Climate Conversations

Peer support for the climate crisis

The principles of peer support

Peer support is a group of people who get together with a common concern to give and receive support.

The foundations:

1. We're all concerned about what's happening to our ecosystem and climate change.

2. Together we create a safe environment to talk in.

3. You can go at our own pace and decide what's right for you.

When these foundations are in place:

• We can begin to have real conversations and feel connected to others.

• Hopefully, you feel comfortable to be yourself.

Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit
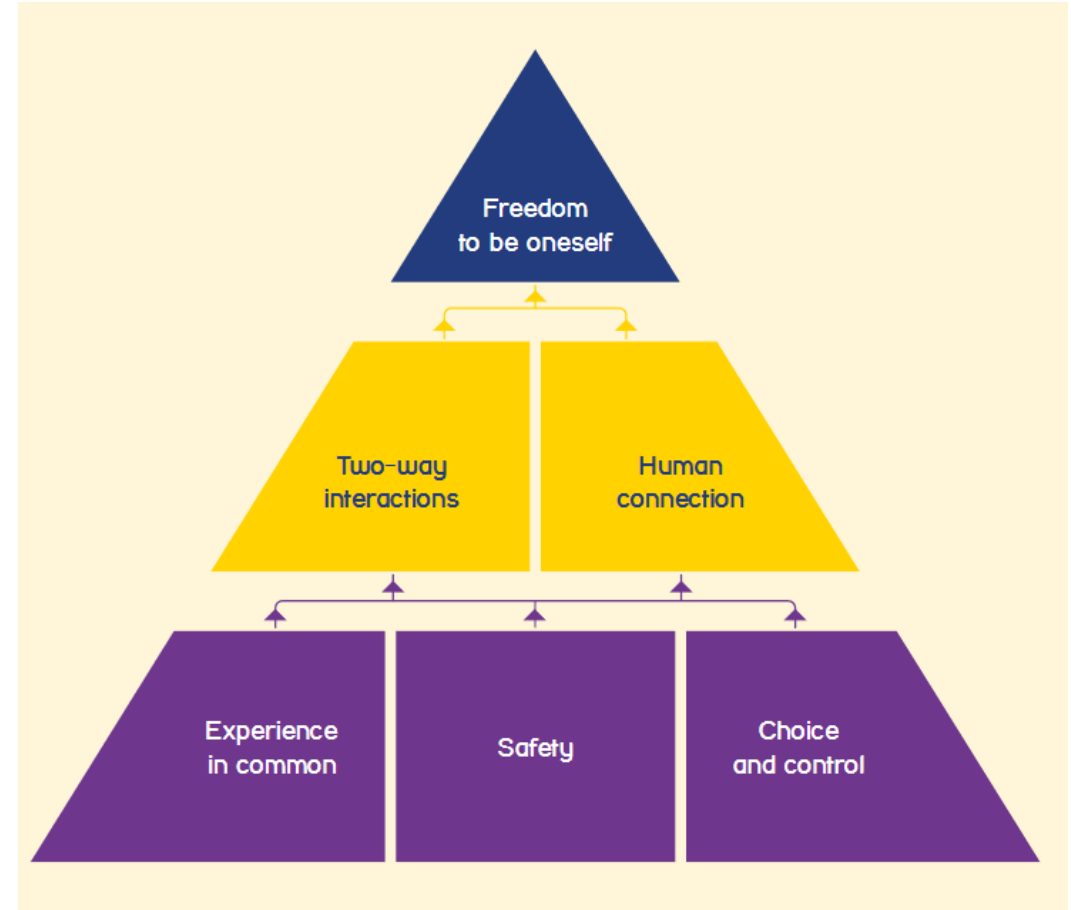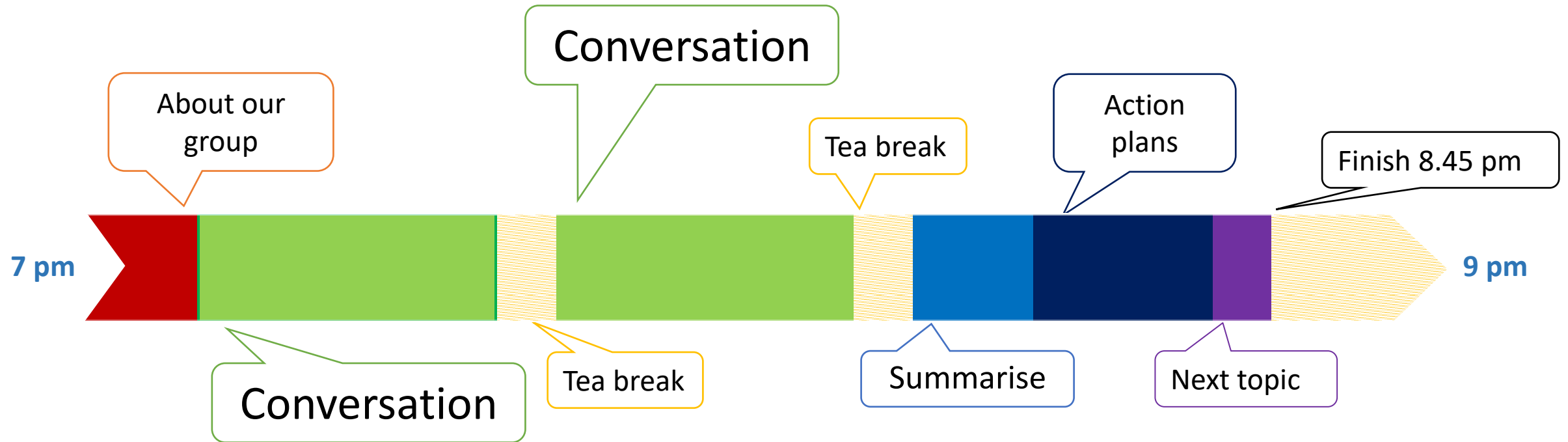
Creating a safe space to talk in

