

Turning Election Anxiety Into Action

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Greg Dalton: I'm Greg Dalton.

Ariana Brocious: I'm Ariana Brocious.

Greg Dalton: And this is Climate One.

[music change]

Ariana Brocious: 2024 will go down in history as a big year for elections. Citizens in more than 60 countries – about half of the world's population – have already voted or will vote this year. Including the citizens of our own country.

Greg Dalton: (tongue in cheek) I've heard something about that...

Ariana Brocious: Yeah right we'll get to that one in a minute. But one thing we're seeing – really around the world as these elections take place – is that who is elected will have a big impact on how we address climate change, on the local and global level.

Greg Dalton: Right, this really is huge. In the UK, after 14 years of a Conservative-led government, Labour won in a landslide. That party campaigned on a strong commitment to climate leadership at home and abroad, which critics say was slipping under the last prime minister Rishi Sunak.

Ariana Brocious: In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa will serve a second term with a coalition-led government. He's been a strong supporter of climate action and a just transition.

Greg Dalton: Right and of course these elections are happening in the face of the growing impacts

of burning fossil fuels. In India, the site of the world's biggest democracy, dozens of poll workers [died](#) during its weeks-long national election. That coincided with the highest temperature ever recorded in the country - 122 degrees.

Ariana Brocious: That's truly awful. People literally dying to make democracy happen.

Greg Dalton: Yes and perhaps that's partly why Indian Gen Zs and millennials show higher levels of climate concern than their global counterparts, according to a [survey](#) by Deloitte.

Ariana Brocious: And as we covered in a recent episode - Mexico just elected its first woman president, Claudia Sheinbaum, who is also a UN climate scientist.

Greg Dalton: As exciting as that is, we still don't know what kind of a climate leader she'll be - she is a climate scientist, and she represents a party with strong ties to the national oil company.

Ariana Brocious: Here at home, we've got two candidates with starkly different platforms: Kamala Harris has promised to continue Joe Biden's record of climate investments:

Kamala Harris: I have always believed that the climate crisis is real, that it is an urgent matter, to which we should apply metrics that include holding ourselves to deadlines around time.

Ariana Brocious: Donald Trump still doubts climate science and wants to dramatically increase drilling for fossil fuels.

Donald Trump: ...that means two things on day one, right? Drill baby drill, and close our borders.

Greg Dalton: Down ballot races are also very important. But wherever you are in the world, whoever you're voting for - their plans to address climate change will have a huge impact on your lives.

Ariana Brocious: As that's why VOTING is one of the best single actions you can take to address climate change.

[music shift]

Greg Dalton: One person working to get out the vote is Reverend Lennox Yearwood Jr. He came on the show last year to talk about his group, the Hip Hop Caucus. They use music and film to engage disadvantaged communities around climate and democracy. And he's one of the most inspiring people I've spoken with when it comes to how we make progress together, in a kind and thoughtful way.

In the face of a really divisive election, I found myself especially craving his perspective. So I invited him back to talk about some ways we can put that energy to good use.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Well, the anxiety is based upon who literally is driving the bus. One party has stated repeatedly they understand the nature of what is happening with the climate crisis. They understand the impacts it's having on vulnerable communities. They are trying to ensure that we have clean air, clean water. I know EPA administrator Michael Regan and have seen him do just an amazing job of trying to particularly go into my home state of Louisiana and try to help Cancer Alley not be Cancer Alley anymore. and I've also had experience with the other contingent that is running. And I remember Wheeler. I remember Scott Pruitt. I remember oil execs running the state department. I remember people wanting to take down the department of energy. I remember all that. That wasn't too long ago. So we don't have the ability to make those mistakes again. So the

anxiety is just around that we need to do all we can to ensure that the public understands what's at stake, that they understand that this really is a key moment in history, that we have to do all we can to transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. And we must do a better job of storytelling and broadening the movement. So folks understand what's at risk right now.

Greg Dalton: You know, we live in anxious times. I deal with it a certain way. What do you do to address your climate and election anxiety?

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Well I'm very fortunate. I get to do a lot of things that engage people. So obviously around with storytelling, definitely use storytelling to help people to understand climate and environmental justice issues and to see themselves as part of the solution. I am the host of The Coolest Show podcast, which is an award winning podcast about climate and environmental justice from the lens of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities. And those, as you know, who are disproportionately impacted by the environmental injustice, and climate catastrophe. I get to go home to my home state of Louisiana and fight the good fight on the front line and the fenceline with folks like Raj St. James, and Time 100 recipient Miss Sharon Levine. So I get to get, I get to keep busy, that helps. And then my faith, I mean, faith is very important for me. People ask me all the time, are you a real reverend? I said, yes, I'm actually a real, I went to school and I'm a real reverend and have all those good things. But without that, my faith anchors me. And I would tell anybody, no matter what your faith background or want may be, if you are agnostic or you are Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, whatever, I still believe in this movement you have to have something invisible to anchor yourself, even if it's something you just love, your children, nature, you have to have something to anchor yourself because if you're, if you're just pulling on yourself in this moment and think you are, this is only you, then you will get in trouble. And then from past movements, looking at the women's rights movements and the civil and human rights movements, looking that it's a relay race. And realizing that there are those who have gone on to become good ancestors and like them, we will too be ourselves good ancestors. And so what kind of ancestors will we be? And so for me, it's about running this race, as fast as I can so that the next generation can get the baton and they too can run this race.

