

Saving Us Reading Circle Guide

To accompany group reading of Katharine Hayhoe's Book, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*.

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Created as a collaboration between [West Kootenay Climate Hub](#) and Castlegar United Church (British Columbia, Canada), by Judeth Betts, Shemmaho Goodenough, and Laura Sacks

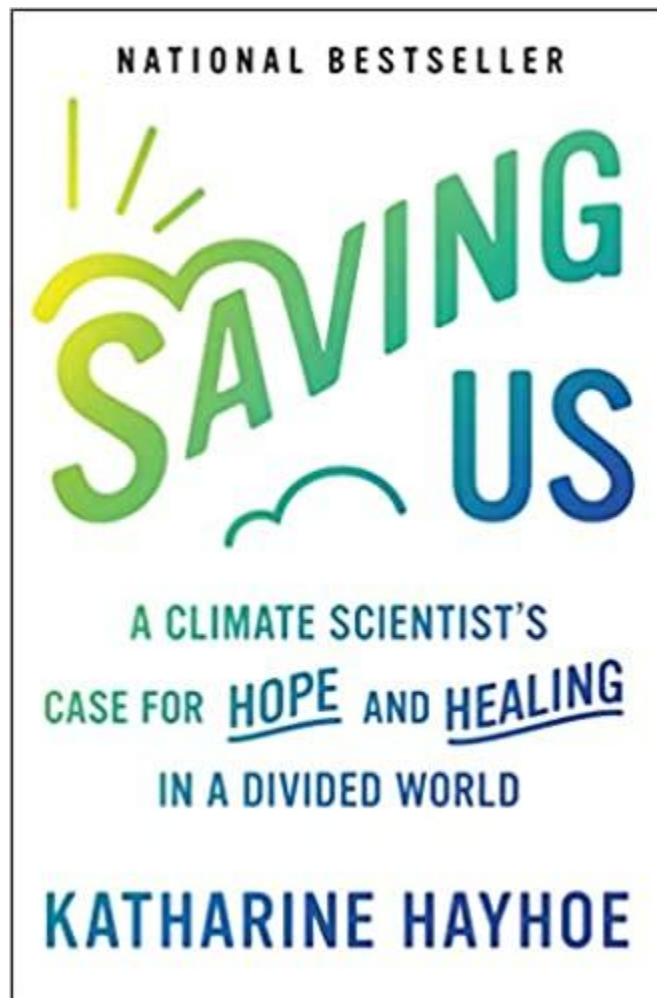


Table of Contents

Overview	2
Week 1, Preface and Section 1: The Problem and the Solution	3
Introduction (10 min)	3
Breakout 1 - Global Warming Six Americas (12 min)	3
Breakout 2: Your Personal Inventory (25 min)	4
Breakout 3 and Closing (12 min)	5
Week 2, Section 2: Why Facts Matter and Why They Are Not Enough	6
Introduction and Zombie Arguments (5 min)	6
Breakout 1: Pivot and Connect (35 min)	6
Breakout 2: Renée Lertzman and Attunement (10 min)	7
Closing (5 min)	8
Week 3, Section 3: The Threat Multiplier	9
Introduction (2 min)	9
Breakout 1: Psychological Distancing (16 min)	9
Local Climate Impacts (10 minutes)	10
Breakout 2: Starting the Climate Conversation (20 min)	10
Local Climate Solutions (10 min)	11
Closing (2 min)	11
Week 4, Section 4: We Can Fix It	12
Introduction (2 min)	12
Breakout 1: Solution Aversion (15 min)	12
Break Out 2: Excited about the future (25 min)	13
Global Climate Solutions (12 min)	13
Closing (2 min)	14
Week 5, Section 5: You Can Make a Difference	15
Introduction (5 min)	15
Breakout 1: Navigating the Climate Conversation (20 min)	15
Breakout 2: Beginning the Conversation (27 min)	16
Final Group Activity: Active Hope (6 min)	16
Sample emails before each session	18
Before Week 1	18
Before Week 2	18
Before Week 3	18
Before Week 4	19
Before Week 5	19

Overview

The West Kootenay Climate Hub and Castlegar United Church (British Columbia, Canada) hosted a 5-week reading group around Katharine Hayhoe's book *Saving Us* that ran between April and May 2022. Anyone is welcome to use this document or improve on it, so long as you don't charge others to use it.

Our weekly sessions were 1 hour long and were based on each of the 5 sections of the book. We used Zoom, but this would work equally well in person. Each session typically had 2 small group breakout sessions, and we included role play to help get comfortable having those hard conversations.

