

Climate Action Team Public Health Workgroup Meeting
"Climate Change and Mental Health"
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Nothing Wrong with Misery: The Climate Challenge Through a Transformational Lens

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Overview

- What are we facing?
- How do we respond?
- How do we foster hope?



Source: <http://cloudsmartz.com/disaster-recovery-care-for-employees/>

The Apocalypse...



Photos (l r, t b): boston.com, thinkloud65.worldpress.com, extension.org, huffingtonpost

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Richard Tol at IPCC AR5 release: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"

Global Warming

When his ship first came to Australia,
Cook wrote, the natives
continued fishing, without looking up.
Unable, it seems, to fear what was too
large to be comprehended.



Jane Hirshfield
After (2006)

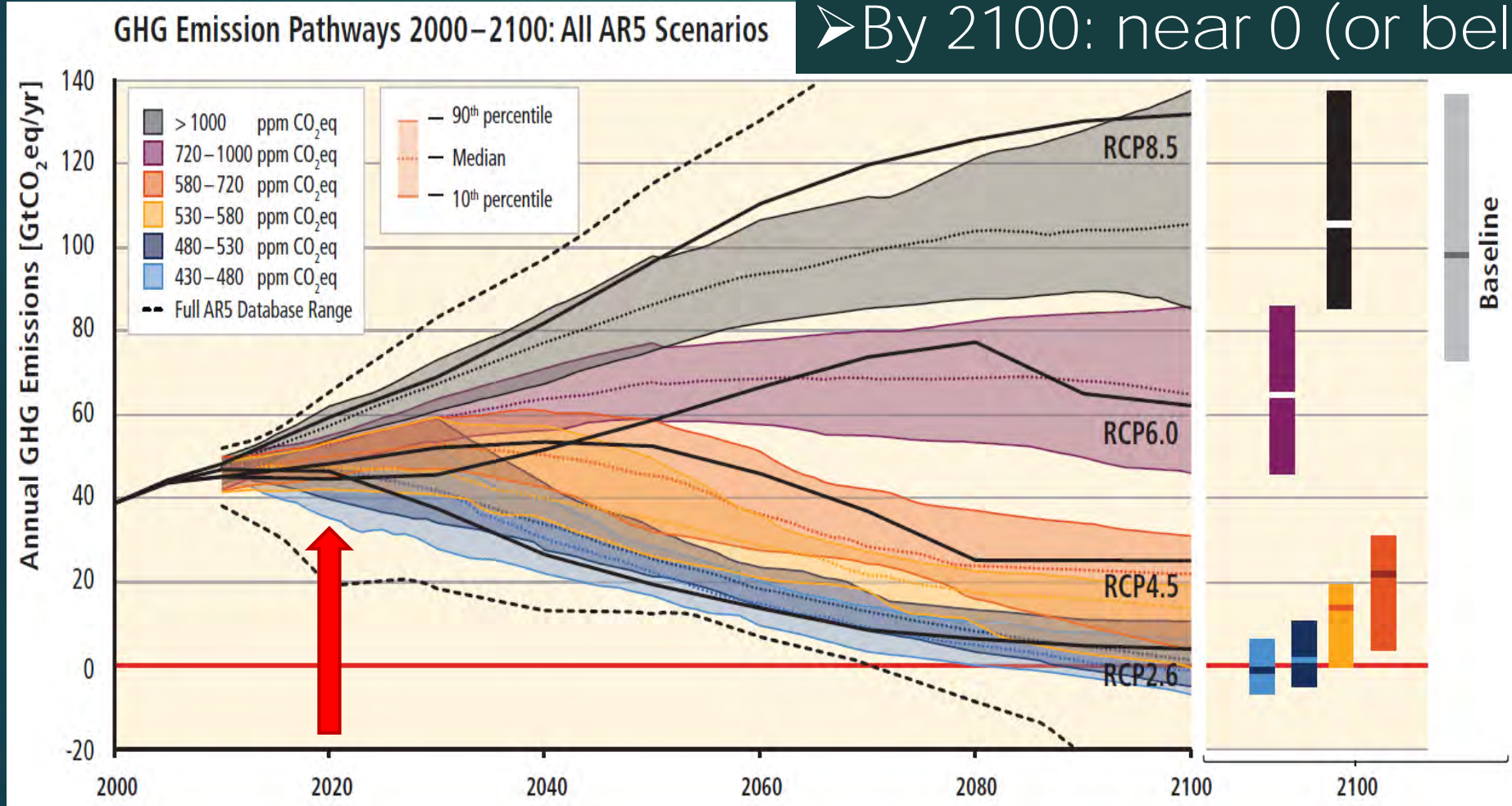
Photo: www.poetrysociety.org

No Time To Lose

450 ppm CO₂eq by 2100:

