

# COPING WITH CLIMATE ANXIETY

## The struggles of Bangladeshi youth

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This year, winter has been very unpredictable in Bangladesh with record low temperatures. Just last year, the country faced similar erratic weather patterns with frequent floods, scorching summer heat waves, sudden winter temperature drops, and lesser monsoon rainfall.

Experts predict that we will face more unpredictable weather events in the coming year due to climate change.

As we navigate the firsthand impacts of climate change as a climate-vulnerable nation, our social media feeds also consistently bombard us with increasingly alarming climate-related updates. This, combined with reports of extreme weather events worldwide, is significantly affecting the mental well-being of the youth.

Umme Hani Lamiya, a 20-year-old student from North South University, shares that her awareness of the consequences of climate change has taken a toll on her mental well-being, causing a sense of helplessness. She expresses, "I came across a news article recently that projected this year to be the hottest on record. The clock is ticking, I feel like we are running out of time."

as stated in a report by Yale Sustainability, "Climate anxiety is fundamentally distress about climate change and its impacts on the landscape and human existence. This may manifest as intrusive thoughts or feelings of distress about future disasters or the long-term future of human existence and the world."

Fundamentally, climate anxiety is anxiety stemming from uncertainty about the future, and this feeling of helplessness or grief about the environment is not uncommon. In a recent international study, over half of respondents between the ages of 16 and 25

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grappling with climate anxiety since his first year of university. "I have experienced climate anxiety ever since I got into the climate tech world and started studying climate change and its impact."

However, he strives to remain optimistic and stresses the importance of having a positive mindset in tackling the effects of

effects of climate change," shares Rimen.

While climate anxiety can be debilitating, it's crucial to underscore the importance of being hopeful. Climate

existential worries.

Rifat Anik, a 21-year-old documentary filmmaker and project lead at Stories of Change, a platform amplifying the voices of those most affected by the climate crisis in rural Bangladesh, recounts his journey of managing climate anxiety while being actively involved in the climate field.

"Personally, I used to struggle with striking up conversation about my own worries about climate change when I was younger because no one wants to talk about how uncertain the future is. It felt isolating.

I became a climate storyteller in hopes of sparking more productive conversation around climate change in

order to help people move forward from this feeling of 'paralysis' that stems from climate anxiety."

While it may not seem like it, it is possible to cope with the big climate emotions of grief, hopelessness, and powerlessness. Whether it is hopelessness regarding the lack of immediate response to tackle climate change or grief over the loss of environment as Umme and Rakibul share, it is important to acknowledge our feelings and prevent escalation into panic or paralysis.

Recognising and acknowledging one's feelings, adopting a mindful news consumption approach, fact-checking information to avoid falling into the climate disinformation trap online, and seeking support from online communities are effective ways to manage climate anxiety. It's essential to address these emotions and allow individuals to stay engaged and take positive action toward mitigating climate change.

"It's necessary to talk about the issue. Addressing climate anxiety can feel intimidating due to its existential nature, but it's vital to engage in conversations to keep exploring solutions. Acknowledging these feelings is essential, even if it may feel isolating. Connecting with others, sharing concerns, and discussing the issue makes it easier to move forward," suggests Rifat on dealing with climate anxiety.

**References:**

1. Yale Sustainability (March 13, 2023). *Yale Experts Explain Climate Anxiety*.
2. The Lancet (December, 2021). *Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey*.



ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANUM

Rakibul Islam Rakib, a 21-year-old student at Dhaka University, reveals that his visits to remote and climate-vulnerable areas have heightened his awareness of the consequences of climate change. He has been experiencing climate anxiety since college. "I feel a sense of grief, but I'm unsure of what action to take or how to navigate through this," he shares.

Experts have defined this new form of worry as climate anxiety. According to Sarah Lowe, Associate Professor at the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Yale School of Public Health,

responded that they were worried about climate change. Among them, 59 percent expressed being very concerned, while 84 percent reported at least a moderate level of worry. Over 50 percent indicated experiencing emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, powerlessness, helplessness, and guilt.

Rakib Shahriar Rimen, a 25-year-old entrepreneur, revealed that he has been

climate change.

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anxiety can cause young people to feel helpless and powerless. One of the antidotes to climate anxiety is cultivating a sense of hope like Rimen.

Learning to manage climate anxiety is important to prevent being overwhelmed by emotions and to remain committed to climate action as it can deter young people from engaging in climate action, which can feel meaningless in the face of

# The academic junkie's guide to micro-dosing success

**Even if it's the tiniest amount of work, it's more work than you did the previous day. This feeling of advancing can be quite addictive, propelling you to work harder over time because you're chasing that dopamine hit.**

ARANYO RISHI CHOWDHURY

After aeons of procrastination, that academic comeback you've been dreaming of all year starts to feel increasingly hopeless and impossible. The sheer depth of the exam dawns on you. If you're anything like me, this experience should sound all too familiar. It's only natural to want to avoid maintaining a rigorous work ethic year-round. However, to avoid despairing over a task that's become monumental through neglect, here's a hack that'll get you addicted to working.

