

Vol. 2

# HEALTHY WORLD, HEALTHY YOU

Climate Change and Your Neighborhood



Story and Illustration by Valeria Menéndez, MPH

Tips for a Healthy Environment by Sarah Evans, PhD, MPH



# HEALTHY WORLD, HEALTHY YOU

Climate Change and Your Neighborhood



Hi! Isabella here, reporting live from my indoor  
gardening spot in Brooklyn, New York.  
This is also, technically, the kitchen.

It's been a while since I taught my brother all  
I know about the environment and our health.



Here's a recap on what we learned about the environment.

Our environment is everything in the world around us. It includes everything inside our homes and outside them like the food we eat, the air we breathe, and even the people around us!



But what does it have to do with being healthy?

Our environment can have an impact on our health. It could help us be healthier, or make us sick.

★  
That's why we have to know which things to keep close to us and which things to avoid completely!

Cool stuff, huh?



Since then, my brother's been learning a lot on his own. He even joined a science club at school!

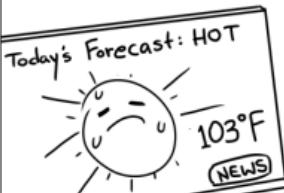


I'm really proud of him.



CAT  
FOOD





103 degrees this weekend?  
That's like 33 too many!

What's with the  
screaming, Joel?

It's the news and all this  
climate change stuff!  
By the way, you got any  
spare sunscreen?





Well yes, I do, but... climate change?

Could you explain that  
to me a bit more?  
I'm not sure I understand  
all that about the temperature.

Oho! Now it's  
my turn to teach  
you a few things!

You got it,  
just give me  
a minute.

**Climate** is more than just the weather on a given day, it's the weather patterns that take place over long periods of time.

**Climate change** is the increase in air temperature and changing weather patterns that have been happening over the past few decades. This means there are more things like hurricanes and floods, hotter summers, and even colder winters and more snow storms in some places!



I really don't like how climate change makes it so hot and uncomfortable these days!

What's even worse, climate change is bad for our health in a lot of ways. The air gets dirtier which makes it harder to breathe, and changing seasons make allergies worsen. As it gets hotter, insects that cause diseases are more common too. It even affects how much food can be grown and how healthy that food is.



As to what causes climate change, some of the things that we do create gases that trap the heat from the sun closer to the earth. Here are a few examples:



Pollution from cars and other vehicles



Plastic production



Electricity production in power plants



Destruction of forests



Usage of too much electricity at home



### Science Time!

Gases are air-like substances that are all around us. When we breathe, we breathe in the gas oxygen and breathe out the gas carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is also made when fuel burns and is a major contributor to climate change. Trees and green plants use carbon dioxide for food - cutting them down makes climate change worse.

Oh, wow!  
You know a lot about climate change!  
But all of this is making me feel  
super powerless.

Is there anything we can do to help  
our planet? To fight climate change?  
I really want to help but...



We can make better choices when it comes to the causes I mentioned. You can try it out by choosing the best alternative from the examples below.



or



or



or



That said, I do feel like we should be doing more...  
But can we? And if we can, how? We should ask  
an adult for help with this.

Don't worry, kiddos!  
Grandma has arrived, and she has  
heard everything!



Climate change is also affecting things right here in our neighborhood. That means there **ARE** things we can do about it. Let me give you all some examples.

Just the other day, I had to talk to my doctor and change how I take my medicines, all because of how hot it's getting.

