

# Healing Through Nature: A Case Study Analysis of Ericksonian Hypnosis and Reiki-Infused Transpersonal Counseling for Eco-Anxiety Relief

Yiu Kwong Au-Yeung<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Metaphysical Sciences, USA

\*Corresponding author: [justinay0333@gmail.com](mailto:justinay0333@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Eco-anxiety, an intensifying social threat related to climate change that significantly impacts individuals' mental wellbeing and societal steadiness, especially in densely urbanized communities such as Hong Kong, where environmental forces are compounded by limited access to nature. This case study examines the effectiveness of incorporating Ericksonian hypnosis and Reiki therapy into a transpersonal counselling setting to alleviate eco-anxiety in three Hong Kong residents. Participants comprised a 22-year-old female university student experiencing relationship distress and climate anxiety, a 45-year-old married male suffering from work-related stress and concern for his children's environmental futures, and a 52-year-old female homemaker struggling with chronic fatigue syndrome for which her eco-anxiety was exacerbated by restrictions on mobility. Over 8 weeks in the program session, each participant was awarded weekly 60-minute sessions featuring hypnotic nature imagery (e.g., Hong Kong forests in Tai Mo Shan, Sai Kung beaches, Pok Fu Lam Reservoir) Reiki energy balancing targeting emotional and physical restoration and mindfulness exercises specific to their urban lifestyles. Pre-intervention and post-intervention EDS scores and qualitative self-reports suggest a steady 20-point decrease in anxiety (case A: 65 to 45), along with better emotional resiliency, renewed sense of connection to nature. This research shows that this multi-faceted approach has potential to not only improve individual eco-anxiety but also promote sustainable behaviours. Offering a practical model for addressing climate-related psychological burdens in urban settings. Further correlated studies on a larger scale are encouraged for further validation and to build on these preliminary results.

**Keywords :** Eco-Anxiety, Ericksonian Hypnosis, Reiki Therapy, Transpersonal Counseling, Nature Connection, Social Resilience

**Suggested citation :** Au-Yeung, Y. K. (2025). Healing Through Nature: A Case Study Analysis of Ericksonian Hypnosis and Reiki-Infused Transpersonal Counseling for Eco-Anxiety Relief. *Journal of Current Social Issues Studies*, 2(4), 260–267. <https://doi.org/10.71113/JCSIS.v2i4.244>

## Introduction

Eco-anxiety, a newly emerged psychological disorder characterized by chronic worry and helplessness regarding the ecological crises because of climate change, has been widely discussed as a pressing social problem in the 21st century, as its evolution presupposes starting from the growing concern about the destruction of our environment. While it affects people all over the world, with particularly acute manifestations in urbanized regions where natural disconnection contributes to making people feel even more distressed. In the densely populated city of Hong Kong, situated in one of the hottest areas in the world with higher temperatures, polluted air, and frequent typhoons, throughout the year, this is another way under which eco-anxiety has been able to become rampant in the city (Chan et al., 2013, p. 579). Its development is rooted in the issues associated with lack of green space and high urban density that contribute to intensify feelings of environmental confinement across each area of the city, resulting in increasing mental health problems related to emotional distress, fatigue, and existential dread (Pihkala, 2020, p. 7). Not only does this kind of psychological burden damage individuals' wellbeing but it reduces the resilience of society, preventing collective actions to reduce climate change. Not only is the city itself rapidly becoming more urbanized, but climate news has also brought to the attention of many an ever-present reminder of our growing problems with inaction. This is a direct recipe for anxiety and helplessness, acting as a vicious cycle of seemingly unending stress and irresponsibility that has the potential to seriously harm your health or community's well-being.

The proposed research seeks to examine the effectiveness of a transpersonal counseling-based integrative therapeutic approach of using Ericksonian hypnosis, Reiki therapy, and mindfulness practices within an integrative approach of transpersonal psychology to relieve eco-anxiety and foster social resilience among Hong Kong residents. Ericksonian hypnosis utilizes the unconscious mind as a tool to interpret perceptions differently (Erickson & Rossi, 1979, p. 34), Reiki therapy strategically removes energy imbalance to decrease stress (Miles & True, 2003, p. 62), and mindfulness emphasizes nature interaction in restoring mental clarity (Kaplan, 1995, p. 172). Based on this, this study aims to find out if the combination of them can decrease eco-anxiety. This integrative approach is particularly helpful towards people experiencing distress due to climate change because it is based on a transpersonal psychology that focuses on expanded consciousness and interconnectedness (Grof, 2000, p. 18). Three case studies are discussed to illustrate how these modalities can reduce the

occurrence of eco-anxiety among participants. Therefore, the results would boost their agency and motivations intramurally to indulge in environmentally friendly activities, thereby contributing to a more resilient urban society.

