Action Wellbeing

Action Wellbeing supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of everyone involved in XR actions

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What is Action Wellbeing?



Action Wellbeing supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of everyone involved in XR actions. Look out for us in our blue hi-vis. In our teams we also have qualified First Aiders who wear green tabards.

Action Wellbeing provide water, hand warmers and snacks (chocolate!), as well as a listening ear and a friendly smile. Rebels come to us for all sorts of things, including: information on the nearest toilets, rain protection, conversation, blankets and pillows, warm tea, songs and chants, support during arrests and countless other useful things!

Designated First Aiders are typically needed when:

- over 50 people are attending an action,
- the action is a high physical risk environment.

Wellbeing is typically needed when:

- arrests are likely,
- an action may last for a long duration,
- larger numbers of people are attending.

Wellbeing is essential for actions that include lock-ons, glue-ons, or occupation.

Contact us wellbeing+awb@extinctionrebellion.uk.

What's involved in being Wellbeing Crew?

These are guidelines for what to expect once you have signed up as an Action Wellbeing Supporter. It can also serve as a set of guidelines for Wellbeing coordinators.

Before the Action

Once you have signed up for Action Wellbeing role you will be contacted by an Action Wellbeing Coordinator who will be able to link you up with other Action Wellbeing Supporters you will be working with. We recommend choosing an Anchor at this point to help build a support network in preparation for the action and continuing long after. An **Anchor** is a point of stability during the tumult of an action and offers check-ins as needed by rebels on the ground. They might be someone who can't come to the action or wants to support from a distance, thus conserving their energies especially for pre- and post-action support.

There will be opportunities for training and ongoing communications so by the time we are on the street we feel prepared, supported and connected.

In this pre-action period we will also arrange a debrief for 1-2 weeks after the action. There will be a named person, possibly a Wellbeing Anchor who will make sure this happens. It would be lovely if it can be face to face but of course this is not always possible and when it isn't online calls will be arranged.

Preparation:

Actions can be stressful situations to enter into and we may not always know what's going to happen ahead of time. Some questions we might ask ourselves and those around us may be:

- What are my motivations for doing this?
- Do my values align with my motivations?
- What do I need to feel nourished?
- How will I know when I need to take a rest?

It is also a good idea to use the Pre-action and arrest preparation guidelines.

Contact:

You will be added to a group chat for the for the action, which will allow effective communication on the day. Apps used are SIGNAL, WHATSAPP or TELEGRAM. If you don't have a smart phone, ensure you have the contact number for the Wellbeing Team Coordinator.

Meeting up:

The Wellbeing Team Coordinator will be in touch with you the day before to inform you of the meeting point and time.

On the day...

What to bring:

- A mobile phone/charger/ battery pack
- Pen & paper
- Food & drink for yourself
- A good book/source of entertainment, in case you do some arrestee support and have to wait a while at the police station
- Enough money to pay for a taxi/food/drinks for arrestees (just in case!)
- Weather appropriate wear: Warm & waterproof clothing, an umbrella, suncream.

What to wear:

Prioritise being comfortable, warm and dry. If you wish to, go smart casual - this may help our portrayal in the media and support the image of an inclusive movement. Keep your XR banners and clothing for when you arrive, it's important that we don't stand out too much when travelling to the actions.

Wellbeing packs:

Each pair will be given a backpack that will have useful things, e.g snacks, water and survival blankets in it. You will also be given bust cards, which have solicitors number on them.

Being identifiable:

We will all wear blue high-viz tabbards to be identifiable as the wellbeing team. The first aiders will have green first aid tabbards on.

Meeting up:

When we meet up for we will:

- Do a grounding exercise
- Have a check in - How am I feeling? Hopes/fears?
- The coordinator will brief the team on any information they have regarding the action.

- Buddy up.
- Share important contacts and write solicitors number somewhere on yourself.
- Agree on a point to meet after the action for a debrief. This could be at the wellbeing hub if there is one, or another easily accessible safe and calm space such as nearby park or cafe.