Talking about climate change can be difficult. To create physical and emotional safety we have a facilitator and a plan that structures our conversation. We also use this group agreement, so we know what to expect from each other and share responsibility:
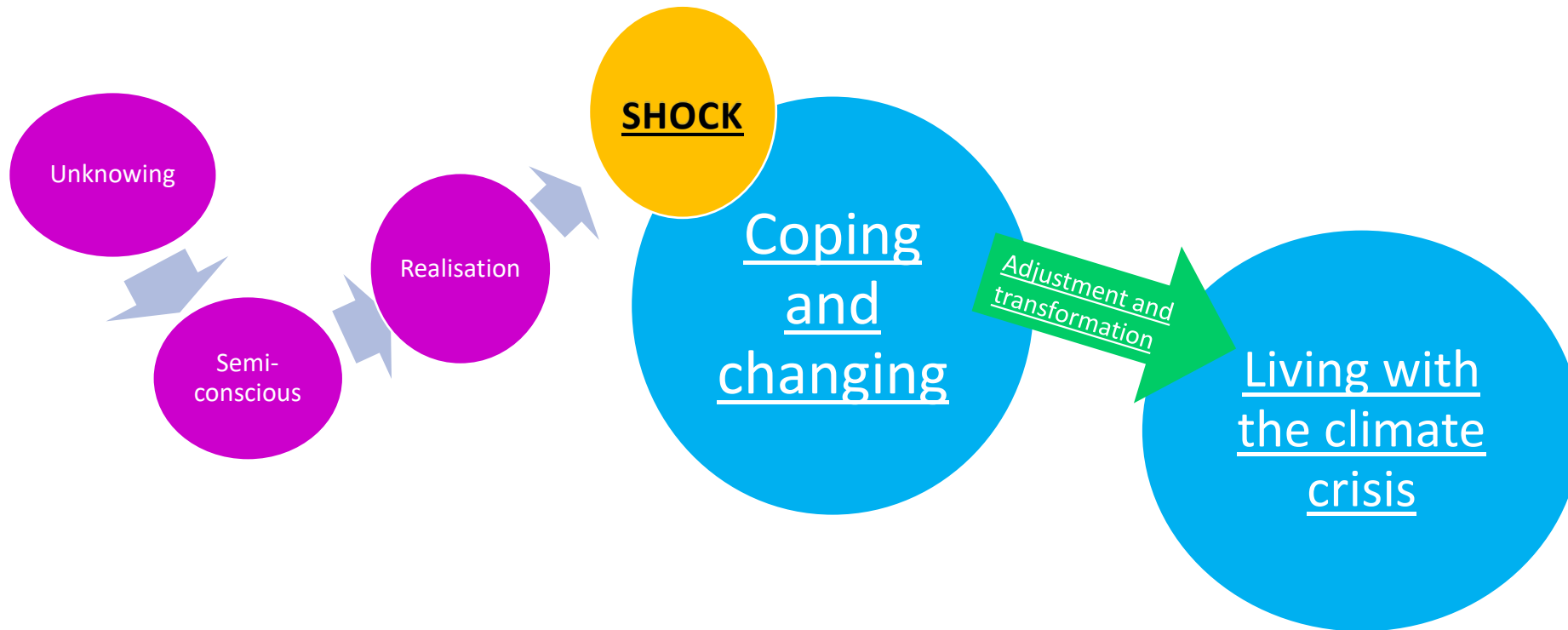
Group agreement:

1. We listen to understand each other.
2. We avoid giving advice - unless it's requested!
3. We keep each other's details and stories confidential.

Can you agree to do this? Is there anything else you need?

Our plan for today

The process of climate anxiety and grief

Unknowing

Semi-conscious

Realisation

SHOCK

Coping and changing

Adjustment and transformation

Living with the climate crisis

This research tells us:
- We're not the only ones struggling.
- It is possible to adapt and cope.
- There aren't any quick fixes.

