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5 Reasons Why Climate Change May Lead More People to Alcohol and Drug Use

The Climate Journal <climatejournal@substack.com>

Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 6:12 AM

Reply-To: The Climate Journal

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CLIMATE JOURNAL

JAN 11



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Climate change is impacting our lives in ways we may not even realize. From extreme weather events to increased stress and anxiety, the effects of a warming planet could lead more people to turn to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism.

Climate Change Damages Mental Health, Raising Substance Use Risks

The most obvious connection between climate change and substance use is the damage it inflicts on **mental health**. Those with mental health issues already face high risks for substance use disorders. As climate change drives up cases of mental illness, it likewise escalates substance abuse dangers.

Extreme Weather Harms Mental Wellbeing

Studies confirm **extreme heat** increases psychological distress and psychiatric emergency room visits, including for drug and alcohol problems. This holds true even for a single sweltering day.

Floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires also take a toll on mental health, both during the disaster and for months or years later. Multiple climate events especially compound the trauma. When people can't cope, substances often become an escape.

Climate Anxiety Fuels Harmful Coping

Many now worry how unchecked climate change will impact their future. While not a diagnosable disorder, climate anxiety generates complex emotions like worry, fear, anger, grief, and helplessness.

These emotional states, particularly sadness, associate with increased tobacco use and higher addiction relapse rates. As climate dread grows, risky self-medication may rise with it.

Physical Injuries Increase Mental Health Risks

The direct physical traumas of climate disasters—like smoke inhalation, burns, and flood injuries—boost mental health problems. Resulting depression or hopelessness can lead people to "self-medicate" with alcohol or drugs.

In turn, substance use causes long-term health issues that correlate with higher rates of harmful use. Climate change injuries and their psychological impacts can fuel a vicious cycle.

Daily Life Disruptions Undermine Coping

Both sudden disasters and gradual climate shifts undermine normal routines in ways that encourage substance misuse. Hotter temperatures, for example, disrupt sleep, exercise, mood, and behavior—prompting stimulant use to manage fatigue.

Even small lifestyle disruptions can destabilize those already facing mental illness or addiction. Climate change may make healthy coping harder across populations.

Worrying About Climate Change Raises Stress Levels

Climate impacts can be overwhelming. Simply worrying about environmental damage takes a toll on mental health. While not a disorder itself, climate stress still drives harmful substance use.

Public Awareness Breeds Climate Concern

With society more aware of climate risks, many now worry about unchecked warming. While not meeting diagnostic criteria, climate concern still causes complex feelings like anxiety, anger, guilt, and grief.

Chronic Stress Increases Substance Abuse Risks

These emotional responses generate chronic stress. Over time, constant stress biologically alters the brain, weakening self-control and decision making abilities. This makes substances more enticing for coping.

Destabilized Routines Undercut Healthy Habits

Stress also undermines the routines and habits critical for mental wellbeing. Disrupted sleep, exercise, diet, and relationships compromise natural coping skills. Drugs or alcohol can seem like the only relief.

Socioeconomic Instability Adds Pressures

Finally, climate impacts destabilize communities themselves. Damaged infrastructure, lost jobs, displaced families, and widespread insecurity tax both individual and collective mental health.

Climate Disasters Can Cause Both Immediate and Lasting Harm

Single catastrophic events can damage health in immediate and lingering ways. But even gradual climate shifts undermine wellbeing over time, upping substance misuse.

Acute Psychological Distress Drives Coping

Severe weather directly harms mental health. Losing one's home or livelihood overnight causes acute psychological distress. Without healthy coping, substances provide fast "relief."

Lingering Mental Health Damage

Disasters also leave lasting mental scars. Months or years later, PTSD, depression, and anxiety still plague survivors. Self-medication seems the only way to manage the anguish.

Daily Life Disruption Weakens Routines

Both abrupt disasters and incremental climate impacts undermine routines regulating mood, sleep, diet, exercise, and socializing—the pillars of mental wellbeing. Disruption invites substance misuse.

Cumulative Impacts Compound Over Time

Individual weather events may not seem dire alone. But cumulative climate impacts - hotter summers, worse pollen, urban flooding - strain mental health over time. Drugs or alcohol start to fill the void.

Physical Injuries Lead to Deeper Trauma

Beyond immediate threats, climate disasters also cause lasting physical harm. Resulting disabilities and chronic conditions create cycles of worsening mental health and substance misuse.