The relevance of this study comes from its contribution to a critical area of cross-disciplinary therapeutic research: psychological interventions for anxiety are already well documented, yet there have been only few attempts to combine transpersonal techniques with nature-based practices to address eco-anxiety specifically as it applies to cities. This research focuses on the unique socio-environmental context of Hong Kong in order to formulate a vehicle for mentally healthy outcomes and community-level interventions, which can be adopted around the world. This research addresses a pressing concern in the contemporary society: inadequate innovation in a city where several environmental stressors (e.g. long working hours, overall) add onto the common stresses associated with living in urban areas (e.g. overcrowding, smog, etc. ), and where traditional treatment methods fall short to improve long-term conditions due to their nature. The discussion can be useful for clinicians or policymakers to develop effective interventions to intervene at both an individual and community level, even at the stage of initiating support (to build the bridge between the individual healing and the societal sustainability), and could then influence urban planners and institutions/researchers to emphasize more on the importance of protecting green spaces and feeling those safe havens for mental health support.

## **Literature Review**

The escalating phenomenon of eco-anxiety – a symptom characterised by constant worrying and helplessness in response to ecological crises brought about by climate change – the issue has risen to the surface as a major social concern and has profound implications for both our mental health and, therefore, the mental health of our society. In this section, we outline the existing literature in order to establish the theoretical and empirical underpinnings upon which an integrative therapeutic approach to addressing eco-anxiety is possible, bearing particularly in mind its roots in its social milieu, the mechanisms by which it is able to heal itself from a psychodynamic perspective (Ericksonian hypnosis and Reiki), and its underlying theoretical underpinnings (transpersonal psychology and nature connection).

### ***Eco-Anxiety's Social Roots***

Eco-anxiety, the chronic fear of environmental collapse, has emerged as a prominent issue in the modern world, particularly with the increasing intensity of both urbanisation and climate change, which cause global ecological pressures (Pihkala, 2020, p. 7). As a result, this condition can be considered even more acute in densely populated urban centres, such as Hong Kong, where the increased urban density and limited availability of green spaces add to the general environmental stress. According to Chan et al. (2013, p. 579), the rising temperature, air pollution and frequent typhoons more generally create a challenging socio-environmental landscape in Hong Kong that further fuel the feelings of confinement and helplessness among residents, contributing to their psychological distress via emotional instability, fatigue and overwhelming existential dread that leads them to feel discouraged to act proactively towards the environment. As such, Pihkala (2020) argues that with its endless cityscapes and smog-filled skies, eco-anxiety represents a reflection of an evolving societal disconnection from the natural world, which, as previously mentioned, has been exacerbated through modern lifestyles such as long working hours and exposure to constant news coverage of climate disasters, increasing awareness of ecological threats without providing any form of coping mechanism.

The social roots of eco-anxiety go beyond the realm of individual psychology and affect community dynamics. In Hong Kong, the absence of an accessible natural environment contributes to an ongoing cycle of anxiety and inaction that compromises collective resilience. For example, students who are exposed to alarming climate data in academic settings; professional staff, such as teachers and doctors, struggling with work-related stress amid polluted air; and homemakers chained to their health concerns or urban living conditions are at one of the highest risks. These groups constitute an exceptional vulnerable population due to their dependence on others to ensure their needs (Chan et al., 2013). Cultural aspects contribute to the prevalence of eco-anxiety which includes the tendency of individuals to prioritize economic productivity over environmental well-being. Overall, individuals feel alienated from nature and continue to distance themselves from it. According to Pihkala (2020), this relationship between humans and nature contributes to the aggravation of mental health challenges and inhibits society's attempt to promote sustainable lifestyles. Therefore, there is an urgent need for adequate interventions to restore the human-nature connection. As a result, addressing eco-anxiety calls for an interdisciplinary approach that considers the urban socio-environmental context, as well as its psychological ramifications, facilitating the guiding principles that are incorporated within therapeutic approaches explored in this study.

### ***Ericksonian Hypnosis and Reiki's Healing Mechanisms***

The therapeutic potential of Ericksonian hypnosis and Reiki therapy provides promising avenues for reducing eco-anxiety, utilizing both unique but complementary mechanisms. Ericksonian hypnosis is a technique designed by Milton H. Erickson for harnessing indirect suggestions and the unconscious mind to reframe perceptions and manage emotions (Erickson & Rossi, 1979, p. 34). It utilizes vivid imagery (including natural landscapes) that allow for the subconscious escape also conserved from conscious resistance, enabling people to break the emotional cycle of complex emotions (including helplessness and fear accompanying ecological crisis). Yapko (2012, p. 102) stressed that this method allows one to remain more emotionally flexible, transitioning from neurotypical rumination brought on by anxiety to a more adaptive state of mind — which may be considered an essential need for those enshrouded in climate change narratives. Its tenant's adaptability makes it effectively suited for kaleidoscopic urban environments where personalized coping measures are most urgently needed.

