

Cruising as the Planet Heats up – Preparing in Uncertain Times The New Mental Game

“Baseball is 90% mental. The other half is physical”
Yogi Berra

Presented to BCA Club Nights – May, 2026

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The Mental Game

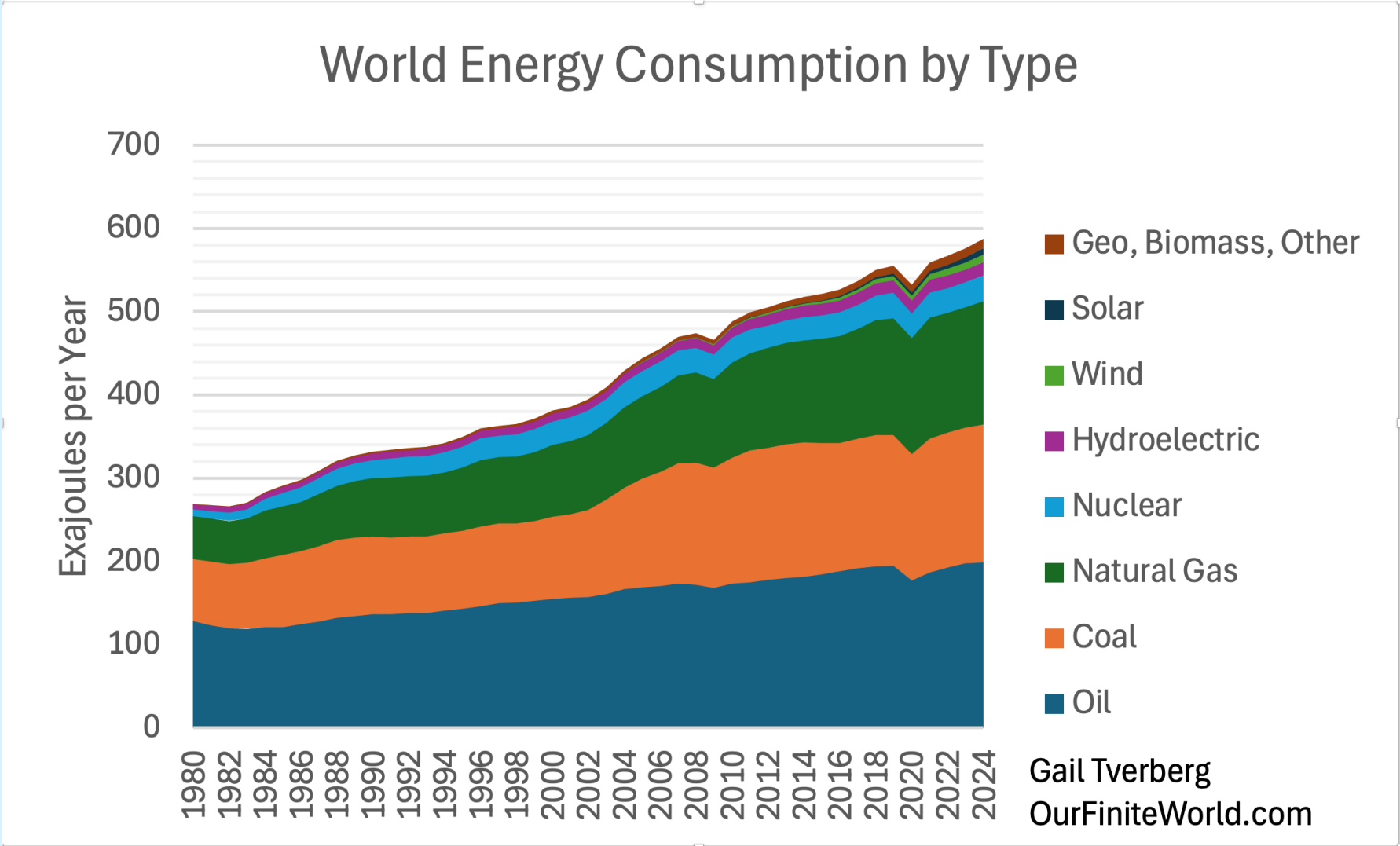
- Climate / environmental chaos increasing
- Challenging our state of mind
- Mindset most important
 - mental, psychological and emotional mastery
- Focus of this talk:
Staying well informed and maintaining our wellbeing?

Outline

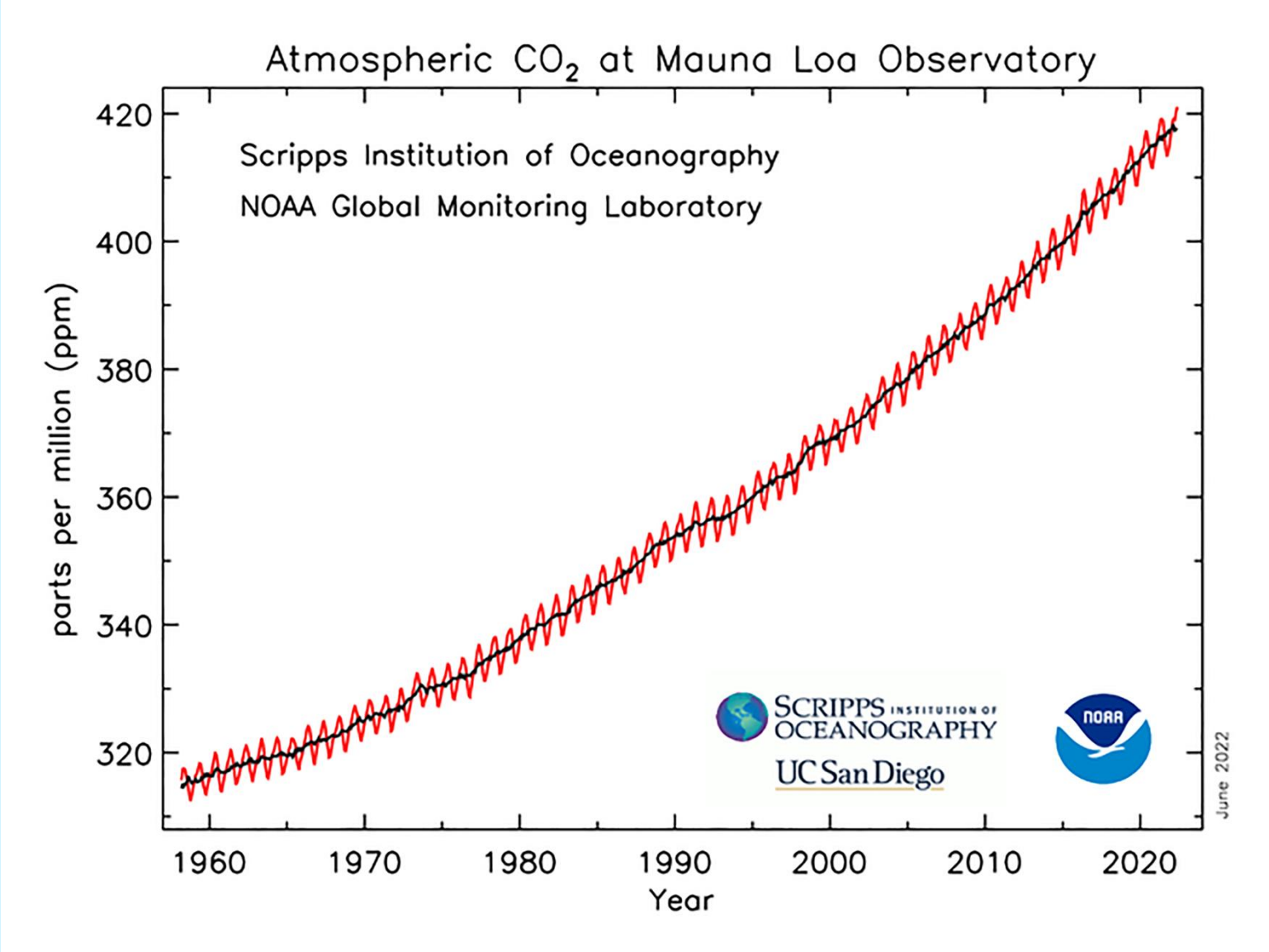
- Fundamentals - Energy, CO2, Methane, Temperature
- Jet stream
- Ocean
- El Nino
- Marine Heat Waves
- Impacts of CC and El Nino on sailing in the Salish Sea
- Heat and aggression
- Climate stress and fear
- Grief
- Hope and resilience

