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This month's Museletter begins with an invitation to join Post Carbon Institute's new programme Resilience+ to explore ways of navigating the polycrisis. That is followed by my first essay for Resilience+ looking at the effect of these crises on mental health. In addition, I recently wrote a piece [From Climate Crisis to Polycrisis](#) for World Literature Today which you can read at my website.

Invitation to a Journey

We at Post Carbon Institute have been watching global trends for a few decades, and we've never before seen so many warning lights flash at once. That's why we've concluded that, as of 2024, humanity is at a make-or-break crossroads in its economic, social, and environmental history. This conclusion, in turn, explains why we've chosen to launch Resilience+ (more on that below) to help people understand and navigate the cascading crises of the 21st century.

First, let's take a quick look at those warning lights. After that, we'll unpack the deeper significance of what's happening and present our organization's plans for Resilience+.

Things Are Deteriorating Fast

Nearly everyone knows that the climate is heating up. But a flurry of [alarming](#) recent studies about [rapidly warming oceans](#), [climate feedbacks](#), and [tipping points](#) suggest that the rate of warming is suddenly accelerating. Last year was the warmest on record "[by far](#)" according to NASA, with the global average temperature leaping above the next-warmest year, 2016, by an unprecedented 0.27 degree F (0.15 degree C). And it's been revealed that the international community of climate experts, rather than fear-mongering, has actually [downplayed the severity](#) of the crisis.

For years the oceans have been devastated by plastics pollution, overfishing, and the expansion of "dead zones" fed by fertilizer runoff. But oceans also absorb most of the energy from global warming. Just within the past few months, ocean heating has accelerated dramatically, with [temperature records being shattered](#) literally every day.

At the same time, armed conflicts have erupted in [Europe](#) and the [Middle East](#). The International Institute for Strategic Studies, which publishes an annual Armed Conflict Survey, [documented 183 regional conflicts in 2023](#),

the highest number in three decades. Far from showing signs of resolving themselves, many of these wars now threaten to intensify, drawing in more countries and combatants. Old alliances are fraying and shifting, make this one of the most [perilous](#) moments for global geopolitics in decades.

The global economy is also on a precipice. It's always volatile, because it rests on an inherently unsteady foundation of shifting relations between natural resource extraction, energy, technology, investment, and labor. The modern economy has come to depend on perpetual GDP growth in order to repay debt, and growth has been enabled primarily by the use of fossil fuels. Those fuels require [more extraction effort](#) than they used to, due to the ongoing depletion of high-quality conventional resources. The economy has made up for the declining efficiency of its main energy sources by increasingly using debt to fund growth. Recently, total global debt, public and private, has hit [a new record](#), both in terms of dollar amount and (for less industrialized nations) as a percentage of GDP. Meanwhile, the economy faces extraordinary headwinds, including [climate impacts](#), energy challenges inherent in efforts to decarbonize industries, and a new tech revolution centered on artificial intelligence (AI). Technology revolutions are always transformative, but AI is potentially a [wrecking ball for both industries and jobs](#). Tech entrepreneurs love the word “disrupt,” but disruption on this scale and at this speed is treacherous.

One of the likely impacts of both AI and climate change is [increasing economic inequality](#). Over the past few decades, income inequality has risen in wealthy economies and rapidly industrializing economies, which together account for about two-thirds of the world's population and 85 percent of global GDP. This increase in wealth disparity has been particularly acute in the United States, China, India, and Russia.

A macrosocial effect of rising inequality is the [destabilization of governance](#) institutions. In democratic societies, extreme inequality erodes trust in leadership and paves the way for takeovers by authoritarian regimes. Political polarization is also driven by conspiracy theories and lack of consensus among major news outlets about basic facts such as election results, both of which are increasingly driven by the algorithms and business models of hugely profitable social media enterprises. As AI begins to ramp up the volume and sophistication of fake news, public consensus may become ever harder to achieve or maintain. Altogether, [democracy globally is endangered](#), most notably in the US, but also Britain, Europe, and India.

