

Description

Guardians of life in a climate crisis

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Careless destruction

Even through the all consuming work of supporting women through the process of becoming mothers, the frightening images from Australia must be penetrating the consciousness of every midwife. Animals incinerated by the million, day turned into the black night with dense smoke shrouding the sun and residents driven to the beach to escape flames. A nation unprepared for the turmoil which continent wide fires are creating. In the chaos parents with formula fed newborns are struggling to make feeds safely and meet the needs of their infants. No one wants to believe this is the beginning of regular climate induced emergency situations; Sadly it is. We have warmed the earth by our profligate use of fossil fuels and our careless destruction of our carbon dioxide absorbing forests. It's natural to feel helpless, hopeless even. As an individual and as a midwife.

What can midwives do?

Understanding comes first. Ancient carbon rich forests pressed into fossils helped lock away enough carbon to make our planet habitable for the rich, diverse and abundant life we see around us. But resourceful humanity took the swaths of standing forests then the locked up fossil energy to create a more comfortable life and in the process released vast quantities of greenhouse gasses. These warm the earth by trapping the heat from the sun. As with any biological system, tuned to work within a narrow temperature band, warming is destabilising. The earth's homeostatic mechanisms are under pressure and we are close to breakdown. It's been happening for more than a century, since the industrial revolution. Now we can see it too, in floods, fires and freak weather all happening with alarming frequency. Acceptance comes next. It is real and it is happening. It is too late to stop all the effects. Rabbit in the headlights or ostrich with it's head in the sand? Neither are the positions a professional can take particularly one looking after those who having created a new person want to be reassured that she will be safe, and will have a liveable world to inherit.

So what to do?

In your own life any or all of the following will help:

- Get on a bike rather than in a car
- Put up solar panels or buy fuel from a renewable energy supplier
- Insulate insulate insulate
- Reduce meat consumption, dairy too if you can
- Buy less, waste less
- Check you are not investing in fossil fuel companies, pension pots especially
- Buy low energy electrical goods, use LED bulbs.

- Stay out of the sky – don’t fly.

Midwifery suggestions

As a midwife you have enormous influence so every baby that is breastfed, every family that buys nearly new baby goods, every mum that uses a sling rather than a pram, every reusable nappy and each baby weaned onto family food rather than commercial sachets helps keep the carbon release low. Maybe the biggest impact you can have is to help women who are thinking of a baby to please their mum/husband/society to have the courage to wait until they are ready. Or say no altogether for their own well being, that of their child and of the planet.
Midwives together can raise their voices to the government to ask for rewilding, more trees, electric car infrastructure, better public transport and cycleways. Help with insulation, support for solar installations, free and easy to access contraception, laws that allow women bodily autonomy, education, access to careers, equal pay and for impregnating a woman without her consent to become an offence. Every family in the UK sees a midwife, trusts their midwife and you by your example your knowledge and through spreading impetus to act for the good of the child just born and all those to come can make a difference. We need it. We need you to be the guardians of life in more ways than one.

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