First, abandon the mindset that you'll cover entire syllabuses in mere weeks' time. The more you delay and the nearer the deadline draws, the more intimidating your long-term goals will feel to you. With each passing day, you're making your task harder.

How to fix this? Start micro-dosing. Most of us aren't in the habit of studying. Consistency can't be built overnight when motivation suddenly hits you at 3 AM, with everything reverting back to your usual tardy routine the next morning. The key is to build up to that level of academic commitment.

Start by merely flicking through the syllabus of a subject on the first day. The next day, you may read a paragraph or two covering a subtopic. Continue this for a few weeks to a month.

Such tiny amounts of progress may seem inconsequential, but the small increments eventually build up to a productive lifestyle.

As you slowly increase the amount of work you do, your attention span recovers at a steady rate. You'll begin to devote more and more time to studying and not feel drained. Every time you get used to a certain level of work, increasing it a little bit won't feel overwhelming and make you want to switch tabs to YouTube or pick up your phone. In no time, reading two paragraphs per session turns into consuming and digesting entire chapters in a day.

As you enjoy studying at a comfortable pace, you'll naturally want to increase the workload as you get used to the previous one. Unlike short bursts of stressful preparation a week away from the exam, this approach gives you a constant feeling of progress, making it more sustainable.

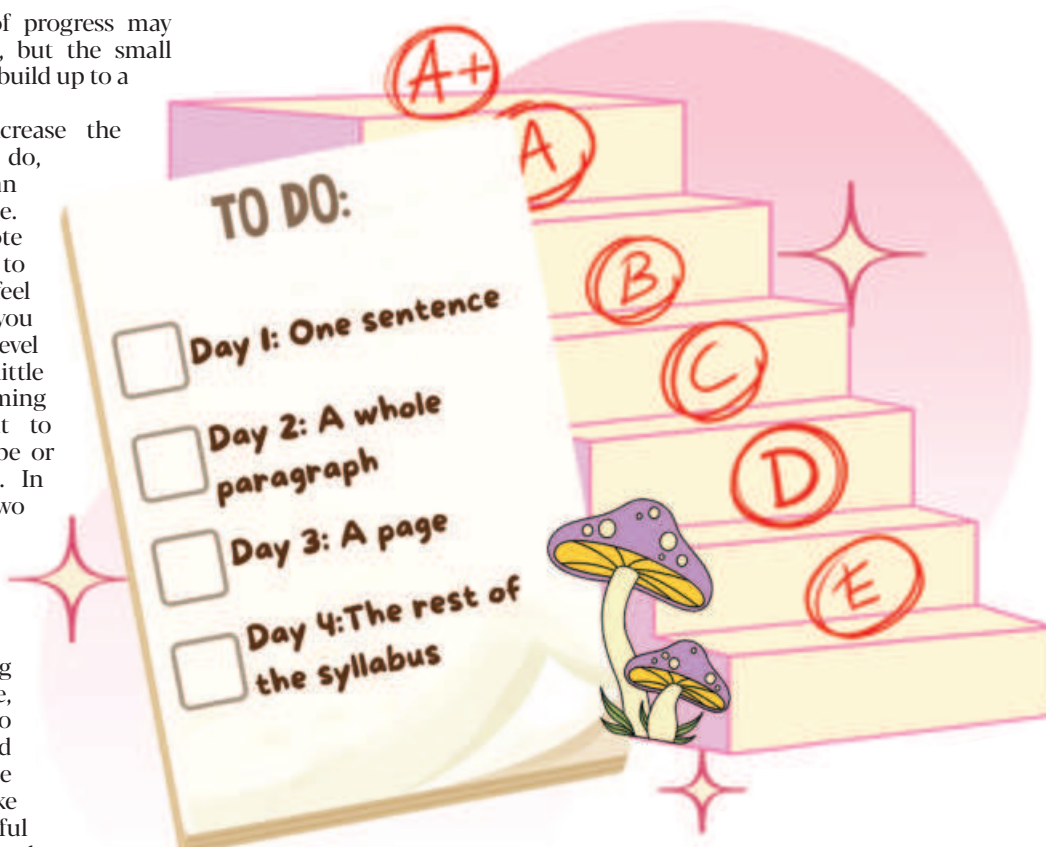


ILLUSTRATION: AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

Even if it's the tiniest amount of work, it's more work than you did the previous day. This feeling of advancing can be quite addictive, propelling you to work harder over time because you're chasing that dopamine hit. Setting small goals, like doing well on an upcoming mock or finishing a subtopic a week (as opposed to "I'll speed-run organic chemistry on the day of the exam"), and actually achieving them, is infinitely more rewarding than setting highly impossible goals and making zero progress because you're terrified of failure.

*Et Voila!* You've created a positive feedback loop of productivity, essentially becoming obsessed with studying. The process, however, won't happen overnight. It happens across several months of tricking your brain into thinking you're a nerd, until you legitimately become one. And there's no point waiting to start at a certain time. Thoughts like "I'll work at exactly 4 PM today" or "I swear I'll start at the beginning of February" are just different manifestations of procrastination that we don't recognise. The sooner you start, the sooner you can salvage those shattered dreams of becoming an academic weapon.

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