



*Photo: Colourbox. Research has shown that young people all over the world are experiencing high levels of anxiety when thinking about climate change, largely because of how uncertain they feel about the future. In some cases, they even ask themselves whether they have a future at all.*

## **Green Guidance and the Great Transformation**

“Our world needs climate action on all fronts: everything, everywhere, all at once”. Career guidance has a role to play in moving humanity closer to the resolution of the climatic and environmental crisis.

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On the release of the final instalment of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report*, United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, described it as "... a clarion call to massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every timeframe. **Our world needs climate action on all fronts: everything, everywhere, all at once.**"

Guterres’s call for action is relevant to all sectors of society, and career development professionals are no exception. Career counsellors bear an ethical responsibility to prioritize their clients’ best interest. They play a significant role in advancing humanity’s efforts to address climate change. By educating about how various careers can contribute to climate

mitigation and adaptation, they can actively contribute to the resolution of this critical global challenge.

## **Understanding the challenge**

In the words of green guidance scholar Peter Plant “[guidance needs a re-orientation, a new approach: a genuine paradigm shift](#)”. This is difficult to take forward with the conviction it requires, because it forces us to challenge our anthropocentric and consumeristic view of the world. This shift, that Joanna Macy describes as the great transformation (the “[Great Turning](#)” in the original English), is the “essential adventure of our time”. It means we are faced with the choice to leave the industrial growth society behind, and to evolve into a life-sustaining civilization.

Walking the path of the great transformation and choosing to become agents of this paradigm shift starts from acknowledging that the current way of life is no longer sustainable. This means recognizing that the actions individuals and institutions take have profound consequences on the environment; and that it is time we took responsibility for those actions. More importantly, the great transformation and green guidance complement and reinforce each other. We need to begin shifting the paradigm from *within* our own personal and professional selves, to then enable social, environmental, and economic change.

As a scholar and educator who has awakened to the reality of climate change over a decade ago, I sympathize with the challenges that career development practitioners are faced with today. Our traditional ways of working may not serve young learners as well as they used to. Research has shown that young people all over the world are experiencing high levels of anxiety when thinking about climate change, largely because of how uncertain they feel about the future. In some cases, they even ask themselves whether they have a future at all. Practitioners therefore face the additional challenge to motivate young people to care about their career development in the first place.

## **Career guidance to respond to the climate challenge**

So, what does meaningful and effective career guidance look like in the context of the global climatic and environmental crisis? This question is something that each one of us will have to contend with in light of our own belief and value systems. However, as we engage in reflection, we can rely on the guidance that various inter-governmental, non-governmental, grass-root, and advocacy movements are offering in the form of policy recommendations.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have provided a framework for individual, collective, and systemic transformation towards sustainable and just ways of living. In the past, development was seen as a process of economic growth and industrialization, with little consideration given to the consequences of those practices to the wellbeing of the planet. In contrast, the holistic approach to development embodied in the SDG recognized that economic, social, and environmental issues are all interconnected and must be addressed together to create a sustainable future for all living beings.

This concept of interconnectedness between all systems and living beings has profound implications for how we conceive careers, and the role careers play in the bigger picture. This is where green guidance can help. With its principles and practices oriented towards the development of a more sustainable world, green guidance promotes careers in fields that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. But also, it promotes a shift in how we think about careers in the first place. Green guidance asks that we help our clients understand how career choices intersect with sustainability and the role these choices play in either promoting or hindering the health of the planet.

Career counsellors may turn to the guidance offered by the [The Norwegian Quality Framework \(NKR\)](#), that emphasizes the importance of different qualification levels and learning outcomes, allowing individuals to identify potential career pathways and understand the requirements for progression within their chosen field. Furthermore, since virtually every career has implications for our own wellbeing and that of the planet, green guidance should not be narrowly understood as an approach to career education that is only relevant to the obvious environmental jobs, such as, for example, engineering or environmental sciences. This is especially important when working with clients who care deeply for the environment but whose career aspirations may not be perceived as relevant to climate change, for example careers in the arts and entertainment or health and social care sectors. By educating these clients about how their career interests might have direct or indirect relevance to climate change, they will become motivated to engage more actively with climate change through their career development.

### **Ten things we can do**

So, what can career counsellors do to guide their young clients through these transformative times and raise their awareness of how careers contribute to the solution of real-world problems like climate change?

1. *Understand youth perspectives:* young people are often at the forefront of climate activism and are passionate about creating a sustainable future. It is essential to understand their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations in the context of climate change.
2. *Promote interdisciplinarity:* climate change is a complex issue that requires a multidisciplinary approach. Encourage youth to explore diverse fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), social sciences, humanities, and arts. Help them understand that every career has relevance for sustainability and planetary health.
3. *Highlight the importance of sustainability:* sustainability is becoming increasingly crucial in every sector, and it's crucial to highlight its significance to young people. Encourage them to seek out careers that contribute to creating a more sustainable future, and to explore

career options outside of the more obvious environmental jobs.

4. *Advocate for inclusivity:* inclusivity and diversity are crucial in creating sustainable solutions. Encourage young people to consider how their career choices can contribute to addressing systemic inequalities and social justice issues related to climate change. Inclusivity, diversity, and sensitivity to social justice issues are key competences articulated in the Norwegian Quality Framework that advocates for ethical awareness and moral aptitude.
5. *Emphasize the importance of lifelong learning:* the field of climate change is rapidly evolving, and it's essential to stay up-to-date with the latest developments. Consistent with NKR that supports lifelong learning, counsellors should encourage young people to pursue continuous learning opportunities, such as attending conferences, networking events, or taking online courses.
6. *Identify opportunities for youth engagement:* many organizations are working on climate change issues, and they often have youth engagement programs. Encourage young people to explore these opportunities to gain valuable experience and make meaningful contributions.
7. *Help to develop transferable skills:* identify transferable skills that young people possess, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, creativity and help them apply these skills to climate change-related careers.
8. *Encourage innovation:* climate change requires innovative solutions, and young people often excel at innovative thinking. Encourage them to explore new ideas and develop creative solutions to address climate change and promote sustainability and planetary health.
9. *Promote community engagement:* community engagement is crucial in addressing climate change issues. Encourage young people to get involved in their communities and work towards creating sustainable solutions locally.
10. *Foster a positive mindset:* climate change is a challenging issue, and it can often feel emotionally overwhelming. You can help young people to approach climate change and balance it with self-care and to view the challenges as opportunities for growth and positive change.

### **A meaningful contribution**

Career educators hold a privileged position to contribute meaningfully to the paradigm shift advocated for by Plant and Macy. Guterres' call for action 'on all fronts' reminds us that change

must take place at all levels of society, including the institutional, policy and management levels. As career educators, our contribution is in changing things we have control over, such as how we approach our professional practice and the principles we are guided by. Part of this change may require that we shift how we think about careers as opportunities to advance the best interest of our clients, while contributing to the resolution of the climatic and environmental crisis. In other words, that we adapt our practices to the principles of green guidance. The SDGs and NKR offer frameworks that can guide practices and approaches to green guidance. Green guidance is the desired career counselling approach at a time of great transformation because it offers powerful tools to help masses of young people find meaning in their careers while making significant contribution towards the resolution of the climate change crisis.

## **References**

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