Greg Dalton: So you, your faith, staying active, connecting with people, and doing things is how you address your, your anxiety and keep, keep even keeled.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: That's right. That's right. And also checking out my son who plays ice hockey. So having some things that are totally disconnected from this as well and enjoying, enjoying him. Shout out to my son who actually just is now, actually graduated from college and is now a pro ice hockey player over in Estonia.

Greg Dalton: That's cool. Congratulations to you and to him. So checking out, yeah, people can get really obsessed with climate. I just recently took some time off and didn't think about climate as much as I do regularly. So which gets to the information diet, you know, I've recently been reading less news and my therapist once said, you know, that news is my drink, it's my addiction, you know, how do you, how do you balance staying informed and having a healthy news diet?

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Yeah. I mean, I think we have to realize that's actually one of the big issues of our time that people are weaponizing news and have been doing that. They've been it forever. That's not new, but they're doing it differently now you have to be very careful. Obviously we have a tremendous process with social media in which you can get caught up in that and looking at all types of things that are coming to you unfiltered. I mean, I go on social media with my team to post information, but I myself am not on there that often.

Greg Dalton: You're a producer, not a consumer.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Yeah, I will, I will produce, and even they will produce sometimes for me, but I am definitely not a consumer like that. and this is, you know, from a faithful perspective, I protect my spirit. I mean, I'm very mindful of how energy works, and as things are very negative, you can't be consumed in that because it will consume you. So I'm just very mindful of how I'm moving about. So I think in doing this work now, folks should know, I mean, I've been doing work in civil human rights for, man, now it's been at least 30 years. And I've grew up around it as well, had, you know, was mentored by Dr. Dorothy Irene Haidt, you know, one of the pioneers of the civil rights movement. So I've been around the movement for some time. So the one thing that I've learned in being around the movement is that having a strong foundation, doing things in love, and also doing things knowing that you are not the center of whatever you're doing that you're doing it for people and for future generations that has a huge impact on maybe lessening the stress load.

Greg Dalton: Right. So yeah, really resonate with that part about... we think a lot about the food we put in our body. We often don't think so much about the information we put in our eyeballs and into our and it's like the diet, like the energy of just the negativity or the doom and gloom. And I -

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Oh, it's so careful with that. Oh my goodness. I'll tell you, man, if you're listening to it right now, I don't care whatever your political disposition may be, you owe it to yourself with this one life you have, to make sure that you do not just put in a constant case of negativity into your life that would have an impact on everyone around you and it makes their lives also miserable when you're miserable. So, yeah, please, please take care of yourself.

Greg Dalton: But isn't that, you know, a lot of climate conversations and political conversations are like, apocalypse is going to happen. Trump gets elected, political apocalypse, you know, climate apocalypse. So do you like, avert your eyes and not go there with the information? And, you know, it's kind of hard because that's the way the currents are going.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Yeah, well, I mean, I would say this to that, though. So this is why I think it's important from, again, from a historic aspect. I think history shows us that while this is a very tough moment and stakes are very high. The one thing about this moment is that we've had some pretty tough moments in history, and I can tell you, I can tell you someone who wasn't, who didn't live back then, but reads about it, the time for particularly black people in this country has been really rough. From the inception of being enslaved to lynching to literally segregation. I mean, the list goes on. And so what continued there was culture. Culture carried those communities over. They had a strong sense of this surviving. And that is what we have to have right now. So we're not going to just assume that it's going to be okay. So if people are listening, you have to make a decision and we need to have climate champions making decisions for our literally our existence. That's real, but in that. Just know that there is this thing where we still have to push on. In the words of Martin Luther King, he says, even if I knew the world was coming to an end, I would still plant my apple tree. And I think that's gotta be our mentality, that even if we knew the world was going to come to an end tomorrow, we would still plant our apple tree today. And that's gotta be how we got to approach this process.

Greg Dalton: Right. Connection, human connections, you know, social connections, relationships. And so much of this is sitting with uncertainty. We don't know who's going to win the election. We don't know how the climate's going to turn out. I think people cling to polls and they think like, Oh, my person's up in the polls. Ah, I feel better. I feel like, or my person's down in the polls. Oh, I feel bad. I can prepare for defeat. Do you look at polls? Do you think about polls? Or because I think polls are, I don't know, got a complicated relationship with polls.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Well, you should based upon the last election. I mean, I think you should be very wary. So this is the one thing I would say about where we are. There are clearly, from

my perspective, two climate champions who are running based upon their record. so that's not even being partisan, just looking at what they've done in the past. They are two folks who, who want to center climate, uh, one is Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Vice President Kamala Harris. And they have talked about climate in a way that looks to fix the problem.

Greg Dalton: And they've done more than talk too. They've actually done things.

