

# CLIMATE COMMUNICATOR TOOLKIT



GLOBAL CLIMATE *Pledge*

<https://www.globalclimatepledge.com/>

# TOOLKIT OUTLINE



Pg. 3 Introduction

Pg. 5 The Four Steps

Pg. 5 Step One: Prepare

Pg. 8 Step Two: Listen

Pg. 9 Step Three: Pause

Pg. 12 Step Four: Respond

Pg. 22 Extra Tips

Pg. 26 Common Misconceptions

Pg. 28 Additional Resources

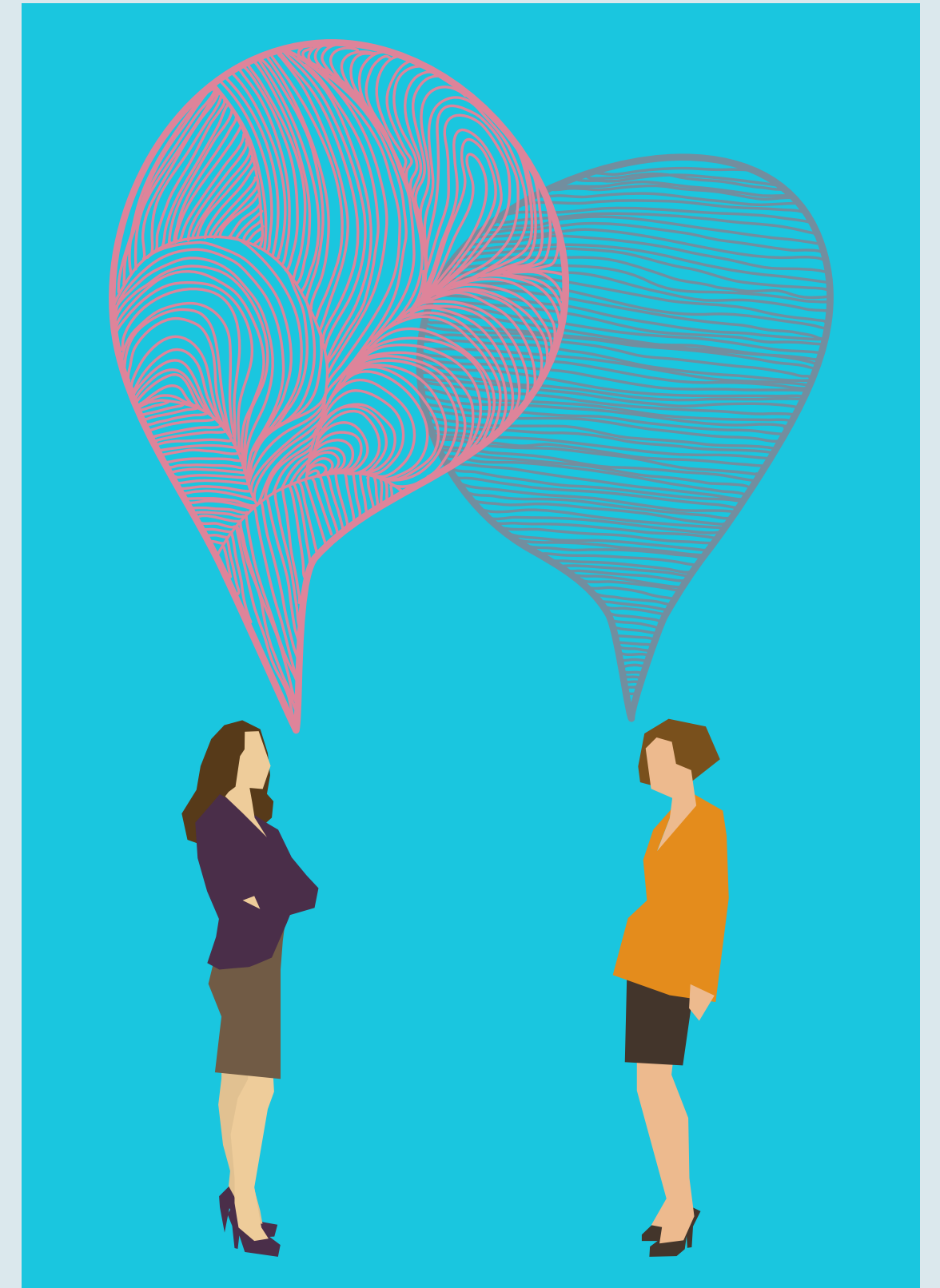
Pg. 29 Sign the Pledge

Pg. 30 Sources

# CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

## DEFINITION

Speaking about climate change to educate, engage, and inspire action in others.



# WHY IS COMMUNICATING IMPORTANT?

Only 35% of people talk about climate change at least occasionally.

The lack of discussion contributes to social norms and psychological distance.

## **Social Norms:**

How we communicate with others and our expectations regarding corporate responsibility and government action.

## **Psychological distance:**

Not feeling engaged with climate change because it is perceived as distant in time and space.

# THE FOUR STEPS



Step One: Prepare



Step Two: Listen



Step Three: Pause



Step Four: Respond

# STEP ONE: PREPARE



## REFLECT ON YOUR "WHY"

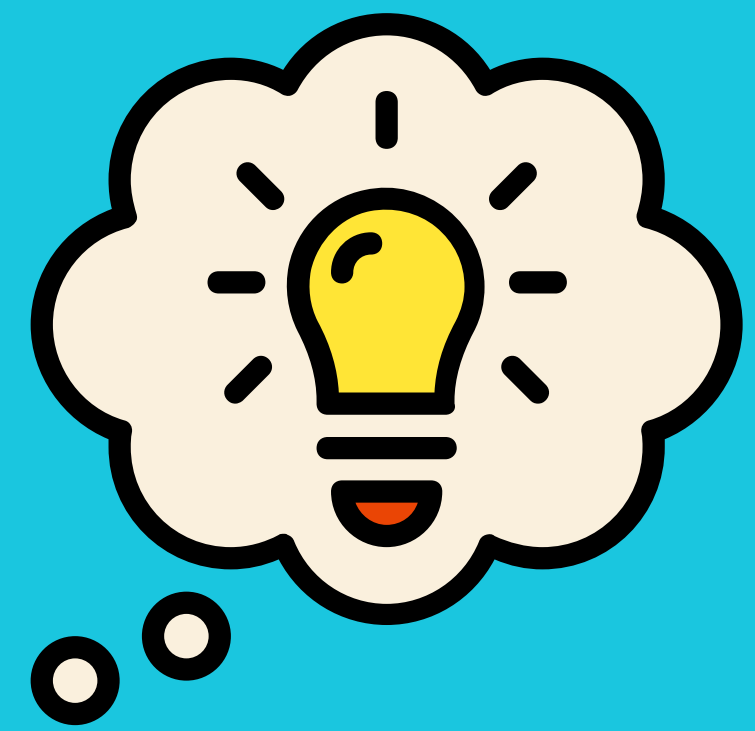
What aspect of climate change inspired you to act? Remember what motivates you.

## ESTABLISH A POSITIVE MINDSET

Going in with negative emotions such as anger or stress can make the conversation less valuable. Try to go in with the expectation of having a *meaningful*, rather than *difficult*, conversation.



# STEP ONE: PREPARE



## **DETERMINE YOUR GOALS FOR THE CONVERSATION**

Do you wish to simply understand them? Educate them? Persuade them? The ultimate goal of climate change communications is to inspire action, but that doesn't have to happen all at once. What do you wish to achieve today?

## **ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PREJUDICES ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL**

Do you associate them with any stereotypes? What do you assume about their values? Try to let go of these preconceived ideas so that you can hear what they actually have to say, not what you assume they will say.

# STEP TWO: LISTEN

## REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Listen to what the other person has to say.

Listen to understand, not to evaluate.

Ask questions to clarify and repeat back paraphrased versions of what they say.

