

**CLIMATE
CRISIS**



Call for multi-pronged coaching response to the global climate crisis

The scientific evidence for climate change is overwhelming and **Alison Whybrow, Zoe Cohen** and **Linda Aspey** have responded, calling on the coaching community to help avert disaster

Seasoned coaches **Alison Whybrow, Zoe Cohen** and **Linda Aspey** have declared a coaching climate emergency and are calling for a range of actions in response.

Cohen's posting on LinkedIn of an open letter penned by the trio, sharing their reasoning and proposed actions had attracted 63 comments at the time of going to press.

Many signalled their support and shared helpful resources. There was discussion too about whether it's now acceptable in this particular context to move away from being non-directive—are we imposing our own agenda or is it

now a case that this is an issue for us all? Read the letter and comments here: <http://bit.ly/2Yex7Hq>

Below, the trio share their rationale and the actions they're calling for.

THE RATIONALE

In this magazine, write *Alison Whybrow, Zoe Cohen* and *Linda Aspey*, Neil Scotton has noted our narrow opportunity to avert or lessen a climate-related disaster that would extinguish life as we know it on our Earth (*Scotton, 2019*). Other colleagues have awoken too, following calls of elders and wise leaders over decades.

Global scientific evidence shows

beyond all reasonable doubt the negative impact we've had on our only planetary home. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (*IPCC, 2018*) notes we urgently need to make significant, sustained changes in how we live and we have little over a decade to shift.

A United Nations report highlights the significant and consequential decline in biodiversity, much due to human activity, and its impact on the planet's life support systems, food production and spiritual wellbeing (*IPBES, 2019*).

In the past 30 years, numbers of bees, insects, mammals, plants, coral

and sea creatures have reduced dramatically. For example, in Germany a 75% reduction in insects, in Australia's Barrier Reef an 89% drop in baby coral. Species extinction is happening 1,000 to 10,000 times faster than usual.

Only 60 harvest cycles are left in our degraded soils, fewer in the UK.

It's real, it's happening now, and with each passing day it worsens. We're in the Sixth Mass Extinction. Not on the verge of it. It's an overwhelming, complex and incomprehensible situation, bringing denial, grief, anger, fear, despair and still, hope. On the change curve, collectively, we're not over the first hump. Individually, we don't easily see what we can do. We struggle to find a way to respond personally and have even less insight about how to engage professionally.

In May, the UK Parliament, following the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliaments' lead, declared an environment and climate emergency. In June, the UK Government legally strengthened the net zero carbon target for 2050. According to campaign group, Extinction Rebellion, we need to put the country on a war footing now, with climate and the environment at the centre of all government policy.

TAKE ACTION

But we cannot leave it to governments, to others. As Scotton astutely points out: "An earthquake that has to happen is one that begins in our minds. During the Renaissance, people were killed for daring to say the Earth is not at the centre of the universe. But they were right. The incomplete part of that seismic shift is simply this – humans are not the centre of the universe either." (Scotton, 2019)

In an open letter to professional coaches and coaching & coaching psychology professional bodies, we're calling for a Climate and Environmental Emergency declaration.

We state that as coaches "we have a vital role to play right now in our collective history as a species, for the human and non-human species alike ... If everything on the planet dies, we die. Our families die. And our clients and their businesses and families too."

We think we have a significant role to play. Being in service does not mean that as coaches this is not our issue. It surely means it is.

Supporting business leaders to grow without considering the planetary and wider ecological impact has led in part, to the problems we now face. As coaches, we've been as big a part of the toxic system as others. We believe we can no longer progress the 'client's agenda' without regard for the life-giving system of which the client and their organisation is a part.

If we choose to recognise and respond to the crisis, we can immediately use our incredible skills to shift awareness and create space for meaningful dialogue. We need systemic and individual transformation.

The open letter invites us all to pledge with immediate effect to take actions including to:

- Declare a climate and environmental emergency, making this public to connections, clients and stakeholders, including why
- Assess your personal and organisation's impact and create an urgent plan to be carbon zero or, ideally, carbon negative, by 2025

● Join others charting their own paths in this new territory

For the professional bodies and educators to:

- Co-create a Global Climate Crisis Network for coaches
- Undertake climate and emergency awareness briefing/masterclasses for board members and staff. Take urgent steps to raise awareness and educate members and learners. Install climate and environmental emergency as the central issue in strategic and operational decision-making
- Ensure climate and environmental awareness is included in professional coaching competencies, including support and advice to members and learners on how to raise awareness and work with emergency related issues
- Ensure all coaching conferences include at least one session on the emergency
- Minimise negative impact of conferences by making as many as possible virtual, or if not, then minimising impact in every way, including travel, using local vegan food – and no throwaway freebies
- Create awards with climate and environmental emergency categories to share and to promote best practice
- Share what you're doing and keep evolving new ways to address this crisis.

These are uncharted waters, and we're all sailing them, whether we realise it or not.

References

- IPBES summary for policy makers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the *Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*: advance unedited version, Paris: IPBES, 2019
- *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*. Incheon, Republic of Korea: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018
- *An Open Letter to Coaches, the Coaching and Coaching Psychology Professional Bodies and Coach Educators* <http://bit.ly/2Yex7Hq>
- N Scotton 'Three minutes to midnight: Shakin' all over', *Coaching at Work*, Vol 14 Issue 3, p17, 2019