



## HUMANISTIC & INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY COLLEGE OF THE UKCP

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE GUIDELINES

**To be a psychologically aware human being in our society today means to embrace the ecological inter-connectedness of all things and to know with every breath we take that we are dependent on this living system of our environment.**

This document serves as guidelines for the complex and pressing issue of climate change and environmental sustainability. It outlines principles that embody a systemic approach to engaging with the earth and environmental issues and offers some guidelines for on going sharing of expertise and knowledge.

#### **PRINCIPLES:**

Essentially as Humanistic organizations, we see that the ecological crisis stems from one of *consciousness* and *relationship*. The psychological issue of denial and disavowal with regard to climate change and environmental sustainability is a deeply shocking and profound issue. The process by which this denial is perpetuated is complex. Psychotherapists have an important role to play in this exploration, enabling a self-reflective dialogue regarding our relationship to the world around us, and our responsibility to it. From this dialogue and reflection, sustainable actions can potentially emerge.

As primary principles we encourage our members to develop an affinity with the natural world and to support its preservation. But also to recognize that climate change and environmental sustainability are seen as systemic issues, where the different parts of the system that create these polarizations live within us.

It is not enough therefore to address these issues within a framework of individual pathology but to see their relationship in a wider context. In this way we come to recognize that our relationship with the earth is alive, and is one in which we participate in self reflective relationship. In the same way that a historic dynamic of separation and consumerism with the natural world has led to degradation, our increased relationship to it as both an inner and outer experience can change the solutions and actions that emerge.

As psychotherapists we are well placed to acknowledge and facilitate the direct effects of environmental degradation, and profound loss of bio-diversity, as and when this impacts communities and individuals. When we consider the issue systemically, we may bring awareness to other possible manifestations – such as body symptoms, tensions and community polarizations. In addition, as a result of marginalization, we are aware that those more often impacted by climate change and environmental issues are likely to be marginalized groups, and are potentially have less capacity to speak out about it.

### **GUIDELINES :**

Each organization has its own unique spirit and is encouraged to find their creative way to engage with this issue. But in addition, these guidelines suggest including:

- Developing direct contact with nature as part of the training, with a willingness to consider engagement in the non-human world of experience as a place of relationship and wider spirituality rather than pathology.
- Exploring concepts, as part of training, which question the idea of an objective universe, one which is separate from us, to ideas which explore an experience of being part of the living earth (*see Systems Theory, Field Theory and Indigenous perspectives*).
- Support for direct expression of feelings with regard to environmental issues, giving opportunities for individuals and communities to express their reaction and to open dialogue around despair, hopelessness and denial (*see Deep Ecology and Ecopsychology work*).
- Facilitation of a self-reflective dialogue on our relationship to the world around us, which encourages a deep level of listening and engagement around this issue (e.g. recognizing eating disorders as reflections of a cultural dis-ease, rather than a purely personal issue)
- Recognition that responses to environmental degradation manifest in a variety of ways, including through individualized somatised reactions and polarized community tensions.
- Recognition that this is a marginalized issue that needs diversity awareness, ie a pro-active approach of engagement and awareness of how this impacts diverse sectors of community differently.
- Research and the building of a positive approach through sharing good practice with regard to this issue. To continue dialogue between different schools and approaches, learning through engagement, discussion and bringing awareness to this issue.
- To consider looking at how to reduce the carbon footprint of your organization. This could include using Skype, live streaming and/or other methods for interactive learning on-line for teaching long distance; using a pro-forma for working out carbon footprint year on year; (Specialist organizations can advise with regard to the method for this.) establishing if your own organization are investing in fossil fuels - for example via banking - and to consider withdrawing funding.