The Situation

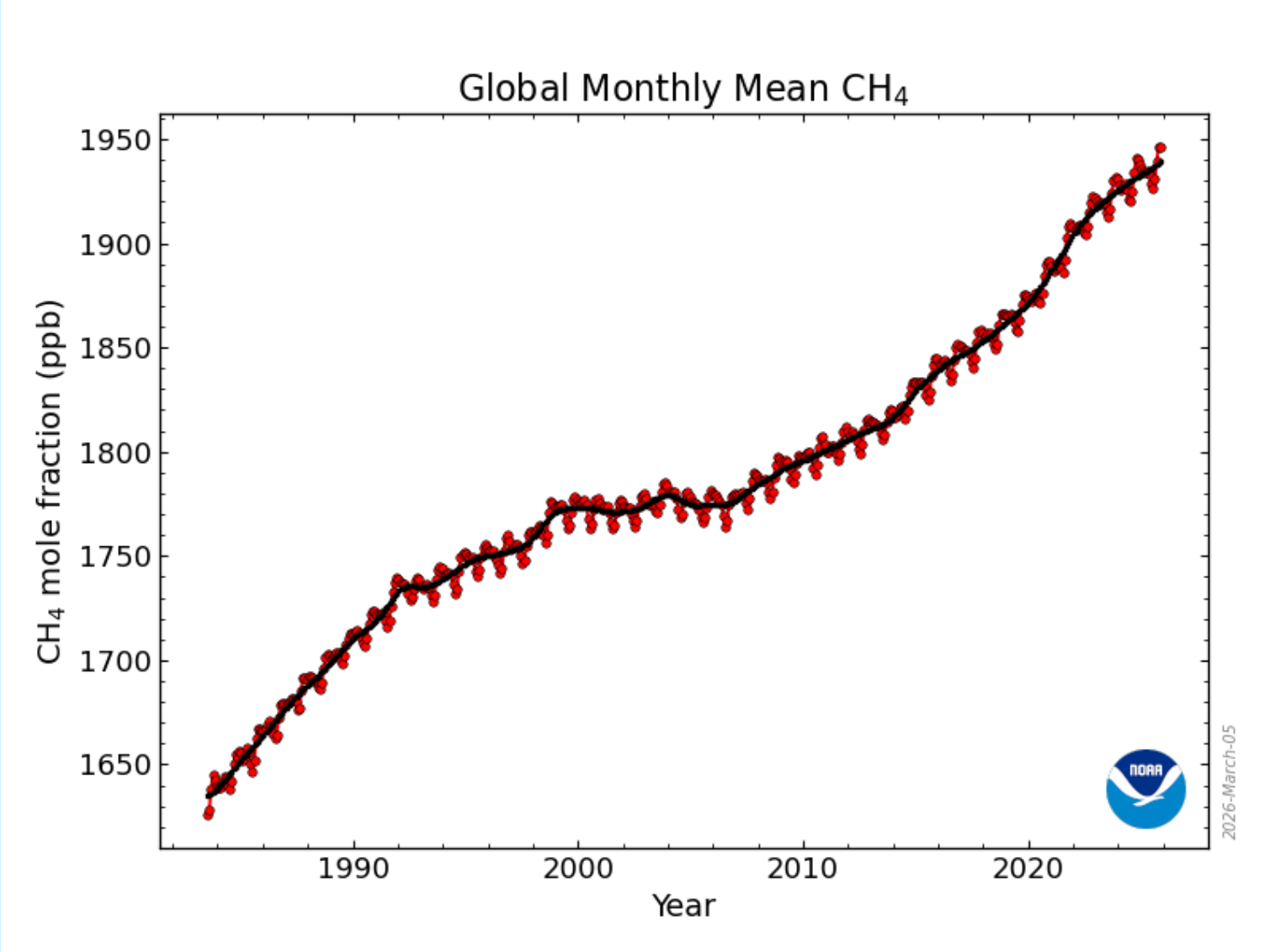
Global Energy Consumption



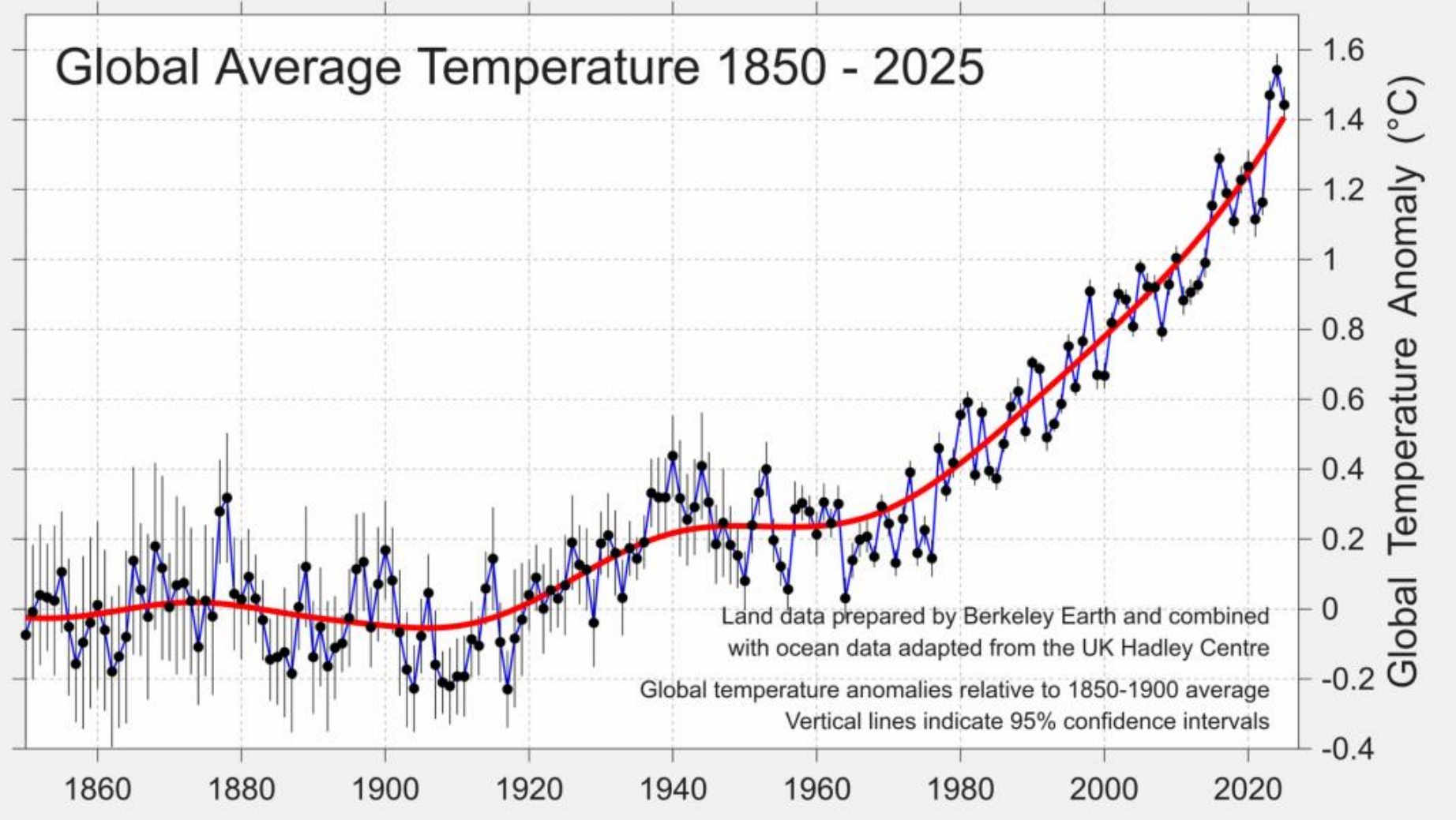
Carbon Dioxide



Methane



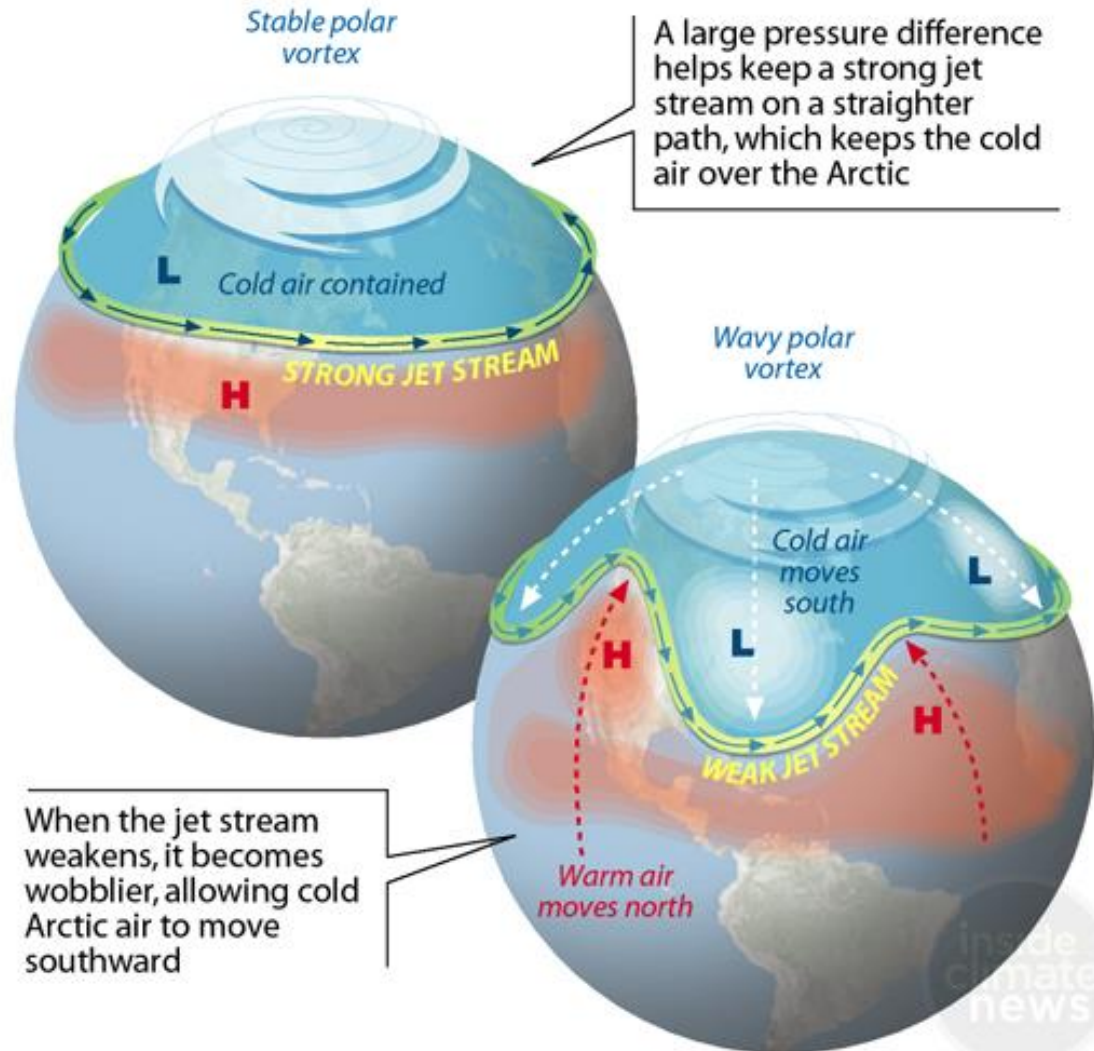
Global Temperature



Jet Stream

Polar Vortex Explained

The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air over Earth's North and South Poles. When the jet stream weakens, it becomes wavier, allowing that cold air to dip southward in places while warmer air pushes northward elsewhere.



Thinking about Climate Change

- No Normal or New Normal
- Complex systems - Multiple causation
- From linear to exponential
- Thresholds and tipping points
- Feedback loops