## LISTEN TO WHAT THEY VALUE

What connects you as individuals? Do you share any values?





# STEP THREE: PAUSE



Breathe. If you're feeling upset or worked up, take a second to slow down your breathing and calm your nervous system.

While it's important that you speak from the heart, it's also important not to let reactive emotions control your response. Hold on to passion, love, and concern, but try not to let anger or other negative emotions control what you say.

# STEP THREE: PAUSE

If the other person is aggressive and does not respond to your empathy, it's okay to end your conversation.

Remember, the ultimate goal of a climate change communicator is to inspire action, not to instill fear. A common cause of climate change apathy is the discomfort of knowing there's a serious problem, but not knowing how to help.



# STEP THREE: PAUSE

It's important to acknowledge someone's capacity for understanding you. Using what you learned while listening, consider what communication style you can use to connect to them.

For example, some people may respond to better to science, others may respond better to values and emotional appeals.



# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



“Communicators balance speaking 'the facts' of the climate crisis and 'speaking their own truth' with 'meeting people where they are at'.”

Jonathan Oosterman

# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



## Components of Good Responses:

1. Tell them your "why"
2. Respond to conspiracy theories
3. Connect to their values
4. Don't use fear tactics

# STEP FOUR: RESPOND

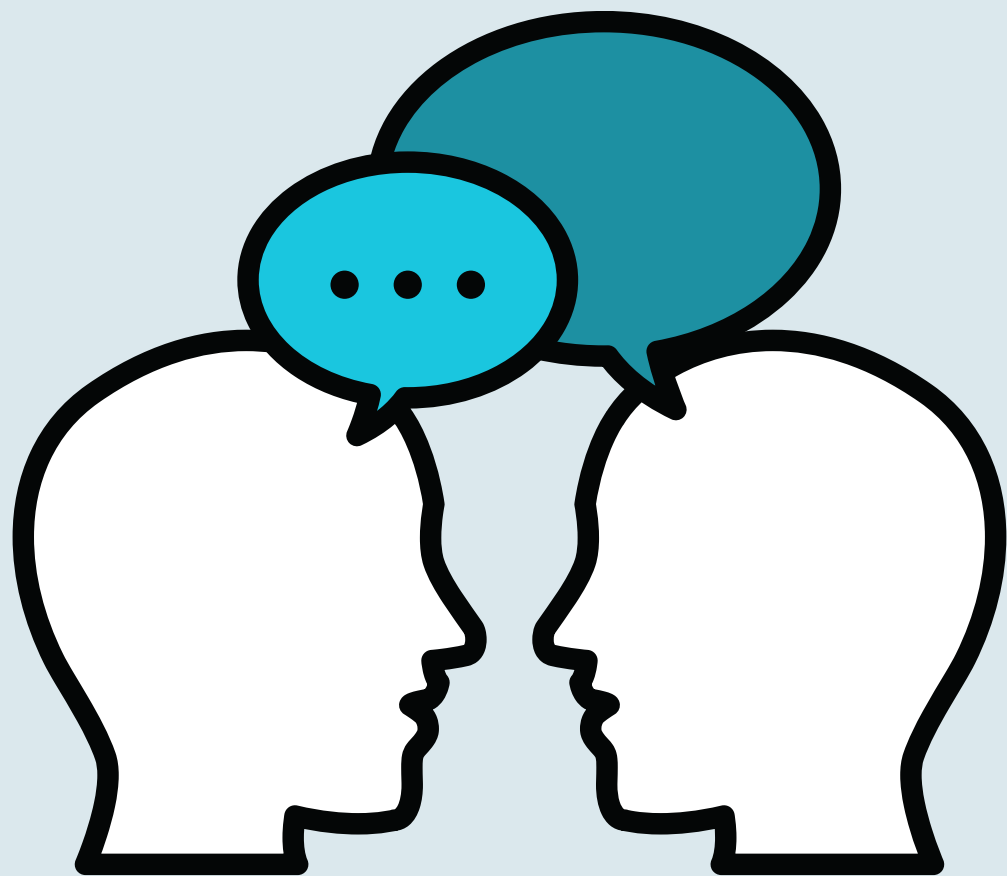


## 1. Tell them your "why"

Many people don't change their behaviors because of statistics. Instead, tell them what led you to care about climate change.