Climate Injuries Bring Psychological Distress

Physical climate traumas like burns, infections, and smoke inhalation harm mental health. Feelings of depression or hopelessness often follow. For some, alcohol or drugs become coping crutches.

Long Term Illness Strains Mental Health

Injuries causing lasting illness or disability also strain mental wellbeing over time. The chronically ill are more prone to low mood, isolation, and substance misuse.

Substance Use Causes More Health Issues

Addiction itself produces lifelong physiological damage, disabilities, and chronic disease. Those conditions, in turn, associate with still higher rates of harmful substance use.

Vicious Cycles Develop

Together, climate injuries, mental illness, chronic conditions, and addiction interact in vicious cycles. Each makes the others worse while undermining healthy coping skills. Breaking these cycles takes time.

Climate Impacts On Community Wellbeing Raise Risks

Climate change doesn't just affect individuals and families - it also destabilizes the social systems supporting community mental health. Civil unrest and collective trauma leave populations vulnerable to substance misuse.

Infrastructure Loss Damages Mental Health

Damaged buildings, power grids, hospitals, and transport systems create public health crises. Infrastructure loss on a mass scale compounds stress and disabling injuries.

Economic Collapse Strains Communities

Agricultural devastation, flooded downtowns, and lost tourism threaten livelihoods. Job loss, poverty, homelessness, and hunger permeate society. Alcohol or drugs offer escape from the collective despair.

Displacement Fractures Social Ties

Entire communities torn apart by disasters undergo collective trauma. As climate refugees, their social ties and supports fracture. Isolation and depression often follow.

Civil Unrest Festers

Climate impacts strain resources, divide factions, and stoke unrest. An overwhelmed legal system spurs vigilantism. When social order frays, addictive substances fill the void.

Recession Worsens Public Health

Economic ripples become waves. Recession leads to worse nutrition, healthcare, housing, and sanitation for all. Increased disease, violence, and addiction follow.

Why Harmful Substance Use Matters

Beyond physical and mental harm to individuals, risky substance use also rends communities' economic and social fabric. As climate impacts rise, society must prevent increased addiction.

Harms Health and Relationships

Beyond direct effects, addiction ruins social ties, work, education, public safety, mental capital, and family life. It drags down society's health and productivity.

Drives Crime and Violence

Desperation breeds crime. Addicts needing money for drugs commit property theft, fraud, robbery, and even violent offenses. All raise community risks.

Drains Public Resources

Healthcare, criminal justice, social services, and economic aid are stretched thin by addiction epidemics. This diverts resources from other public needs.

Worsens Inequality

Harms fall heaviest on marginalized groups - the poor, mentally ill, homeless, and communities of color. Inequality widens as the rich protect themselves.

Undercuts Progress

Economic growth, infrastructure, technology, education, the arts - progress stalls if climate change consumes public spending to address rising addiction.

Policies Must Address Climate-Addiction Links

With scientific consensus on warming's harms, governments must act on evidence showing climate change likely increases substance misuse

disorders.

Overall Emission Cuts Critical

Most importantly, rapid overall carbon emission reductions remain vital to restricting temperature rise. Curbing climate damage lessens pressures on mental health and addiction.

Prepare Health Systems

Public health systems require increased addiction treatment capacity to handle the influx of new patients as climate events multiply. Staff need proper training to address climate-related mental health needs.

Increase Outreach and Education

School programs should teach climate psychology and mental health self-care. Public outreach campaigns can also encourage resilience practices while reducing stigma around seeking mental healthcare.

Aid Hardest-Hit Communities

Economic relief, counselors, addiction treatment, and social workers should be surged into disaster-struck and marginalized areas suffering disproportionate harms.

Promote Infrastructure Resilience

Making power, water, transport, healthcare, and emergency services more climate-resilient reduces collective trauma during disasters - minimizing spikes in substance misuse.

Support Displaced Populations

Specialized assistance for climate refugees helps maintain social ties and cultural identity. Preventing isolation and depression makes substance avoidance easier.

Fund More Research

Expanded research quantifying links between climate impacts and addiction allows more targeted, evidence-based policies. Science should guide smart,

ethical response.

Signs of Change on the Horizon

While dangers are rising, all is not yet lost. Climate activism and social movements give hope that society may still curtail warming and get addiction risks under control.