Buddying up:

You will have a buddy, who you will stay with or know the exact whereabouts of at all times during the action. If you have been involved in the planning and preparation you will hopefully already have a buddy but if not it will be arranged during the morning briefing. Action Wellbeing Supporters help to keep energy levels high, keep an eye on vulnerable participants, generally ensuring the physical and emotional wellbeing of anybody who is taking part in the action.

There will be time for any questions. Then we will head to where the actions are happening with our buddies.

During the Action

At the action there will be:

Affinity Groups:

Some of the people taking action will be organised into affinity groups (small groups of people who know each other well enough to take direct action together). Some affinity groups will have a wellbeing coordinator. You and your buddy will be there to provide extra support, encouragement and guidance to these wellbeing coordinators.

There will also be:

Mostly, those who are not part of an affinity group and members of the public who have just joined. It is the role of the wellbeing supporter to keep an eye on the wellbeing of everyone at the action.

What you should do as an Action Wellbeing Supporter:

- Checking in with the people taking action (and their wellbeing coordinator if they have one) to see if they need anything.
- Keeping an eye out on arrests and taking note of the arresting officer, and the police station they are being taken to - especially if there are no Legal Observers present. See Witnessing an arrest notes.
- Keeping an eye out for anyone injured, distressed or overwhelmed, making sure no one is left on their own.
- Thanking and cheering (if it feels appropriate) arrestees when they are taken off to the police van. Or if they are alone accompanying them to the van and being the last smiling and supportive face they see before they are taken away.

- Checking in with strangers, especially if they are alone, and seeing how they are doing. A good question you can ask is ‘What brought you here today?’ (Remember some people may be cautious of giving their name if police are around.) See if they are planning on being arrested and if so...
- Checking-in with arrestables
  Before and during an action, check-in with people and see if they are planning to be arrested. If they are then offer to explore the following with them - explain that this is not to deter them, but it is to make sure they are fully prepared to maintain their wellbeing through the criminal justice system:
  - Reasons & Motivations
    “How did you decide that you want to be arrestable?”
  - Anxiety/Fears/Concerns/Boundaries
    “Do you have any fears or concerns about being arrested?”
    "Do you have any concern that any of your traits/qualities may impact your experience at an action or during arrest (e.g. ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation)"
  - Impact
    “What impact do you think this will have on you and your family/friends?"
    "What do you think is the worst case scenario?”
  - Support & Preparation
    “How have you prepared yourself for today?” e.g., attended NVDA, know your rights, informed family) but also
    “What is your support network like?” e.g. part of an affinity group, police station support, has an anchor at home, has a buddy with them at the action.
  - Embedded
    “How does today, including any arrests, court appearances etc. link in with the rest of your life, your plans, your values?” - linking back to the motivation at the beginning.

Help the rebel to return to a positive place after what could be difficult questions.

In case of...

- Minor injuries - call over a first aider (in a green hi-vis)
- Serious injuries - call an ambulance
- Someone feeling overwhelmed/seems distressed - take aside to sit down, offer water/reassurance/to call a friend/family if needed
- Someone feeling unwell and needing to leave the action - ensure they have assistance/company- either a friend or trusted wellbeing person, do NOT send them off with someone unknown to them, or on their own.
- Someone taking direct action intoxicated or behaving in a way that doesn’t adhere to XR’s principles and values/the action consensus eg: Being verbally or physically violent - IF you feel comfortable doing so let the person know that we are a non violent movement with a set of principles & values guiding our work that we ask everyone on site to agree to. Have someone with you when you do this for support. You can also call on the support of a de-

escalator (white hi-vis) or your co-ordinator.

After the Action:

Check out:

We will gather again immediately after the action to check out, and handover if another team is coming on shift. This serves as a mini debrief, but is not an alternative to a full debrief.