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: They've done things. Obviously, Kamala Harris has been a champion around issues regarding lead poisoning to obviously being the tiebreaker on signing the inflation reduction act. And the list goes on and on and on. that could really create economic justice as well as economic opportunity for communities in our, in our great country. Climate champions, without a doubt. We don't know, we don't have a crystal ball here, so we don't know what's gonna happen if they don't win. There's still been something that's been put out there. It would be horrific, as far as climate is concerned, but there has been some that's been ignited that people are excited about and that's what I think we need to continue that momentum and that's the long term game I think that we need to look at and how do we continue to have folks understand because what we do know, Yale did a study that says when they asked particularly African Americans, if they had even heard of the term climate justice, only 12 percent of African Americans had even heard of the term climate justice. But when they, when they, when they asked them, would you do anything about it now that you know what it is, 70 percent of them said they would do something about it. That still goes even right now, four out of 10 registered voters don't even know the inflation reduction act is a climate legislation bill. Four out of ten! And so that means that literally half of the country has no idea that we've actually even passed climate legislation. So we have to do a better job of telling our story, of explaining what's being done. And I think that's hopefully now with them running and others running on state and local levels, that helps us to tell the story of climate in different ways to broaden the message to a bigger audience.

Greg Dalton: Young people are often optimistic, though not always these days. Gen Z has some real, you know, dark views about the future, but there's a tendency that young people are optimistic. How has working with young people helped you continue to do the work you do and kind of inspired you?

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Yeah, well, I think it keeps me young. I would also say that I'm encouraged. I think that this generation is so exciting and I'm so glad they are the ones who are going to lead us into the next millennial. I think that what I see from, uh, actually millennials and actually Gen Z and the one after them, they are a different breed. I have said repeatedly that our generation, those of us who are from Gen X and baby boomers, that we were, we were probably much more revolutionary in our tactics. And we still sometimes fall into those lanes. This generation is not as revolutionary as they are solutionary. Meaning that they will radically fight for something, but I need to understand the solution before they move. We'll just kind of, "stop the war." We'll just get in to start doing that, but they, I think, see it much differently. And so I'm excited about them. And I think that with the technology aspects, how they're approaching it, obviously how they're using media and communications, both through social media, but even through larger media, how they understand things from a global citizen perspective, it's exciting. And what we need is that kind of energy and that kind of connection between them beyond just being here in America or beyond them being in their city here in America, but thinking themselves as global citizens and then also understanding the fossil fuel industry as a global crisis and begin to attack it that way. I'm excited. If we can pass them the baton, they can actually help save this planet for many, many, many generations.

Greg Dalton: Right. And we heard at the Democratic Convention, JFK's grandson talk about that passing of the baton. We're kind of at this real interesting moment. If you could give people one

message about this age of climate and political uncertainty where there's a lot we don't know, a lot we can't control, what would it be?

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: I would say to embrace that. Embrace it, and understand that that makes us human. I think sometimes we forget that we're not here forever. Even though we have all the markers, from the tombstones to this, even in our own lives to show us that we are not, we're just, we are finite beings. And I think that sometimes we forget that. And then this anxiety that comes from that, it kind of comes from wanting to control. So I think that embrace that human feeling that you're feeling it's okay. And it's actually beautiful. What helps me in this is that I look at this from a standpoint of, I always just add a hundred years to wherever, wherever I am. So right now it's 2024. I just say, well, in 2124, obviously I won't, I won't be here. And many of us listening to this right now, we won't be here. But what will be here will be the work that we have done, for that generation. And if we fight for clean air, we fight for clean water, we fight for a planet that's livable, and we fight for us to transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. Yes, it's rough right now. There's no doubt about it. We are dealing with heat waves and, and, and wildfires and many, many things that are impacting our climate and impacting our communities. Yes, I get that. But if we can actually come together as humans, black, white, brown, red, male, female, straight, gay, theist, atheist, humans, and we can come together, I still believe that we can fix it. And we always have. Organized people beats organized money every single time. So I still believe in us as humans to be able to fix things. I believe that running your race for this moment, however it is, if it's 20 years, 50 years, a hundred years, whatever you get, run that race for justice and ensure that the next folks coming behind us, they have this beautiful, amazing planet to live on and to cherish.

Greg Dalton: Reverend Lennox Yearwood Jr., President and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus, thanks for coming on Climate One

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr.: Thank you.

Ariana Brocious: No matter who you're planning to vote for, we're probably all feeling some anxiety about what's going to happen in November. But could that anxiety actually be an opportunity to come together? Coming up, I'll talk with a psychiatrist, who has some tips for how to reach across the aisle... or the dinner table.

Lise Van Susteren: When you reveal that you too are feeling fear and can talk about why. This helps to humanize you, and then you sit quietly and ask the other person what his or her fears are and talk about personal experiences. That's what puts us in a position of listening. (:22)

Ariana Brocious: That's up next, when Climate One continues.