We also are sharing sample emails before each session (see end of this document).

Week 1, Preface and Section 1: The Problem and the Solution

Introduction (10 min)

Host:

My name is _____ and I gratefully reside on the traditional territory of the _____.

Welcome to our book study of Saving Us by Katharine Hayhoe. It makes me feel so good to know that there is this much interest in this timely book. We have only an hour to begin our journey together so let's get started. I would like to begin our round of introductions.

- ❖ Round of intros (be mindful of time) - Name, where you are from and one word that describes how you feel about climate change.

Host:

Katharine Hayhoe beautifully outlines the purpose of her book in her preface on page xii. These words will guide us through the next 5 weeks. Please turn to page xii. I would like to read the passage out loud that starts "Here's the good news"....."available today".

Breakout 1 - Global Warming Six Americas (12 min)

Assistant sets up breakout rooms in advance - 3 per group

Host:

Let's familiarize ourselves with the Six Americas or categories of climate concern (page 8). We'll also put a link in chat if you don't have a book in front of you. (Pause to let people find the page.)

Assistant copies in chat:

<https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/global-warmings-six-americas/>

When I first read about these categories: alarmed, concerned, cautious, disengaged, doubtful, and dismissive I felt a mixture of relief and hope. There are more people that care, than that don't care!

This will be our first breakout, to give you all an opportunity to talk, share and get to know each other. We will be breaking you up into groups of around 3, where you can review and discuss why "two tribal groupings are not enough" (page 7.)

We'll have 9 minutes for this breakout, so with 3 per group, each person will have about 3 minutes for each to share. So please try to be mindful of the time. We'll send out a 2 minute warning before we close breakouts.

Optional: Before going into breakouts, we'll go over some simple ground rules to make these breakouts as successful as possible. (Note, create your own ground rules for respectful conversations.)

For this Breakout, here are some leading questions to consider as guidance for your discussion:

- Reflect on some conversations you have had about climate change. Where did the person you were talking to fit into those 6 categories of climate concern?
- How did the conversation go?
- Are you comfortable bringing up climate change in conversations?
- How do people respond to you when you do?

Assistant copies question into chat

Any questions before we go into the breakout?

Start Breakout 1 (9 min)

Assistant monitors time and sends 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. We'd like to conclude this section by reading the following sentence from page 9:

Quote: "I had fallen into the trap of believing that facts could convince someone whose identity is built on rejecting climate science." Katharine goes on to give us permission to avoid talking to dismissives.

Breakout 2: Your Personal Inventory (25 min)

Host:

Katharine starts **Chapter 2** by stating that it's nearly impossible to make someone care about climate change for the same reasons you do, so she suggests we create an inventory of ourselves which can help us find what we might have in common with others, our shared values. To do this, we will go back to your breakouts and ask that you consider some questions to **help you create your own inventory with the goal of connecting who you are with why you care.**

Katharine Hayhoe suggests the following question from the book to "interview" each other and give you practice at listening with curiosity. You will have about **20 minutes**. **So the questions we would like you to consider while creating your inventory are:**

1. Where do you live?
2. What do you love doing?
3. Where are you from?
4. Who do you love?

5. What do you believe in?
6. What community do you think you could reach out to?

Assistant copies questions into chat

Start Breakout 2 (20 min)

Assistant monitors time and sends 5 minute and 2 minute warnings

Breakout 3 and Closing (12 min)

Assistant creates new breakouts of 4-5

Host:

Welcome back! Hopefully, you now have an idea of what you could start a conversation about, what things you might be able to offer, things you could agree on, things you have in common.

We would like everybody to have an opportunity to share and discuss a passage or sentence from this section that inspired you, made you wonder, spoke to your heart. To do this, we will go into our third break out. We have 8 minutes for this and we will send out a 2 minute warning.

Start Breakout 3 (8 min)

Assistant monitors time and sends 2 minute warnings

Host:

Welcome back again. That wraps up our first session. For next week, please read section 2, Why Facts matter-And Why They Are Not Enough. We would also like you to view Rene Lertzman's TED talk, How to Turn Climate Anxiety into Action so please look for an email with a link to this TED Talk.

Thank you for coming today, just your presence here today gives me hope. I would like to end with a quote from Katharine Hayhoe. When asked by an individual, what can I do, her response was...."be less of an individual". I will leave that with you and we look forward to seeing you next week.