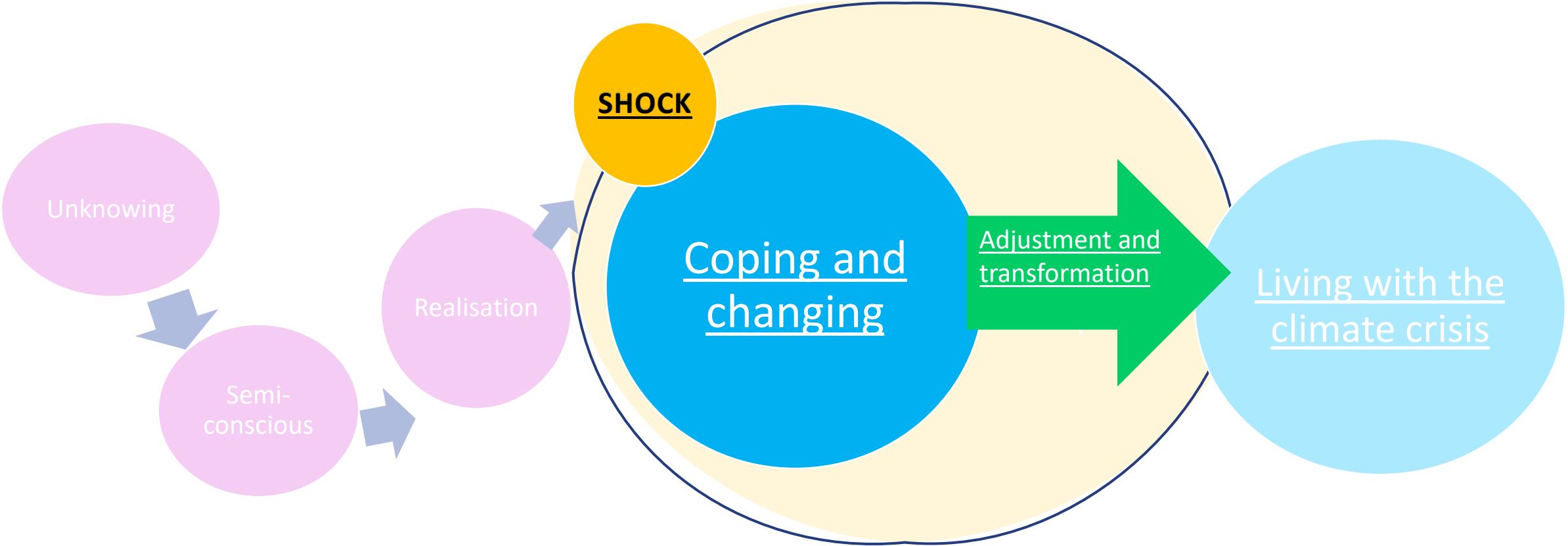Peer support can offer:
- Social support
- Long-term

→ conversation

Adapted from Dr Panu Pihkala's Process model of eco-anxiety and ecological grief

The process of climate anxiety and grief

SHOCK

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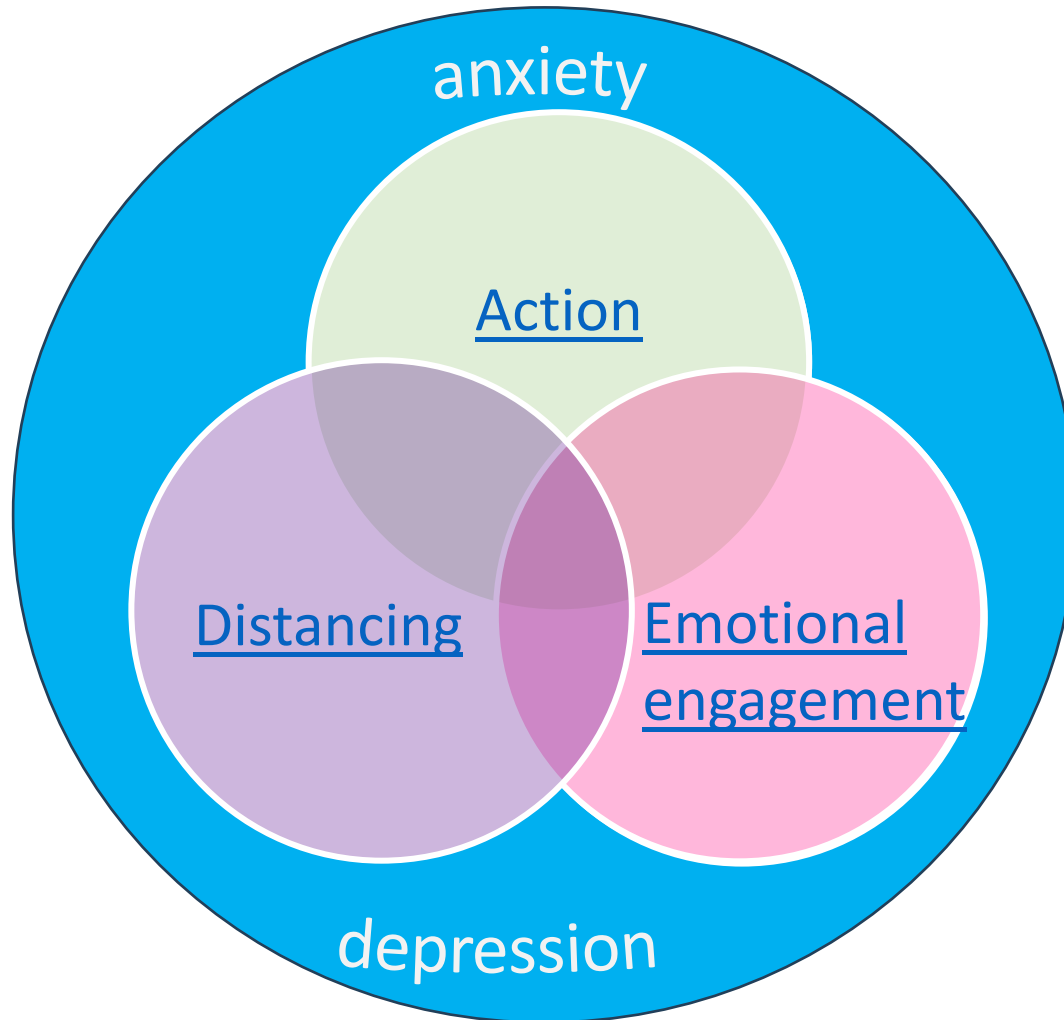
Adjustment and transformation

