



Response to Consultation on Reconnection: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out.

Institute of Health Promotion and Education

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General comments

We congratulate The Mindfulness Initiative, The Emergence Foundation, LUCSUS centre for sustainability studies, and LUND University in highlighting the link between mindfulness and climate change. Up to this point actions against climate change have focused very much on practical technological solutions, so this is a welcome addition to the overall debate. That there is a disconnect between the anxiety and victimhood that people feel with their actual behaviour and sense of agency needs to be addressed.

Increased mindfulness and compassion should help us understand ourselves and our reactions and hopefully enable us to take positive cultural and behavioural change actions to limit climate change. To this end recognised health promotion strategies could link with mindfulness to create individual understanding and help move people forward into taking individual and corporate action.

See also discussion and call for further papers addressing these issues in the International Journal of Health Promotion and Education.

For example:

Chris. G. Buse, Maya Gislason, Arleigh Reynolds & Mira Ziolo (2021) Enough tough talk! It's time for the tough action(s) to promote local to global planetary health, International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, 59:5, 271-275, DOI: 10.1080/14635240.2021.1956796

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14635240.2021.1956796>

Owen P (2021) Working together is key to tackling climate change and achieving the sustainable development goals, International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, 59:6, 378-380.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14635240.2021.1987120>

For further information on health promotion, see our position statements:

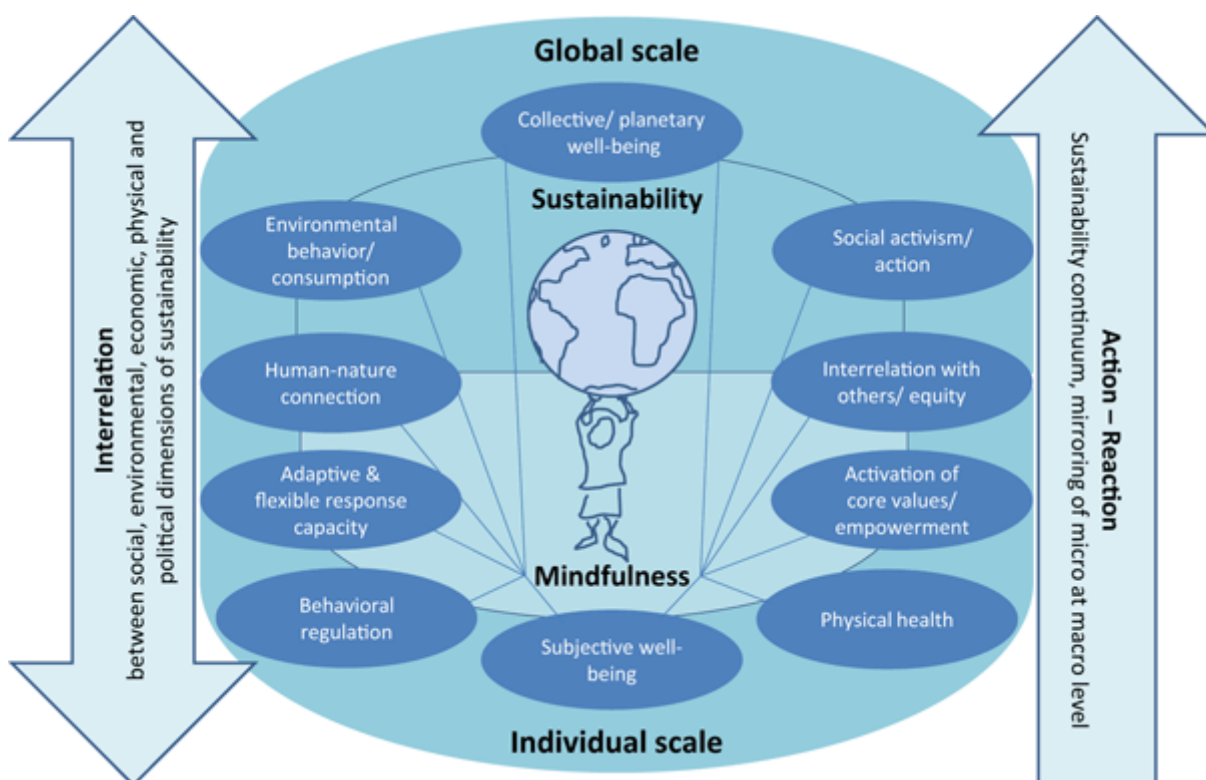
- IHPE Position Statement: Health Promotion (May 2021)
- IHPE Position Statement: Air Pollution (December 2019)

<https://ihpe.org.uk/resources/position-papers/>

We suggest that readability and accessibility of the document could be improved so that it is easier for a wider audience (including policy makers) with the intention of galvanising people into action. Some suggestions:

1. Boxes with key information
2. Diagrams
3. Definitions of language not widely understood, such as 'agency' and 'inner and outer transformation.'
4. Care should be taken when using certain colour combinations (font/background) as they can be difficult for people with colour vision deficiency (colour blindness). Guidance can be found here: <http://scdg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Colour-information-with-header-sheet-2.pdf>.
5. Some of the good quotes that were mentioned in the webinar
e.g. Jon Kabat-Zinn – The real meditation practice is life itself. Add to a box?
e.g. Jamie Bristow's definition of mindfulness – was just a few points but very clear. Add to a box?