Week 2, Section 2: Why Facts Matter and Why They Are Not Enough

Introduction and Zombie Arguments (5 min)

Host:

Welcome to our second week of our Book Study on *Saving Us* by Katharine Hayhoe, week 2.

Katharine introduces us to the expression, “**zombie arguments**” (p.38). You’ve all heard them, erroneous statements about climate change that just don’t go away, no matter how often they get debunked.

To start, we’d like you to take a minute to put in chat some examples of zombie arguments you have heard. We will give you a minute or two to do this, and as people put their responses in chat, we will all get a chance to read them. Click on the talk bubble at the bottom of your screen and type in your zombie argument. (Give a minute or so for people to do that, and you can read a few.)

Breakout 1: Pivot and Connect (35 min)

Assistant creates breakouts of 3

Host:

Thank you for sharing. We will be using these in our role playing activity in our first breakout. In our last session, we created our own personal inventory of who we are and what our values are. Let’s practice putting this understanding of ourselves into our climate conversations through **role play**. _____ will now read a passage from Katharine’s book to set us up. It is from line 10 to line 14 on **page 39**.

... “So the key when these Zombie arguments surface is to have an answer..... from the heart rather than the head” (don’t read the last sentence).

I will outline that process again and we will put that in chat..

1. Acknowledge the objection
2. Provide a brief response
3. Pivot promptly to connecting over shared values
4. Speak from the heart, not the head (5 minutes)

Assistant copies above into chat

We’ll be dividing you into groups of about 3. Decide which one of you wants to initially play the role of the person with the “Zombie argument” and who will practice pivoting and

connecting and then connecting over shared values. The 3rd person is to observe, offer suggestions or prompts if the role players get stuck.

Our purpose is to generate discussion and give you practice at communicating in this effective way that Katharine recommends. You'll get 25 minutes, so make sure each person has a chance to have each role. We will let you know when we are halfway through and when 2 minutes are left.

Start Breakout 1 (20 min)

Assistant broadcast time at 10 and 2 minutes)

Host:

Welcome back. We'd love to hear your reflections on how that went.

What was easy? What was hard? What did you learn? What was a surprise? Ask for volunteers to share, use raise hand function at bottom under reactions, or just wave your hand (give around 10 minutes)

Breakout 2: Renée Lertzman and Attunement (10 min)

Assistant creates paired breakouts

Host:

Katharine Hayhoe refers to the work of Renée Lertzman in her discussion of moving past our fears and guilt. Renée's work explains that when we experience too much stress, more than can be tolerated in our "window of tolerance" we collapse. Renée goes on to talk about **attunement**, the act of digging into our feelings and the feelings of others through compassion, curiosity, no judgment or shame, but allowing people to be who they are.

Today, we have the opportunity with this group of people, to take the time to start looking at our own window of tolerance, our binds, our conflicts, our fears.

For our last activity, let's take a deep breath, and have compassion for ourselves and one another.

You will be in paired breakouts. We invite you to share your fears, worries, concerns, hopes, and successes about climate change and practice the skill of attunement. Each person will have about 2 minutes, and then switch. Any questions?

Start Breakout 2 (5 min)

Assistant gives 2 minute warning

Closing (5 min)

Host:

Welcome back. We will end by reading a passage from pg. 83

“How do we move beyond fear or shame?.....hope”

To close, we'd like you each to share a single word about how you are feeling at this moment. (Someone could record them and you could create a word cloud to share later.)

See you next week. Look for an email with any reminders.

Week 3, Section 3: The Threat Multiplier

Introduction (2 min)

Host:

Welcome back to our book circle. I'll be moderating today's session. This session is entitled The Threat Multiplier. Let's take a moment to settle in.....take a few breaths.....and focus our attention. (Sit quietly together for a minute.)

Thank you for coming today.

Psychological distance is the human tendency to ignore threats that are further away from us in time, physical distance and social relevance. Psychological distance allows us to be unconcerned.

Breakout 1: Psychological Distancing (16 min)

Assistant sets up breakout rooms, 3 per room

Host:

For our first breakout, let's explore this concept more deeply in smaller groups. Have your books open to page 90 and 91, **Why Climate Change Seems So Far Away**. Take a moment in your group to familiarize yourself with the 3 types of psychological distancing: it's abstract, distance in space and time, and social relevance.

Here are some questions to guide your discussion. We will put them into the chat.

1. Think about and share your own experiences when your actions or thinking were driven by psychological distancing, what kind was it?
2. How is psychological distancing impacting the climate change movement?