Climate Concern Going Mainstream

Record high temperatures and disasters are educating the mainstream public on climate risks. Politicians must now listen or face electoral reprisal.

Protests Forcing Action

A critical mass now recognize climate change as a defining threat to human society. Mass demonstrations globally insist governments and corporations embrace drastic emissions cuts immediately.

Momentum Toward Decarbonization

Renewables now reliably beat fossil fuels on cost. Large industry players face growing pressure via carbon taxation, divestment, and consumer choice to ditch CO2-emitting business practices.

Increased Addiction Focus

Mental health and substance use disorders are finally gaining mainstream public understanding. Reduced stigma allows those struggling to seek help.

Pandemic Lessons Learned

Covid-19 gave societies crash courses in public health messaging, research collaboration, and rapidly mobilizing around an urgent threat. We now know fast change is possible.

Cause for Hope, If We Act

While dangers are real, engaged citizens and responsible leaders can still change course. Our future depends on combining climate action with

compassion for all people's wellbeing. United by shared purpose, we can get through crisis.

Preparing for What's Ahead

The scientific evidence leaves little doubt - climate change poses substantial threats to public mental health and risks increasing substance misuse disorders. As societies debate policies to curb warming, they must also ready health systems for the challenges ahead.

With future climate impacts now largely locked in, preparation can determine if coming decades spiral into crisis or see communities grow more resilient despite mounting pressures. Proactive investments made today will pay dividends down the road.

Brace for Turbulence Ahead

Much like airplane passengers facing expected turbulence, people must secure their own psychological "seat belts" as climate disruption accelerates. Families and communities likewise need to reinforce supports and stability.

Promote Mental Health Literacy

Psychological first aid training, emotional learning in schools, addiction awareness campaigns, and widespread mental health screenings can catch issues early and direct people to support. Knowing what to expect defuses distress when crisis hits.

Expand Treatment Access Dramatically

As substances become more enticing to growing numbers, huge investments in rehab programs, counselors, peer support networks, and relapse prevention are essential. Help must be made low barrier and stigma-free.

Foster Community Resilience

Neighborhoods should build social cohesion and mutual aid networks through community centers, volunteering, religious groups, and civic organizations. Together, people withstand trauma and Watch out for those around you.

Make Institutions More Robust

Hardening healthcare facilities, establishing emergency mental health services, readying displacement shelters, and backing up critical systems like power and water make downtime during disasters shorter. Limited turmoil means less substance misuse risk.

Embrace Harm Reduction

For those already struggling with addiction, meet them where they're at. Needle exchanges, safe injection sites, managed alcohol programs, and drug checking services help people stabilize lives and avoid worst outcomes as climate risks multiply.

Shift Focus From Blame to Support

With climate impacts broadening, society must rethink moralistic attitudes around addiction. Substance use disorders are health conditions needing compassion and practical aid, not stigma.

See Addicts as People First

Those who develop substance use disorders are fellow human beings worthy of respect and dignity. They cope as best they can with the complex factors life has handed them. Recovery is often a long process requiring patience and care.

Address Root Causes

Addiction never occurs in a vacuum. Trauma, poverty, marginalization, mental illness, injury, and lack of healthcare access or social support all enable substance misuse. Only tackling root causes treats the disease, not just symptoms.

Make Treatment Truly Accessible

Rehab centers with lengthy waits, unaffordable costs, and rejecting those who aren't "ready" or "compliant" deter people seeking help. Treatment must meet addicts where they are with no judgment or barriers.

Support Harm Reduction Approaches

Abstinence isn't right for everyone. Some may still use substances regularly or relapse during treatment. Shaming them increases stigma. Harm reduction like needle exchanges and safe injection sites saves lives.

Change Narratives Around Use

Society often sees addiction as a moral failing or character flaw. Reframing it as a disease requiring health support, not punishment, reduces stigma so more feel able to get help sooner.

Cultivate Compassion For All

Climate change will test our shared humanity in coming years. Collective trauma may sow division and contempt if we let it. Alternatively, crisis could bring out our boundless compassion.

Healing both society and environment requires having empathy for each other's pain. Though times look dark, the human spirit has shone brighter still. We must care for this world, and for one another. Our future depends on it.

Preparing Health Systems for Climate Impacts

Climate change threatens to increase rates of mental illness and substance use disorders. Health systems worldwide must start preparing now to handle the coming surge in patients. With adequate capacity, staff training, and smart resource allocation, societies can avoid worsening public health crises as the planet warms.