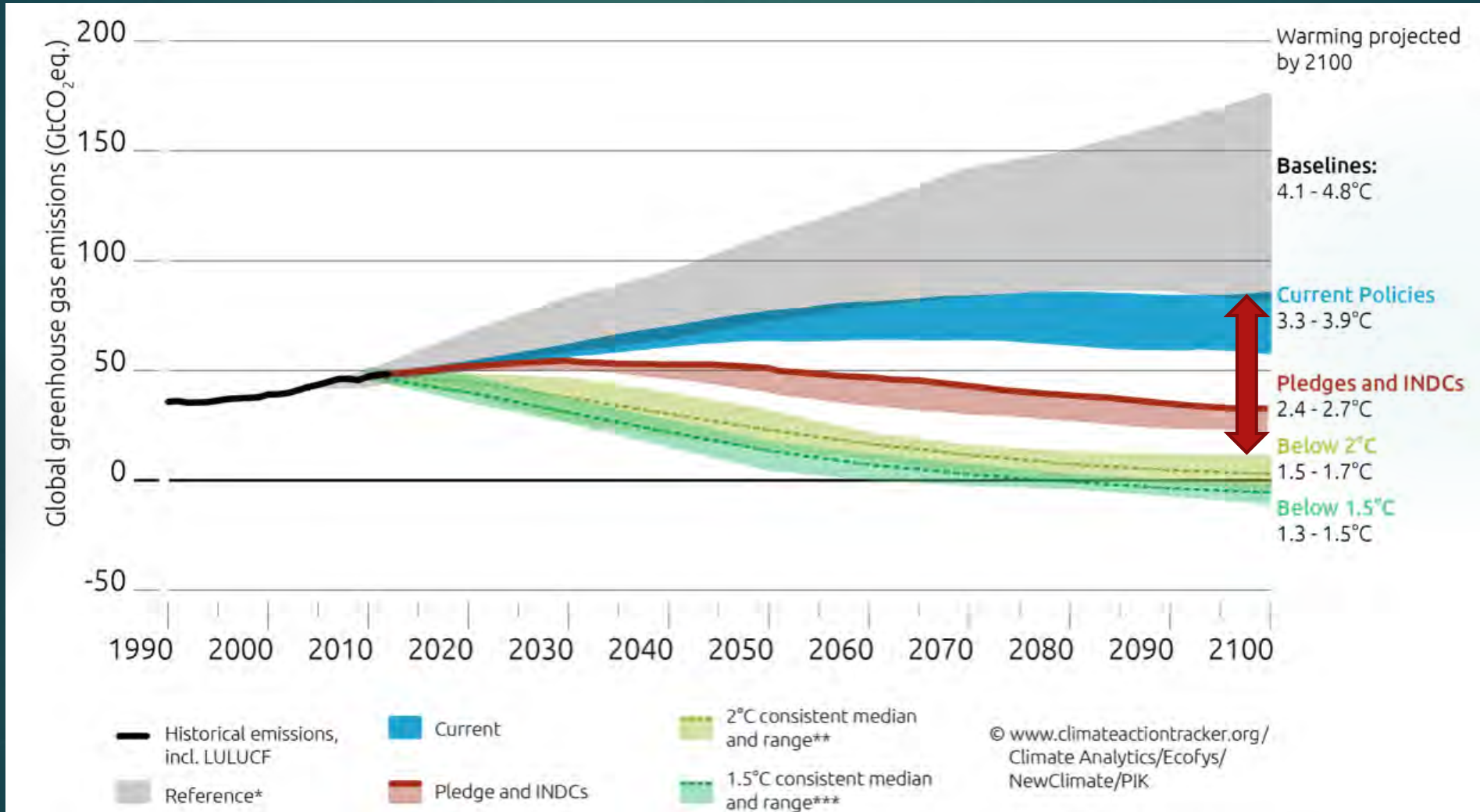
➤ By 2050: 40-70% emission reduction globally

➤ By 2100: near 0 (or below)



Source: IPCC 2014

How Close Are We to Staying “Safe”?