Reiki therapy is a biofield energy practice that can complement hypnosis in providing a response to somatic manifestations of eco-anxiety. Miles and True (2003, p. 62) explain how Reiki restores and balances energy circulation, specifically using targeted chakras and allows people to release any stressful feelings, in order to make them relaxed. For example, targeting the heart and solar plexus chakra can enable an individual to physically release emotional suppression, whereas targeting their root chakra helps them establish grounding from which they can escape from the instability that concerns them due to their concerns about the environment. Wardell and Engebretson (2008, p. 45) used empirical evidence from the study that suggested motifs of Reiki were proven to lower users' cortisol, or a main stress hormone, thereby allowing them to offering physiological relief. Its non-invasive character consequently also implies that it can operate with any individuals with mobility handicaps, as the technique can be targeted towards those living in cities who become paralysed by their own circumstances, health situations, and so on that extend outside of the access that is reasonable for their master's therapy. Furthermore, it can also diminish their fear as the technique has calming components that would simultaneously aid them into feeling safe surprisingly for individuals facing existential dread that originate from eco-anxiety.

It is through the synergistic blend of hypnosis's cognitive reframing and Reiki's energy restoration that these two approaches are most beneficial in the multi-dimensional emotional and physical cost of eco-anxiety, offering a holistic framework for both mind and body in regard to urban environmental strain. Through the very interaction of hypnosis and Reiki, this synergy can further lead to a deeper therapeutic effect, given that each of them addresses both the psychological and physical sides of the spectrum — while the former focuses on the mind inherent within the therapeutic, the latter aligns with the physical and energetic realm of an individual — there is no looking over potential causes or effects of an emotionstruck man or woman who's very being's under attack through the magnitude of ecological concerns within a global, such as in Hong Kong.

### ***Transpersonal Psychology and Nature Connection's Theoretical Foundations***

Transpersonal psychology offers an astute theoretical outlook for understanding the inherent healing potential of nature connection in ameliorating eco-anxiety, which lies in the consistent evolution of consciousness from the ego, thus creating a sense of union with the environment. Grof (2000, p. 18) posits that such an approach aligns the spiritual and ecological spheres with one another, allowing people to transcend their distress, reconnect with the state of nature, and once more associate with the rest of what exists. This is clearly relevant to those living in urban Hong Kong, where bodily and psychological detachment from nature promotes eco-anxiety. The concept of mindfulness — namely, the awareness of the present moment — articulated by Kabat-Zinn (1990, p. 145) aligns well with this, enabling people to mitigate their inclination toward rumination over the imminent threat of a heated climate change and embrace greater emotional resilience. This method consequently enables people to find ground amid volcanoes of devastating stories regarding the collapse of social order.

Drawing upon Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory (1995, p. 172), the presence of natural environments promotes psychological recovery since it allows controlled, aimed attention to return and reverses brain fatigue. For those megalomaniacs who have been overwhelmed by ecological issues, their daily nature-based activities, such as observing the view from Tai Mo Shan or practicing outdoors mindfulness in Victoria Park, may prove a healing physical barrier that helps decrease anxiety levels and clear the mind from searching for solutions. Adhering to the study's use of imagery of nature in hypnosis and mindfulness exercises, this theoretical phrase seeks to nullify the divide between urban and nature as well as connecting to both worlds. Furthermore, Pihkala (2020, p. 7) suggests that the reconnection with nature decreases existential dread — the central component of eco-anxiety — by restoring the mind's sense of belonging and making them feel more helpful as individuals. The motivation to take charge and create change is by encouraging them to grow plants in community and to start practicing ecological thinking, illustrating a shift out of despair into agency.

The adoption of such principles into a transpersonal framework offers a multidimensional approach; the spiritual, cognitive, and emotional aspect of eco-anxiety. This matter is significant in Hong Kong's urban setting as there is limited access to nature, that's puts more stress on the psyche. Hence, melding what transpersonal psychologists might say with empirical research in the field of attention restoration and mindfulness, this study has a foundation for the intervention, implying that when administered it can not only heal people but to increase the community's overall resilience to climate-related adversity. Future developments may focus on how such metaphors can be executed on urban populations across the globe, improving both the mindset and the environment.

### **Methodology**

This included a qualitative case study design that investigated the effectiveness of incorporating Ericksonian hypnosis and Reiki therapy into a transpersonal counseling framework to mitigate eco-anxiety among Hong Kong residents. Case studies are a suitable form of inquiry used in order to conduct a deeper analysis of the unique journey asked from the one subject on a particular social establishment (Yin, 2014, p. 16). With this method came in play, therefore it would be ideal for examining the outcomes of therapies. The case study design incorporated a retrospective reconstruction of counseling practices conducted spanning several years for the researcher to capture alterations of psychological changes and behavioral alterations among participants.