Expand Treatment Infrastructure Dramatically

As climate events multiply, sheer patient numbers with addiction issues will multiply too. Health systems require drastically expanded capacity to meet surging demand.

Build More Inpatient Treatment Centers

Those with severe substance use disorders may need medically-supervised detoxification and stabilization in residential facilities. But in many nations, not enough rehab centers exist to handle current patients, let alone future influxes.

Invest in Long Term Care

For those with years of addiction and related health issues, short rehab stints of days or weeks are often inadequate. Long term care facilities providing months of comprehensive treatment and social support are crucial for recovery.

Develop Robust Outpatient Networks

Outpatient programs allow people to maintain jobs, family roles, and community ties while getting addiction care. These require networks of counselors, peer support groups, community health workers, and social services.

Make Treatment Accessible to All

Cost, location, wait times, and admission criteria shouldn't exclude anyone needing help. Low-income assistance, transportation, fast intake, harm reduction approaches, and meeting patients "where they are" expands treatment access.

Backup Essential Systems

Addiction treatment centers require guaranteed access to power, water, sanitation, medication supply chains, and electronic health records, even during disasters. Otherwise patient health is jeopardized when it's needed most.

Train Healthcare Workers Extensively

Clinicians across medical fields require substantial training to compassionately and effectively treat the surge in patients with climate-linked mental health and addiction issues.

Foster Climate Change Understanding

All health professionals need grounding in climate science, impacts, and health risks to grasp the scale of the crisis. They must also model climate-aware lifestyles to patients.

Teach Climate Psychology

Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors and social workers must be versed in climate anxiety, trauma, grief, depression, and their links to substance use. These professionals will be on the front lines of the mental health crisis.

Include Addiction Screening Across Fields

Primary care doctors, nurses, OB-GYNs and other specialists should universally screen for substance use and warning signs of mental distress exacerbated by climate impacts and disasters.

Train All Staff in Mental Health First Aid

Even medical assistants, pharmacists, and community health workers require basic skills in psychological first aid, counselor referrals, and substance use hazard reduction to compassionately respond to patient needs and prevent worsening.

Share Treatment Knowledge Broadly

Best practices around addiction medicine, therapy, peer support, medication-assisted treatment, and holistic wellness must permeate across healthcare. Similarly, addressing climate health risks should be integrated throughout.

Allocate Resources Wisely

With so many competing priorities and finite budgets, smart health resource allocation is critical. Investments should focus on prevention, social determinants, and helping those most impacted.

Prioritize Lowering Emissions

The top healthcare priority remains rapidly cutting greenhouse gases to restrict temperature rise and limit destructive climate impacts. Curbing climate damage lessens pressures on mental health.

Focus On Social Determinants

Poverty, inequality, homelessness, lack of healthcare access, and marginalization all exacerbate climate health risks. Tackling these root causes mitigates many public health crises including addiction.

Target Prevention Programs

Though treatment will remain vital, earlier interventions avoiding substance misuse in the first place have exponential benefits across society. School programs, mental healthcare access, resilience training, and public education campaigns help.

Surge Resources to Hot-Spots

Communities bearing disproportionate climate impacts require concentrated aid to build collective resilience and address trauma. Mental healthcare and addiction treatment should be immediately dispatched to disaster sites.

Fund Community Health Workers

Trusted peers providing mental health outreach, addiction education, recovery coaching, and post-disaster support can reach marginalized people and overburdened health systems cannot. Community health workers fill gaps.

Support Vulnerable Populations

Low-income groups, communities of color, children, Indigenous people, the elderly, disabled, homeless, and mentally ill suffer most harm from climate change and substance misuse both. Assistance should concentrate among those facing the highest risks.

The Vital Role of Harm Reduction Approaches

As climate change assists substance misuse, harm reduction approaches play an increasingly vital role in public health. Harm reduction seeks to

minimize adverse consequences of drug use rather than force abstinence.

Meeting substance users “where they are at” saves lives.

Harm Reduction Aligns with Public Health Ethics

Above all, healthcare aims to prevent human suffering and save lives.

Demonizing, stigmatizing, or punishing people who use substances contradicts public health ethics. Harm reduction offers pragmatic, compassionate care.