We're also seeing a sea change in the relatively slow-moving realm of demographics. For decades, world population has increased. The percentage rate of growth peaked in the 1970s, but the absolute number of people added per year has continued to hover at around 80 million. The number of humans alive is [still increasing](#). But [fertility rates are now falling](#) rapidly nearly everywhere—not because everyone has suddenly realized that the world is overpopulated, or because most people have gotten rich (the “demographic transition”), but increasingly because young would-be parents around the world fear for the future.

Humanity has seen dramatic changes in the past century—world wars, pandemics, the introduction of new technologies, and the growth of new industries. Human population more than doubled, and the world's

geopolitical map was redrawn several times. You might think that with so much change already behind us, things would start to settle down; but, given all the environmental and social turmoil described above, the pace of change is instead likely to accelerate further. This new spate of change will, in many instances, be destructive to bedrock human institutions, and will increasingly elude human efforts to direct or control it. Longstanding growth trends will reverse themselves, making past experience a poor guide for adaptation to unexpected and often frightening ecological, political, and economic events.

And it's all coming to a head *now*—i.e., roughly in the period from 2024 through 2030.

We're Not the Only Ones Who See It This Way

The word “polycrisis” became a [buzzword](#) in 2023, and, during the last couple of years, a [network of think tanks](#) has sprung up to study the confluence of worrisome global trends. Post Carbon Institute is part of that network, and we've contributed to the literature on the polycrisis (in a long-form [report](#) and a shorter [summary article](#), as well as other articles and podcasts).

However, we do see things a little differently from some who use the term. Many seem to think the polycrisis is just a rough patch in the inevitable evolution of larger, more powerful, and more technologically sophisticated societies. Human groups have always had problems, say these optimists, but eventually challenges are overcome. In this view, the source of the polycrisis has a lot to do with increasing human connectivity: old problems (e.g., geopolitical rivalries, financial panics, and ecological issues) are compounding each other faster than before. Humanity just needs to find ways to speed up its responses. According to this widespread view, AI may help us not only respond more quickly, but finally overcome seemingly intractable challenges like the development of clean energy and technologies to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

We at PCI take both a systems-oriented view and a deep historical view of the world situation. From these perspectives, the growth trends of the past century are inherently unsustainable. They arose from a series of prior developments (innovations in metallurgy and finance, the introduction of fuel-burning technologies like heat engines, and European colonialism)—but especially the increasing use of fossil fuels. The early results, in the forms of wealth and mobility, expanding food production, and rising population numbers, appeared miraculous. However, fuel-based growth is intrinsically self-limiting because of the finite size of nature's resource base and waste sinks. The growth of consumption and population merely accelerates our [overshoot](#) of Earth's long-term environmental [carrying capacity](#) for humans.

The most important pioneering work in global systems analysis was “[The Limits to Growth](#),” a computer-based system dynamics project undertaken at MIT in the early 1970s and updated several times since (most recently [in 2023](#)). The goal of the project was not to produce a forecast of future events, but to provide a set of scenarios showing likely interactions between resource depletion, pollution, industrial output, food production, and population. The actual evolution of these societal growth drivers, inputs, and outputs has followed the “standard run” scenario, in which growth trends continue until the early-to-middle decades of 21st century, but then reverse themselves,

initiating decades of decline.

From our perspective, the polycrisis can be seen as an expected foreshock of peaks in resource availability, industrial output, population, and food production. As growth sputters, economic, ecological, and political events will present disturbing surprises on a nearly daily basis.

One of the defining characteristics of a polycrisis, by all accounts, and one of the sources of its surprises, is the increasingly chaotic interactions between system drivers and outputs. For example, as the climate heats up and triggers worsening droughts, heat waves, and storms, resulting waves of refugees will seek to move to places less affected. But rising immigration sometimes leads to more political polarization in host nations or regions, which in turn makes consensus on climate action harder to achieve.