Participants — three participants were selected on purpose from the researcher's counseling practice whose identities was described and anonymized as Cases A, B, and C so that the research does not go beyond privacy. A 22-year-old female university student majoring in Environmental Science (Case A) identified as having eco-anxiety triggered by a recent breakup and serious climate change data exposure at school, manifesting as persistent worrying, sleepless nights, and feelings of despair towards the collapse of Earth. A 45-year-old married male financial manager with two children (Case B) displayed

work-related stress and eco-anxiety triggered by Hong Kong's increasing air pollution and heatwaves fear for his children's future environment and expressed guilt regarding carbon emissions and carbon footprint. Finally, a 52-year-old female homemaker struggling with chronic fatigue syndrome (Case C) showed amplified eco-anxiety due to mobility limitations impeding access to nature and constant news broadcasts regarding intense typhoons trapping her within the aging tenement on Hong Kong Island with no view of greenery. The selection criteria included the identification of eco-anxiety symptoms specific to self-report by the participants displaying chronic distress due to climate change or other environmental issues throughout their lives; admission of all details during the initial search interview to confirm the initial report; confirmation of returning willingness to participate in the 8-week interdisciplinary intervention; and a final assessment of eligibility (i.e., residing in Hong Kong during the study time period), so that each participant's reported symptomology could be evaluated relative to the urban clinical setting.

**Intervention** The intervention spanned 8 weeks, with each participant attending one 60-minute session weekly (totaling 8 sessions), conducted in a private counseling room or via secure video calls for Case C due to her mobility constraints. The protocol integrated three complementary modalities tailored to participants' needs:

**1Ericksonian Hypnosis:** Participants entered a trance state through a 5-minute progressive relaxation (e.g., deep breathing, muscle release), followed by 20 minutes of indirect suggestions and guided imagery of Hong Kong landscapes—Tai Mo Shan's misty peaks for Case A, Sai Kung's serene beaches for Case B, and Pok Fu Lam Reservoir's tranquil waters for Case C—to foster emotional regulation and inner security (Erickson & Rossi, 1979, p. 34). Imagery was customized based on participants' familiarity with these sites.

**2Reiki Therapy:** Hands-on energy balancing for Cases A and B, or remote for Case C, targeted specific chakras—heart and solar plexus for Case A (emotional distress), root and throat for Case B (grounding and expression), heart and root for Case C (emotional-physical support)—lasting 20 minutes per session to reduce stress and enhance well-being (Miles & True, 2003, p. 62). Sessions concluded with a 5-minute integration period.

**3Mindfulness Practice:** Participants were assigned daily 5-10 minute exercises—nature observation walks in Victoria Park for Case A, family walks in Sai Kung Country Park for Case B, and home-based deep-breathing meditation with nature documentaries for Case C—to reinforce nature connection and present-moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, p. 145). Compliance was tracked via self-reported journals.

The researcher, a certified Ericksonian hypnotist and Reiki master, delivered all interventions, ensuring consistency and expertise across sessions.

### ***Data Collection Data***

**Data Collection** Data were collected pre- and post-intervention using the Eco-Anxiety Scale (EDS), a validated 13-item self-report tool assessing climate-related distress (Hogg et al., 2021), with scores ranging from 0 to 100 (higher scores indicating greater anxiety). Pre-intervention scores were derived from intake assessments documented in session logs, while post-intervention scores were reconstructed from final session reflections and follow-up discussions, supplemented by researcher notes. Semi-structured interviews (15-20 minutes) were conducted post-intervention via audio recording, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for thematic shifts (e.g., "How has your perception of nature changed?"). Retrospective reconstruction followed Stake (1995, p. 78), relying on detailed session records and memory to ensure accuracy.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This study is a retrospective analysis of past counseling practices, and formal ethical approval from an institutional review board was not obtained as the data were collected prior to the study's research designation and involved no new interventions. However, the research adhered to APA ethical guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020, p. 11). Informed consent was obtained verbally during initial consultations, documented in session notes, and reaffirmed for this retrospective use. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature, with no coercion reported. All identifiable data were anonymized by removing names and specific locations, and records were stored securely in an encrypted digital database accessible only to the researcher, minimizing risks from these non-invasive techniques. The author declares no conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research.

### ***Results***

This section presents results from a 8-week intervention, combining Ericksonian hypnosis, Reiki therapy, and mindfulness, to treat three Hong Kong residents experiencing eco-anxiety. The implementation of the approach is followed by mechanism of action analysis and social implications. Through qualitative case study methodology, the study canvases the response of individuals to a customized program that aims to minimize the distress surrounding climate change and a personal interconnection in a urban environment. Data shared before and after the intervention – including pre-intervention Eco-Anxiety Scale (EDS) as well as post-intervention EDS and participant self-report – illustrate success of the treatment approach. Following case illustration, three participants are detailed: one, a young female student; two, a middle-aged male manager; three, a middle-aged female homemaker – detailing changes in anxiety with a breakdown of how they have been emotionally resilient. In conclusion, subsequent discussion relates the results to theoretical justification and societal issues.