This is Climate One. I'm Ariana Brocious. Anxiety can be such an overwhelming feeling and it can manifest in different ways for each of us. Anger, suspicion, sadness, straight-up fear... So we decided to bring in a professional to give us some tools to address it. Lise Van Susteren is a psychiatrist and an expert on the physical and psychological impacts of climate change. She's the author of "Emotional Inflammation - Discover Your Triggers and Reclaim Your Equilibrium During Anxious Times." She got interested in climate about twenty years ago - not as a psychiatrist, but as a politician.

Lise Van Susteren: I ran for the U.S. Senate in Maryland in 2005, 2006, and as we can all see, I did not prevail. But I did leave that experience knowing after seeing a movie, the next revolution, that my job is going to be focusing on sustainability. And then I found out that Al Gore was choosing a

group of what he referred to as his first 50 to train them on the specifics of climate change. So down, I went to Carthage, Maryland, his farm, and I was one of the first 50 that he trained. And took it from there.

Ariana Brocious: That's amazing. What was that experience like?

Lise Van Susteren: Well it was so very exciting. Of course he's a hero to the movement. And to be just sitting alongside of him, right in his barn in Carthage, we had a truck that took us out into a field and there was hay... There was such a spirit of solidarity and a sense of community and combined purpose. And it was very uplifting not to mention it filled us full of a sense of confidence that we knew enough to go out there and do what needed to be done.

Ariana Brocious: I'm struck by the fact that you ran for Senate because that in and of itself is a pretty bold and committed act to make change. We're coming up on the election and a lot of people including myself are dealing with a lot of anxiety and specifically, anxiety around the outcome of the election and what the climate impacts might be. What are some ways people can address election anxiety when it feels like there is so much at risk, so much at stake?

Lise Van Susteren: Let me just back it up a little bit and say, not to think of anxiety necessarily as something that is a problem, because anxiety itself can promote action when it's in the right hands. So what do we do about it? Classically, of course, if you are so anxious that you have a problem functioning, then you need professional help. So I've had people call me and say they can't leave their apartment, they were so scared about climate, so that's obviously a functional issue. But otherwise, the best way to take that anxiety and think of it as your potential magic sauce is to go out there and do something about what you're anxious about. So if you're anxious about climate, if you're anxious about policies, go out there, knock on doors. You don't have to be sophisticated to do that. Write postcards. If you've got money, do that, you know, and support the candidate that represents the policies you think that will make us safe and run for office yourself. There are plenty of places we can be used. So those are some of the things I refer to them as the P's, the personal, the professional, the political, then there's the public and purse and I've got P's ad nauseum, but go out there and take action whatever it is.

Ariana Brocious: So we asked our listeners to call in and share some questions for you that they have around this issue of anxiety and election anxiety specifically. And I want to play one for you now, because it's just what you're talking about. And this is someone who is taking action, but maybe wants to know what the next step is.

Sidney: Hi, my name is Sidney. I live in Maine, and I have experienced extreme climate anxiety for the past few years, which has, however, been alleviated by some things that I'm, I've been doing. One of them is I started a group called Plant the Seed to come To my home once a month to talk about things we can do. After that, I decided that the most effective thing you can do is to put pressure on your political leaders. So I joined something called Citizens Climate Lobby. And now, um, I'm producing a concert for climate. So these have been really, really helpful for my own climate anxiety. Taking action has assuaged my anxiety quite a bit and, just wondering what else, what else I can do besides what I'm doing. and what is the correlation, psychologically speaking, between taking an action and reducing anxiety?

Lise Van Susteren: Well, first of all, Sidney, you are a textbook case of the example of what a person should be doing. First of all, bringing people to your house, like minded individuals. That connection with others that sense of solidarity, the community and socializing. We all know that's important. And then starting a group or joining CCL citizens climate lobby. That's a huge national organization that does address policy. So you really feel as if you're right there where the sausage

making takes place. So it's very obvious that you're doing many things that are absolutely right. Now, the other thing is that can we think of being free of all anxiety as reasonable? Maybe not. Sometimes it might mean that we have to accept that there is going to be residual anxiety about climate, about this and about that. So, the issue of what else you can do. Some people talk about meditation. Others will talk about returning to nature. And I wrote a book called Emotional Inflammation. There's a whole restore plan, that I think offers a way to return ourselves to greater equanimity, but congratulations and thank you for your enlightened citizenship.

Ariana Brocious: It is really powerful to hear somebody taking action and finding some relief from anxiety in doing so. I think, uh, you touched on meditation. I know a lot of people find benefit there connecting with nature, as you said, I really just want to underline that idea of acknowledging because we aren't going to be free of these emotions and and just recognizing that they're there and sort of being with your emotions can do a lot. I'd like to play another question we got from a listener.

Lise Van Susteren: Hi, my name is Anne. I'm 46 and I have an 11 year old son who wants to be a weatherman. He has a lot of apps saved on his computer, and one of them is a fire map, because here in Washington, D. C., we had fire smoke last summer. And he also asks me why it doesn't snow anymore in our area. Because, fossil fuels, I have to tell him. It's a scary world to be a parent right now. And I'm wondering, what do we tell our kids? I don't want to scare them, but I want them to know the truth.

Ariana Brocious: So I think this is a particularly difficult thing, not just handling our own emotions, but trying to help our children, other people in our lives navigate these really complex topics, the election, politics, climate. How do you suggest we do that?