Use your story, your emotions, and your passions to engage with them.

# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



## 1. Tell them your "why" Example

Less effective:  
"The amount  
of CO2 in the  
air is the  
highest it's  
ever been."

More effective: "What first  
caught my attention was  
ocean pollution. My family  
goes to the beach every  
summer – we love it. The  
level of plastic, chemical,  
and mercury pollution is  
heartbreaking because  
studies show the pollution is  
affecting human health."



# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



## 2. Respond to Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories, big and small, can be really hard to let go of and often cause people to feel defensive.

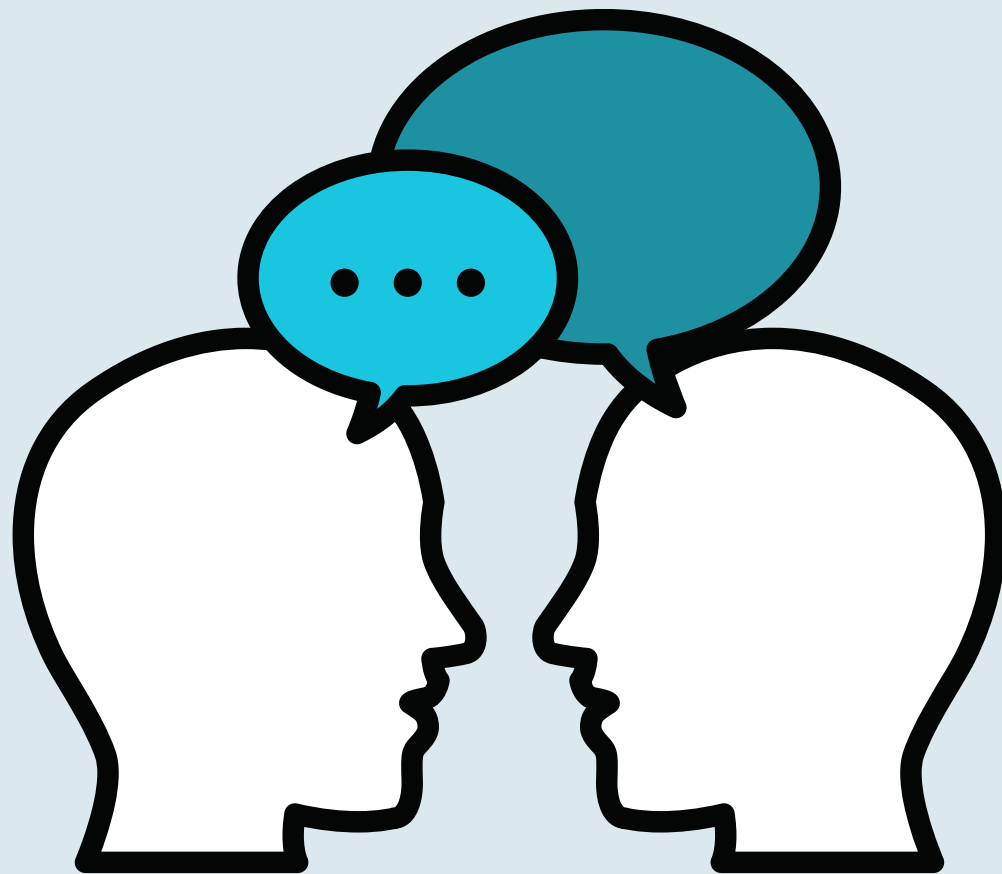
Rather than attacking someone for having fallen into a trap, validate their emotions, but politely challenge their political beliefs.

# STEP FOUR: RESPOND

## 2. Respond to Conspiracy Theories Example

Less effective:  
“How could you possibly believe that climate change isn’t real? That’s obviously a conspiracy.”

