

Supporting Children in the Face of Climate Change

Watch This Informative Video



By Marn-Yee Lee, Chapter Co-Chair and SV Families Director

This video, “Supporting Children in the Face of Climate Change,” is 1.5 hours long. Although it is well worth watching in its entirety, I have summarized the content into sections and provided time codes so you can easily watch specific segments of interest. (See below.)

The speaker is **Jo McAndrews**. Her work is built on sound, up to date and immediately usable research and practice from the fields of neurobiology, attachment, trauma, and resilience. Her approach is deeply relational and imbued with creativity, mindfulness, and compassion.

The key message of the video is that parents need to take care of themselves, first and foremost, when digesting the heavy news of climate change and working as activists. Parents need to be a role model of calm, and they need to support healthy social-emotional development of children -- who will unfortunately grow up in an uncertain world. We can help them become grounded adults who will be effective changemakers, by first focusing on helping babies and young children feel secure in their interpersonal connections, their body, their space.

Here is a summary of the video in sections:

29:05 While working on the frontline of climate activism is important, supporting people who are activists is a form of activism. This is especially recommended for parents with kids 0-3 years old, as their primary role should be ensuring their babies develop a deep sense of connection to the caregiver.

33:27 She recommends not talking about climate change to kids 3-7 years old, but to encourage them to play in nature and develop a deep sense of connectedness to nature.

38:32 For kids 7-14, they are absorbing climate change info. Reassure them that the adults have got it - that we are taking actions - but they are also welcomed to participate in doing something. Watch for signs of anxiety, especially at the older range of this age. Continue being protective around media and information they receive. When taking actions together, emphasize consent -- check if the child wants to participate in taking action you feel strongly about, and respect their choices.

Kids 14+ are developing a much stronger understanding on climate change, and the desire to do something. Adults should be good listeners, respect youth voices, and work with youth to support the actions they want to take. Parents may want to connect their children to adults who can play such roles in climate activism. Help children of this age develop critical thinking around the media info they receive on climate change. Be on the lookout for symptoms of existential anxiety.

46:47 has some great tips on how to involve children in adult activism. For example, with a climate march / protest, think about how you can educate them about the risks and rewards of being involved, how you provide options for the child to opt into taking part, having a safety strategy if there's a problem, and how the adults plan to regulate their own stress level so that they can stay calm enough to help their children as needed. This, coming from her experience with the Extinction Rebellion modus operandi. She reminds us to always remember, changing the world is adults' responsibility - beware of using children and burdening them -- they didn't cause the problems they have to live with.

59:10 If our children grow up taking action, they won't have to learn from how to take action from scratch, like most of us are doing now.

59:42 Family-friendly Model of Activism. This approach is very much needed! Take steps to keep the atmosphere friendly, calm, lively - not threatening. Use music - it creates harmony. Involve children at their level, from a point of meaning for them. Ask kids to talk about what they love (e.g., dolphins, trees...) Consider language used including in signs and posters. Use language that involves paradigms of connection and interdependence - not war language, not "us vs. them."

1:10:01 A powerful example of music as symbolism at an Extinction Rebellion family event.

1:13:35 Parents should help their children build resilience for an uncertain future. Teach children components of resilience, including:

- Being flexible in the face of change and uncertainty
- Connect with others
- Resourcefulness

- Practical skills
- Ability to self-regulate
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Loving the earth - not being separated from nature

If you have feedback, please feel free to send me an email at:
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