Lise Van Susteren: So I like to remember things with little acronyms and I call the ABCs of what we do with kids. And A is for the age of the child and we calibrate what we say based on the age. B is the behaviors. Is this an inside kid, an outside kid, a sporty kid, musical, artistic, whatever. C is what are the conditions in which this child grew up? And in this particular instance, the child is seeing that there are extreme weather events that are affecting him. For the parent, I do the three L's. Listen, first of all, to what your child has to say. Let him or her know that what is going through their minds is important to you. Learn, if there are things that the child is talking about that you're not aware of, learn about it and then the leverage goes to the things that you can do sometimes based on the age of the child. In this particular instance, a child who is 12, it's saying, you know, you're right. There isn't snow. And yes, there is smoke. Don't pretend that there isn't because they feel betrayed and abandoned. Then segue to, here's what we can do about it. And those things might be personal, your family, a garden. It might be community based. It might be, do you want me to drive you to a protest if you're skipping school, if that's where you are. But this is what I would say in general to any parent who is experiencing this. And this is a very widespread concern.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah. When we spoke earlier, You spoke about the joy in writing your book, Emotional Inflammation. On other Climate One episodes, we've talked about how happiness and climate action can actually go together and we now hear this word joy being used around the Harris Walls campaign. So I'm curious what you make of the use of that word joy in regards to the Democratic campaign for president.

Lise Van Susteren: Well, joy in general, feels to me as a special word because it means that it's untethered in the sense there's a sort of uplifting aspect to it and a purity about it. It's not just happy, which seems sort of time restricted, but joy is a state of mind and being. And, I think that, the sense of relief that many people had, and I won't pretend to speak for everybody, but there were a lot of people who felt immense sense of relief that there was possibility. And joy is the energy, I think, that comes from believing that we have all sorts of possibilities in front of us if we only wrap

ourselves around them and work together to make them happen.

Ariana Brocious: It's so interesting because I think the physical feeling of those emotions are so different, right? You can feel anxiety and all kinds of parts of your body that's uncomfortable and, palms sweat, you know, maybe your stomach clenches. There's all kinds of physical feelings. And likewise with joy and, you know, I've heard the advice to capture the moments of joy or to try to sort of, write them on your brain in a way to remember just little slices of life in spite of whatever else is happening in the broader world so that you can experience those moments to contrast with, other feelings like anxiety.

Lise Van Susteren: Right, and one of the chapters in the book is thinking yourself into a safe space, which is exactly what you're saying, Ariana. And the other thing that I really am marveling at is what you said about the body associated with emotions. We have seen, and there are studies that show that negative emotions even no matter what the culture is, what the ethnicity is, where the geographical region is, the various negative emotions are experienced in certain parts of the body. People will identify that part of the body as where it's anger, sadness, jealousy, etc. So, I imagine that joy must be the same thing because I think it makes us sort of stand up straight and look up.

Ariana Brocious: So you're talking about the commonality of experience of these emotions, no matter who you are, where you are, they kind of feel the same in your body, but we are so politically polarized right now that it can be really hard to find understanding for where the other side is coming from or compassion for people who feel very differently than we do about these issues. And that can be stressful in and of itself. So how do you suggest people find empathy or connection with people who they really disagree with?

Lise Van Susteren: Okay. So the key issue is really finding common ground and then being able to communicate those elements of common ground in a congenial fashion. For me, I'm from Wisconsin. If I hear somebody else's from Wisconsin, I'll say, Oh, really? Where are you from? There's an automatic connection. So what we want to do is really understand, first of all, what connects us. And then to recognize that much political polarization comes from misunderstandings that are based on fears that we have, and the fears that we have cause us to feel stressed. And when we're stressed, we don't make good judgments. We don't speak the way we want to. We don't evaluate our moral compass and our codes and things like that in a way that helps us to connect with people. So when people are stressed out, as we are right now, we are prone to not communicating very well. Understand the person that you're sitting in front of and make an effort to talk to other people is probably feeling fear too. And when you reveal that you too are feeling fear and can talk about why, this helps to humanize you, and then you sit quietly and ask the other person what his or her fears are and talk about personal experiences. That's what puts us in a position of listening. And once we can listen to each other, we're gonna be in a better position to make good decisions and stop insulting each other.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah, that's a big one. So do you think there's a difference between the way we process anxiety for issues like climate change, which are slower moving, but existential in scope, compared to something like an election that does have an end date and, you know, an outcome, a definitive outcome?

Lise Van Susteren: Well, I'm going to quibble with you on that latter because if you don't get the outcome that you want, then there's a long tail. So your election anxiety is not just what happens in November, but what about if it doesn't turn out the way we want it to or One wants it to, you know, this is a real nail biting experience that there are consequences to. So what I would like to emphasize is that anxiety comes in so many forms. It's like a big black pool in our brains. And it is impossible really to delineate. Well, this 30 percent is financial, 45 percent is election, then 55

percent is climate, whatever. This all is like a big dark soup. So I think acknowledging that right now, this is a very stressful time and we have a lot of real challenges ahead of us. And climate change for some is far off but we're seeing the impacts right now. So the idea is, and this is a term I thought I coined pre traumatic stress, just like post traumatic stress, turns out the Danish army used it for the recruits, but pre traumatic stress is focusing on future harms and the belief that generations that might succeed us or we, specifically, are in harm's way and not enough is being done.