Things to think about during check out:

- How am I feeling now?
- What went well?
- Do I have any concerns?
- What do I need right now or what will I do later to nourish myself.

Arrange to check in with your buddy over the next few days and attend the debrief (which will have already been arranged for 1-2 weeks after the action).

Welcome home gathering:

Gather with your affinity group or others you were in action with to connect, share stories and celebrate.

Debrief:

Debriefs are an important part of post action care and can often be forgotten about in the business of an action. That is why we recommend that all debriefs are booked in before the action starts. Some of the main reasons for debriefing are:

- Learning and improving
- Emotional processing
- Preventing ‘Burn-Out’
- Staying connected

Take a look at the Debrief Template. This can be adapted and simplified. Pick the bits that work for you.

After this debrief we recommend keeping an eye out for or organising Ongoing Talking Circles/Reflective Spaces to help stay connected.

Access and Inclusion in Action Wellbeing

In XR we want to make our events as inclusive and accesible as possible and not all of access needs are obvious. Certainly physical disabilities are easy to recognise, whereas mental health and non-visible disabilities like deafness and poor sight are often not so easy to recognise.

It is important that we, in Action Support roles, demonstrate an awareness that rebels may find certain situations uncomfortable (noise, crowds, distances to cover, sight, hearing, etc.). We need to know the location of accessible routes between locations, toilets and other services. We can offer to guide someone from a transport hub, or push a wheelchair for example.

An awareness of and a demonstration of that awareness is typically needed when:

- expecting attendees with varied mobility, or other access requirements
- large public events
- specifically requested in advance.

Contact us: xr.inclusion@protonmail.com

First Aid in Action Wellbeing

Whilst we encourage all in Action Support roles to have a basic awareness of First Aid, our designated **First Aiders** are all trained and certificated to the Level 3 Award in First Aid at Work, or its equivalent. Since such training is expensive, we aim to recruit First Aiders who are already certificated.

Our First Aiders will wear Green First Aid Tabbards. Usually our First Aiders and Welbeing crew support actions in **Buddy Pairs** together.

For multi-day actions, we organise our Wellbeing and First Aid crew using an **On-Line Rota**, so that each member can select the most appropriate times that they can contribute their support. This helps to balance out attendance and ensures that we have cover for all the individual activities on each day. In between major actions, we generally keep in contact with our First Aider pool, using our Telegram chat channel. But during actions, we use Signal, which is a more secure platform.

Prior to bigger UK based actions, we may need to run some **First Aid Training sessions**, to remind our crew how we "**work on the street**". This lets us talk about what issues can present themselves during actions - possibly with greater emphasis on the **emotional needs** of the rebels we'll be looking after, rather than their physical needs. This can be particularly important where the action may result in multiple arrests.

If you are already certificated, and wish to join our First Aid crew, please join us on telegram here:

First Aid Chat channel.

If you have any queries regarding your certification, contact us on:

wellbeing+fa@extinctionrebellion.uk.

Ways to stay Grounded and Connected during an Action

Check-ins

We want to develop resilience and wellbeing through introspection and deepening our support networks (for arrestables and non-arrestables). Regularly checking in with each other during actions can help us to:

- Recognise, observe and explore our emotions
- Develop greater connection and a feeling of support and safety between each other
- Ground the group at times of heightened emotion
- Uncover and respond to the needs of the group

Self soothing techniques

Practice these techniques long before the action so become second nature and readily available when you need them in times of stress.

