

Project Description

The aim of this project was to create a website to help those who may feel lost, overwhelmed, or uncomfortable when discussing the negative emotions unearthed in environmental education (EE), using best practices from the field of death education. During the Capstone process prior to creating the website, I reviewed the literature surrounding eco-grief, death education, and meaning-making to answer the question *How can environmental educators apply best practices from death education to help children make meaning from eco-grief?*

The website focuses on hope and meaning-making in the face of eco-grief, drawing on best practices in death education and grief counseling. Some of these best practices include “holding” (creating space and time for another’s emotions), conversing openly and honestly, accepting one may not have all the answers, and purposefully dedicating time for self-care (as well as advocating for student self-care). There is also an emphasis on community building and relationships with others, self, and nature. This website intentionally centers emotions as a vital dimension of knowledge and experience while seeking to disrupt the taboo of death in globalized Western society, especially the way knowledge and coping skills are withheld from children in the name of preserving their innocence.

The original intended demographic of the project was anyone who works in EE and experiences eco-grief or has students experiencing it. However, during the process of creating the website I realized that most of the information surrounding grief and loss is applicable to any age range or curriculum. The language on the site was kept

intentionally broad and does not specifically mention any specific subjects. For the sake of approachability, the website does not assume a background in EE, nor lean on specialized academic language from the field. Readers should be able to choose any section on the website, easily comprehend the best practices described, and apply them however they like, whether or not they work in EE.

The website should not be given to children to explore on their own, as it is not directed at children and they may not understand all the concepts. The text is meant to be filtered through an adult lens, internalized by the educator, and then applied sensibly to the learning environment. In the future, resources specifically for children could be added.