Lise Van Susteren: Think about this anxiety, though not necessarily as pathological, meaning problematic and suggestive of ill mental health, but rather your reasonable response to a danger, which means that then you can take action.

Ariana Brocious: And that's really key, right? Sort of distinguishing, and it can feel very hard when, if you're framing an issue as being so overwhelming, or if that's how you're experiencing it, it can feel hard to know how to act, right? And we've talked about some ways to do that.

Lise Van Susteren: Okay, well, that's an extremely important point. I'm glad you made that distinction because I've often heard people say, Oh, well, what one person does doesn't matter. Well, yeah, actually, it does. If you're worried about climate, you're reducing your carbon footprint, what you are doing is counted collectively, just like votes on election day. It isn't just one person, it's all of us together. And what we do, our buying habits drive markets. They set social norms so that other people see what we're doing. And they also enhance a deeper commitment to taking action. So on the contrary, uh, yeah, protest the use of fossil fuels and encourage the transition of renewable energy, but don't ever downplay what you can do personally in collaboration and connection with everybody else.

Ariana Brocious: So getting a little bit back to the election, do you offer specific advice to your clients around what they consume in terms of news and social media, particularly people who are dealing with various kinds of anxiety?

Lise Van Susteren: Yes, I do. And other two ways of, there are extremes. There are the people who have a television on all day long. And they keep re-traumatizing themselves by hearing the same news expressed by different pundits and see the same videos and, you know, it's like reopening wounds. On the other end of the spectrum, and there was a fellow in 2018 that was written about in the New York Times who decided, and I don't know how long he completely withdrew from hearing the news, but of course, not everyone can do that. There is a sweet spot. And I think it's being a citizen who is aware. Our democracy is not a default form of government. It requires an enlightened citizenry, it requires that we vote, it requires that we understand these policies, and for that we have to have some knowledge. So we have to be in that sweet spot in the middle where we're not traumatizing ourselves, but we're not withdrawing from the truth.

Ariana Brocious: Do you have plans for what you'll be doing the night of the election in November?

Lise Van Susteren: Um, I sure have had a movable feast of plans, from doing what I did in a prior election, which is I sat in a dark basement by myself, and, called a couple of people to ask them if things were going to go the way it seemed they were, and then there have been times when I've had a great party or been at a great election night party and really felt the thrill of being involved in something as precious as democracy. So, you know, I've run the gamut too.

Ariana Brocious: Lisa Van Susteren is co founder of Climate Psychiatry Alliance and author of Emotional Inflammation. Thank you so much for joining us on Climate One.

Lise Van Susteren: Thank you so much for having me and, great to be with your audience.

Greg Dalton: Coming up, how do you get people to engage with a challenging issue like climate change? I'll talk with a gun control activist who says: "take a page out of our playbook."

David Hogg: We can't just be talking about it after there's been a mass shooting. We need to give people a way to get involved that isn't just related to something terrible happening in the first place.

Greg Dalton: That's up next, when Climate One continues.

Ariana Brocious: If you'd like to hear an ad-free version of our show, join us on Patreon. Thanks for your support!

Greg Dalton: This is Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton. When the two candidates at the top of the ticket are so different from each other on so many issues, it's natural to feel anxious about the election outcome. Everyone wants their side to win – and is stressed out about the alternative.

But the most successful activists take that energy and use it as fuel.

David Hogg: Honestly, I wouldn't say I'm so much anxious as I am just motivated to keep working and getting stuff done, cause I've learned to compartmentalize a lot of those emotions because I just gotta focus on what's ahead.

Greg Dalton: As a high school senior, David Hogg survived the 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. A teen killed 17 people with a high-powered military assault rifle.

David Hogg: After the shooting, many people said to us that it wasn't going to be possible to make change. Many people said that we were just a bunch of dumb kids and that Florida is a Republican state and nothing's ever going to change.

And we said, all right, watch us. So we decided to start organizing at our state capital in Tallahassee to get young people to show up there. And a young guy named Maxwell Frost reached out to us to help us organize and we ended up getting thousands of people to Tallahassee with us. We protested, and we actually did change gun laws.

We raised the age to buy a gun to 21, and we passed a red flag law that can disarm people that are a risk to themselves or others, despite it being a Republican state legislature. We were able to do that.

Greg Dalton: And that was just one action of many. He and some other students from his high school went on to form March For Our Lives.

David Hogg: We decided to hold a march, have a march in Washington, D. C. that we thought we were going to get, you know, a couple dozen people to maybe 100 or so, and we ended up getting over 800,000 people to that march and over, had over 800 marches around the world. And you know, after that, we continued doing work. We did a bus tour around the country, turning out young voters that my friend Maxwell helped out with as well. And we ended up defeating more NRA-backed incumbents than ever before in American history because we went to districts where if we turned out more young people to vote, we could defeat those NRA backed incumbents and it worked.

