

## Lunchtime Learning: May 16, 2024 at Noon Virtually

### Climate Change and Mental Health: What We Know, What We Can Do with Meg Houlihan, PhD

We can't escape the fact that our climate is changing in ways large and small. We hear about climate-related disasters in our state and around the world; we experience changes in weather patterns and pay high heating and cooling bills; a favorite summer location is too hot, or a winter location no longer has snow. Increasingly, we are learning that the effects of climate change on individuals include not only physical symptoms like respiratory disorders from polluted air, but also mental health issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety. And yet we struggle to fully take in this serious situation, experiencing a level of denial in ourselves and others. What is our role as psychologists in addressing these issues? What types of interventions do we have that are helpful? This presentation will trace the growing awareness and scholarship in our field related to the role that psychology can play in addressing the many challenges of climate change. After examining the role of climate change denial, we will look at three areas of intervention: "on the ground" responses to climate crises; treating clients who come into our offices for psychotherapy, whether they present with concerns about climate change or not; and taking direct, psychologically informed actions in our own lives and communities. A focus will be on self-care and resiliency, since climate change is an issue that affects us as well as our clients. We'll look at experiential resources for clinicians to use with clients and for themselves and discuss the importance of hope and meaning as essential ingredients for resiliency. Participants will be encouraged to identify skills and tools that they already have that can be used in this important work.

**Fee:** NCPA Members - \$20.00; Non-members - \$45.00

**Instructional Level:** Basic

**Educational Format:** Lecture with slides: small-group discussion

#### Learning Objectives:

**By the end of the institute, participants will be able to:**

1. identify three psychological processes that interfere with an accurate assessment of the threats posed by climate change,
2. explain the difference between the disaster mental health model and the individual psychotherapy model as responses to climate-induced psychological distress, and
3. select one experiential exercise to practice for self-care and, potentially, to utilize in individual psychotherapy.



#### Instructor:

**Meg Houlihan** is a clinical psychologist in private practice, treating adults with a variety of concerns including anxiety and mood disorders, relationship concerns, and managing chronic medical conditions and life transitions. Prior to working in private practice, she was Director of Predoctoral Internship Training at UNCC Counseling Center; taught for the University of Maryland Overseas program in Guam and Japan; worked at The Rehab Center, a multidisciplinary chronic pain program in Charlotte; and served as staff psychologist at Charlotte Rehabilitation Hospital. She is a lifelong environmental activist who has been seeking ways to apply psychological knowledge to environmental problems; to this end, she has presented at professional conferences and to numerous community groups on topics such as the importance of nature to children's health and resiliency, and

she has testified twice before the NC Utilities Commission about the psychological effects of poor air quality. In addition to her membership in NCPA, she is a member of APA (Division 48—Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence) and Psychologists for Social Responsibility, and she has served on the Medical Advisory Board for Clean Air Carolina.

**Continuing Education Information:** This workshop is sponsored by the North Carolina Psychological Association (NCPA). NCPA is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer Continuing Education (CE) for psychologists. NCPA maintains responsibility for this program and its content. **This workshop is offered for 1 hour of Category A credit.**

#### Attendance Requirement for CE Credit:

To receive CE credit, you must attend the entire workshop. No credit will be given to participants who are more than 5 minutes late at the beginning of the workshop. You must be present at the close of the workshop and sign-in and sign-out. You may not be excused early. Partial credit is not provided.

**Citations:** Available upon request.