

Can climate change affect our mental health?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Beth

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Beth.

Neil

And I'm Neil. Today we're going to talk about climate change and how it can affect people's mental health. Natural disasters and the impacts of climate change can be stressful. Isn't that right, Beth?

Beth

Yeah, definitely. In today's episode we're going to find out about how people can protect their mental health from the impacts of climate change. We'll be hearing from a psychiatry expert and a man who survived a wildfire and helped rebuild his town.

Neil

But first, Beth, I have a question for you. Scientists aren't always sure whether natural disasters like floods and wildfires are as a result of human-caused climate change. But in January 2025, big wildfires affected big parts of Los Angeles in California. But according to research organisation World Weather Attribution, human-caused climate change made the fires:

- a) 10% more likely
- b) 35% more likely
- c) 20% less likely

Beth

Erm... I'm going to say 10% more likely.

Neil

OK. Well, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. Now, natural disasters like floods and wildfires can destroy homes and communities.

Beth

People who live in areas affected by natural disasters can often experience climate **trauma**. **Trauma** is what we call the very bad and long-lasting emotional effects of an event or experience.

Neil

Professor Jyoti Mishra is an expert in climate trauma at the University of California. She explained more about the condition to Graihagh Jackson, host of BBC World Service programme, The Climate Question.

Jyoti Mishra

Climate **trauma** is not an individual **trauma**, it's a community-wide **trauma** which really requires community-wide healing.

Graihagh Jackson

Yeah, I'm really **struck by** what you've said about the fact that it's whole communities that are affected, not individuals, but also part of the solution is about the community and how it rebuilds and **reknits** together.

Jyoti Mishra

Absolutely, yes. So, we've found that individuals who have a greater sense of positive support from their family and a greater sense of meaningful connection with their community — they are in general more **resilient**.

Beth

Jyoti's research on climate trauma has found that it affects communities rather than individuals.

Neil

Host of the programme Graihagh Jackson is **struck by** what Jyoti says. If you're **struck by** an idea, you find it particularly interesting or impressive.

Beth

Graihagh says that part of the solution to climate trauma could be in how the community **reknits together**. This means how the social connections in a community are restored. We can often describe a community as **close-knit**, which means everyone helps and supports each other.

Neil

Jyoti explains that having a strong community also helps reduce or heal climate trauma. She says that research has found that people who have a strong community are more **resilient** when bad things, like natural disasters, happen. If you're **resilient**, you're able to get better more easily after something difficult or bad happens.

Beth

One person who had to be resilient is Brad Sherwood. He survived a wildfire in Northern California in 2017 called the Tubbs fire, but when he returned home, his neighbourhood was destroyed.

Neil

Brad started to volunteer for a local support network called After the Fire to try to rebuild his community, as he explained to BBC World Service programme, The Climate Question.

Brad Sherwood

The **silver lining** in all this — I mean, if it wasn't for the Tubbs fire, we wouldn't be working as a community right now to build a new community plaza. We were a close community before the Tubbs, but afterwards we are so much stronger and **resilient**. And I think our children are as well. They can jump over any **hurdle**.

Beth

Brad says that the work to rebuild and improve his community is the **silver lining** to the fire. The expression **silver lining** means a positive thing that comes from a negative situation.

Neil

Brad's community became more resilient after the fire, including the children. He says that they can **jump over any hurdle**. We can describe challenges or difficult things in life as **hurdles**.

Beth

And it's quite inspiring, I think, to hear how Brad has taken a bad situation and tried to stay resilient. Now, the organisation Brad volunteers for, After the Fire, are helping those impacted by the fires in LA in January.

Neil

Which reminds me, I asked you, Beth, about the impacts of human-made climate change on the wildfires in LA in January.

Beth

And I said 10% more likely.

Neil

Which was, I'm afraid, the wrong answer. It was actually 35%.

Beth

Wow. OK. Well, let's recap the vocabulary we've learnt, starting with **trauma**, which is what we call the very bad and long-lasting emotional effects of an event or experience.

Neil

If you're **struck by** an idea or something someone has said, you find it particularly interesting or impressive.

Beth

If a community **reknits together**, it becomes closer again. And a **close-knit** community is where everyone looks after each other.

Neil

Resilient means able to get better more easily when bad things happen.

Beth

A **silver lining** is a positive thing that comes from a negative situation.

Neil

And we can describe challenges or difficult things in life as **hurdles**.

Beth

Once again, our six minutes are up, but why not try the interactive quiz on our website to test what you've learned, and we have a free worksheet as well. Just visit bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

Thanks for listening and goodbye!

Beth
Bye!

VOCABULARY

trauma

the very bad and long-lasting emotional effects of an event or experience

struck by

interested or impressed by

reknit together

become closer again

resilient

able to get better more easily when bad things happen

silver lining

a positive thing that comes from a negative situation

hurdle

challenge or difficulty