Living with the climate crisis

Adapted from Dr Panu Pihkala's Process model of eco-anxiety and ecological grief

← process diagram

→ conversation

The coping and changing phase

Adapted from Dr Panu Pihkala's Process model of eco-anxiety and ecological grief

This research tells us:
- Once we know about climate crisis, we have to respond.
- Our responses might be automatic or deliberate.
- We all respond differently.
- Healthy coping needs all three areas.

Peer support can offer:
- Opportunity to explore what we can do.
- Space to think and reflect.
- Choice and control over what you engage with.

←
process diagram

→
conversation

Conversation

Rest is Resistance

Why rest?

1. Rest to be more productive
2. Rest so our work is sustainable
3. Rest is a form of resistance

Burnout and activism

The Climate Burnout Report from Climate Critical Earth found that:

- Burnout in the environmental justice world is widespread and serious;

- People working in this realm are especially vulnerable to burnout because they often feel a disconnect between how hard they're working and how little tangible difference it appears to be making;

- Systemic racism exacerbates and intensifies the symptoms of burnout for Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of colour, and often this happens because BIPOC are working in climate justice spaces designed by and for white people;

Dread, Gen. "Tamara Toles O'Laughlin Is Decentering Whiteness and Reimagining Climate Work." Substack newsletter. *Gen Dread* (blog), May 4, 2023. https://gendread.substack.com/p/tamara-toles-olaughlin-is-decentering.

Rest as Resistance

" TRICIA HERSEY: I don't want to be under the guise of believing that I have to be productive in order to be deemed worthy. I am enough now."

NPR. "How to Think about Rest as a Form of Resistance," December 27, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/12/27/1145716272/how-to-think-about-rest-as-a-form-of-resistance.

From this perspective, rest isn't just a means to keep the work going, it is part of the work itself. Allowing ourselves and others to rest is an act of refusal to participate in the systems of capitalism and white supremacy.

This is a refusal that being exhausted and working to your limit is normal, necessary or acceptable.

"Capitalism wants my body to be a machine"

(Hersey, 2022, p.193)

"Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy."

(Hersey, 2022, p. 14)

In our culture:

Do we get enough rest?

What gets in the way?