Assistant copies above into chat

You'll have **10 minutes** for a robust conversation on this topic, and we will send a 2 minute warning.

Start Breakout 1 (10 min)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. Would anybody like to share their insights, revelations or new understandings? We have about **5 minutes** for this. (Facilitate discussion)

Local Climate Impacts (10 minutes)

Host:

So how do we flip this perspective, because psychological distancing isn't helpful in the face of climate change. Katharine states that "psychological distance is a more widespread challenge than whether or not we accept the science of climate change," which is a startling observation! (page 92)

I'd like to read a relevant passage starting on pg. 92 (read the last two paragraphs), if you'd like to read along. The last two paragraphs start with "But when we talk about what's happening here,

Let's talk about climate change close to home. Katharine says she has witnessed first hand the amazing depolarizing power of sharing local climate impacts. Studies suggest that the outcome of sharing our own stories should result in the reduction of psychological distance.

Katharine states that the simple concept of pairing local information with understanding the impacts of our choices is at the core of everything she does. We have agency. We have choices.

So let's make a list of all the local and immediate ways climate change affects us here and now. We'll give you a couple minutes to jot down your observations into chat. (Wait until they stop coming in quickly; read a few of them out loud.)

Breakout 2: Starting the Climate Conversation (20 min)

Host:

What we want to achieve here as climate communicators is being able to bring up the changes you have noticed in your local community and connecting it with climate change. Let's practice **starting the climate conversation**. Think about shared values and making connections,

We will go into breakout groups to take turns practicing building your confidence in starting these challenging climate conversations. This is a role playing exercise, and we think it would be helpful if the person starting the conversation is given a prompt by another in your group. For example, the initiator could say, "this smoke is freaking me out!." This creates the opportunity to practice connecting their comment to climate change. Feel free to use observations from the list we created in chat as the prompt.

You will have **around 15 minutes** for this discussion. We will stick with the same groups we had in the last breakout. Are there any questions before we break out?

Start Breakout 2 (15 min)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. Does anyone have anything to share about how it went? (Just a couple minutes.)

Local Climate Solutions (10 min)

Host:

I'd like to shift gears and talk about local climate solutions. We asked in this week's email to think about something that's happening in your community to address the climate crisis - directly or indirectly. Also think about what else gets better. For this, we will be sharing as a full group so we can hear about all the things you may not realize that are going on locally.

Please raise your hand (bottom in reactions) or just wave your hand if you're not familiar with that. So who would like to go first?
(If time, go for a second share.)

Closing (2 min)

Host:

Thank you for coming today, sometimes the conversation is not easy.
(Share a short quote that you prepare in advance.)

We look forward to seeing you all again next week, where we'll discuss Section 4, We Can Fix it.. Please look for our email before our next session with any updates and zoom info.

Week 4, Section 4: We Can Fix It

Introduction (2 min)

Host:

Welcome to our fourth gathering as we continue to explore Saving Us.

We are very glad to see all of you again. Let's take a moment, take a deep breath, and get settled and focused.

Breakout 1: Solution Aversion (15 min)

Assistant sets up breakouts of around 3 per group

Host:

Katharine starts off by talking about solution aversion, the idea that people fear the solutions more than they fear the negative climate impacts. (Note her definition on page 134.)

Solution aversion can create what Katharine referred to as a “bind” – where we feel that what we *want to do* isn't doable for us personally, or we haven't found a way to do it. Guilt and other negative self-talk can spring from this bind. I'm sure you have all felt it. Finding ways to have conversations with compassion and kindness around our aversion to solutions is a necessary step to becoming climate solution communicators.

For this breakout, we'd like you to consider your own personal experiences with solution aversion, and the binds you may have felt or experienced. We have you in breakouts of around 3, and you'll have about 10 minutes for a discussion with your group about a specific bind that you have found yourself in.

Any questions?

Open Breakout 1 (10 min)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. Anyone like to share anything that came up for you?

Break Out 2: Excited about the future (25 min)

Host:

The purpose of this next activity is to help you see yourselves as climate communicators and to build your confidence to be able to share your excitement about the future with others.

Simply by showing up to this book study, you have demonstrated a commitment towards meaningful climate action. You appreciate the urgency and you've got the necessary persuasive skills because you have come to understand the human foibles you are going to have to navigate if you want to be heard.

You know about connecting over shared values, pivoting the conversation and avoiding science overload. You understand psychological distancing, the need to communicate urgency, and you've got a few facts, figures and climate solutions and successes in your back pocket. Now let's put these skills to work.

