

# **XR Psychologists' Strategy 2024** (draft 13/1/24; amended 15/1/24, 20/1/24)

This draft strategy was initiated following discussion/ consultation at one of our monthly whole group meetings, 8/1/24, progressed at a specially convened Strategy Meeting, 12/1/24 (Annie, Antonia, Marion, Lizzie), and agreed through exchanges between members of the Co-ordinating Group. It will be finalised by the Co-ordinating Group following further consultation with members on the full WhatsApp Group.

## **A) Context**

2024 is set to be a big year politically, with a UK general election and more elections globally, a troubling rise in disinformation, social division and rising social and economic inequalities. There is terrible global conflict, wars and oppression of citizens, serious warnings of significant risks of future increased turbulence, discontent and global shocks, and government repression of activists and environmental defenders. We have just had in 2023 the hottest year ever recorded, with increasing severe weather events in the UK as well as globally. Costs of living are rising, alongside soaring profits by the richest. COP28 in 2023 is widely considered to have been hijacked by vested oil and financial interests, albeit with the first ever mention of the need for carbon cutting. This wider context should shape our strategy, communications and activities as climate and environmentally concerned psychologists, and as part of the wider XR community.

## **B) Who do we want to influence?**

Politicians, the general public and fellow psychologists.


## **C) What can we bring, especially as psychologists?**

Our guiding strap line remains “feel, think and act together” - reflecting our identity as psychologists and psychotherapists, and our desire to work in partnership with others (within and beyond XR) in raising awareness and demanding political, civic and business action to address the climate and ecological emergency.

We want to be informed by relevant reliable evidence and to 1) listen and learn, formulate, share knowledge; 2) encourage and support others in changing behaviour (individually and systemically); 3) hold, contain and motivate; 4) amplify climate concerned voices that are less heard (including those of children, people experiencing psychological distress, people from minority groups); 5) centre justice; and in all our actions be seen as (we hope) “trusted professionals” in convincing others that demanding climate action is necessary and reasonable and that action must be fair especially to those who are suffering most and have done least to cause the harm.

## **D) How much capacity do we have?**

There are 165 people (practitioner and academic psychologists and psychotherapists) on our WhatsApp group, and 2472 followers on Twitter/X, with maybe around 20 of us actively sharing and attending meetings and actions, but likely more available to call on for particular actions; we hope the information we share on WhatsApp and Twitter/X ripples out and is helpful for group members and others taking personal, local XR or professional actions.

We hope to gently encourage, inspire and galvanise as many rebels and potential rebels as possible to actively engage more .

## **E) What is current XR Central Strategy? See**

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2023/05/28/extinction-rebellion-strategy-2023-2024-here-comes-everyone/> and <https://rebeltoolkit.extinctionrebellion.uk>

(a) only return to Parliament when numbers are sufficient and sustainable over a longer term. Meantime recruit, recruit, recruit (though keeping up the momentum with continuous recruiting is demoralising when there's not much action to currently engage with. People fall away almost as soon as they're recruited!) (b) Focus on participative democracy with local people's assemblies (c) General Election – prepare to get the climate crisis foregrounded with all political parties, but don't peak too soon!

## **F) What are our theories of change?**

As psychologists and psychotherapists, we know that human change is complicated: change happens at different levels and timescales and with different motivations. So, we draw on a range of theories - there's not just one way. People, power, truth and imagination are all part of the picture. People - enough people - are needed to shift the balance of power away from corporate greed towards kindness, care and creativity. XR draws on the work of Erica Chenoweth (see <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/behind-the-book/erica-chenoweth-civil-resistance>) whose research suggests that political transformations can happen through the social power of broad and diverse participation in non-violent resistance, with a large and varied movement having a wide set of tactics to draw on, maintaining discipline in the face of escalating state repression and helped by defections to the cause by members of elites or security forces. XR's aim, informed by Chenoweth's early research, has been to reach a tipping point of engagement of 3.5 percent of a population. We understand that action depends on the particular political context. We agree that we need a large movement of people who understand the causes and implications of climate and ecological harm, who want to stop the

underlying injustices and who have a voice through participatory democracy, including well informed citizens' assemblies, just as juries understanding evidence and motivation have a vital role in protecting our fair rights and freedoms.