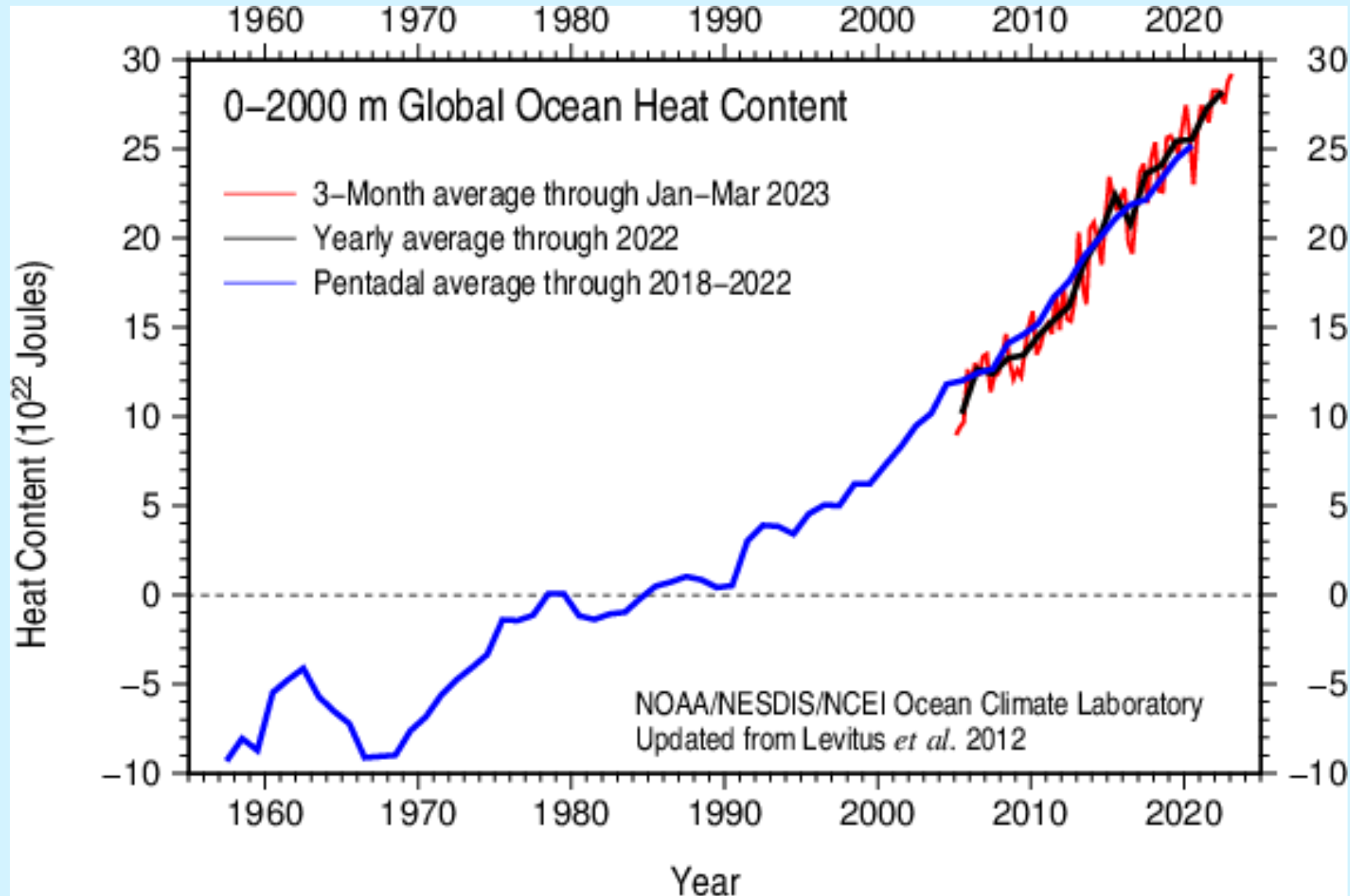
- Beware of bias in thinking:
 - Normalcy; Positivity; Simplicity

Ocean Heating

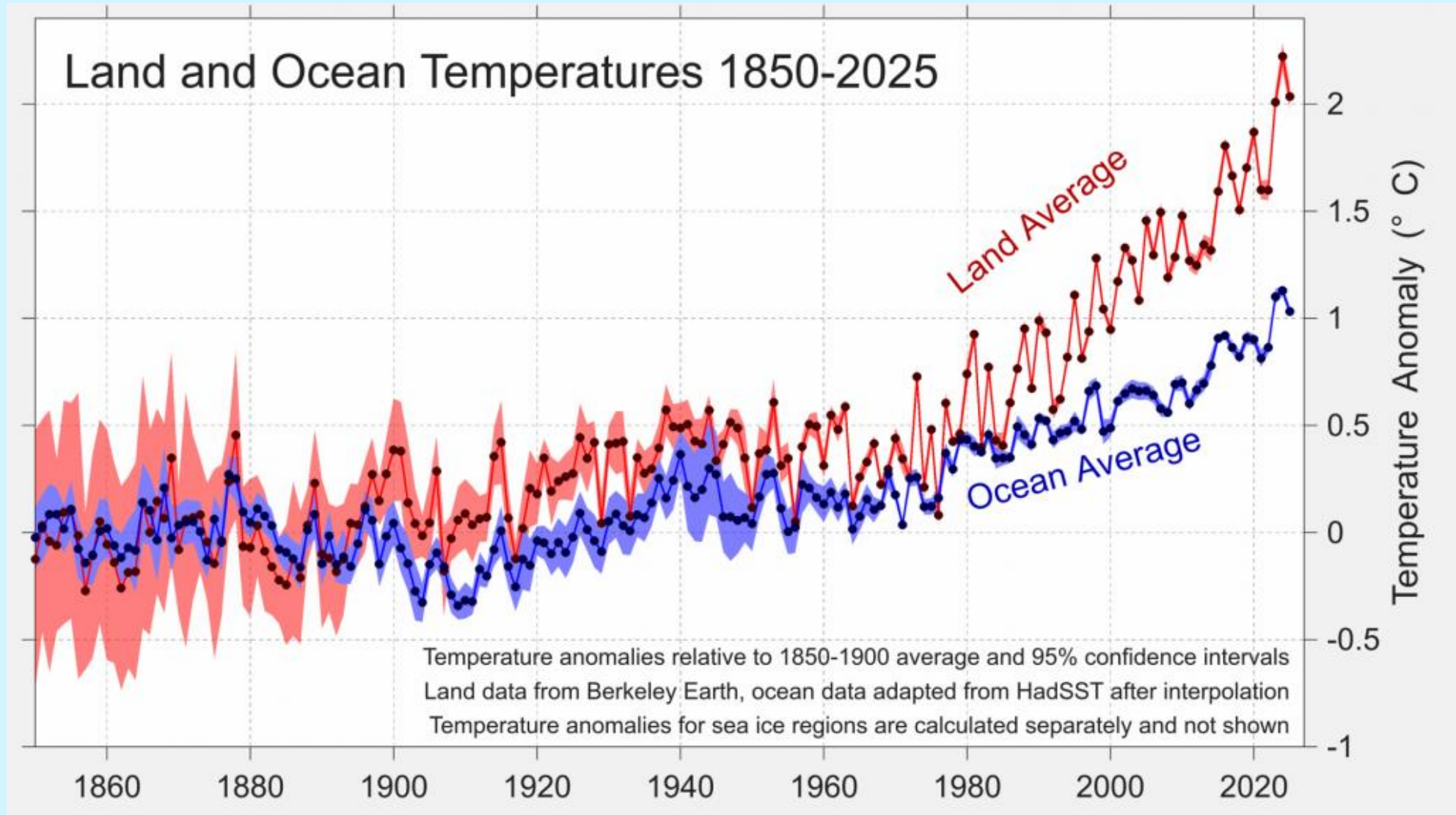
Oceans

- Oceans absorbed about 90% of warming caused by humans = hotter
- Oceans absorbed 30% of CO₂ emissions = more acidic
- The oceans are warming faster than the air
- The deep ocean is warming faster than expected

Ocean Heating



Ocean Heating



What is your reaction to climate change ?

- Curiosity Learning
- Concern Engagement in solutions
- Anxiety Resignation Withdrawal
- Minimizing Avoidance
- Rejection Not urgent No problem
- Anger Tears Paralysis
- Check out Black and White Thinking

Mental Game

- Your psychological response (mindset / attitude) to what is happening sets the foundation for your mental game
- Freak out, denial, depression are not resourceful mindsets
- What are the alternatives?