- **Focusing on your breathing**. Observe your breath, first without changing it and then very gradually lengthening your exhales. Try to only focus on breathing out, trusting that breathing in happens naturally as and when your body needs it.
- **Grounding.** Bring your attention to your feet and feel connected to the immediate ground underneath, and through it, to the soil, the earth, the planet. You are part of a whole and you are connected to it, through your body and through your feet at all times. You are on safe ground.
- **Bring attention to your senses.** Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.
- **Broaden out your vision, 'owl vision'.** Looking as far around you as you can – all the way up to the sky, all the way down to your feet. All the way to your left and all the way to your right. Our vision sometimes contracts when we are scared and we lose sight of what’s important.
- **Loosen your shoulders.** Pull them up as hard as you can and then let them fall down. Repeat a few times. Turn your head very slowly from one side to the middle, to the other side, to the middle again. Repeat a few times. We tend to tense around our neck and shoulders in times of stress, actively releasing this tension can help you relax.
- **Shake it out.** Shaking is a normal response to tension in the body, shaking releases the tension and relaxes the muscles which has a direct affect on your nervous system. We love a quick shake out or dance break with a group mid action.

Action Wellbeing Practice Scenarios

Role plays and discussion to practise with your affinity group, wellbeing team, friends, anyone!

Specific Action Visioning

Spend some time in a small group thinking about the action you are about to take. Discuss the type of action it is, where it is, the size of it and any other details you can think of specific to that action. Start to come up with some example scenarios of what you might come across. You may decide to role play these or simply talk about them and start to get a sense of what it might look and feel like in that situation and what the Action Wellbeing needs might be?

Wellbeing Supporter Role Plays

Applied Active Listening

Get into groups of 3-4. Do this by lining up roughly in terms of experience of activism, been arrested for loads of different actions at various times at one end of the room. Never done anything like this in their lives at the other. Make up the groups of 3-4 people so that there is a variety of experience levels in the groups. In all the scenarios ask the Wellbeing person to try and practise active listening with the person taking direct action in order to support them.

Active Listening tips:

- Give the speaker your undivided attention.
- Try not to interrupt while they are talking.
- If you notice yourself drift off or start thinking about how to respond, try to bring your attention back to what the speaker is saying.
- See what it's like to just listen fully with your whole mind and body.

Supporting someone being cut out of a lock on

1-2 Police, 1 rebel locked on, 1 WB person.

Ask the rebel to lie down. The police person should be sat over/ next to the protector, leaning over them as if cutting off an arm lock. Imagine the machinery and kit needed to be cutting someone out of an arm lock. It is loud, and invasive. The police can be asking questions. The wellbeing person is to support the rebel through that experience.

Supporting someone being criticised by a member of the public

1 Angry Driver, 1 rebel, 1 WB person.

The rebel is standing within conversation range of an angry driver who is hanging out of their car window, the rebel can choose whether or not to engage with the driver. The angry driver can be shouting, may be offensive. Possible things to say, ‘get a job’ ‘this is hitting the wrong people I’m just trying to get to work’ ‘I’m going to lose my job because of you’ ‘my kids are waiting at the school gate and are late because of you’ Be imaginative, and don’t be afraid to be mean, it will help with the practise. The wellbeing person is to support the rebel through that experience.

Supporting someone who is talking to police liaison

1-2 Police Liaison, 1 Attendee (may not be doing something arrestable, 1 WB person.

The attendee has had no NVDA training or briefing and no prior experience with the police. The police liaison are really friendly and having a wee chat. WB person is to support the attendee.

Supporting someone who is getting arrested by the police

1-2 Police, 1 rebel, 1 WB person.

Start with the arrest, putting on of handcuffs, ask first but can get physical. The police may try to move the person away from the WB supporter. WB person is to support the attendee. Come back together for a debrief. Talk about the scenario and things that came up.

Decision Making Exercise

In groups of 5-10, go through one of these scenarios and respond within 90 seconds:

Coordination:

Ask a co-ordinator from each group to come forward and get a task. (If the co-ordinators are predominantly male, name that to the whole group. Mention that in deciding who will coordinate and in making the decision to put yourself forward or not ask if your first response is more to do with capability or the way you have been socialised in our current society. Thank those coordinators for stepping forward and ask for 2 different coordinators to come up)

Give them this task: ’you have just been messaged with info that 2 swarming affinity groups have gone off and will be doing something arrestable nearby. One has just left and can be seen leaving down a side street. The other cannot be seen and there is no info on where they are other than ‘nearby’. The group of WB people you are with are currently looking after a group of vulnerable arrestables e.g. younger people or older people or members of the disabilities network.

