

Katherine Hayhoe:

“The most important thing you can do to fight climate change is to talk about it.”

Katherine Hayhoe in her 2018 Ted Talk states the following facts about climate denial:

- If the science tells us that the planet is warming, that humans are responsible,
- The number one predictor of whether we agree that the climate is changing, humans are responsible and the impacts are increasingly serious, is nothing to do with the science but where we sit on the political spectrum.
- People will find any excuse for their comfortable lives not to be disrupted by government directives. Also by admitting it's a problem, but then going on to admit that you don't want to fix it makes you the instantly the 'bad guy'.
- This means that people will opt for arguments against action – and therefore explain why they can't / shouldn't / won't tackle the climate crisis.
- What are the real reasons for these rejections?
 - Little to do with the science
 - A lot to do with identity, ideology
- When we look at most recent studies, the majority of people recognise that climate change is real. And increasingly people are being impacted directly by these changes through more extreme weather patterns.
- So how do we help people feel empowered? Talking is crucial. Not about the science, which Katherine Hayhoe says people have been talking about the science for 150 years – we've been aware of the impacts of carbon emissions since the 1850's.
- Social science tells us “If people have built their identity around the rejection of a certain set of facts, then arguing against these facts is a personal attack which digs a trench rather than builds a bridge”.

What can we do?

We recognise that good conversations stem from conversations where the following are identified:

- Shared values
- Common interests
- Common concerns
- Shared faiths
- Find out what your friends, relatives, colleagues' values are, what they enjoy, what makes them tick.
- Once you know what is important, you can make connections and help them to see why caring (and acting) about a changing planet is important.

When talking to people

- Fear is not what is going to motivate us
- Fear is designed to help us run away – from the bear, or the person beside us ranting about climate change
- What we need to offer is rational hope
- We need a vision of a better future
- Where lives can be better, not worse, today

Solutions

- Practical, viable, accessible solutions
- Lifestyle choices, eating habits,

Take heart

- Climate changemakers states that “in the US, people underestimate the percentage of fellow Americans who are concerned about climate change, which also has us believing climate action is *less popular* than it really is ([it's popular](#)). Psychologists call this phenomenon “pluralistic ignorance”, but the important thing to know: people do care about climate”
- Effectively fighting climate change requires concerted, collective action from lots of people. Collective climate action is often driven by [social norms and group identities](#). By stepping up and engaging in real, emotionally intelligent conversations with each other, we can chip away at pluralistic ignorance *and* build up social norms around climate action.

Advice:

How to prepare to talk to people:

- When talking to people who care about you, remember that they're most likely to be moved by *your* passion and *your* story. Just focus on nailing that part, and then have some resources in your back pocket if you need them.

Don't underestimate the power of the individual

- "The corporate sector is responsible for over 70% of global emissions, controls enormous capital that flows into the fossil fuel industry, and more importantly has the power to lobby governments for progressive climate policy," she says. "So employees have so much influence over how corporations behave."

Some supporting data:

- One bright spot: Many job seekers are now looking to work in companies aligned with climate goals. A 2021 Yale School of Management survey of 2,000 students across 29 business schools globally [found that](#) 51% would accept lower salaries to work for an environmentally responsible company. That's a good sign, because filling the labor gap will require both new skills and people leaving their existing jobs for new and rapidly evolving industries. A reckoning is needed across the workforce, and there are some signs it's already underway.

Taken from the Climate Changemakers website:**Learn effective climate conversation tactics**

- Effectively fighting climate change requires concerted, collective action from lots of people. Collective climate action is often driven by [social norms and group identities](#). By stepping up and engaging in real, emotionally intelligent conversations with each other, we can chip away at pluralistic ignorance *and* build up social norms around climate action.
- For more productive conversations about climate, consider these tactics, organized into the memorable acronym C L I M A T E:

C – Check your agenda at the door.

- While your big-picture goal may be persuasion, you cannot expect to change anyone's mind with a single conversation. Plus, it will close you off from the compassion, curiosity, and open-mindedness that makes for productive conversations. Your goal is to *actually learn* about the other person's perspective. After all, what matters more to you—this conversation or the relationship?

L – Listen first.

- Treat the conversation as an information-gathering mission. Asking questions is one of the simplest strategies for a low-conflict conversation. The key is to make people feel heard.
 - **Ask open-ended questions** with compassion. "Why do you think that's the case? I'm really curious."
 - **Echo** what you've heard. "I hear you saying that you..."
 - **Confirm** that you've understood. "Do I have that right?"
 - Try **legitimation rhetoric**. "That makes sense" and "I see where you're coming from" go a long way.
 - Here's a case study from [How to Save a Planet](#) on the importance of listening.

I – Speak from the "I" perspective.

- "I don't see it that way" goes a lot further than "you're wrong" or "that's not true," even when the other person has said something you know is factually inaccurate. Whether it feels like it or not, [you're a trusted messenger](#) that can cut through a hyper-politicized cultural narrative.

M – Find mutual goals and acknowledge your differences.

- **Find common ground** and build connection. A shared desire to make the world a better place is a great place to start.

Identify productive differences. Sometimes naming where you disagree can help you move on by finding common ground and a path forward.

A – Explore ambivalence.

- Remember that climate action is nuanced, and that people often feel a great deal of [ambivalence](#). After all, various facets of social identity (like race, class, or gender) are connected with climate change in complicated ways. Many people *do* care about climate change...along with many other issues. Exploring how a person's various value systems may conflict can generate a productive conversation.

T – Keep in touch with yourself.

- How are you feeling? How are you reacting? Are you starting to head toward the “danger zone”? You can always pause the conversation and come back to it later.

E – End on a high note.

- Thank the person for talking with you, and find one positive takeaway or element of commonality. The fact that you had the conversation is a win.