Mental Game

- What is the key to a resilient mental game (wellbeing)
- Confidence!

Mental Game

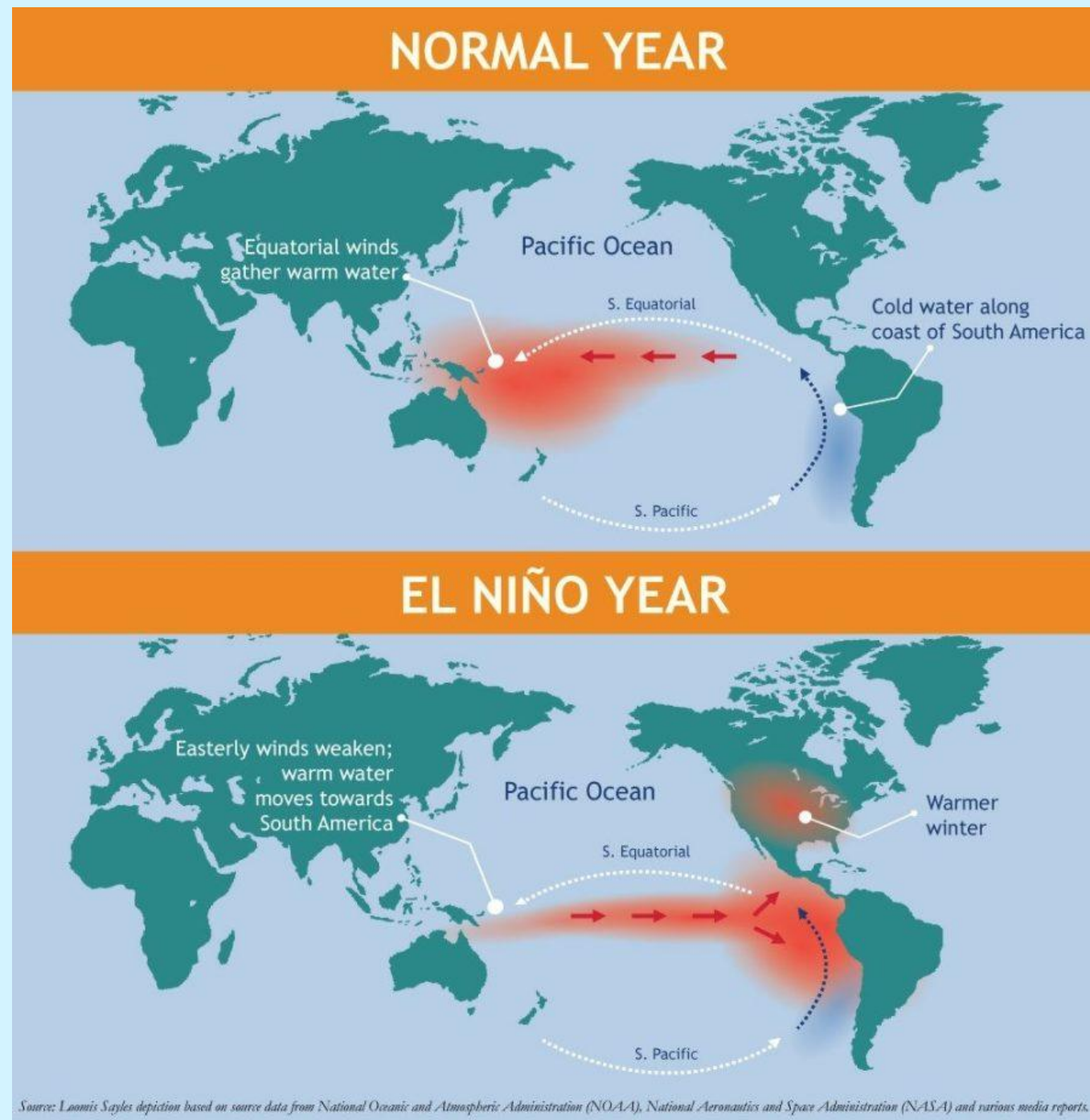
- What is the key to Confidence?
- Preparation!

Mental Game

- What is the first step of preparation?
- Know the situation
 - Big Picture view
 - Personal

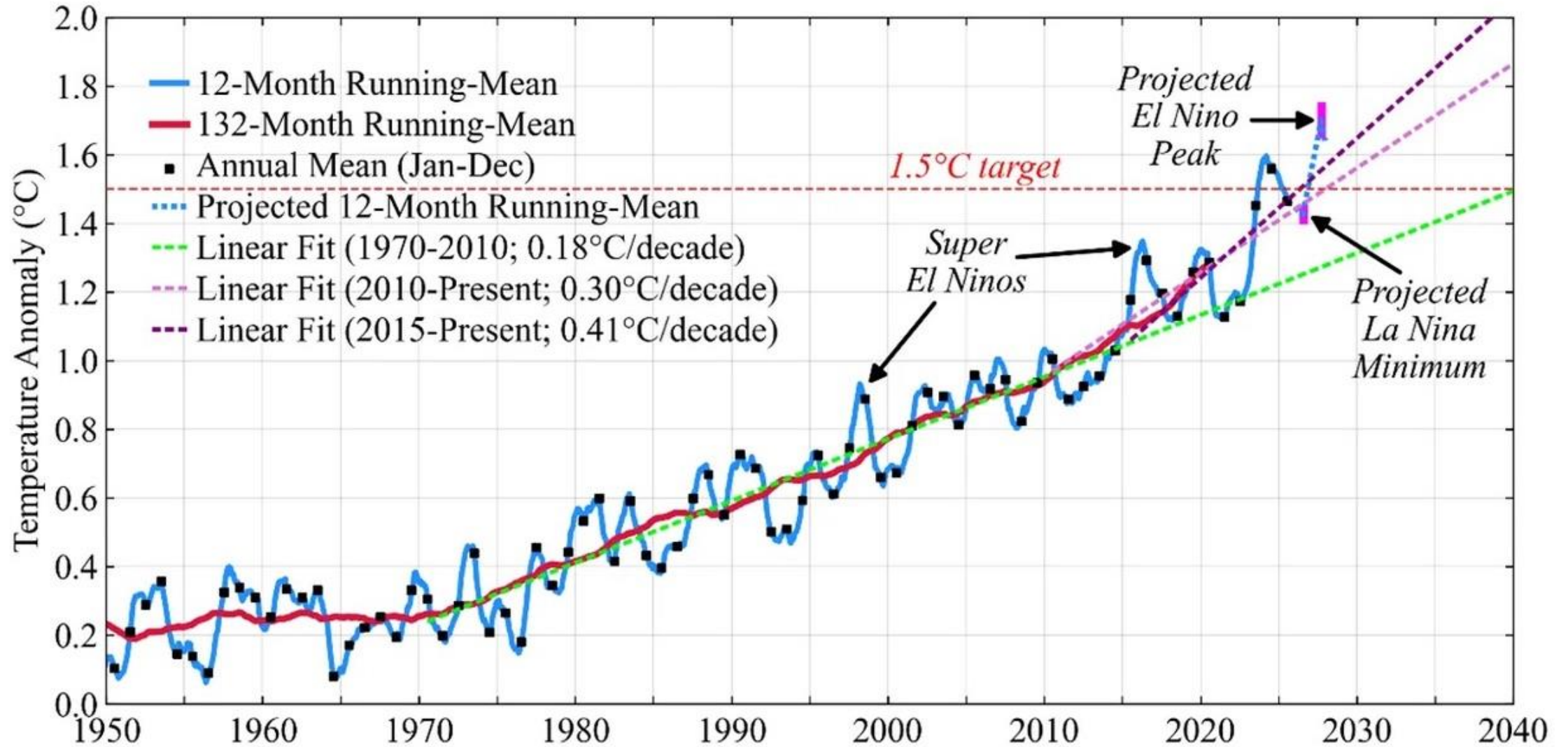
El Nino

El Nino



Source: Loomis Sayles depiction based on source data from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and various media reports.