Upholds Autonomy & Dignity

It starts from the premise that people deserve facts and resources to make their own health decisions. This upholds personal autonomy, respect, and dignity.

Focuses on Preventing Harm

The goal is reducing harmful effects of substance use rather than enforcement or coerced abstinence which often backfire. Preventing harm aligns with health ethics.

Rooted in Compassion

It operates from a place of unconditional compassion, not judgment. This builds trust and maximizes client health outcomes.

Driven by Evidence

It applies evidence-based interventions proven to reduce risks like disease transmission and overdose. Data shows it works.

Cost-Effective

It provides substantial return on investment. Preventing harms avoids huge costs of health crises, hospitalization, disability, lost productivity, crime, and social services.

Core Components of Harm Reduction

Many low-barrier interventions reduce drug use hazards without mandating immediate abstinence. These pragmatically meet users where they are now.

Safe Injection Sites

Also called supervised consumption sites, these licensed facilities allow sterile injection of drugs under medical supervision to prevent overdose deaths and disease transmission. Evidence shows they work.

Drug Checking Services

These allow anonymous submission of drugs to check composition and purity, detecting contaminants like fentanyl. Users make informed choices lowering overdose risks.

Naloxone Distribution

Providing users and even family members with naloxone kits to rapidly reverse opioid overdoses prevents many deaths. Most places now allow direct naloxone access.

Needle & Syringe Programs

These provide free sterile needles and syringes to reduce needle sharing and infectious diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Many jurisdictions now offer needle exchange.

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)

MAT combines behavioral therapy with medicines like methadone or buprenorphine to stabilize those with opioid addiction. It greatly improves outcomes.

Managed Alcohol Programs

For those unable to stop drinking, providing pharmaceutical-grade managed alcohol reduces bingeing, street drug use, and alcohol harms. It keeps people safer.

Peer Support Networks

Peer recovery coaches and support groups empower people through shared understanding. This community fosters recovery and prevents relapse far more than shaming.

Housing First Approaches

Providing stable housing without mandating abstinence or treatment compliance dramatically reduces harms and builds trust to encourage recovery when addicts are ready.

Benefits of Harm Reduction

Mounting evidence shows harm reduction improves both individual and public health when part of a comprehensive substance use strategy. It saves lives.

Prevents Disease Spread

Sterile injection, safe smoking kits, and naloxone distribution reduce HIV, hepatitis C, endocarditis, sepsis, and overdoses - minimizing preventable deaths.

Lowers Health Complications

Managed alcohol reduces falls, head injuries, alcohol poisoning, seizures, pancreatitis, and liver issues. Supervised use prevents infections. Overall, complications requiring hospitalization are lessened.

Reduces Crime and Social Issues

Crime plummets when addiction is stabilized through housing, managed substances, and methadone treatment. Harm reduction cuts incarceration, homelessness, unemployment, and family crisis.

Saves Public Resources

Money spent on preventable health crises, criminal justice costs, disability payments, child welfare, and social assistance drops dramatically when harm reduction is fully implemented.

Builds Trust to Encourage Recovery

By meeting people without judgment as human beings worthy of dignity, harm reduction fosters openness to deeper change. But readiness must come from within. Forced compliance backfires.

Offers Lifeline During Crisis

Particularly during disasters, economic turmoil, trauma, and collective instability, offering nonjudgmental harm reduction services saves lives as more people use substances. A compassionate hand up is extended when people need it most.

Addiction Treatment Models for an Era of Climate Disruption

With climate change expected to increase substance misuse disorders, treatment systems must evolve to handle new patient challenges. What models of care will prove most effective and ethical during climate disruption?

Holistic, Evidence-Based Treatment

As climate instability worsens public health, integrative addiction treatment rooted in data and ethics is essential. Fragmented approaches waste scant resources and lives.

Treat Root Causes

Trauma, inequality, poverty, mental illness, chronic pain, and social isolation drive most substance misuse. Ignoring underlying factors guarantees relapse. Holistic care treats whole person.

Take Climate Impacts Seriously

The climate crisis undermines global physical and mental health. Treatment must help people process climate grief and trauma while building resilience skills.

Apply Lessons from the Pandemic

Covid-19 highlighted biomedical complexity and society's deep inequities. Addiction care must integrate insights around trauma, marginalization, mental health, and collective social support.

Deploy Treatments Proven Effective

Evidence clearly shows medication-assisted treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy, contingency management incentives, mindfulness, peer support, and holistic health radically improve recovery outcomes. These should be standardized.

