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Climate Change and Mental Health: What Can We Do?

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Learning Outcome: Identify three actions to address mental health issues resulting from climate change.

**Abstract**

- Climate change is recognized by the WHO as the defining health issue of this century.
- Significant impact on mental health.
- Vulnerable populations are most affected – poor, elderly, people of color, indigenous populations, women, children, those with existing mental illness.
- Nurses have a moral and professional responsibility to take action to mitigate effects of climate change on mental health.

**Background**

- Rising land and ocean temperatures result in droughts, land loss, air pollution, thawing of permafrost, rising sea levels, flooding, and increased salinization of sea water.
- Acute events include wildfires, hurricanes, cyclones and extreme heat waves.

**Impact**

- Forced displacement and migration.
- Death and illness.
- Impaired air quality.
- Food insecurity.
- Loss of livelihood.
- Land loss.
- Increase in vector, and food/water borne illnesses.
- Interpersonal and group violence.

**Eco-Anxiety**

...leading to new terms

**Solastalgia – the distress caused by environmental change**

**Ecological Grief**

**Actions**

- Advocacy – local, federal, global.
- Education – Nurses Climate Challenge.
- Climate, Health and Nursing Tool (CHANT) – Assessment tool for individual nurses, faculty, and organizations.
- Environmental Health Nurse Fellowship - training program created by Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE).
- Nurses Drawdown – global initiative for restoring and sustaining healthy communities and planet.
- Build individual / community resilience.
- Address environmental and social determinants of health inequities.
- Improve screening/assessment and utilize validated tools such as the Environmental Distress Scale.
- Research – conduct and support.

**References**


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