El Nino Temperatures

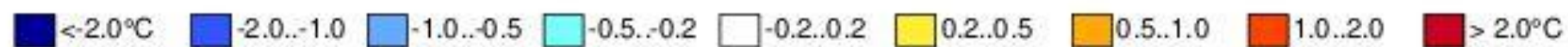


ECMWF Seasonal Forecast

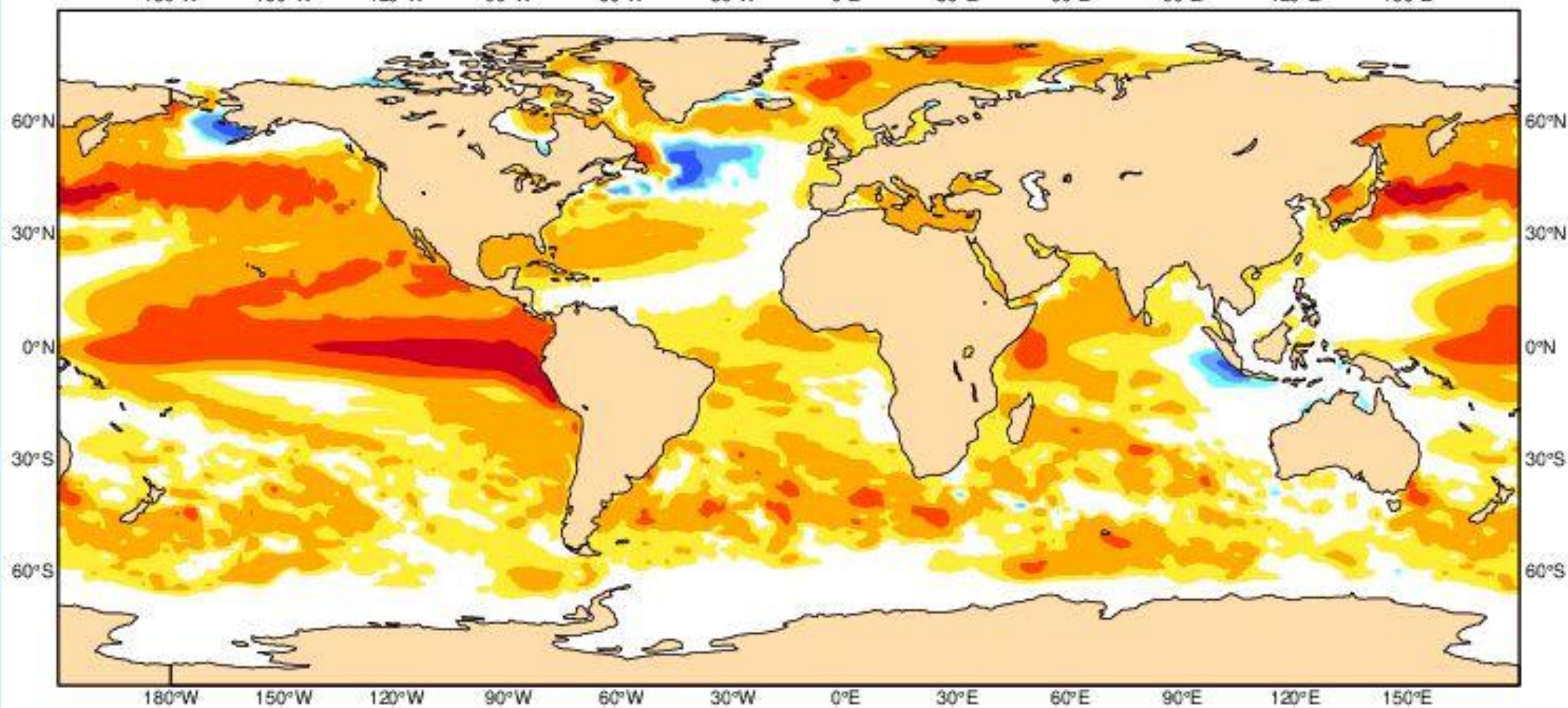
Mean forecast SST anomaly

System 5
JJA 2026

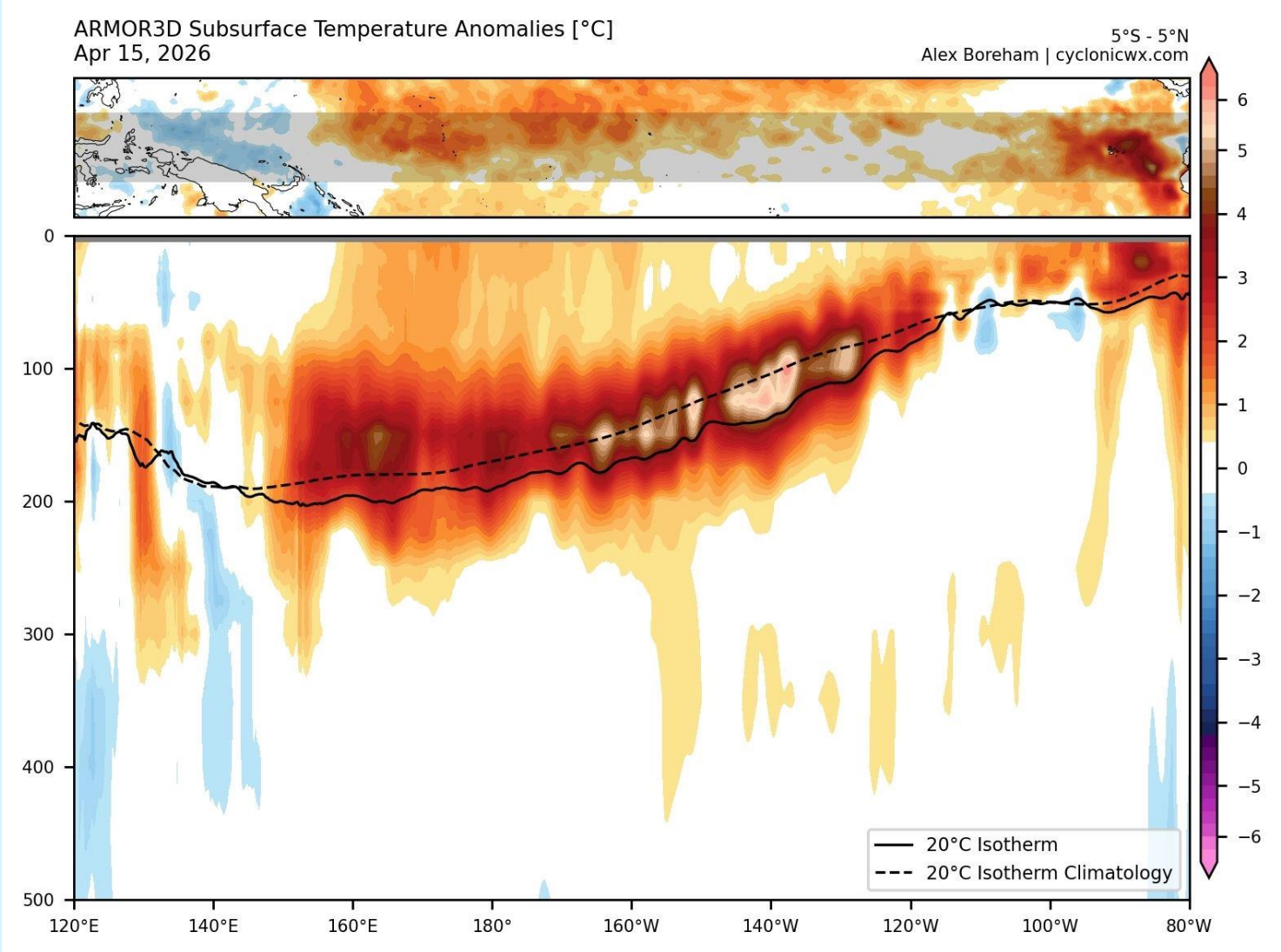
Forecast start is 01/03/26, climate period is 1993-2016
Ensemble size = 51, climate size = 600