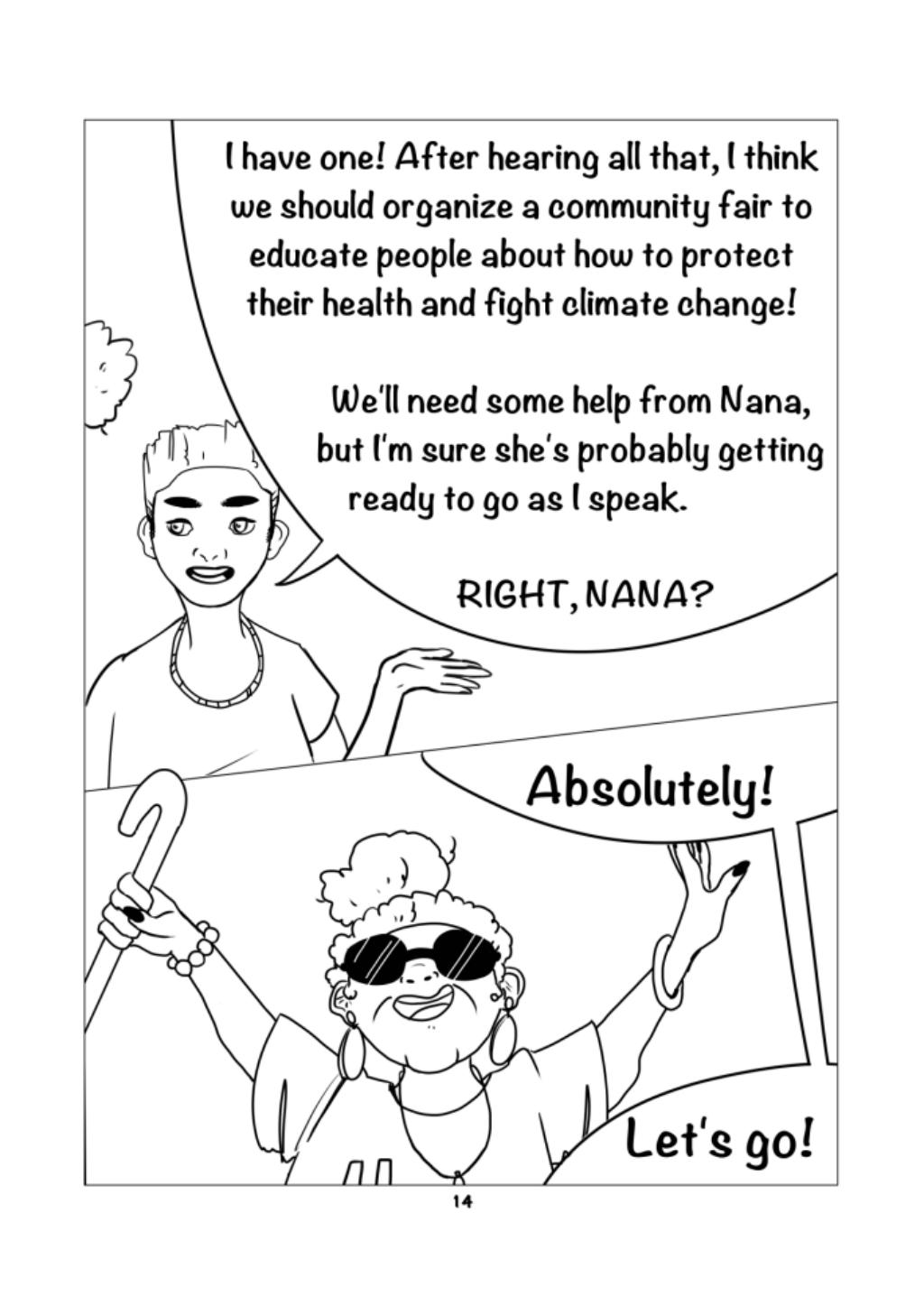
I also had trouble getting my groceries because the air quality was terrible, and the closest market closed down about a month ago.



### Science Time!



88% of illnesses resulting from climate change are in children under 5 years of age. The elderly are also more likely to be impacted, especially those who have lung problems or take certain medications that are affected by temperature.



I have one! After hearing all that, I think we should organize a community fair to educate people about how to protect their health and fight climate change!

We'll need some help from Nana, but I'm sure she's probably getting ready to go as I speak.

RIGHT, NANA?

Absolutely!

Let's go!

First, let's fix up our community's park. Draw your perfect park below! I'll put some ideas for you in the box.

Garden   Trees   Seats   Bike Rack   Playground   Fountain



Now we'll make emergency preparedness checklists. With these, people won't forget to pack important things in case a storm comes. Write the name of each item on the line next to its picture.