The addition of this excellent diagram would provide a helpful summary.



Source: Professor Christine Wamsler. Permission to use has been granted providing the 2 references below are added.

Leal, W., Consorte McCrea, A. (2018) Handbook of Sustainability and Humanities, chapter by Wamsler, C. (2018) 'The role of individual inner dimensions and transformation in sustainability research and education', World Sustainability Series of Springer.

Wamsler, C., Brossmann, J., Hendersson, H., Kristjansdottir, R., McDonald, C., Scarampi, P. (2018) Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice and teaching, *Sustainability Science* 13(1):143–162.

Comments about the Conclusion

Should some more positive information be added to the conclusion. Two key points:

- 1) Change is possible
- 2) We have a beautiful planet with many resources.

For example:

Change is possible, but it is a choice we must make, requiring us to develop the skills to break out of unhelpful habit patterns and act positively from a place of clarity. Reclaiming our collective ability to really see our beautiful planet, our deep connection to, and dependence on, it and the many resources offered freely, we can move to the vital position of prioritising work to maintain and improve it, reclaiming sustainable health along the way.

Comments about Recommendations

- Some of the recommendations would benefit from being more specific. Also, the comments made earlier about targeting a wider audience and galvanising them into action, particularly apply here.

1. Policy integration and mainstreaming

Public institutions and advocates for climate action should raise awareness about the importance of developing inner capacities, including mindfulness and compassion, to societal flourishing and sustainability. This process should be supported, as per other mainstreaming issues such as gender equality, through systematic policy integration - modifying existing mechanisms and structures at all levels and across all sectors of society.

- Positive aspects of actions need to be communicated rather than always focusing on negative.
- Also encourage a settings focus.

2. Education

Sustainability education and related digital media education should be a right of every pupil and student, requiring targeted financial governmental support. Integrated learning approaches should include mindfulness and compassion-informed elements. Children and young people need a balance between learning about ecological concerns and developing the inner capacities and agency required to cope with the emotional toll and respond appropriately.

- This should be part of PSHE as well as other key subjects. Importantly it will need to be coordinated. Teachers will need training and continued support.
- “Agency” Use different words as many people will not know what this means.
- Across the life course.
- In a variety of settings (e.g. schools, prisons, secure training centres).

- Vital that marginalised and underserved populations are supported.

3. Strategic policy and oversight

Governments should establish central expertise by creating specialised units and positions within the agency responsible for overseeing cross-departmental initiatives. These units should support and coordinate programmes in different areas of public life that nurture the inner cognitive, emotional and relational capacities of citizens and public sector staff, with particular emphasis on evidence-based interventions such as mindfulness and compassion training.

- A senior person needs to be appointed to drive it forward.

4. Climate leadership development

Public leaders, particularly national politicians, should receive basic education about the interconnection of inner and outer dimensions of climate change, including impacts at individual and societal levels (e.g. trauma, polarisation, systemic mental health issues such as eco-anxiety). In this context, leaders should be routinely offered evidence-based programmes to nurture inner capacities, such as mindfulness and compassion and health.

- Add health/health promotion to this recommendation
- Again, 'inner and outer dimensions' may not be widely understood. Consider adding diagram or link to earlier part of the document.

5. Research

Governmental and research funding bodies should provide increased funding for research that fills gaps in understanding of the linkages between inner and outer transformation for sustainability. They should support the investigation and development of methods to intervene in the vicious cycle of climate change, mental health, trauma, and unsustainable paradigms.

- An outsider may be puzzled by this wording "between inner and outer transformation for sustainability"
- Need to add - investigate positive ways forward.
- Need innovation and research in specific settings that has potential to engage underserved populations.

6. Innovation

Mindfulness and compassion experts and innovators should critically reflect upon and expand their work to support climate action. Innovations should incorporate approaches from social and sustainability sciences. Common approaches should become more trauma-informed and socially and ecologically aware.

- Need to add health/health promotion to first and second sentences.
- Need to add policy makers/politicians to the first sentence.
- Should common approaches become more positive?
- Should common approaches become more health promoting?
- It is not clear what 'more trauma-informed' means.

7. Equitable Access

Evidence-based courses that support inner capacity development and the integration of inner and outer transformation for sustainability should be publicly funded. They should be delivered in context-sensitive formats and in accessible language so that they can reach a wide cross-section of the population. The current reliance on privately and corporately funded forms of inner development, such as mindfulness and compassion-based courses, exacerbates health and social inequalities.

- First sentence may be difficult to understand. Use different language or add a diagram e.g. for "integration of inner and outer transformation for sustainability".
- Across the life course.
- In a variety of settings (e.g. schools, prisons, secure training centres).
- Vital that marginalised and underserved populations are supported so that they can contribute.

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