Greg Dalton: In college, Hogg hired Maxwell Frost to be the National Organizing Director at March for Our Lives. A couple years later, Frost decided to run for Congress.

David Hogg: And I decided to support him, and I'd never really supported anybody running for office before. And Maxwell, despite, once again, everybody telling us that it wasn't going to be possible, that he was too young, too inexperienced, didn't have enough money, didn't have the connections, ended up winning by 10 percent in that race, becoming the youngest member of Congress, the first Gen Z person in Congress, and the first member of March for Our Lives in Congress.

Greg Dalton: That victory was hard won.

David Hogg: I had to help him raise over \$400,000 in his first two quarters, and he ended up needing to raise over \$3 million total to be elected. And he had to Uber drive every night from 9 p. m. to 2 a. m. every single night while he was running for Congress. And that's not possible for most young people.

And less than a year after Maxwell was elected, I got to see him introduce the President of the United States for the creation of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention at the White House, something that we'd spent three years working on at March for Our Lives, pushing for with our allies in the movement.

Greg Dalton: Not long after that, Hogg helped found a group called Leaders We Deserve, a PAC that helps young progressives running for office. In the past year, they've raised more than 8 million dollars – and they're supporting more than a **dozen** Millennial and Gen Z candidates.

David Hogg: We saw how hard it was for a young person to get elected because of things like Citizens United, and so many other issues where young people are just not taken seriously. And I've done so much work now to help register young people to vote and turn them out to vote, that I wanted to really focus on giving them other young people to vote for.

Greg Dalton: The fight for gun control is one of the defining movements of our time; as is the fight for climate action. Both make us feel vulnerable to forces we can't control. But the root issues are so different, I asked Hogg what connections he sees between the two.

David Hogg: There's a couple of ways to think about it. We know that when the weather gets hotter, that shootings are more common because people are outside more and we know that gun violence is worse around the 4th of July every year in the United States. And it's because that's when temperatures get really high. And as the climate warms up, that's obviously going to make gun violence worse. I also think it's going to make gun violence a whole lot worse in the global south, where that is going to be disproportionately impacted by climate change, and it will obviously destabilize a lot of different governments.

Greg Dalton: So they sort of, they interacting sort of negative feedback loops. I've heard both gun safety advocates and climate activists try to frame each of those issues as public health issues. So I'm curious how you see them framing them as health issues and how that maybe helps people, understand them or find them relatable?

David Hogg: You know, a lot of gun violence that occurs in the United States happens in cities, because there's just more people there, and naturally when people live close to each other, they're going to be more likely to, you know, interact with each other and commit acts of gun violence, unfortunately. We have to address not just how somebody gets a gun, which involves the laws around it, but also why do they feel the need to pick up a gun in the first place? That means addressing the urban heat island that causes temperatures to be so much higher in our cities.

What's really interesting to me, though, is that the way that climate is impacting a lot of the housing market and that the affordability of housing isn't so much because a hurricane is coming along and taking out houses. Of course, that's a factor, but more than anything with causing insurance premiums to skyrocket in Florida are sporadic weather events that are just super extreme and happen in the moment that it that aren't making the news a lot of the time, but just nonetheless create a lot of hail, create a lot of wind, create a lot of damage.

Greg Dalton: Right. And that's one area where I'm feeling anxiety about that because climate impacts can happen almost anytime, anywhere. Kind of like gun violence. And so I'm curious how you, how you think about these things that could happen to any one of us.

David Hogg: Yeah, it can happen to any one of us, but we know that it's going to disproportionately impact minorities and low income people, as so many of these public health issues do in the United States, because we know, for example, the number one place where gun violence occurs in the United States, the biggest predictor of it is where communities were redlined by the federal government, and a lot of those communities that were redlined were also in areas that are very prone to flooding and other areas like that, that. You know, we have this overlapping of injustices that is impacting so many people in our country and having the double whammy of the climate crisis on top of gun violence, not to mention the fact that we know that the people that are most likely to die from a gun in the United States are older to middle aged white men that use it in the form of a gun suicide, disproportionately in rural areas, a lot of them work in agriculture. And we know that those deaths of despair are not going to get any better the worse that the climate gets because it hurts those rural economies way more. It makes it way harder for them to have infrastructure out there. It has just a terrible impact. So we need to have a holistic solution that addresses what causes somebody to use a gun against themselves and also what causes the economic factors that causes them to want to pick up a gun in the first place that is having, you know, a sporadic weather event that destroys so much of their community. And I think that's one of the biggest problems that any movement, especially, but especially gun violence or fighting climate change has, is how traumatic it is, how hard it is to work around these spaces when we're only around each other after there's been a climate disaster. And that's the only time that people are talking about it a lot of the time, or at least talking about in any substantial way.

It's the same thing with gun violence. We can't just be talking about it after there's been a mass shooting. We need to give people a way to get involved that isn't just related to something terrible happening in the first place.