Another example: efforts to tackle climate change often involve a build-out of renewable energy generation capacity and the electrification of industries. The amount of new infrastructure that would be needed in order to phase out fossil fuels altogether, while providing the same energy services as today, would be vast. Building that infrastructure will take energy and raw materials, which requires a lot of mining and transport. So, ironically, efforts to solve one environmental problem (climate change) will likely worsen others (resource depletion and [habitat destruction](#)), and deepen inequities between the Global North and Global South.

These sorts of complex interactions make for [wicked problems](#)—i.e., ones whose solution requires sacrificing something that society currently holds dear, or ones that generate still more problems.

The polycrisis marks a historic inflection point in the story of civilization. Once we're past a rapidly approaching moment, society won't be able to maintain business as usual, even with significant reforms. The economy will behave according to new rules. Solutions will backfire. And few people will understand why all of this is happening.

New Context, New Strategies

This changing context has inspired new efforts here at Post Carbon Institute. During the past 20 years, PCI has created a heap of products (books, videos, articles, reports, podcasts, websites, and webinars) to help our audience understand fossil-fueled environmental overshoot—its historic roots and its consequences. We will continue this work. However, as forecasts of the future turn into current impacts, we know that our audience's needs are changing.

In response, PCI is introducing a new program we're calling [Resilience+](#). Our goal is to explore what the polycrisis means not just in terms of Earth history and the overall trajectory of human events, but also our own personal lives. Dealing with the chaotic manifestations of the polycrisis will call for new thinking and behavior on everyone's part. It will challenge us emotionally and spiritually as well as intellectually.

We're not just seeking to host a discussion about "solving" climate change, though of course we should all be doing what we can. There are three reasons for this. First, that discussion is already happening in many venues. Second, humanity's existential risks are not limited to climate change. And third, it's

likely that the opportunity for a painless solution to both climate change and the more fundamental overshoot dilemma expired in the 1980s, as global society pursued further growth rather than undertaking the reforms—voluntary reduction in global population and overall consumption, along with maximization of efficiency—that, in the “Limits to Growth” scenarios, appeared to lead to a “soft landing.” That’s why, today, we are confronted increasingly not with discrete solvable problems, but with mutually exacerbating predicaments.

Understanding is vital if we are to avert the worst likely outcomes and lay the groundwork for sustainable societies in the future. Preventing harm requires us to anticipate coming shocks to our communities as much as we can, both so that we can protect ourselves and our loved ones, and so we can promote and model more sustainable ways of living.

Given the momentum of events, it’s easy to become fatalistic, and to conclude that nothing we do matters. But, in fact, there’s much we can do to adapt positively to the polycrisis. More than ever before, it’s important to undertake strategic efforts to save nature and culture. We can do that by identifying and pursuing “no regrets” (or “[multisolving](#)”) strategies such as [restoring nature](#) as a way to capture and store carbon.

At the core personal level, we all yearn to find meaning in what’s happening, and to make our lives a contribution to others, rather than a burden. That requires finding our place within networks of restorative thinkers and activists around the world, and finding our unique voice.

Sometimes it means learning more about what’s going wrong, without jumping immediately to the first “solution” that presents itself. As Donna Haraway puts it, we must “[stay with the trouble](#).” That’s often uncomfortable, and it’s why many people merely seek escape—which usually takes the form of either fatalism or techno-optimism.

Fatalism is certainly no help. It just leads to depression and irrelevance.

More people take the route of techno-optimism, but that’s just the path of delusion, since it rests on a misdiagnosis of the polycrisis. Our essential human problem is not that we’ve somehow chosen the wrong (i.e., fossil-fuel based) set of technologies, while another set (that’s renewable-energy based) will fix everything. Our problem is that a momentary energy bonanza has enabled humanity to grow its population and consumption levels far beyond what’s sustainable long-term. The only real solution will be for humanity to inhabit the planet differently. That will require vision, persuasion, and time. It will require humility, solidarity and cooperation. It will require new stories of progress and purpose. And it will require (re)turning to the wisdom of both nature and Indigenous peoples—who have learned over countless millennia how to live sustainably. But, critically, this adaptation process will have to proceed in the context of societal and ecological breakdown.