We're going to go into breakouts and do some role playing.

Think about an example of a conversation you would like to have with someone who hasn't yet made the connection between their choices and the bigger picture, climate change.

In this role playing scenario, see if you can get them to rethink, consider a better choice for the planet, convince them not to fear the solution, or recognize that the impacts will be worse.

We will open the breakouts, and have about 15 minutes. Try to have everyone get a chance to role play – so about 5 minutes each.

Open Breakout 2 (15 minutes)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. We have 5 minutes for anyone who wants to share how it went.

Global Climate Solutions (12 min)

Host:

The last activity is to shift to climate solutions. Last week we shared local climate solutions. This time, please share a global climate solution that excites you.

Just raise your hand, and we'll go around the circle that way. Anyone want to start off? Please be aware of your time, so everyone can get a chance to share.

Closing (2 min)

Host:

We're going to close with this quote from Wangari Maatha (pg. 173),

"When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope. We also secure the future for our children."

See you next week for our last session. Please read Section 5, You Can Make a Difference, and watch for an email before then.

Week 5, Section 5: You Can Make a Difference

Introduction (5 min)

Host:

Welcome back. This will be our last time together. Let's take a moment to get settled, put our cares from the day aside, take a deep breath..... And begin.

Katharine begins this section by talking about behavioral contagion. She states that "one of the biggest reasons our actions matter is that what we do changes us. And the other big reason is that what we do and say changes others too." This made me realize that change is not only possible, but inevitable. So our job, Katharine is telling us, is to set the course of change by communicating why we care to others, with the intention of igniting change in them.

Katharine tells us that taking action leads to feeling empowered, which decreases despair and leads to more action.

For our first activity, we invite you to put into chat some low carbon habits or actions you have already adopted or are considering for the future. Add as many as you would like to share. Take a moment to read what others are up to. (Read some of them out loud)

Breakout 1: Navigating the Climate Conversation (20 min)

Assistant sets up breakouts - 3 per room

Host:

To help us strengthen our sense of self efficacy – the belief that we can make a difference – and avoid self silencing, Katharine gives us some pointers on pg. 218 on how to navigate the climate conversation:

- Use personal stories and experiences over data
- Include a celebrity, influential person or group that is doing something good for the climate
- Share what scientists say
- Don't be afraid to talk, research tells us people want to talk
- Accept that it IS possible to disagree and remain respectful

Assistant puts this list into chat

On page 223, she suggests that "while you are working with like minded people, (such as this book study) discuss why climate change matters, what you are worried about, how what you are doing can make a difference and how you might bring more people on board."

We would like to put you into groups to talk, to get practice at and consequently be more comfortable using Katharine's list of pointers in your conversations.

Open Breakout 1 (10 minutes)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back! How did that go for you? Do you feel you are building up your personal data base that you can draw on for future conversations? Would anybody like to share? We have about 5 minutes.

Breakout 2: Beginning the Conversation (27 min)

Host:

On page 233, Katharine has a header that reads "How to begin the conversation" and that is what we would like to explore now.

We'll be going back into breakouts for a role playing activity. Have someone in mind that you would like to have a conversation with.

Try to figure out what they care about by:

1. Asking open ended questions or simply an interesting question,
2. Sharing how you feel (I'm worried, or I've noticed, have you noticed)
3. Listening for shared values, things you can agree on (remember attunement?)
4. Aiming for empathy
5. Knowing when to stop the conversation

Assistant copies five points into chat

We will put these five points into chat
Are there any questions?

Open Breakout 2 (20 minutes)

Assistant times and gives 2 minute warning

Host:

Welcome back. How did that go? We have a few minutes for sharing.

Final Group Activity: Active Hope (6 min)

Host:

I want to read a passage on Active Hope by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (pg. 244:)

*“Active Hope is a practice. Like Tai Chi or gardening, it is something we **do** rather than have...**First** we take in a clear view of reality; **second**, we identify what we hope for;...and **third**, we take steps to move ourselves or our situation in that direction...*

Rather than weighing our chances and proceeding only when we feel hopeful, we focus on our intention and let it be our guide.”

When we want to learn an instrument, or anything that requires skill development, we practice diligently every day, whether we “feel” like it or not. Over time, we get better at it, and before long, we want to practice because the very activity engenders feelings of empowerment. The practice of active hope sets an intention of hope, leading to a positive hopeful outlook in life.