180°W 150°W 120°W 90°W 60°W 30°W 0°E 30°E 60°E 90°E 120°E 150°E



Building 2026 ?Super? El Nino



Implications of El Nino – Salish Sea

- Warm water moves north – Marine Heat Waves
 - Ocean releases heat to the air
 - Warmer / drier winters – less snow
 - Warmer / drier summer – low river levels; drought
 - Increased wildfire risk
 - Ecological stress – kelp, salmon spawning, etc.
 - Shifted species distribution
-
- 2027 is likely to be generally hotter and drier + more extremes in weather than 2026

Marine Heat Waves (MHW)

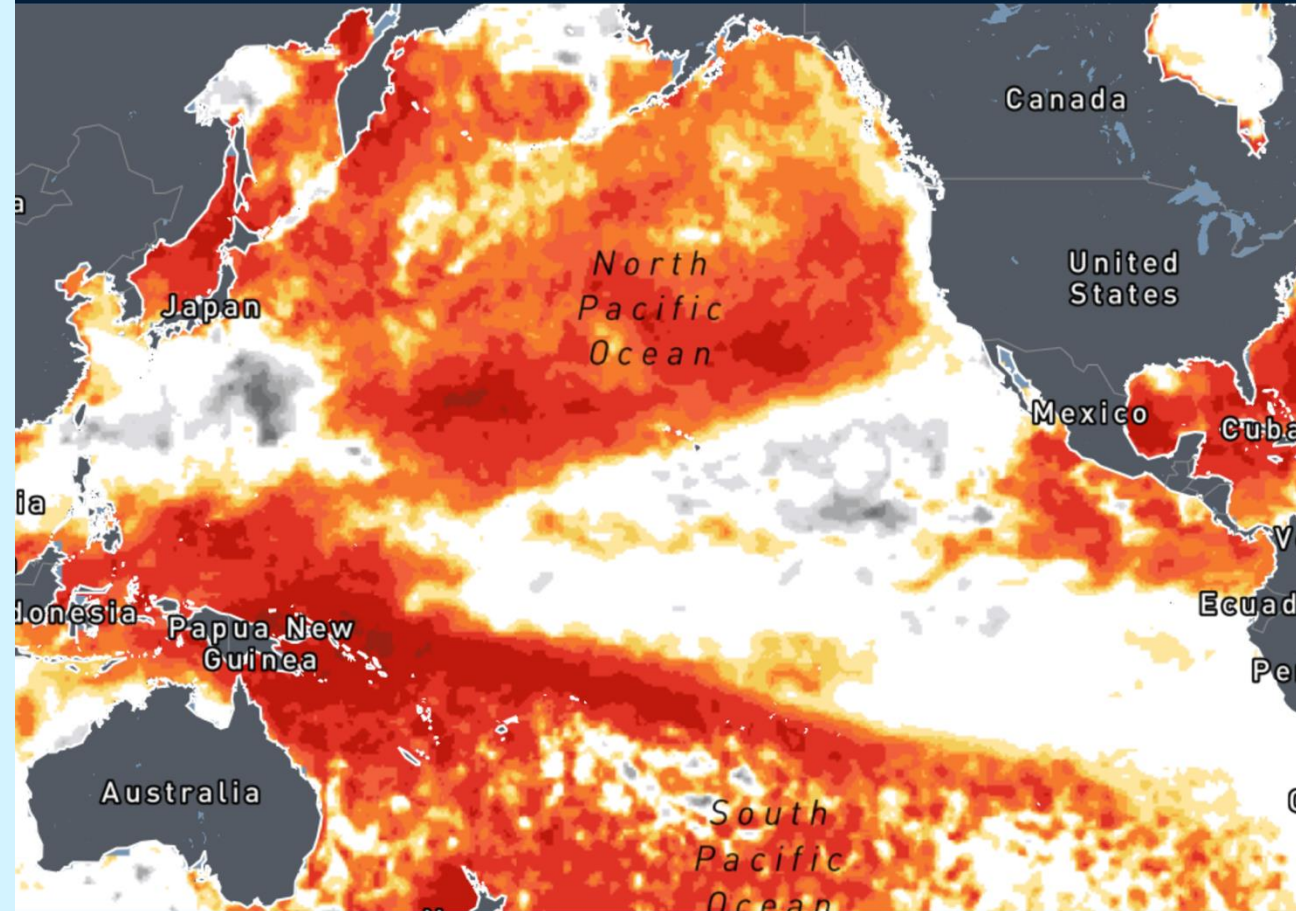
Marine Heat Waves --- Blobs

- Areas of warm, stratified, low-oxygen, acidified water
- Caused by ocean absorbing heat (CC) and CO₂
- Lack of wind/current mixing (surface and subsurface)
- Becoming more common - persist for months / years.
- Increasing in global impact – rivalling El Nino

Climate Shift Index: Ocean

Aug 2, 2025

Change in likelihood due to climate change



Climate Shift Index: Ocean for average sea surface temperatures.
Based on NOAA OISST. Dates are UTC.

CLIMATE CENTRAL

Impacts of Marine Heat Waves (MHW)

- Influence storm tracks and storm intensification
- Cause extremes in weather
- MHW areas more hypoxic and acidic
- Corrosive to creatures with calcium carbonate skeletons / exoskeletons – crabs, oysters
- Migratory species avoid Blobs - impacting fishing, economies, and food security.