## **G) What shall we XR Psychologists do this year?**

In all our actions, we try to be informed by relevant reliable evidence and by our XR Principles and Values <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/about-us/> including building a regenerative culture, encouraging participation by everyone, following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action.

### **1) Listen and learn, formulate, share knowledge:**

- a) continue information sharing on WhatsApp. There are many excellent sources of wisdom, knowledge and activism to draw on and learn from. This is encouraging and helpful eg for influencing people/bodies including the British Psychological Society (BPS), Association of Clinical Psychologists (ACP) and British Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Psychotherapists (BABCP) and others.
- b) continue with our Twitter/X account (thanks Luke). Anyone on Twitter/X please follow and share;
- c) make better use of our website: work on posting relevant material and updates on our website (any of us can forward content and links to ask Becs to post);
- c) continue with our monthly book club (thanks again Luke).

### **2) Encourage, plan, join & support others in changing behaviour individually, and demanding systemic change (including actions where individuals risk losing their freedom):**

- a) we acknowledge civil disobedience (non-violent direct action) as a crucial part of the mix; our commitment is to support that, and work together as a group with various roles to support any members/colleagues who choose to risk their freedom, while also acknowledging that for good reason civil disobedience is not an option available to all of us;
- b) join in with national/ regional actions: currently planned events are Farnham Airfield end of January; Drax action in York 24 – 25th Feb;
- c) join in with regional and health hub/ XR Health events: eg currently planned SW climate inquest Jan 27th and more to follow elsewhere;
- d) find ways to build stronger partnership in liaising more specifically with Health XR, amplifying their voice with mental health perspectives on their actions;
- e) build on and/or replicate our previous actions including digital actions like our Trimester project and Francesca's Twitter Storm. Collectively sharing the preparation as well as the action could involve more people, with more ideas/focused information resulting in an even more powerful action;

- f) consider joining in actions/ coordinating more with other XR groups such as Money Rebellion, Elders and Grandparents, Regen Culture, Mothers' Rebellion;
- g) encourage and support individuals engaged with activities connected with climate activism, which adhere to XR's Values and Principles but are not performed under the umbrella of XR such as GlobalPsyFuture, Defend our Juries, the Primaries movement prior to the General Election, and those seeking to influence their local councils eg through offering People's Assemblies held locally;
- h) explore ways to support Zero Hour, pushing in general election year in supporting the Climate and Ecology Bill <https://www.zerohour.uk/bill/>;
- i) consider developing events/ resources eg how to have good climate conversations in public engagement events.

### **3) Hold, contain, and motivate (ourselves and others):**

- a) continue to offer Climate Cafes, Resilience to Resist support sessions;
- b) explore new/ creative ways of activating such as storytelling and mime actions as in our first action in 2019.

### **4) Amplify climate concerned voices that are less heard:**

- a) explore ways to work more with children, and promote children's views and energy, with educational psychologist Dan O'Hare invited as our first guest speaker of the year: See <https://www.bps.org.uk/news/climate-crisis-and-its-implications-children-young-people-and-educational-psychologists>.

### **5) Centre justice:**

- a) We need more ideas and initiatives to help us to think, learn, share, support and do more to join the dots between intersecting issues of climate justice: war, the weapons industry, colonisation, genocide, the media, neo-liberalism, excessive profits, forced migration and immigration, homelessness and poverty, social class, disability, racism, environmental degradation, lack of access to green spaces and clean air.

## **H) Conclusion and continuation**

We hope this broad strategy, to listen, encourage, hold, amplify unheard voices, and centre justice, will inspire actions, help everyone who wants to find their place in XR Psychologists to participate, and influence our tactics. We still need to prioritise and schedule a few things to focus on. Everyone is welcome to suggest initiatives that fit under this strategic framework, usually by setting up small working groups to plan. We will keep an eye on, and be guided by, the broad goals of XR. And we will regularly review and adapt our strategy through reflection at open monthly meetings, and at occasional strategy planning meetings set by our XR Psychologists' coordinating group and open to all.