Go back to your well-being people and decide who goes where, this is time sensitive as people are likely to be arrested quickly once they start their swarming activities. Time 90s seconds as it is the

amount of time they will have before the affinity group disappears from sight. Debrief, did you make a decision? Did you listen to each other? Did anyone not feel listened to? Who was loudest/quietest?

Swarming:

Before doing this decide which 2 people in the group will represent WB people.

‘You’ve been swarming all day, and come off the road to let the first cars through. During this moment a car on the other side of the road overheats and goes on fire, blowing huge amounts of smoke everywhere. You are a bit spread out and can only speak to the 3 people closest to you. Do you go back on the road as planned at the next light?

- Did you make a decision?
- Did the whole group make the same decision?
- Was the WB view different from the others?
- How did WB facilitate communication and de-escalation in that situation?
- Did you listen to each other?
- Did anyone not feel listened to?
- Who was loudest/quietest?
- Were the most listened to/first to speak/loudest voices to do with the way we are socialised in our society?

Priorities:

Split into smaller groups of 3-4

You are standing together at the first aid point giving out tea. Someone is brought to the point having just fainted. At the same time you see the police starting to arrest people who had been blocking a road at one end, there are WB people there but the arrests look like they may need backup. At the same time a parent who has lost a child comes over in distress, looking for help. At the same time you receive a message that some of the march is leaving and will need WB people to go with it. You should always be within eyesight/earshot of your buddy.

Decide who sees to what in this situation. How do you organise and support?

Notice, with no judgement, just noticing.

- Was someone leading?
- Did they listen to each other? Did anyone not feel listened to?
- Who was loudest/quietest?
- Why did those who stepped forward feel most comfortable doing so. Note on privilege awareness.

Come back together for a debrief.

Useful Tools & Templates

More Resources for Action Wellbeing volunteers

PDF Wellbeing Handbook- a deeper guide into the details promoting wellbeing in our rebels on an ongoing basic, as well as the details of organising Action Wellbeing for a large action.

Action Wellbeing Practice Scenarios – to role play with your Affinity Group, Wellbeing Team or other Rebels