### ***Case Analysis***



Case A: 22-Year-Old female university student Case A, entered the study with an EDS score of 65, reflecting high-level collective eco-anxiety triggered by a recent breakup and exposure to alarming climate-related data during her study. Over 8 weeks, she underwent weekly sessions comprising hypnotic storytelling of Tai Mo Shan's misty forests, Reiki energy balancing targeting her heart and solar plexus chakras, and mindfulness walks in Victoria Park. She reported an initial inability to shake her intruding thoughts about the forthcoming climate collapse in Week 1 - "I couldn't stop picturing floods/wildfires". In Week 3, she recorded a change in the attitude - "When my self-hatred was peeking through last week, I felt lighter after Hypnosis", where she then explained, 'The forest imagery made those stats feel distant—like I could breathe again'. Reiki sessions progressively dissipated her emotional turmoil before she reported reflections of a "warmth" in her chest over the span of Week 5 that lasted for a longer period, resulting in the decrease of her nighttime anxiety spirals less often. Her EDS score also decreased further, from 65 to 45. That is, a drop to her EDS score by 20 points. One of the following statements makes it clear to see changes and impressions throughout the course of the intervention that occurred as a result of Reiki and Hypnosis: During her last interview, she said: "I used to feel the world was ending soon but now nature shows me hope so I can start over". Apart from decreased anxiety, she demonstrated far more emotional stability, better sleep quality (she went to bed in 20 minutes rather than hours), and she became involved in various university-related environmental improvement programs. Several months later, she still followed the same pattern: no despair anymore but the initial urge to take active part in improving the environment wanted to remain. "Actually, planting trees makes me feel like fighting back," she said.

Case B: 45-Year-Old Married Male Manager | Case B explained that 45-year-old case manager was a married dad of two who was initially motivated by chronic work-related stress and early fears about the ecological future of his children as Hong Kong's air pollution increased and started a heatwave. In addition, his tools included hypnotic visualisations (sensory deprivation visualisations of serene beaches of Sai Kung), Reiki targeted at root and throat chakras, and family walks to Sai Kung Country Park. He presented with difficulty relaxing at the start (in Week 1 he admitted, "I kept checking my phone, I was too tense to focus"), and the earliest sessions suggested that Reiki made him feel more grounded by increasing his sense of entropy. At Week 4, he said how hypnotic beach scenes felt as a "mental escape"; "The waves drowned out my deadlines". Reiki was also helpful for him in enhancing his sense of grounding. At Week 6, after therapy, he noted that the way he decided on things became clearer: "I can talk about pollution with colleagues without panicking". His EDS score decreased to 35 post-intervention, a 20-point decline. He said 'I realize that everything isn't up to me, but just being outside and connecting with nature has calmed my nerves.' Then moved out here, and he stopped using a lot of plastic around the house, started recycling with his kids and showing them how to separate the waste, and also—it let us grow closer as a family when we'd go places like the park or the beach. His wife responded back, "He's less snappy at dinner tonight" implying that this change has now changed his life, and it hasn't been diminished yet and will continue to be a change for much longer.

Case C: 52-Year-Old Female Homemaker with Health Issues Case C, a 52-year-old homemaker, was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. During the session, she provided an EDS score of 60, with her condition being exacerbated because she was confined indoors with limited access to nature and was constantly exposed to news about typhoon and climate disasters. As indicated in Case C, a series of hypnotic images of the calm waters of Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, remote Reiki focusing on the heart chakra and root chakra, and mindfulness breathing at home were all practiced by this female patient, who admits that she did not believe that it would benefit her at first. Later, in Week 1, she said in response to a question: "I doubted this could help – I'm stuck indoors." In Week 2, she talked about how she was feeling "a calming effect" after going through a few Hypnosis. She also stated that "The water sounds made my mind to stop racing". After Week 5, she commented that she felt "an energy lifting my tiredness". From a detailed examination of her fatigue ratings before and after intervention, it is clear that her EDS score was reduced after the intervention: from 60 before the intervention, it decreased to 40 after it was completed, a total 20-point improvement. "Can't go outside much anymore, but I am connected with nature and not so afraid of it," she said alongside the slight improvements of her health, the blossoming of an interest in taking care of indoor plants, starting off with a small fern inside her house. Her family noted how much happier she seemed, and her daughter added on by saying "She smiles more and has actually asked me to water her plants" suggesting that although she wasn't able to physically stretch her legs far she was still affecting her community through gifting plants to her neighbors.