- The MHW in the NE Pacific (blob) - larger, hotter, and closer to the coast of BC

Overall Impact CC, El Nino, MHW

- More unpredictable extremes in weather
- More unpredictable storm tracks
- Oceans more toxic
- Storms, hurricanes, typhoons increase in intensity and occur further north and south
- Storms move slower
- More intense rain and flooding
- Biodiversity loss and species decline

Questions?

- What aspects of CC, El Nino and MHW most concern you?
- What are your psychological, emotional and physical reactions to these concerns?

Impacts of CC + El Nino – Salish Sea - Summer

- Increased coastal MHW and heat domes
- Increased chance of marine death at low tide
- Drier interior conditions – more fires, and smoke
- Increased acidification – Crab and shellfish decline
- Kelp die-off -- Algae and Jelly Fish blooms
- Weaker westerlies, outflow likely
- Increased humidity, cloud, fog, squalls, waterspouts
- Continued species decline – GWGull, WGrebe, SScoter

Cruising Preparations

- Less wind - more motoring – use fuel efficient speeds
- Optimize sail plan for light air AND prepare for squalls
- Practice fog and smoke navigation
- Less solar charging in fog and smoke
- Jellyfish clog engine and water-maker intakes
- Avoid floating kelp mats
- Dead marine life and ‘stink’ near shore in heat domes
- Fewer bird companions on the water

The Mental Game (MG)

- Expand sailing skills - mental / cognitive / psychological skillset
- Rational understanding insufficient— engage emotional and intuitive intelligence (left and right brain)
- Overvaluing rationality while suppressing feelings contributes to mental and emotional problems

Heat

Heat Impacts

- Heat impairs sleep, hydration, brain function
- Heat, noise, motion and light disrupt circadian rhythms
- Heat + dehydration affect mood regulation (serotonin, dopamine)
- Lower tolerance, impulse control = Increased aggression
- Increase in domestic violence, road rage, riots
- Couples may experience heightened conflict; unresolved issues may surface
- Local communities may experience heightened irritability and social stress

Heat Impacts - Cognition

- Climate-related stress (HEAT, smoke, emotional impact) strains cognitive function
- Under heat stress - brain defaults to habitual responses
- Habitual responses to new situations = dangerous
- Stress + decision fatigue increases risk of errors, freezing, or taking risky shortcuts
- Heat plus smoke impairs judgment, creating safety risks

MG - Preparation

- Enforce rest, hydration, and cooling breaks
- Develop a protocol for conflict resolution before departure
- Anticipate irritability - take a step back rather than escalate
- Carry ventilation fans, breathable bedding, shading solutions, blackout masks and earplugs
- Minimize disruptions – duties and watch rotations
- Talk about how heat, smoke, stress is affecting you

Questions ?

- How do you respond to heat, smoke, climate stress ?
 - Grumpy, impulsive, irritable, irrational, ???
- Can you identify stress responses in your sailing partner ?
- What cognitive impacts most concern you?

Climate Chaos

MG - Climate Chaos – we want certainty But

- Loss of predictability; more disruptions and uncertainties
- Climate anxiety: anticipatory stress, worry, depression
- Not just emotional but physiological
- Discomfort and inconvenience increase, despite \$ invested
- Acute stress responses: hypervigilance, panic, dissociation
- Latent trauma reactivates under new stress
- Guilt for not being ‘strong’ or positive enough

Stress / Fear

Stress / Fear

- Fear – biological response to real and present danger
- Anxiety – worry about what we think might happen
- Dread - internal response to what we 'know' will happen
- People cope differently - irritable, angry, freezing in emergency, overacting aggressively

MG - Preparation

- Know how you respond to stress and fear (anxiety, dread)
- Acknowledge stress and fear as part of the changing world
- Make time for reflection and talk about reactions / feelings
- Create space for post-incident processing (not “move on”)
- Recognize that what’s coming may trigger responses and unresolved issues from the past
- Get training in psychological first aid

Questions ?

- What causes you the most fear, anxiety, dread?
- What is your stress / fear response?
 - A) Insecurity, overwhelm, withdrawal, dissociation, catatonia
 - B) Helplessness, bravado, anger, demands, aggression, recklessness
- How will you prepare mentally, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually?

Grief

Grief

- We live in a grief phobic culture
- Society encourages distraction, positivity, problem-solving, avoidance of grief
- Loss aversion – we don't want to give anything up
- We grieve the loss of what we love
- The deeper the love, deeper the grief

Grief

- Acknowledge there is so much to grieve:
- Personal – Dreams, desires - for self and family
- Humanity – Suffering around the world
- Natural world – Destruction, extinction, starvation, dead / dying ecosystems
- Death of trust in the future

MG - Preparation

- Grief comes in waves and affects focus and decision-making
- Current grief often opens up past unresolved grief
- Stop resisting, being 'strong', or thinking you will just get over it
- Acknowledge sadness, anger, sorrow, numbness
- Spend time with the feelings rather than suppressing
- Give grief a voice: Crying, Ritual, Poetry, Sharing experiences
- "There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power." — Washington Irving

Alternatives to Acknowledging Grief

- Shutting down
 - Callousness
 - Less compassion / concern
 - Selfishness
 - Withdrawal
-
- So: When your heart feels like breaking, let it break

Questions ?

- What do you love, that you see is fading / ending?
- What do you most grieve about what's changing?
- How will you develop your 'heartbreak capacity' - to become resilient?

Wellbeing and Resilience

Wellbeing and Resilience

- We forget that we are so fortunate!
- Acknowledge our privilege
 - Living in BC
 - Owning a boat
 - Being free to cruise
 - And so much more
- Focus on Gratitude – an antidote to depression

MG - Preparation

- Find your people / community - maintain close contact
- Counteract separation, isolation and loneliness
- Be vulnerable – drop the masks and identities
- Express what you feel
- Cultivate purpose and contribution
- Build time for gratitude into your routine
- Be humble and grateful
- Develop a mindfulness / meditation / awareness practice

Joy

Cultivate Joy

- Focus on your love of sailing
- Let the ocean soothe and inspire you
- Focus on beauty, wonder, awe - talk about those feeling – dopamine, oxytocin
- Make space for storytelling, art, photography, journalling
- Practice gratitude, generosity, forgiveness
- Cultivate your sense of humour

- Beware of the thieves of joy!

Summary

Summary - We know what's coming

More:

- Heat, heat domes, drought
 - Intense storms, atmospheric rivers, fog
 - Storm surge
 - Acidification, hypoxia, algae blooms
 - Ecosystem and species decline - extinction
 - Wildfire
-
- It will impact all of us

Mental Game – Wrap up

- Continuously develop your mental game (mindset)
- Know the climate situation and how it is changing
- Incorporate Cognition, Stress, Fear, Grief management
- Maintain your agency and sense of humour
- Know your reactions, choices, and recovery processes
- Focus on gratitude, wonder, awe and joy
- Support each other – and especially young people

Questions ?

Resources:

- Mindset:
- “Mindset” – Carol Dweck -- (2012/2017) Edition

- Emotional Intelligence:
- “Emotional Intelligence” – Daniel Goleman
- “Permission to Feel” – Marc Brackett

- Fear / Dread:
- “Hope and Help for Your Nerves” – Claire Weekes
- “Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway” – Susan Jeffers

- Grief:
- "The Wild Edge Of Sorrow" - Francis Weller