We’re here for the duration, so let’s stay with the trouble, understand as much of the predicament and its possible remedies as we can, and try to minimize the suffering of humanity and other species now and throughout the period of polycrisis and adaptation.

What We Offer, What We Ask

What do we have in mind?

We invite you join us on a journey of discovery. We don't know everything you might need in order to understand the polycrisis and navigate your way through it. But we do have access to brilliant thinkers and people doing fascinating and inspiring things in their lives.

We're a think tank: what we've always done is to aid our audience in understanding so that their actions are more grounded and strategic, while also providing a hub of engagement. And we have a good track record in this regard. It makes sense for us to build on these skills and accomplishments.

Fortunately, we've gained access to diverse networks of global activists, writers, artists, and experts, which is important because it's going to take a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

Resilience+ will feature a series of "Deep Dive" events, spaced roughly two months apart. Each Deep Dive will feature a webinar with experts. That webinar will be followed by a discussion session designed to engage the audience directly. Additional materials will include recorded and transcribed interviews with other experts and activists, framing essays, and curated lists of resources for further study. In the first year, our deep dives will explore emotional resilience, climate change, political polarization, and capitalism/degrowth. In between Deep Dives, we will provide supplemental videos and articles meant to share actionable ideas and inspiration for how to navigate the polycrisis. And of course, we'll continue to offer a daily dose of insightful articles on the [Resilience website](#).

Our first **Deep Dive - Building Emotional Resilience**, is now available to [sign up for and purchase at Resilience +](#). Some Resilience+ stuff will be free, some will be behind a paywall. We're doing this because, if you're getting something valuable, it's reasonable to ask you to help support our organization. (We will have scholarships to help make the material more broadly accessible.) Being part of Resilience+ will mean being part of a community of fellow explorers.

But more important, we need you to take the information and use it.

All of what we're doing proceeds from an ethical stance: we're interested in what's good not just for us, but for future generations, Earth, and other species.

If you share that ethical stance, we ask you to stay with the trouble, make alliances, and work from where you are. We are all on a journey, one that's sure to be met with extreme weather, tough times, and untold obstacles. We hope you'll share some of your journey with us, as together we'll stand a better chance of arriving at the destination we aim for: a sustainable, equitable society that works for all.

Going Sane in a Crazy World

Nearly everyone occasionally describes the human world as "crazy." And,

there's plenty of anecdotal evidence that, as a species, we are indeed a little batty—from the often-indecipherable instructions on electronic products to the fact that you can't get a job without experience, but can't get experience without a job. However, humanity's most glaring symptom of actual collective insanity is surely its unswerving drive toward self-destruction.

For decades we've been overshooting sustainable levels of population, resource use, and pollution. In the 19th and 20th centuries, sources of cheap, concentrated, and storable energy—fossil fuels—enabled humanity to develop new technologies that, in turn, made it possible for us to travel further and faster, produce more food to feed an expanding population, and manufacture a stupefying array of new products. The rich got richer, most people got more comfortable, and the human population ballooned from 1 billion to 8 billion. The economy became a thing to be measured and studied; growth was the new goal and sign of success.

However, Earth's supply of raw materials and ability to absorb wastes has not grown; indeed, expanding our population and economy just means depleting resources and polluting nature faster. One result seems to overshadow many others: the functioning of Earth's life-support systems is now threatened more than at any time in thousands, if not millions of years primarily due to fossil-fueled climate change.

The consequences of our adoption of consumerist, growth-seeking industrialism will ultimately be a crash—hopefully only partial and temporary—of society and nature. That's not a crystal-ball prophecy; it's a mathematical near-certainty given the fundamental contradiction between the ways in which ecosystems work and the ways modern industrial societies work. In fact, the crash has already started (via climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss) and will play out over the remainder of this century and possibly longer.

