

The background of the slide is a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The pattern is dense and fills the entire frame.

Psychological challenges and coping strategies for youth climate justice activists

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Background: Health effects of youth activism

- **Benefits:** prevent feelings of helplessness, empower youths, meaning and purpose
- **Risks:** poorer physical health, exposure to criticism and discrimination, disillusionment and burnout

Methods

11 adolescents (ages 14-19)
involved in a Bay Area
climate justice organization
for at least 6 months

In-depth, semi-structured
interviews over Zoom

Thematic analysis





More exposure to climate news = more climate anxiety!



Lack of progress + responsibility
→ Guilt + powerlessness



Balancing school, activism, self-care



Distancing from past relationships

Results: Challenges



Navigating social dynamics in activist spaces

Results: Coping Strategies

- **Problem-focused coping:** look for solutions
 - Doing more environmental action/activism
- **Emotion-focused coping:** regulate or avoid negative emotions
 - Taking breaks
 - Creating good self-care habits
 - Expressing oneself through art and writing
 - Seeking emotional support
- **Meaning-focused coping:** increase positive emotions, which buffers against negative emotions
 - Connecting to purpose and motivation
 - Mindfulness/spiritual practices
 - Accepting existential uncertainty





Conclusions



Climate justice activism can be rewarding, but can also introduce new psychological stressors.

Youth climate justice activists need adult support, understanding, and allyship to develop healthy coping strategies!