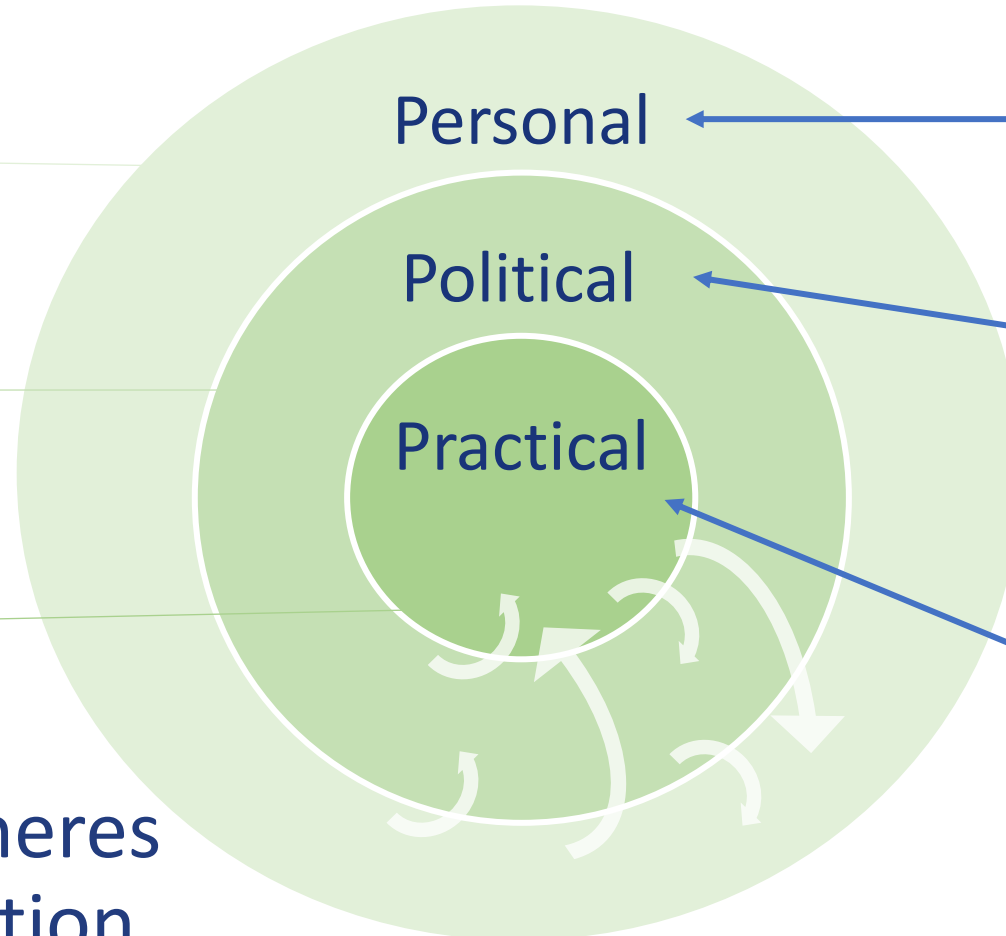# Action to tackle the causes of the climate and ecological crisis

What?

How?

Beliefs and values

Systems and structures

Technological and behavioural solutions

Personal

Political

Practical

- Reflection
- Questioning

- Social movements
- Lobbying
- Interest groups
- Social innovation

- Actions
- Interventions
- Strategies
- Behaviour change
- Practices

The Three Spheres of Transformation
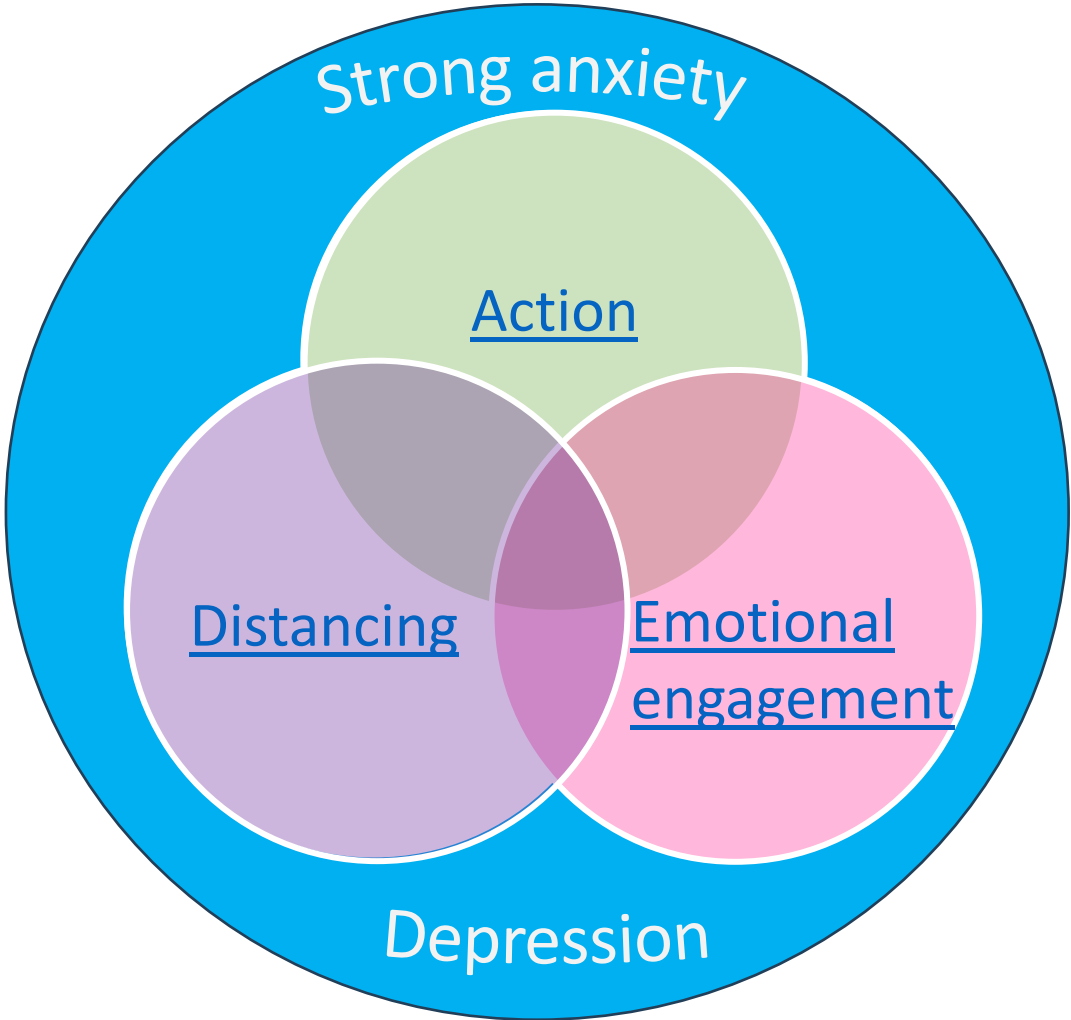
Notes

