns about the environment are big news at the moment and children are hearing about this through TV and social media like never before. It is an issue that lots of children feel very strongly about and it can also be a cause of great worry for them.

In the 2019 summer term, Safety Net consulted with **600 children aged 9 – 11** in **10 local primary schools**. We wanted to find out what children of this age worry about.

We asked children: what do you worry about most? Your neighbourhood? Things at home? School worries? The world?

51% of children said that they worried about world issues the most, especially the environment.

In a recent BBC Newsround survey of 2,000 8 – 16 year olds, 53% said they didn't think adults were doing enough to protect the environment. One 11 year old boy, Dylan said: *"I'm going to grow up in this world. All this bad stuff is happening and I want to do something about it. Adults have lived through most of it so they don't care as much as us children"*.

It's important for children to be informed and get involved, but we also need to make sure that we preserve their sense of hope and safety in the world.



★ What can you do to support children in thinking about the environment?

- ★ Help children **develop an interest in nature** by going on nature walks and talking to children about plants and animals around where you live. A Scavenger hunt can be a fun way of doing this. See <https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives>
- ★ **Lead by example**, do your bit as a family by having a plan for the 3 R's (Reduce, Re-use and Re-cycle) and getting your children involved.
- ★ **Find out what your child knows** or has heard already so you have a starting point.
- ★ **Listen to your children's concerns** about the environment and allow them to tell you how they feel and think.
- ★ **Be honest**. You could say *"well, there are a lot of people who are worried about that too"*. However, be aware that too much detail about environmental issues could be alarming to younger children.
- ★ **Monitor** how much your children are being exposed to media stories on environmental problems.
- ★ **Reassure** your children and give them hope. Find positive news stories about how children and adults are doing good things to help the environment.
- ★ **Explain what action they can take to help**. For example doing their bit to reduce waste, getting involved in a local project like a park clean up, or taking part in a wider campaign.

(Adapted from *The Australian Psychological Society*, 2018)



★ Things you and your family can do

- ★ **Take more public transport**, walking and cycling instead of using your car
- ★ **Reducing and recycling** at home and at school
- ★ **Turning off** electronic items when not in use and using them less
- ★ **Taking showers instead of baths**, only using the water you need
- ★ **Eating less meat and dairy** and reducing food waste
- ★ **Buying fewer clothes** and toys and shopping for things made locally
- ★ **Talking to friends** about what they are doing. *From BBC Newsround*



★ Useful resources

Websites

- ★ **National Geographic for Kids**: Has information on everything from endangered species to protecting the environment and battling plastic pollution: www.natgeokids.com
- ★ **Young People's Trust for the Environment**: www.ypte.org.uk
- ★ **Our Bright Future** – for older young people www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk

YouTube clips

- ★ For example, this short film on what happens when you throw plastic away: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6xINyWPpB8
- ★ Or this on children taking action against ocean plastic: <https://youtu.be/hKfV9IquMXA>
- ★ BBC Newsround focus on climate change www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/48965605



Leaflets & information

- ★ **Be an Ocean Guardian** is aimed at American children but has some good facts and activity sheets: <https://bit.ly/33ob0fx>
- ★ **Is Plastic Fantastic?** Features facts on where plastic comes from and easy tips for refusing single-use plastic. <https://bit.ly/2C9SOv8>
- ★ **A Guide for Parents about the Climate Crisis**: A useful guide produced by the Australian Psychological Society: <https://bit.ly/324yciU>

Books

There are lots of children's books that use storytelling to tackle environmental problems:

- ★ **The Lorax** by Dr. Seuss
- ★ **The Tantrum That Saved the World** by Megan Herbert and Michael Mann
- ★ **A free online story** for children of 5 and over is this reading of a book for kids on climate change read by Lily Cole: <https://bit.ly/2MAF6Ge>
- ★ **The Tragic Tale of the Great Auk** by Jan Thornhill
- ★ **The Problem of the Hot World** by Pam Bonsper
- ★ **The Brilliant Deep** by Kate Messner, illustrated by Matthew Forsythe