This is our last opportunity to share. Consider how you practice Active Hope. In a few words, please briefly share with the group your practice of Active Hope. We'll go around the circle. (Go around the circle and call on people.)Closing (2 min)

Host:

In closing, we want to reiterate the book's very last paragraph (p. 245).

“The future we collectively face will be forged by our own actions. Climate change stands between us and a breathtaking, exhilarating future. We cannot afford to be paralyzed by fear or shame. We must act, with power, love, and a sound mind. Together, we can save ourselves.”...

Thank you for participating in this reading circle. You are welcome to share this weekly guide with others who may want to run their own reading group.

(Include ways to get involved locally with a climate group.)

(Also, consider taking a photo with your books to share on social media, and tag Katharene Hayhoe)

Sample emails before each session

Before Week 1

Welcome to our Book Study of *Saving Us* by Katharine Hayhoe. We are thrilled you have decided to join us in learning to find common ground through conversations about our changing climate. We will start on ____ promptly at ____.

In this first session, you will become familiar with Global Warming's Six Americas, create your own personal inventory of who you are, connect it to why you care and begin exploring what communities you could start a conversation with about the future of our warming planet. Please read the preface and Section 1 before our first session. Also, please come with a paragraph or sentence from the book that inspired you, made you wonder or spoke to your heart that you would like to share.

Before Week 2

Welcome to Section 2. In this section Katharine clearly and succinctly explains the scientific facts driving our changing climate. She introduces us to zombie arguments, the origins of climate change denial, why facts don't always change our minds and explains motivational reasoning, our human capacity to resist questioning our perspective.

If that isn't enough, she also talks honestly about fear and guilt, where they come from and how to repurpose these feelings into action. There is lots here to help us understand how humans process climate change and why we respond the way we do. This week we will do some role playing to hone our communicating skills at "pivoting" and "connecting".

Also, please take a moment to watch the following Ted Talk that Katharine recommends:
How to Turn Climate Anxiety into action by Renee Lertzman
https://www.ted.com/talks/renee_lertzman_how_to_turn_climate_anxiety_into_action

Finally, think about a "zombie argument" you have heard and would be willing to share.

Before Week 3

Our next session will be _____ and we will start promptly at _____. This will be our third opportunity to spend some time together and talk about difficult climate issues that are hard to talk about, with the guidance of Katharine Hayhoe's insights.

Reading this book for the second time, it seems to be more about what it is like to be human than about climate change. Why is it that we seem less aware of the changing world around us than polar bears? Katharine would rewrite this sentence by adding the word "choose", why is it we choose to be less aware of climate change than the polar bears? In this section, Katharine

helps us to understand why we humans make the choices we make in the face of something as harmful to humans and life on this planet as climate change.

Please read section 3, the Threat Multiplier. Also, please bring a local climate change success story to share as Katharine is very clear about the need to recognize positive progress.

Before Week 4

Our next session will be _____ and we will start promptly at _____. Please read Section 4 of *Saving Us: We Can Fix It*. We look forward to exploring this section with you.

In this section, Katharine continues to peel back the layers of what makes us human, the very same attributes that can make us reject climate action and be adverse to the solutions. Katharine helps us to recognize those things we need to understand if we are to move the conversation forward and into action – things like education, the global commons and how oil companies sow doubt and guilt. But take heart, as there are good things happening out there and Katharine shares many of these success stories in this section. That is why we would like you to bring a global success story you are aware of and willing to share.

If you have time, please watch [Katherine Wilkinson's TED talk, How Empowering Women and Girls Can Help Stop Global Warming](#), which is referred to in this section and is worth watching.

Before Week 5

We look forward to seeing you for our last session this _____, starting promptly at _____. Please read Section 5: *You Can Make a Difference*.

In this final section of *Saving Us*, Katharine truly becomes our personal cheerleader, urging us into action, conversationally and otherwise. We are not to feel alone or without efficacy – the ability to produce a desired result. Katharine points out that many environmental educators who are trained to talk about climate change, hesitate to start the conversation, or self silence.

So let's gather for our last time and stand together in that familiar space we all know so well – hesitation – and support each other as we take the leap towards creating meaningful conversations about our changing climate. Through our conversations, let's learn to make a practice of hope.

A few things before our next session:

- Please bring examples of some simple low carbon habits you have already added to your life, or that you could think about doing in the future.
- For our role playing activity, think of someone you would like to have a climate conversation with, maybe someone a little skeptical.
- If you have time, check out **Climate Mind** <https://climatemind.org/> a soon to be App to help people talk about climate change, recommended by Katharine on page 232.