Source: <http://climateactiontracker.org/>; status October 2016

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Between the Impossible and the Unthinkable



“That is where we are:
Stuck between the impossible and the unthinkable.
And so for the rest of your life,
your job is to make the impossible possible.”

David Roberts, Ted talk (2012)

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pznsPkJy2x8>

The Gravity of Experience



“Catastrophe.
In a nutshell, that’s basically it.
The end of the world
as we know it.”

“Oh, just devastation. I mean the effects of it are so widespread,
and we can’t even anticipate all the effects. So it is scary.”

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Photos (l-r): [static.guim.co.uk](http://static.guim.co.uk/citylab.com/southernstudies.org); citylab.com; southernstudies.org
Quotes from: Yale project on Climate Change Communication (2014)

Between the Impossible and the Unthinkable

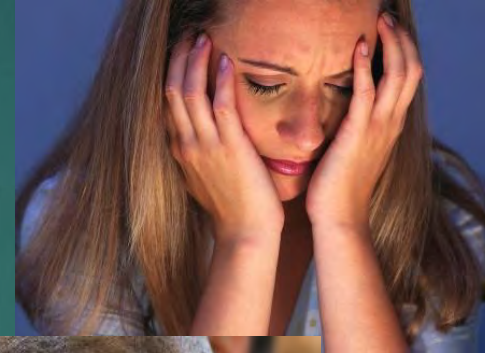


Photo: Americares.org

- Loss of health
- Loss of life
- Loss of home
- Loss of livelihood
- Loss of places/sense of place
- Loss of social connection
- Loss of sense of security
- Loss of well-being
- Loss of trust in future
- Loss of identity
- Loss of hope

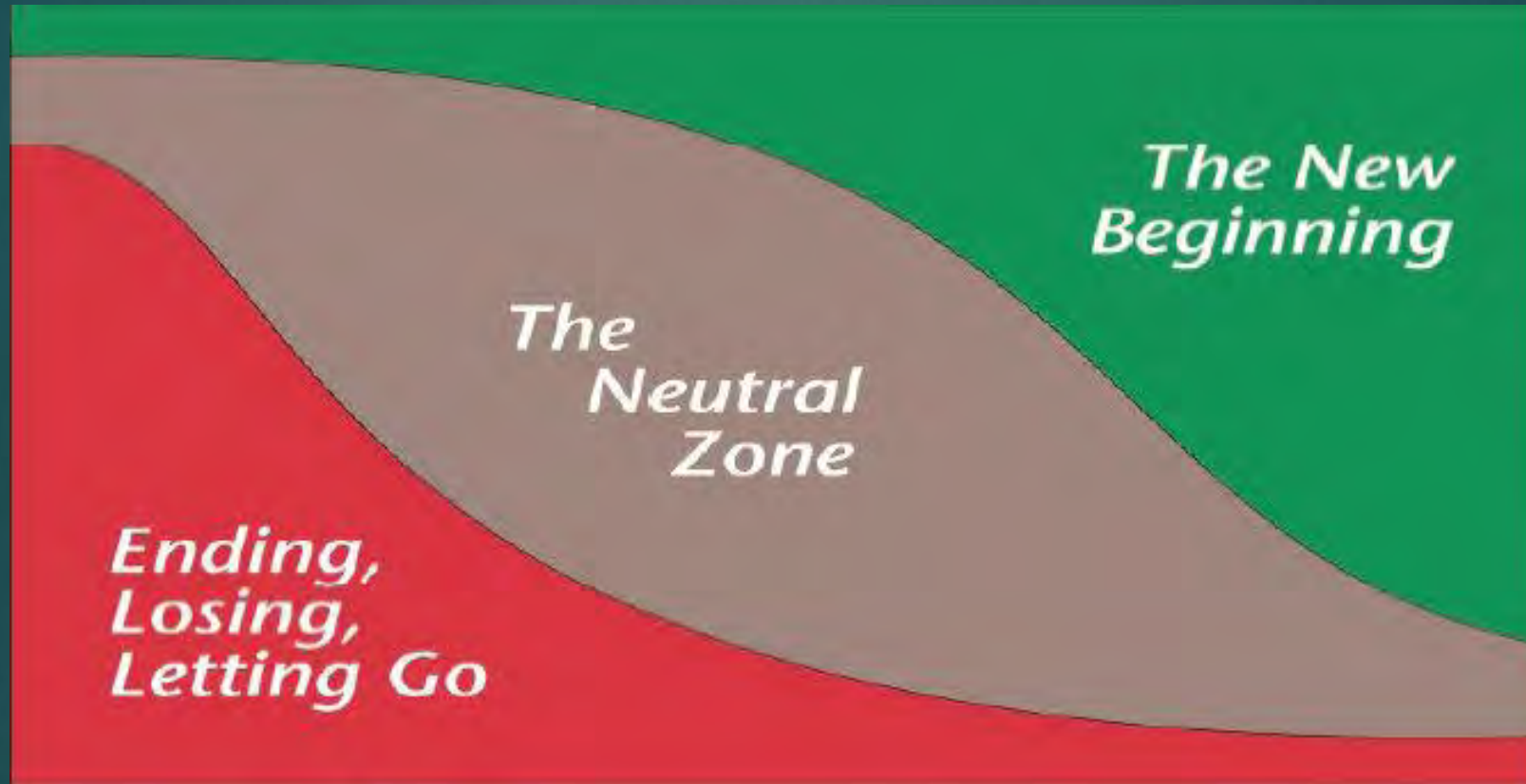
What Are We Facing?