Meanwhile, our crazy way of organizing human affairs has been normalized. It's not hard to understand why. Organisms thrive on the ability to do things (metabolize, move, sense their environments, and process information), and doing anything whatever requires energy. Fossil fuels gave humans the biggest energy subsidy that any organism has enjoyed in all of evolutionary history. When we suddenly found ourselves able to accomplish far more things, we luxuriated in the benefits and took credit for them: progress, we assumed, was entirely due to human intelligence and ingenuity. We simply took energy and natural resources for granted. We developed ideologies according to which there are no environmental limits to growth, and there is no problem that human intelligence cannot solve.

The result is a social system that denies ecological reality in myriad ways. And it is the social setting that largely defines what is considered “normal” thinking and behavior in individuals. But what's the use of conforming to “normal” behavior within a crazy context?

Of course, definitions of mental health don't all turn upon whether we adhere to or defy cultural norms. Individual psychopathology, sometimes caused by stress, trauma, or neurochemical imbalance, often entails disability and suffering (for example, in cases of dementia or severe bipolar disorder), and can result in harm to others (in cases of schizophrenia or extreme narcissism).

As humanity encounters serious impacts from its collective craziness, people whose mental health is already at risk will likely suffer more than others. But even otherwise psychologically stable people will be emotionally challenged as their eco-social context is disrupted or shattered.

In this article, we'll explore ways to survive psychologically in a world that's crashing on the shoals of ecological limits. Individual psychological resilience is valuable for its own sake. But it may also be essential to the bigger and more important project of creating a human world that's actually sane—i.e., one that serves the long-term survival of our species within a healthy ecosphere.

Psychological Stresses in a Time of Polycrisis

The unraveling of Earth systems and human societies will impose psychological burdens on vast numbers of people throughout the remainder of this century. The following are some of these burdens:

Pre-traumatic stress disorder. Knowledge of impending global crisis can trigger persistent, debilitating fear or dread. Some mental health practitioners have labeled this condition [pre-traumatic stress disorder](#), but the term is not widely accepted. Nevertheless, the condition is becoming more commonplace as people hear dire warnings about climate change.

Pre-traumatic stress affects young people in increasing numbers. One 2022 [study](#) found that, among a pool of 10,000 youth and young adults from around the world, 59 percent said they were very or extremely worried about climate change, and about 67 percent said they were sad and afraid.

Tragically, some ecologically aware people are [taking their own lives](#) out of climate angst, and as a way to call attention to the issue.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Actual eco-social trauma can come in a multitude of forms, including hunger, heat, human-on-human violence, and destruction of homes and livelihoods by natural disasters. Despite the variety of harms to which people can be subjected, their psychological responses to trauma tend to display some commonalities, and these have been [studied extensively](#).

Symptoms of PTSD may include sleeplessness, nightmares, avoidance of situations that trigger memories of the trauma, heightened startle response, anxiety, or depression. As warnings about ecological collapse turn to reality, the numbers of victims and refugees will swell, and PTSD symptoms will likely become more commonplace.

Cognitive dissonance. Living with cultural messages that are contradictory or hard to reconcile (“life in modern industrial societies is the pinnacle of evolution”; “we are destroying the planet”) [takes a toll](#) on psychological health. People who experience the discomfort of cognitive dissonance often deal with it by avoiding certain subjects, or by mentally delegitimizing anyone who calls attention to the dissonance.

Awareness that society is on a treacherous path is inherently a source of cognitive dissonance. It can lead people to question their own sanity or that of people they disagree with, or cause them to adopt spurious explanations

(“conspiracy theories”) for cultural or ecological stress. (Some of my colleagues at Post Carbon Institute have a [podcast](#) dedicated to navigating this dissonance through dark humor and companionship.) As such explanations proliferate and gain adherence, societal consensus will tend to disintegrate, advancing the conditions for generating even more cognitive dissonance.

Grief. The coming Great Unraveling will entail losses that are personal, cultural, and/or ecological. Many people will lose loved ones in tragic circumstances. Others will feel a sudden or increasing absence of familiar life circumstances as whole communities crumble. Still others will feel grief for the loss of nature—including forests and wildlife. Significant loss naturally brings feelings of grief, and unexpressed grief can make us numb, depressed, and ineffective.

