

Customized Guide to Effective Climate Conversations

NOTE: Use this Guide to prep yourself for effective Climate Conversations. Then, set the details aside and just enjoy having and learning from a climate conversation without worrying about whether you are doing it exactly “right.”

1) Prepare yourself.

- Adopt a “Tell-Me-More” attitude (If you remember only one thing, this is the one!) Part of a Tell-Me-More attitude is listening to whatever the person says and trying to understand them, not arguing with them.
- Review Listener’s Tool Kit
 - Head nods
 - Eye contact
 - Listening Noises (“Hmmm.” “I see.” “Uh-huh.” “Got it.”)
 - Conversation Extender: “Say more about that.”
- Commit to no interruptions. Listen to the end of the person’s thought/statement (even if you feel like you already know what they need to hear!)
- Commit to listening more than speaking! (Fundraising lesson: Who speaks most “loses.”)
- Prepare to exercise your empathy “muscle.”
 - Mentalize: Imagine what the other person may be experiencing / suffering.
 - The Empathy Cascade leads to relationships:
Empathy —> Kindness —> Connection —> Community
- Remember “I’m Okay, You’re Okay” is where you want to be.
 - Mentalize: Imagine what the other person may be experiencing / suffering.

2) Who will you talk with first / next?

- Who provides the “Just-Right Challenge” for you at this time?

3) Beginning the conversation: 4 Options

- a) Reciprocity: "What's new with you?" (Listen deeply & at length!)
 - "What's new with me is I've gotten involved with **THIS! Is What We Did** to fight climate change..."
 - "I've gotten more concerned about climate change and I'm committed to fighting it..."

- b) Conversation Starter (**check out Climate Change Literacy QUIZ for ideas**)
 - "I'm concerned about _____. Does that worry you?"
 - "I just read about _____. What do you think about it?"
 - "I read that the Defense Department calls climate change a "threat multiplier" that makes all the other threats we face worse. What do you think about that?"

- c) Share your Climate Story: ("I want to fight climate change so my grandkids can have a future.")

- d) Share your Vulnerability: ("I'm so sad that the Monarch butterflies are dying off.")

4) Handling curve balls. (No need to be an expert! No shame!)

- Questions you can't answer: "That's an interesting question. I don't know but I'm curious about it so I'm going to ask around to see if I can find an answer."

- Things you disagree with; **Empathy is not agreement!** State your position & bridge to keep conversation going.

Them: "Climate change is a farce & scientists are only promoting it to get research money."

You: "Unlike you, I believe that climate change threatens everything I care about. What causes you to doubt the science?"

Them: "If you believe in Jesus Christ you have nothing to worry about."

You: "Well, I am a Christian, and my Christian values require me to try to stop climate change from destroying our planet. Do your Christian values do the same?"

Them: "What's the big deal? We've always had wildfires."

You: "True, however I'm concerned because last year we had more than 9,000 wildfires in California alone. I think it is because the world is getting hotter."

Them: "This is so big, there is nothing I can do that will make a difference."

You: "It does seem overwhelming but I believe that solidarity is our true super power. If we join together we can have an impact!"

Note on use of “but” — The word “but” diminishes what comes right before it. We want to be careful not to use “but” to diminish what the person is saying (even if we disagree). However, using but to diminish unhelpful things is a good tactic. For example, in the above example, “but” diminishes the feeling of being overwhelmed and provides a positive alternative: “...solidarity is our true super power.”

5) A big question for the right moment.

- If / after the person has expressed concern about climate change, try asking this question: “What do you do with your concern?” OR “What do you do with those feelings about climate change?”
- This may lead to him/her asking what you do with your feelings about climate change. To which you might say something like: “I find that taking action helps. When I moved my money from my climate-bad bank, I felt so empowered.” OR “I’ve gotten involved with **THIS!** and acting with other people helps me keep going.”

6) Closing the conversation.

- Thank them for the conversation! See **Follow Up** in # 7 below

7) Assess the conversation.

- Write down your thoughts as soon as you can. (Think it and ink it!).
 - What I did right / what went well
 - What I could have done better
 - Next time I will...
- Assess your conversation partner
 - On continuum from Ready-To-Take-Action to Hard-Case / Climate-Denier
- **Follow Up** depending on their place on the continuum
 - Schedule a further conversation?
 - Share **THIS!** website? <https://thisiswhatwedid.org/>
 - Send QUIZ? <https://thisiswhatwedid.org/climate-change-literacy-quiz/>
 - Email with more info?
 - Send **THIS!** Newsletter? (<https://thisiswhatwedid.org/news-events/>)
 - Invite to Move-your-Money cohort or other **THIS!** initiative
- Share your learning with **THIS!** to make Effective Climate Conversations training even more effective.