We share notes from the meeting to our email list and on the website.
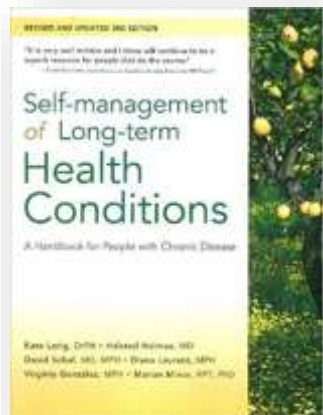
- What would you like to remember from this meeting?
- What might be useful in the future?
- Is there anything you'd rather we didn't include?

Topic for next time?

Putting it into practice

Dream big, start small!

'Self-Management of Long-Term Health Conditions', written by Kate Lorig and other authors and published in 2014

It doesn't always go to plan!

If you didn't complete your plan...

- Did you learn something useful from doing it?

- Can you adjust your plan and try again?

- Or do you want to set it aside for now and work on something else?

- Sometimes, when we've tried everything we can thing of we have to admit the problem isn't ready to be solved.

How did you get on with your plans?

Action plans

1. Identify a problem or goal.
2. Make a list of ideas.
3. Choose an option to experiment with.
4. Plan what you will do in the next two weeks: say exactly what, when, where, how much, and how often.
5. Write out your plan and keep it somewhere visible.

Example:

I will keep a diary of when I use the car. I'll write it in my diary after dinner on 10 days. I'll set an alarm on my phone to remind me to fill out the diary.

Step 1. Identify a problem or goal

1. List some of the things that matter to you.

2. Choose one to work on and mark it with a star.

Examples of problems

I can't give up my car as I need it to get to work.

Examples of goals

I want to use my car less.

Step 2. make a list of your options

1. List all the ways you can think of to solve your problem or reach your goals.

Tip: Don't be too quick to discount an idea.

Step 3: choose one option to try out

1. Put a star next to one item on your list.
2. Don't worry if it still seems too big, or if it seems too small.

Tip: make sure it's something that *you* want to do.