Guilt and projection. Many people will feel some degree of personal responsibility for socio-ecological unraveling, having spent their lives participating in and benefiting from fossil-fueled consumer culture. Feelings of guilt can be helpful if they lead to self-examination and positive behavior change. However, persistent, unaddressed guilt can lead to depression. Even if one doesn’t feel personally responsible for the Great Unraveling, [survivor’s guilt](#)—which is common in the wake of wars and lethal natural disasters—can be debilitating.

Some people try to shed feelings of guilt through the well-known psychological process of projection, in which negative feelings about oneself are displaced toward others. Projection could in turn lead people to seek villains and scapegoats for eco-social collapse, thereby further weakening social systems and leading to still more trauma.

Anger and rage. Losses and threats to one’s wellbeing often arouse anger, which can turn to violence. When this happens to many people at once, rage can reverberate through the collective psyche of a mob, leading individuals to do destructive or cruel things they would never do on their own. And violence typically leads to even more trauma.

Psychological Resilience: Resources

In light of these challenges, there is increasing need for resources for individuals and communities to build psychological and emotional resilience. These resources should include trained therapists, formal research, literature for both practitioners and laypeople, and infrastructure such as regional clinics—as well as organizations that bring people together to solve problems or provide mutual aid, and popular media content that spreads awareness about climate and mental health.

Developing psychological resilience, especially as it relates to climate change, is a new but quickly growing field of study. As part of the [Deep Dive](#) that Post Carbon Institute is offering on building emotional resilience, we will be providing a curated list of books, workbooks, and podcasts on emotional and psychological resilience.

As useful as self-help books and podcasts may be, in many instances they are no substitute for trained personal help. Fortunately, there is now a Climate Psychology Alliance in North America that maintains an updated [Climate-](#)

[Aware Therapist Directory](#). (There is also a [Climate Psychiatry Alliance](#); the two organizations work closely together.)

In reading the growing literature on psychological resilience, it is hard to miss the presence of a Buddhist thread (notably in the books of Joanna Macy, Kaira Jewel Lingo, and Susan Bauer-Wu). Some people may find this Buddhist connection surprising or off-putting, but for those with a knowledge of Buddhism, it makes perfect sense. While Buddhism has some elements of religion (mythology and hagiography), its main goal has always been the alleviation of suffering through expansion of consciousness and compassion. In America, a statistically significant number of psychotherapists [have Buddhist training](#).

The other main thread in the literature is the findings of psychological research. Over the past few decades, some psychologists have specialized in studying the impacts of wars and natural disasters, as well as the recovery process afterward. Such findings will gain increasing relevance as eco-social unraveling proceeds. (See “Research on the Psychological Effects of Natural Disasters,” available as part of the emotional resilience [Deep Dive](#) materials.)

Research has also focused on what enables some people to bounce back from adversity more readily than others, and to continue functioning at a high level.

Advice for Building Emotional Resilience

Psychologists have found that a person’s level of psychological resilience is based on brain chemistry, life experiences, and learned skills. We have at least some ability to regulate all three causes. While we can’t change our early life experiences, [we can change](#) how we think about them and, to an extent, how they continue to shape us.

While your brain chemistry is largely determined by genetics, it can be altered somewhat by what you eat. A healthy diet of whole foods and minimal refined sugar can [help your brain work optimally](#). Of course, millions of people also turn to pharmaceuticals to alter brain chemistry, with widely varying results.

Your habitual behavior can make you more or less psychologically resilient. If you find that you are easily depressed, then don’t spend hours each day glued to a computer, closely following the unraveling of global ecological and social systems. Feelings of depression are not a character flaw; they’re warning signs that you need to take care of yourself and seek help.

Being able to cultivate emotional resilience is different from being an optimist. Research has shown that resilient people realistically assess risks and threats; studies suggest that in some ways pessimists [can have the advantage](#). What seems to distinguish resilient people is their use of successful [coping techniques](#) to balance negative emotions with positive ones, and to maintain an underlying sense of competence and assurance.