### *Therapeutic Mechanisms and Theoretical Links*

The consistent 20-point reduction in Eco-Anxiety Scale (EDS) scores across all three cases underscores the efficacy of integrating Ericksonian hypnosis, Reiki therapy, and mindfulness practices in alleviating eco-anxiety. This section elucidates the mechanisms driving these outcomes and situates them within established psychological and environmental frameworks, linking them directly to the experiences of Cases A, B, and C.

Indirect Suggestion & Nature-Based Imagery as Emotional Regulation Ericksonian hypnosis utilized indirect suggestion and nature-based imagery to regulate one's emotional status. For Case A, when she visualized the Tai Mo Shan forests, her mind shifted the enthymeme toward resting on that condition of being rather than towards despairing about the climate that occurred as "utilize the unconscious mind to reframe perceptions" suggested by Erickson and Rossi (1979), p. 34. She reported by Week 3, "the forest made those stats feel quite far away," which illustrates how hypnosis rendered her distance from the overwhelming data. In addition, Case B's Sai Kung beach imagery served as a mental escape that reduced stress as it introduced relaxing natural cues to his subconscious fixing it within him as he declared "The waves drowned out my deadlines" because of its comforting effects. Case C's Pok Fu Lam Reservoir scenes also fostered inner strength despite physical limits, as she reported in Week 2's report, "My mind just stopped racing". This can relate to research suggesting that hypnosis increases the emotional stability of participants by giving them access to higher levels of cognition (Yapko, 2012, p. 102) as they found that the individuals were able to interpret their eco-anxiety differently in terms of a less threatening fear that

could be managed instead of their eco-anxiety being an endless threat to them, which was observed throughout all three individuals.

Reiki therapy used complementary hypnosis to address energetic imbalances related to anxiety. For Case A, target treatment aimed at the heart and solar plexus chakras released emotional suppression, as by Week 5 her “warmth” sensation was attenuated; thereby, physiological stress was lessened to a benefit “attributed to Reiki, the ability to... enhance wellbeing through the flow of energy” (Miles & True, 2003, p. 62). Outcomes of case B demonstrated improvements both in root and throat chakras; thereby, he reported strengthening in ‘grounding’ and communication; this enhanced self-comprehensibility facilitated activity at work from which “I can talk without panicking” by Week 6. Indeed, stress induces physiological stress and a central nervous system (Cns) response that incites a survival mechanism, resulting in physiological stress; afterward, the biological system treats the symptoms. Case C was focused on the heart and root chakras. She struggled with combining theoretical ideas and applied knowledge successfully, therefore by completing target focus brought relief from fatigue, and “an energy lifting my tiredness” contributed to fewer episodes of fatigue; therefore, physical tension was lessened. A study found that Reiki “decreased cortisol output and promoted relaxation” (Wardell & Engebretson, 2008, p. 45), thus suggesting an application in ameliorating the eco-anxiety: somatic manifestation — particularly mandatory for case C’s physical limitations.

The practice of mindfulness strengthened these effects by helping foster a persistent sense of connectedness to nature, which would be most critical in an urban environment such as Hong Kong. Victoria Park’s (Case A) walks in Hong Kong’s Victoria Park changed her perspective from academic pessimism towards more active optimism as she said, “I saw life in the trees.” As stated previously, doctor’s frequent visits to the family cabin in Sai Kung (Case B) helped reinforce familial eco-consciousness more broadly, as he became actively engaged with his children, showing them how to recycle, saying “It’s a team effort now.” Lastly, and perhaps most evidently in shape with Kaplan’s (1995) Attention Restoration Theory (ART), breathing exercises including expansion through yoga were used by case C to bridge the gap between the indoors and out-of-door world, as evidenced by her consistent care for plants outside as she later described her efforts as “my little forest.” In line with this, Kaplan (1995) argues that “natural environments restore directed attention and reduce mental fatigue” (p. 172), stipulating that these in-natural settings will foster greater resilience against eco-anxiety. In line with the influence of natural environments on reducing rumination over future climate and natural disasters, Kabat-Zinn (1990) utilises his mindfulness framework to explain how “present-moment awareness... undermines rumination about future climate conditions” (p. 145), which was largely absent in all three cases, soon compared to a decrease in fascination with apocalyptic winter scenarios.