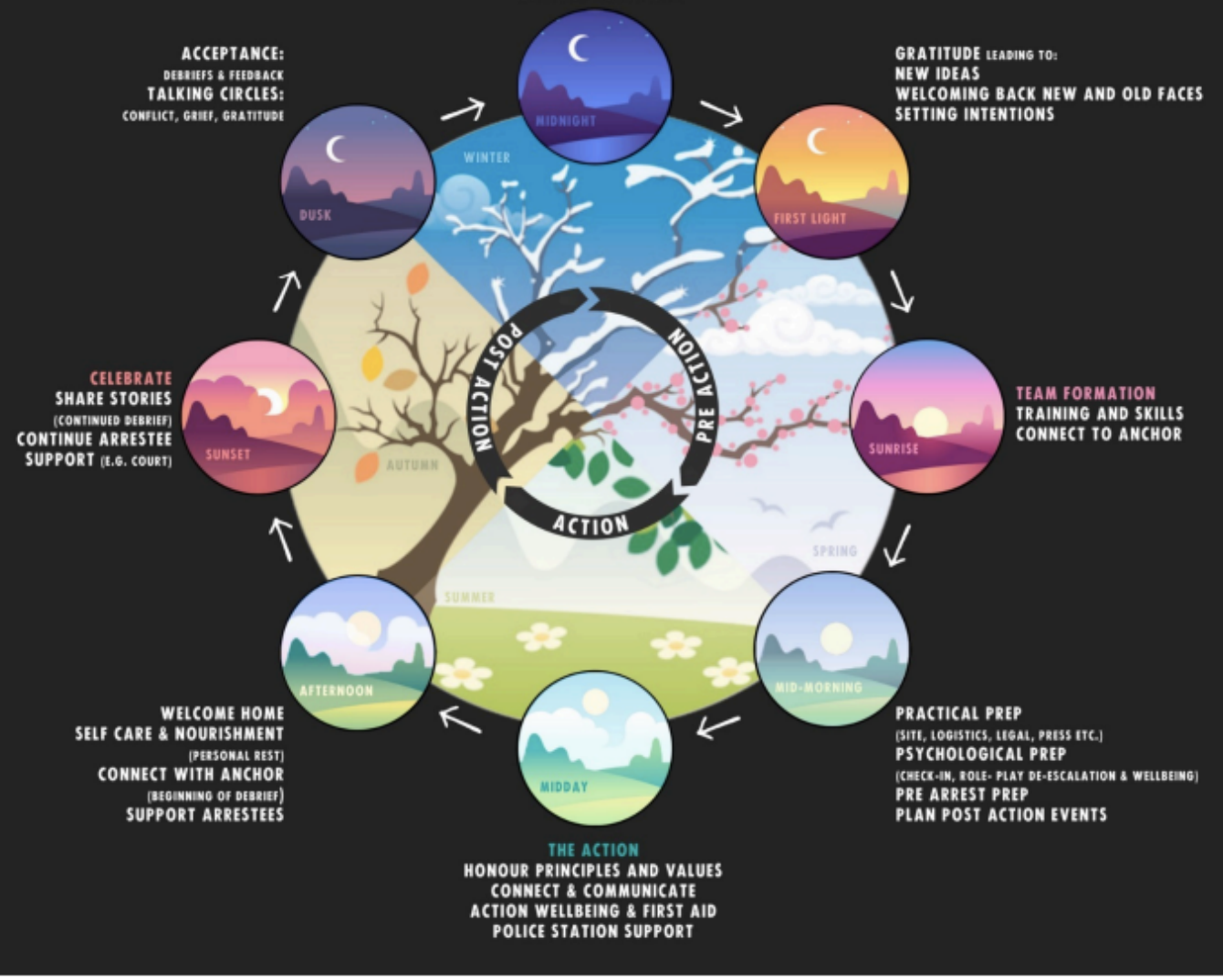
Pre Action and Arrest Preparation- Emotional and practical preparation for action (and arrest)

Kit List – some suggestions for your Wellbeing Kit

How to debrief – please take inspiration and use what is useful to you

The Regenerative Action Cycle

THE 'REGENERATIVE ACTION' CYCLE



REST!
DREAM
REFLECTION LEADING TO INSPIRATION
RE-CONNECT TO VISION
CONNECT TO NATURE

GRATITUDE LEADING TO:
NEW IDEAS
WELCOMING BACK NEW AND OLD FACES
SETTING INTENTIONS

TEAM FORMATION
TRAINING AND SKILLS
CONNECT TO ANCHOR

PRACTICAL PREP
(SITE, LOGISTICS, LEGAL, PRESS ETC.)
PSYCHOLOGICAL PREP
(CHECK-IN, ROLE- PLAY DE-ESCALATION & WELLBEING)
PRE ARREST PREP
PLAN POST ACTION EVENTS

THE ACTION
HONOUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES
CONNECT & COMMUNICATE
ACTION WELLBEING & FIRST AID
POLICE STATION SUPPORT

WELCOME HOME
SELF CARE & NOURISHMENT
(PERSONAL REST)
CONNECT WITH ANCHOR
(BEGINNING OF DEBRIEF)
SUPPORT ARRESTEES

CELEBRATE
SHARE STORIES
(CONTINUED DEBRIEF)
CONTINUE ARRESTEE SUPPORT (E.G. COURT)

ACCEPTANCE:
DEBRIEFS & FEEDBACK
TALKING CIRCLES:
CONFLICT, GRIEF, GRATITUDE