Regardless of your baseline temperament, you can make yourself more psychologically resilient through practice. The main things to work on are communication and problem-solving skills, the ability to manage strong impulses and feelings, and the ability to make realistic plans and to take the steps necessary to follow through with them.

At the same time, relationships with others are crucial, so make sincere efforts to stay tight with family members, friends, and co-workers. Tell the truth and be a trustworthy friend.

After a loss, take time to grieve and look at the experience as an opportunity for self-discovery. Spend time in nature: gardening is a good excuse. And get plenty of exercise, as sedentary existence increases your likelihood of feeling depressed. If you don't already have one, explore the possibility of cultivating a creative outlet (music, art, dance, theater) that you can pursue in the company of others. Self-work in these areas can help you develop a positive [self-concept](#) as well as confidence in your own strengths and abilities.

These recommendations are easier said than done. Learning new behaviors, especially ones that entail changing habitual emotional responses to triggering events, can be difficult. The most effective way to do this is to find a way to associate a [neurotransmitter reward](#) with the information or behavior being learned. For example, if you are just beginning an exercise regimen or learning a musical instrument, continually challenge yourself to make incremental improvements that are just barely within your reach. This activates the dopamine reward circuits in your brain.

In many Indigenous societies, the maintenance of individual and collective psychological health was at least partly the business of the [shaman](#)—the wounded healer, the connector of worlds. Many shamanic cultures used mind-altering plants therapeutically. Arguably, in today's far more complex societies, the shamanic role is filled at least somewhat by trained psychotherapists, who are rediscovering the usefulness of [psychedelic therapy](#) in the treatment of psychological trauma.

Making a Sane World Together

The authors of the works on psychological resilience in our [Deep Dive](#) curated resource list all appear to agree on one point: keeping your cool while the world burns is useful, but only up to a point. What's even more important is that we work to minimize the destruction of nature and society and build a saner world.

Work can be therapeutic, especially if it comes with a sense of purpose. If you engage in community climate action, food system localization, and the regeneration of ecosystems, you're likely to meet interesting people and feel useful. For many years we at PCI have been assisting in the formation of ongoing communities of reflection and practice such as [Transition Initiatives](#). If that strategy makes sense to you, but you don't have a Transition group close by, you might take the [Think Resilience](#) course and then host a discussion group in your school, home, or public library.

Devoting your time to protecting endangered species and ecosystems can be fulfilling, but it can also be heartbreaking, because your work may be undone by the next disaster or change of government (Thomas Jefferson is reputed to have said: "In the environment, every victory is temporary; every defeat permanent"). Nevertheless, loss and heartbreak are inevitable parts of life. Numbness and inaction may seem to promise psychological safety, but they rob us of the experiences that make life meaningful.

You might find it inspiring to devote some of your time to envisioning what a truly sane society would actually look like. The study of [anthropology](#) can be helpful in developing a cultural imagination, and the best futuristic fiction can also be of use. Ernest Callenbach's 1975 classic novel, [Ecotopia](#), inspired innumerable countercultural experiments in its time; more recently, Starhawk's [The Fifth Sacred Thing](#) (1993) and Kim Stanley Robinson's [The Ministry for the Future](#) (2020) have helped large numbers of readers imagine a realistic best-case world to come.

The poet Antonio Machado wrote, "We make the path by walking." If our goal is a durable, beautiful, fair, and compassionate society, then our means of achieving it must be consistent with those ends. Above all, strive to act in ways that serve collective survival and evolutionary success. Practice ways of peaceful conflict resolution while recognizing the natural limits that are likely to stir conflict in years to come.

Maintaining sanity and emotional resilience in a global society that is collectively becoming ever-more unhinged is a daily practice with both demands and rewards. If you commit to that practice, you will not only be more prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead, but you may be better placed to contribute to the welfare of the people around you, and perhaps even that of future generations and other species.