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---



---

---

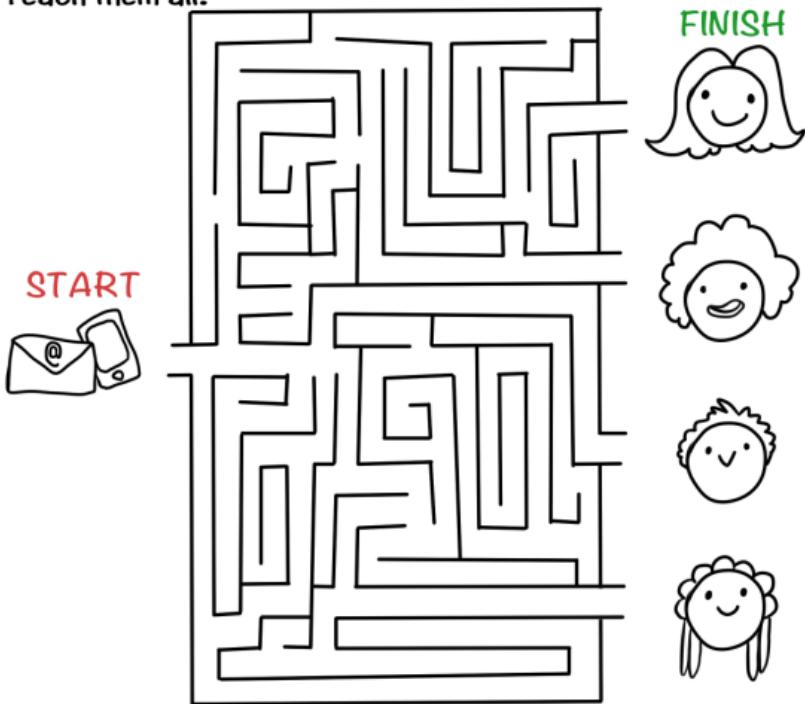


---

---

For a complete guide on emergency preparedness,  
please visit the [ready.gov/kids](http://ready.gov/kids) website.

We'll need doctors, local businesses, educators, and the local media to support and promote our fair. Can you help us call them? You'll have to clear the maze 4 times to reach them all!



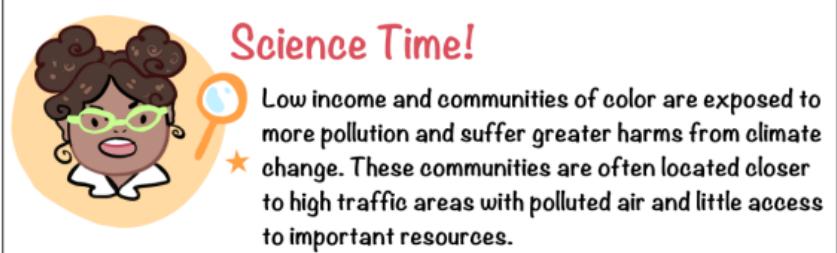
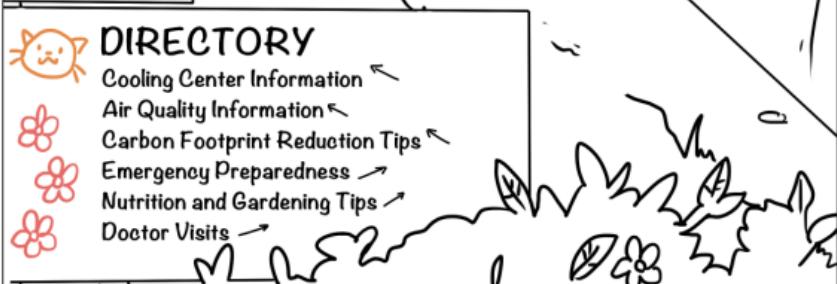
## Science Time!

Organize with community members and contact your local representatives to reduce vehicle traffic and idling or to create more parks and green spaces. Green spaces have a cooling effect on air temperatures and trees remove the gases that cause climate change from the air.

Today's the day!

After all our hard work, the community fair is about to begin! Wow! I'm super excited (and nervous!) about it! I hope everyone likes it.