Step 4: Decide what you will do in the next two weeks

1. Be specific. Think about what, when, how often or how much?

2. Is your plan realistic? How likely are you to carry it out? (adjust the plan if you need to).

3. How will you remember to follow your plan?

Tip: start slowly and start from where you are.
Carry out a reality check and adjust your plan if you need to.
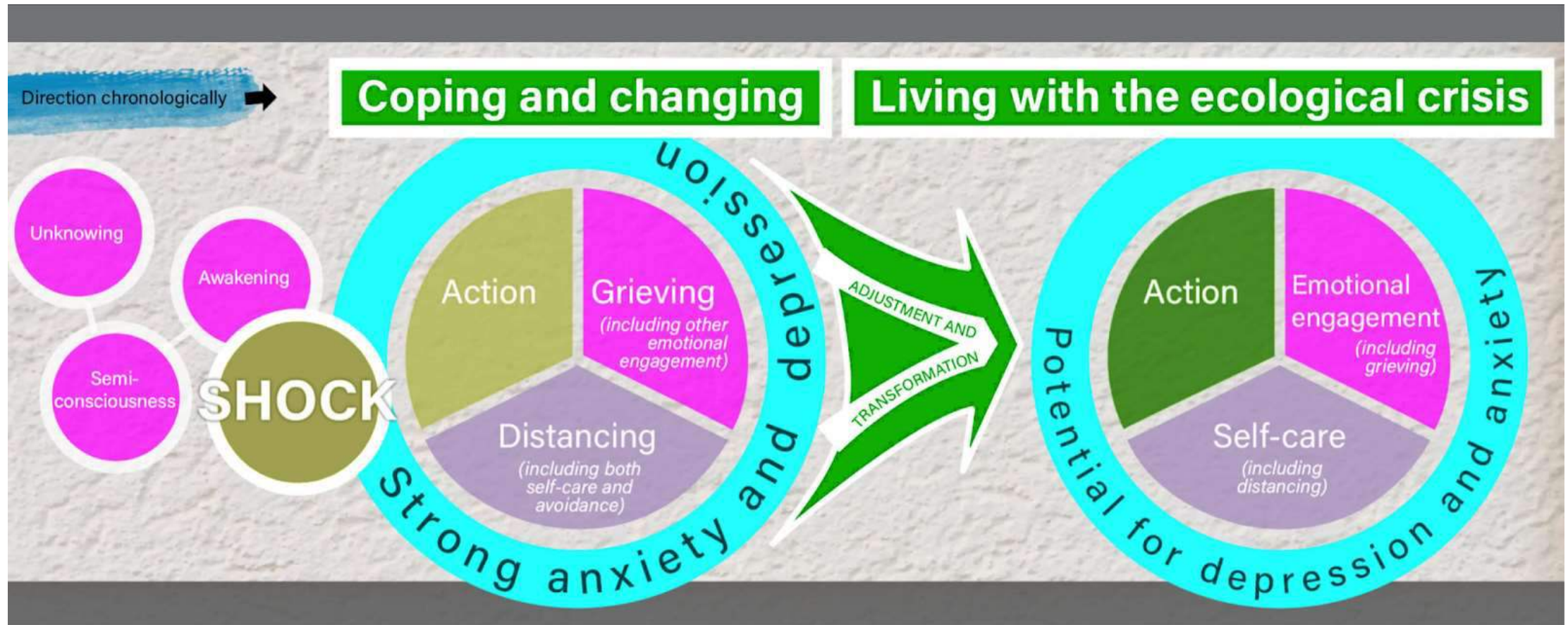
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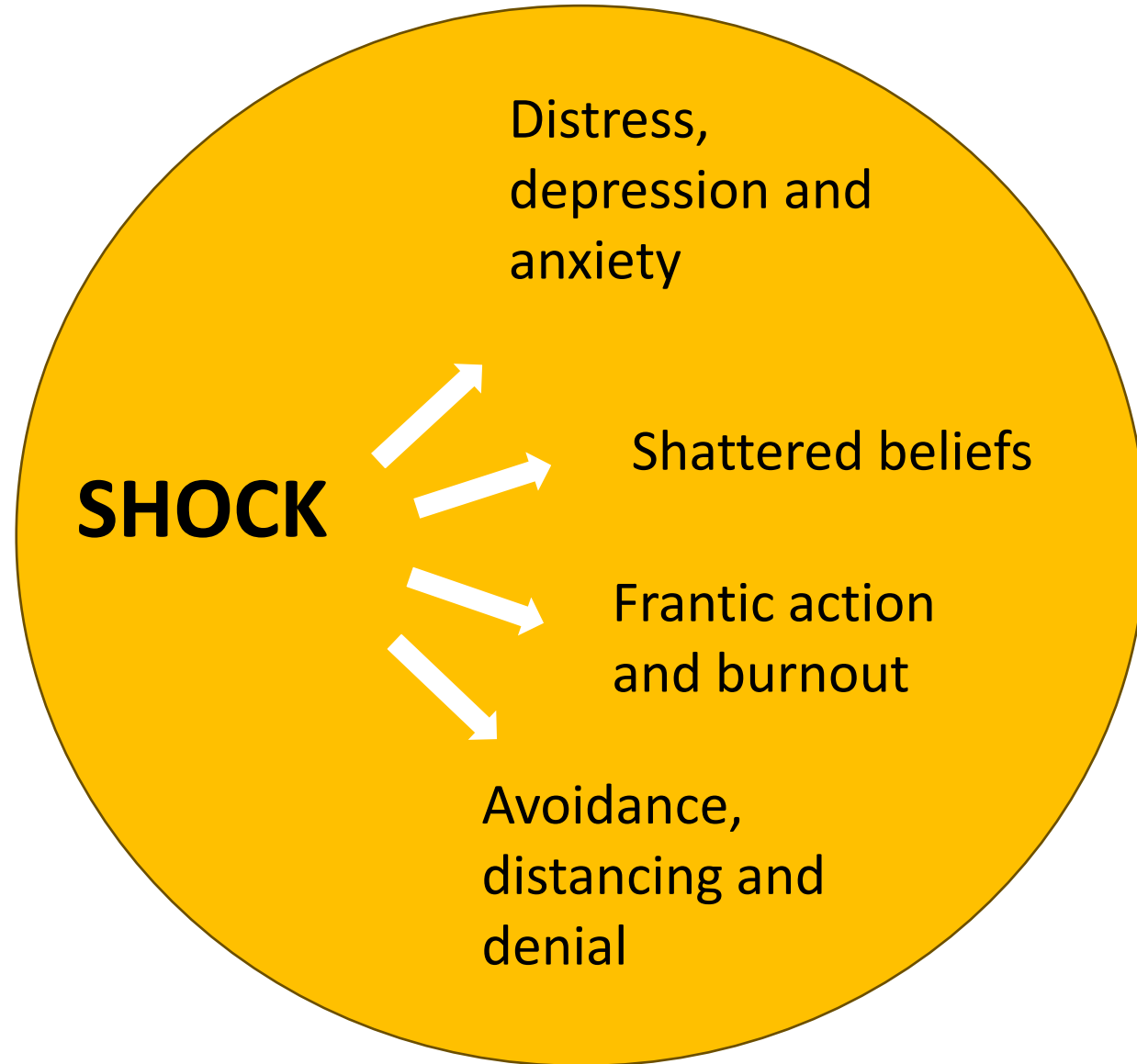
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# The Process of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Grief