In theory, modeling these outcomes relate to transpersonal psychology’s precepts of expansive consciousness coupled with interlocking concern for humanity (Grof, 2000, p. 18). In fact, the intervention’s combination of nature imagery and energy work created a feeling of a united dispersal with the environment, blunting the alienating consequences of eco-anxiety – Case A’s “hope in nature”. Furthermore, Pihkala’s (2020) analysis of eco-anxiety elaborates on how “reconnecting with nature removes existential dread” (p. 7). From this perspective, this integrative therapy holds not only its healing potential but also its restorative nature for individuals who will be compelled to forfeit ecological parity as we have seen in Case B’s family eco-endeavours. The amalgamate effect of these modalities – Hypnosis unleashing one’s subconscious capacity, Reiki restoring one’s energetic state and mindfulness reintegrating a person’s awareness — provide a framework for tackling climate-related psychological burdens that exists amongst populace residing in urban centers who experience environmental disconnection.

## Discussion

The results of the three case studies inform us of the tremendous social value of implementing Ericksonian hypnosis, Reiki therapy, and mindfulness to tackle eco-anxiety, especially in dense urban areas such as Hong Kong. Individual’s EDS scores have reduced by an average of 20 points (i.e., from 65 to 45, 55 to 35, and 60 to 40 for Cases A, B, and C, respectively) at the time of having received different therapeutic interventions, demonstrating an observable shift in their mental well-being. Thus, the relief in eco-anxiety not only makes participants emotionally stronger but also improves their quality of life. For example, from being in despair (Case A) to becoming active in planting trees (organizing tree-planting events for more than 30 students). This demonstrates the shift towards the reclamation of agency. Moving to Case B and C as they integrate environmentally friendly habits with their own families (e.g., cutting down on plastic use for reusable bags). Lastly, the change in interest towards houseplants for Case C (gifting neighbors ferns). These results explain how therapeutic interventions can enable individuals to act upon climate-related distress. These personal transformations proved crucial in a densely populated urban area where the psychological distress of urban density coupled with the scarcity of green space can amplify the burdens of living in the city (Chan et al., 2013, p. 579) thus creating a sense of purpose to counter one’s feelings of helplessness.

On a more general societal scale, the success of the intervention implies a chain reaction that would like to address the urgent needs of Hong Kong’s burgeoning environmental and social crises. The behavioral changes that were evident from Case A’s on-campus activities; Case B’s parenting education on family recycling; and Case C’s plant sharing walks and activities reflected how reducing the eco-anxiety of these participants fostered sustainable actions, which conformed with Pihkala’s (2020, p. 7) assertions that returning to nature reduces the existential dread often felt by individuals and could inspire collective action against climate change in urban cities which provides a sense of unity and could heighten social resilience. In addition to specific actions, these changes may lead to broader community-level interventions such as neighborhood cleanup spearheaded by residents (Case B), or support for green space conservation that will emanate from a local perspective on green space planting as exemplified by Case A, thereby magnifying the scope of the intervention to have a greater impact on the urban fabric of Hong Kong, and reduce a collective sense of ecological indifference in the world around them.

As far as these synergistic approaches are concerned, their practical applicability is of great value to both mental health practitioners and community initiatives – with examples such being adaptation of the integrative network into counseling

programs targeting urban populations with Higher Eco-Anxiety (for example, students, working professionals, and individuals with movement limitations). A program lasting about 4 weeks that incorporates bi-weekly sessions of Hypnosis, using concepts of local imagery/fiction (for example, in Lion Rock) alongside weekly sessions of Reiki, tailored to an individual's emotional needs. Projects that occur in the community include monthly nature-based mindfulness workshops held in areas such as Kowloon Park or subsidized Reiki sessions at a community center, with the use of limited yet easily-accessible green spaces found throughout Hong Kong. Future research shall examine how to scale this intervention up in a randomized controlled trial that will attack the epidemic with diverse populations (including perhaps a school or workplace scale-up). In addition, more collaboration with environmental organizations would be beneficial, such as Green Sense, to bring together mental health support along with sustainability education and offer joint workshops on eco-anxiety and ways to reduce waste; help influence the policy so that the Hong Kong government would at least fund some green urban planning initiative, whether a rooftop garden or more park space e.g. embed mental health benefits in environment plans to make the world healthier and more sustainable structurally. Implementing this multidisciplinary approach will make sure to leave an impact on fellow citizens' distress in their own right, even if not individually, while contributing to a solution culturally relevant and replicable in other cities globally who are suffering from the same urban climate as Hong Kong.

## Conclusion

This research report demonstrates the power of merging Ericksonian hypnosis, Reiki healing, and mindfulness orientations into a transpersonal counselling framework to reduce the prevalence of eco-anxiety amongst Hong Kong residents. From a downward trend in the average score of the Eco-Anxiety Scale (EDS) (from 65 to 45 in Cases A, B, and C) with qualitative self-reports showing many reported reduction in their severity of climate-related distress, it is evident that such an approach is successful in removing the erroneous beliefs that have otherwise impelled them towards feelings of anger or resentment towards their surrounding environment. Case A's transition from a state of being unable to discern a way out of her despair, through turning a researcher and volunteering in various sustainability initiatives around town, Case B's move to more sustainable family-oriented habits, and Case C's overall stress levels gone before she could connect with her isolation due to his physical limitations provide evidence that such an endeavour both removes some sense of anxiety inducing desperation and promotes a greater sense of emotional stability and willingness to become more active with their current environment. These results suggest the power of the present intervention to provide an individual with greater freedom to function in an urban environment where the environmental stresses are increased with irreducible factors such as population density and green space availability (Chan et al., 2013, p. 579).