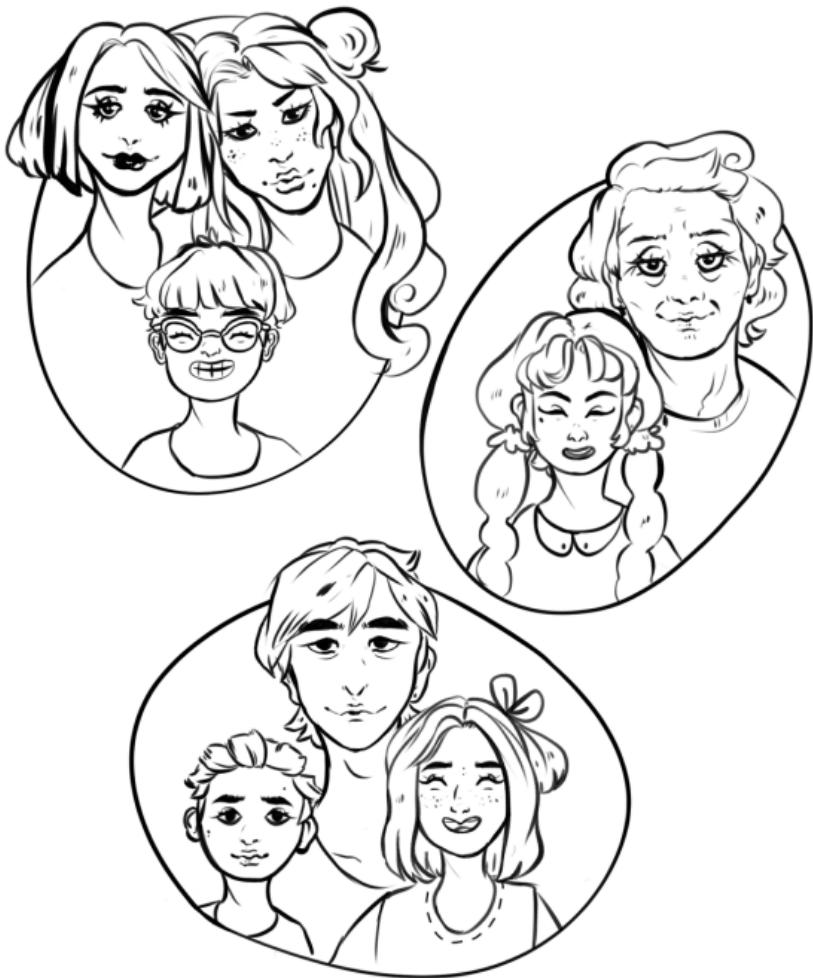
I'm really proud of you, kids!  
Look at all the good you've done!

I hope many youngsters out there are inspired  
to follow your example. Actually, scratch that,  
I know many will be. Our planet's future is bright!



**Use this page to write down ideas on how you can fight climate change in your neighborhood!**

# Family Review!



Talk to your family! Ask them questions!

Some grown-ups might have more cool information to share with you!

# ★ Tips for Grown-ups ★

## Each Family Can Make a Difference!

### Top Tips to Prevent Climate Change:

- Choose locally grown food and eat less meat.
- Carpool, take public transportation, walk, or bike.
- Plant trees and support local parks and green spaces.
- Bring reusable bags when you shop and reduce the use of plastics.
- Encourage laws that reduce carbon emissions.
- Choose companies that use clean energy from the wind and sun.
- Support local climate and health preparedness programs.



### Top Tips to Protect Your Family from the Effects of Climate Change:

- Limit time outdoors if the air quality is poor. Monitor air quality in your neighborhood using apps like AirNow.
- Stay hydrated and seek shade in hot weather.
- Protect yourself from insect bites. Wear long sleeves and pants when out in nature and use insect repellent that contains DEET (no more than 30%) or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus.
- Talk to your doctor to see if you need to adjust medications during heat waves.
- Develop an emergency plan for extreme weather events at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

# Authors



Valeria Menéndez is an artist. Valeria is very passionate about public health and firmly believes that everyone should be able to feel healthy, happy, and loved. Valeria grew up and studied in Puerto Rico, but now lives in New York. She loves her pets, her houseplants, and the color green!



Dr. Sarah Evans is a scientist in the Department of Environmental Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. In addition to her research on how chemicals and other toxins affect children's health, Sarah often speaks at community events, including schools to educate teachers, parents, and kids on how they can be environmental health champions and make small changes with big impacts. Sarah loves to garden and composts at home. She has three awesome kids and lives in Connecticut.





©2020, 2025 by Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

"Climate Change and Your Neighborhood" is the second book in the *Healthy World, Healthy You* storybook series. It follows a young girl named Isabella and her younger brother Joel who live in Brooklyn, New York. Together, they explore the intersection of health and the environment and what they can do to protect their own health and that of their friends and neighbors.

This book was developed within the Department of Environmental Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. It was created in 2020 by Valeria Menéndez, MPH, Communications Program Coordinator in the Department of Environmental Medicine in collaboration with Sarah Evans, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Medicine, with support from the Center on Health and Environment Across the LifeSpan (NIEHS grant P30ES023515).







**Mount  
Sinai**