Make Care Accessible to All

Cost, stigma, location, admission criteria, and program culture should not exclude willing people needing help. Barriers facing marginalized groups must be dismantled through outreach.

Foster Compassionate Relationships

Addiction corrodes human bonds. Recovery restoration lasts only through unconditional compassion, respecting autonomy, and reconnecting people to community—not blaming and punishment.

Balance Treatment and Harm Reduction

With climate change likely expanding substance use disorders, harm reduction will prove a vital public health component alongside traditional treatment models. The most effective systems integrate both.

Some Abstinence Programs Still Essential

Medically-supervised detox, intensive rehab, and residential recovery centers provide lifesaving care for those with severe, complex addictions - especially during times of collective trauma. These require dramatic scaling up.

Most Still Require Ongoing Support

After formal treatment, most individuals benefit from ongoing medication-assisted therapy, counseling, peer groups, recovery housing, vocational help, and social services to sustain hard-won sobriety and heal root causes.

Not Everyone Is Ready for Abstinence

Reality is some maintain substance use despite devastating consequences. Forcing abstinence on those not ready causes them to avoid all help. Harm reduction meets them where they are.

Harm Reduction Has Vital Public Health Role

As climate disasters increase substance misuse, pragmatically preventing overdoses, disease, homelessness, and other harms through policy makes moral and economic sense.

Offer Integrated Options

Joining harm reduction services with traditional treatment, social support, and tackling of inequality gives people pathways to better health while preventing deaths from untreated addiction. Multiple doors should lead to recovery.

Change Rules That Criminalize Use

Laws that further marginalize users by making possession or paraphernalia illegal actually drive dangerous use and deter treatment-seeking. Decriminalization alongside health outreach saves lives.

Make Systems More Resilient for Coming Storms

With climate disruptions ahead, substance use treatment must become disaster-resilient itself. Plans to provide uninterrupted care during crises will prove ever more vital.

Make Buildings More Resilient

Facilities require energy efficiency, onsite renewables, battery backups, microgrids, flood protection, storm-rated construction, and climate-appropriate landscaping and water systems to continue operations amidst weather extremes.

Ensure Access to Medicines

Robust supply chains with local sourcing, strategic stockpiles, and delivery redundancy must prevent medication disruptions for those in medication-assisted treatment during disasters. Lapses risk withdrawal, overdose, and death.

Back Up Health Records Digitally

Cloud-based encrypted health record systems prevent data loss and continuity of care disruptions when facilities flood or lose power. They also improve care coordination between providers.

Share Resources on Mental Health First Aid

Train all staff, recovery coaches, and community health workers in psychological first aid, mental health triage, climate trauma counseling, and suicidality assessment. Local capacity bolsters resilience.

Develop Emergency Preparedness Plans

Response plans outlining patient evacuation, sheltering, transportation, medication, staffing, and alternate facility operations enable rapid execution when disasters strike. Doing so limits collective trauma which can trigger substance use relapses.

Foster Peer Support Networks

Strong communities foster recovery and resilience. Group counseling focused on climate preparedness, mutual aid planning, emergency communication, and mental health resources reinforces social ties against future strains.

Conclusion: Moving Toward Health and Healing

Climate disruption, inequality, health system fragmentation, and stigma around mental illness and addiction combine to form a perfect storm, threatening to push substance misuse rates higher worldwide. But this crisis point also presents societies an opportunity to change course.

By confronting climate change, economic injustice, and inadequate healthcare head-on while embracing evidence-based treatment and harm reduction, we can yet curb addiction and overdose epidemics exacerbated by a climate-strained world. But collective will and wisdom must be applied soon.

The moment has come for humanity to care for our shared planetary home and each other within it. While the road ahead looks challenging, people immobilized by fear, resignation, or despair will create far darker futures than those who harness compassion's tremendous power to build a healthier world even amidst turmoil.

Healing begins when we move beyond blaming individuals to fix broken systems. It continues when we stand together, no longer isolated, listening to and assisting our hurting neighbors without judgment. And healing will come when societies finally declare, with one voice, that all people deserve safety, justice, opportunity, and dignity regardless of race, income, nationality, gender, health, or history.

If we cannot yet stop the gathering storms, we may still weather them through foresight, courage, and boundless love for humanity. These must guide us on the path ahead.

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