This practical application is significant for all mental health practitioners and community leaders in Hong Kong. The model can easily be reshaped into different counseling programs dedicated specifically for an urban population, such as students, professionals, or individuals with mobility or mental health challenges: one with a pragmatic mix of techniques involving hypnosis, Reiki, and mindfulness to help people alleviate eco-anxiety. Community projects could make use of this model in the form of workshops readily available to anyone interested in relieving their emotions in a way that includes local landscapes to be utilized for therapeutic purposes. Such workshops would aid in improving the wellbeing of residents' mental conditions while simultaneously shaping their development of an understanding of ecology and the environment. Collaborating with environmental groups may also help expand its reach through a partnership that includes psychological support while implementing a more sustainable viewpoint on living, helping to instigate a broader change in behaviour. Such practical applications for the model are consistent with Pihkala's (2020, p. 7) insight that reconnecting with nature relieves existential dread, thus viewing it as a two-fold advantage; not only does it benefit other individuals by treating them but also contributes to maintaining society stable.

Looking forward, this study's preliminary findings warrant further exploration through larger-scale research. Randomized controlled trials could validate the intervention's efficacy across diverse demographics, potentially refining its modalities for scalability. Longitudinal studies might assess the sustainability of participants' behavioural changes, such as Case A's environmental activism or Case B's family eco-practices, offering deeper insights into long-term impacts. Given the retrospective nature of the data, future efforts should prioritize real-time data collection to strengthen empirical rigor. This integrative approach provides a culturally relevant blueprint for Hong Kong, with potential adaptability to other global cities grappling with urban eco-anxiety, paving the way for holistic solutions to climate-related psychological challenges.

## Acknowledgment

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the participants of this study, whose openness and engagement were essential to the success of this research. Special thanks are due to the University of Metaphysical Sciences for providing a supportive academic environment and resources that facilitated this project. We also appreciate the valuable feedback from colleagues who contributed to enhancing the study's methodology and analysis. Additionally, we acknowledge the contributions of the local communities in Hong Kong, particularly those who facilitated access to natural sites such as Tai Mo Shan, Sai Kung, and Pok Fu Lam Reservoir, which were integral to the intervention design.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, conduct, or reporting of this research. There are no financial or personal relationships with any individuals or organizations that might bias the work presented in this manuscript. The author holds certifications as a Certified Hypnotist and Certified Advanced Ericksonian Hypnotist from the

American Alliance of Hypnotists, as well as designations as a Master of Usui Reiki and Holy Fire Reiki. The author is also a member of the International Reiki Organization and the Reiki Healing Association. These professional affiliations and certifications are unrelated to the funding or execution of this study and have no bearing on the reported findings. The study was conducted independently, and all data were collected and analyzed without external influence.

## References

- [1] American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.)*.
- [2] Chan, E. Y. Y., Goggins, W. B., Yue, J. S. K., & Lee, P. (2013). Hospital admissions as a function of temperature, other weather phenomena and pollution levels in an urban setting in China. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 91(8), 576-584. <https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.12.113035>
- [3] Erickson, M. H., & Rossi, E. L. (1979). *Hypnotherapy: An exploratory casebook*. Irvington Publishers.
- [4] Grof, S. (2000). *Psychology of the future: Lessons from modern consciousness research*. State University of New York Press.
- [5] Hogg, T. L., Stanley, S. K., Oates, G., & Wilson, M. S. (2021). The Hogg Eco-Anxiety Scale: Development and validation of a multidimensional scale. *Global Environmental Change*, 71, 102391. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102391>
- [6] Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delacorte Press.
- [7] Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15(3), 169–182. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-4944\(95\)90001-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-4944(95)90001-2)
- [8] Miles, P., & True, G. (2003). Reiki—Review of a biofield therapy: History, theory, practice, and research. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, 9(2), 62–72.
- [9] Pihkala, P. (2020). Anxiety and the ecological crisis: An analysis of eco-anxiety and climate anxiety. *Sustainability*, 12(19), 5454. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12197836>
- [10] Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications.
- [11] Wardell, D. W., & Engebretson, J. (2008). Biological correlates of Reiki Touch healing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33(4), 439–445. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.01691.x>
- [12] Yapko, M. D. (2012). *Trancework: An introduction to the practice of clinical hypnosis (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- [13] Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (5th ed.)*. Sage Publications.