- ▶ Untold suffering
- ▶ Countless endings
 - ▶ Environmental
 - ▶ Socioeconomic
 - ▶ Psycho cultural
- ▶ Wide range of psychological responses – entirely understandable
- ▶ Appropriate and inappropriate expressions of responses
- ▶ Ill-equipped support systems to assist and navigate the coming transformation



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The Human Geography of Transformation



Adapted from Bridges (2004)

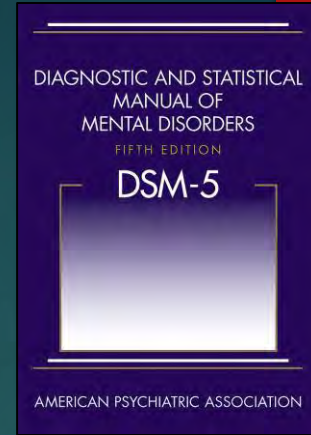
Approaches to Mental Health “Problems”

Common Practice

- ▶ Ignoring, reacting
- ▶ Pathologizing
- ▶ Individualizing
- ▶ “Treating”
- ▶ Patronizing

Needed Practice

- ▶ Truth-telling, accepting, confronting
- ▶ Validating, framing
- ▶ Normalizing
- ▶ Mapping, supporting
- ▶ Empowering



Fostering Psychological Skills for a Transformation

Severance

The courage to transcend cultural norms

Saying yes to change

Failure consciousness

Death consciousness

Being with deep emotions

Reflexivity and asking the big questions

Source: Berzonsky (2016)

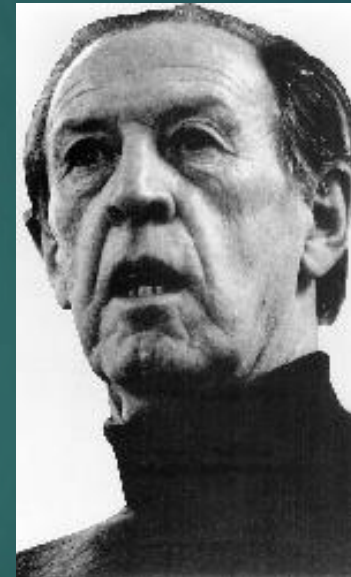


Photo: <http://s2.thingpic.com>

Supporting the Transformation with Radical Acts of Courage

"To be truly radical is to make
hope possible, rather than
despair convincing."

- Raymond Williams



Varieties of Hope



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Seven Ingredients of Authentic Hope

1. **Clear-eyed diagnosis:** Where are we at?
2. **Vision of a worthwhile outcome:** What is achievable?
3. **Feasible path:** How can we get from here to there?
4. **Strategy for setbacks and interim goals:** What to do when the going gets tough?
5. **Meaningful role for me:** What can I do?
6. **Call on my highest self:** Who do I most want to be?
7. **Doing it together:** What will you (others) do?

Photo:villageofhopeuganda.com



Photo: Heinz Gutscher

Thank you!

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