



Dear Psychologists,

We were encouraged to see the article by Georgia King on the inextricable link between mental and planetary health. As King highlighted, without urgent action we face the sixth mass extinction, with all of the physical and mental suffering that entails.

Unless our leaders facilitate rapid and significant reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions, we are facing a future of mass death and large-scale forced migration due to climate change causing increases in flooding and other extreme weather-related events that render areas uninhabitable (Bradshaw et al., 2021; <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcsc.2020.615419/full>). Heatwaves kill people as well as animals and wildlife, and the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions are most vulnerable (Howard & Krishna, 2022; <https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj.o1741>). We also know that increased air pollution negatively impacts cognitive performance (Krebs & Luechinger, 2021; [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3947149](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3947149)), and increases rates of dementia (Peters et al., 2019; <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30775976/>), depression and suicide (Braithwaite et al., 2019; <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/EHP4595>). Of course, the realities of climate change are already with us; last year, in the UK we saw temperatures reach 40°C for the first time (<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2022/july-heat-review>), with these heatwaves causing more than 2,800 excess deaths in the over-65s (Office for National Statistics, 2022; <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/excessmortalityduringheatperiods/englandandwales1juneto31august2022>). Public Health England estimates that 28,000 to 36,000 deaths in the UK each year are attributable to long-term exposure to air pollution (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-applying-all-our-health/air-pollution-applying-all-our-health#:~:text=In%20the%20UK%2C%20air%20pollution,and%2036%2C000%20deaths%20every%20year>). Tragically, the most severe impacts are and will be felt by those countries who have contributed least to global emissions (Althor, Watson, & Fuller, 2016; <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep20281>); recent severe flooding in Pakistan has left thousands dead and one-third of the country submerged (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-62712301>).

According to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct, psychologists should consider 'respect for the welfare of humans, non-humans and the living world' (BPS, 2018; <https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-guideline/bpsrep.2021.inf94>). Similarly, the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics state that as healthcare professionals we have a duty to promote and protect the interests of our service users and their carers. Sadly, government inaction over decades illustrates that we cannot rely on our political leaders to protect our planet and lives without sustained and profound public pressure. Children and young people know that they have been betrayed and that their future is bleak without radical and urgent action to reduce emissions (Hickman et al., 2021; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2542519621002783>).

For this reason, we are calling on our fellow psychological practitioners to consider joining us at the 'Big One' climate event in London in April. A number of national, regional and local environmental, scientific and health-related organisations and groups are coming together for a low-risk action that has a 'festival' feel. This will commence on Friday April 21st and continue for four days, with Saturday 22nd April the centrepiece as 'Earth Day'. The aim is to achieve a 'critical mass' of people 'to create a moment that's impossible to ignore' (<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/>) There is some provision to support those living outside of London with travel costs and accommodation; for example, please see <https://www.humanhotel.com/xr/>

Time is running out to save our planet. We hope to see you in April.

Warm wishes,

Dr Meghan Graham, London & Dr Louise Roberts, Sussex

On behalf of XRPsychologists

**TELL THE TRUTH**

**ACT NOW**

**GO BEYOND POLITICS**