Shock

SHOCK

Distress, depression and anxiety

Shattered beliefs

Frantic action and burnout

Avoidance, distancing and denial

Living with the climate crisis

- More balance, understanding and control.
- Still a need for all three areas.
- New shocks might create new needs for coping and changing.
- Happening against a background potential for depression and anxiety.
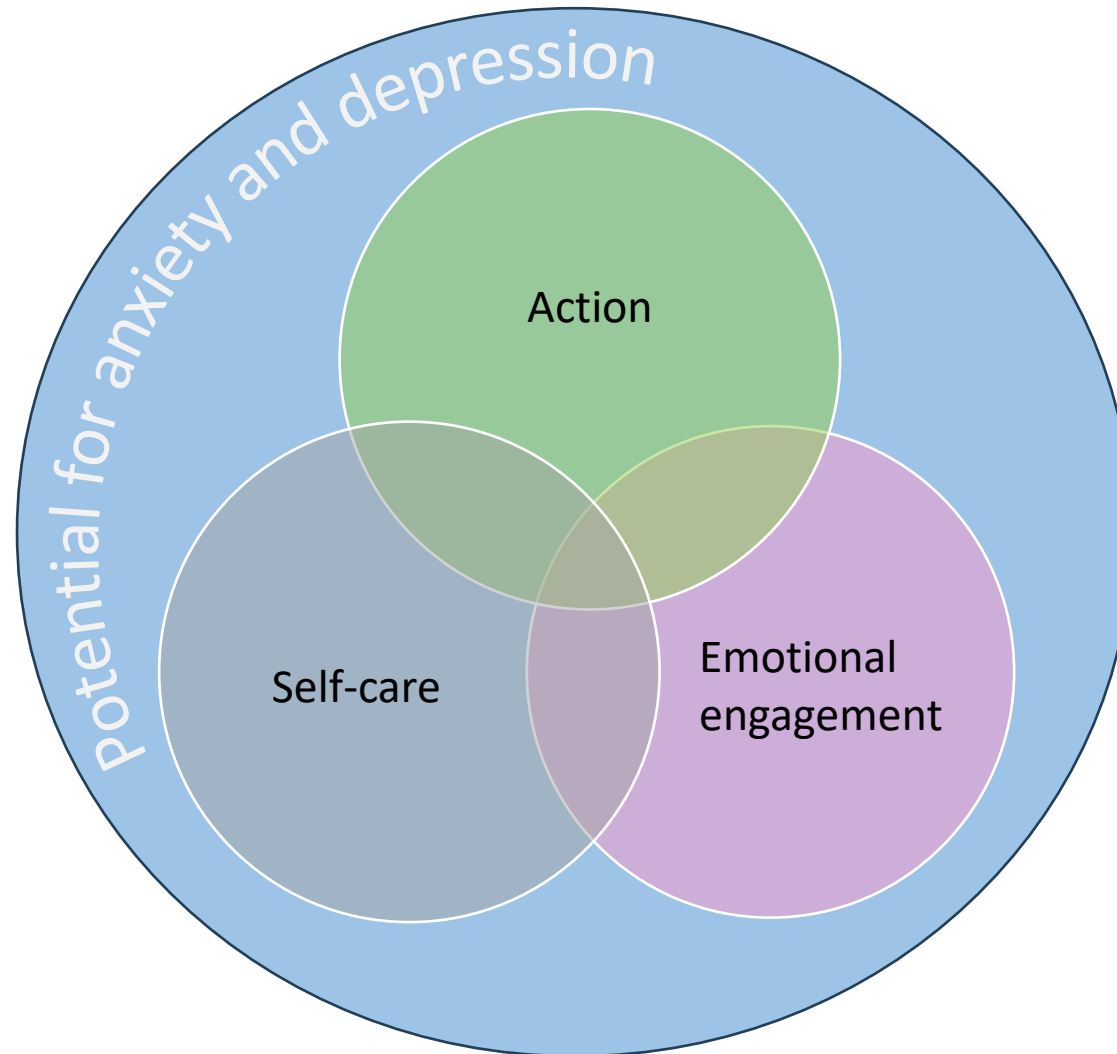
Emotional engagement

Surprise

Shock

Anger and moral outrage

Sadness and grief

Depression

Guilt

Tolerating distressing emotions: why and how?

Caring

Inspiration

Hope

Pleasure

Belonging

Envy and admiration

Fear and anxiety

Hostile emotions

Climate Emotions Wheel

← process diagram

→ conversation

Self-care and distancing

Rest	Soothing	Denial
Relaxation	Self-care and community care	Distraction