Greg Dalton: Right. Talking more about solutions rather than, you know, I think, you know, with, with guns and certainly with politics, there's, there's all this negativity, fear, bad things are going to happen rather than the good things that can happen. If we address climate change, I've seen you post about high speed rail or, you know, if we, if we get this right, a lot of positive can come from this. And it seems like that doesn't often come through. Part of it is, you know, there's clickbait in the media is driven by negativity. Negative, you know, gets ratings. Clickbait preys on our fears and our anxieties, right? And that's, that's kind of a business model.

David Hogg: Right. I think one of the really exciting things about climate stuff that we can do though, and in the, in the realm of gun violence is like we can kill multiple birds with one stone by building more affordable housing, building transit oriented development, reforming our, our horrifyingly car centric zoning laws in this country, um, to help make sure that we're able to build more high density housing, more walkable communities where people don't need to own a car because they have access to public transit and it saves them a ton of money every single year because they don't need to spend tens of thousands of dollars on a car that's constantly depreciating in value and instead they can spend it on, you know, adding solar to their house or they can spend it

on supporting local businesses or they can spend it on just, you know, saving up to get a better education and all these other things. So that's one of the things that really excites me is we can build healthier, stronger and more climate friendly communities with more affordable housing by simply focusing on how we build our society.

Greg Dalton: You were an early fan of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz saying he'd be a good VP. I think what back in February, you might have said that. So how did Walz's selection change your mood and anxiety if you had it around the election?

David Hogg: I'm just super excited, um, and I'm ready to win in November, and I think it, it really just helped to animate me a whole lot more because he's such a, he's just a great guy. I think Tim Walz represents what a lot of Americans had lost due to Fox News, which was like, their fathers or their uncles and things like that, because of the brainwashing that the right wing media spin machine has done. And, you know, really, I think he provides a really healthy version of what masculinity actually looks like. That's not defined as putting other people down or hating other people or things like that, but really defined as being, you know, there for your family and caring about people other than yourself. And I think that that's what I'm really excited about, because the Democratic Party has been hemorrhaging young men over the past few election cycles. And we've got to do something about that because if we don't, we're going to end up losing the massive margin that we've had with young voters for the past few election cycles.

Greg Dalton: Right. So there's been a bit of a mood shift with what you saw at the convention with kind of freedom, joy, happiness. Yes.

David Hogg: And I totally agree. I think that's the way that we need to go forward. We need to build movements that people are excited to be part of, that they want to be part of. And because people need to get things from these movements, they need to, they need to feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves and not just a sense of existential dread whenever they're working in them.

Greg Dalton: So if you could give people one message about this age of climate and political uncertainty, what would it be? How can we build the future we want?

David Hogg: I think it's just do something. I think, I think one of the most inspiring things that I've done recently that seems really boring and mundane is I recently moved into a new community and it's not, it's not a super wealthy neighborhood by any means. Contrary to the conspiracy theories, I'm not a multi millionaire, unfortunately. But it's, you know, it's a nice community, but there was a lot of trash around my house. And the bus, the, there's bus stops nearby my house, and they were just, just filthy, like completely filthy. And I take public transit a lot because I don't own a car. Because I don't need to own one when I live in D. C. And it's basically the single best thing I could do for the climate is just not having that in the first place.

Greg Dalton: For your health, too. Your personal health. Yeah.

David Hogg: What I saw was, you know, I just started going around the first day I moved in and started picking up trash. And the really amazing thing to me was all my neighbors. A lot of them started coming out and helping me. Mhm. Even though they had never met me before and then they were like, oh, like I was mentioning how I wanted to power wash the bus stops. And they're like, oh, like you can use my power washer. Oh, you can use my broom or, oh, you can use this other thing. And what's really amazing is a lot of the time, I think we get too caught up in being like, oh, we need national solutions. We need all this stuff. And that's true. Luckily, there's a lot of people out there doing that, but I feel like more than anything, what each of us can do is just be the person that we

want to see out there and what I'm doing when I'm helping to power wash the blood off the ground of the bus stop where a guy cut his hand a few weeks ago in the city never cleaned is I'm making that bus stop more accessible to people to the families that are there more comfortable for people so that they're more likely to use that transit and keep us as a walkable community, right? So then more people are more likely to use that bus. I feel more comfortable using that bus and it's my way of contributing to building a better future for this country, even though it's such a small act.

Greg Dalton: David Hogg, thanks for your insights with us today on Climate One.

David Hogg: Appreciate your time. Awesome. Thanks, Greg.

Greg Dalton: David Hogg is a gun control activist and co-founder of March for Our Lives and Leaders We Deserve.

Ariana Brocious: And that's our show. Thanks for listening. Talking about climate can be hard, and exciting and interesting — and it's critical to address the transitions we need to make in all parts of society. Please help us get people talking more about climate by giving us a rating or review. You can do it right now on your device. Or consider joining us on Patreon and supporting the show that way.

Greg Dalton: Climate One is a production of the Commonwealth Club World Affairs, led by Gloria Duffy and Philip Yun. Our team includes Brad Marshland, Jenny Park, Ariana Brocious, Austin Colón, Megan Bisciegli, Ben Testani and Jenny Lawton. Our theme music is by George Young. I'm Greg Dalton.