More effective: “I also saw the headline that extra CO2 is good for plant growth, but I did some further research and it turns out that the other effects of increased CO2, such as higher temperatures and more intense storms will outweigh the benefits.”



# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



## 3. Connect to their values

"Climate change impacts a lot of things people care about ... coffee, alcohol, wildlife, chocolate, farmers, our endangered animals ... Everyone has a reason to care about this issue." – Gareth Hughes

Many people feel disconnected from climate change because they don't understand how it will affect the things they care about. Connect with the values they hold to give them a platform for engaging in the conversation.

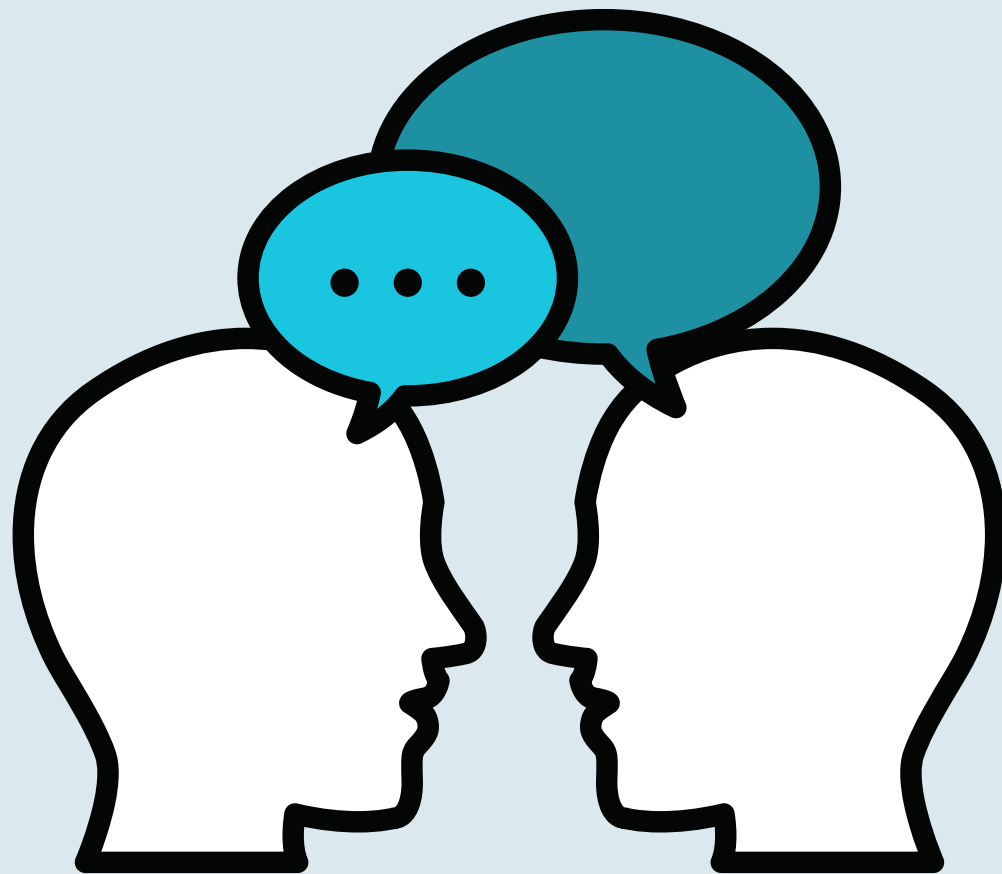
# STEP FOUR: RESPOND

## 3. Connect to their values

### Example

Less effective: “Did you know that global temperatures have increase 1° C since the industrial revolution?”

More effective: “I know you love going skiing. Many places now have to use artificial snow to open on time. Have you noticed that ski season is starting later and later every year? That is a result of climate change.”



# STEP FOUR: RESPOND



## 4. Don't use fear tactics

Spreading fear without providing any actions someone can take to help solve the situation leaves people feeling overwhelmed and disengaged.

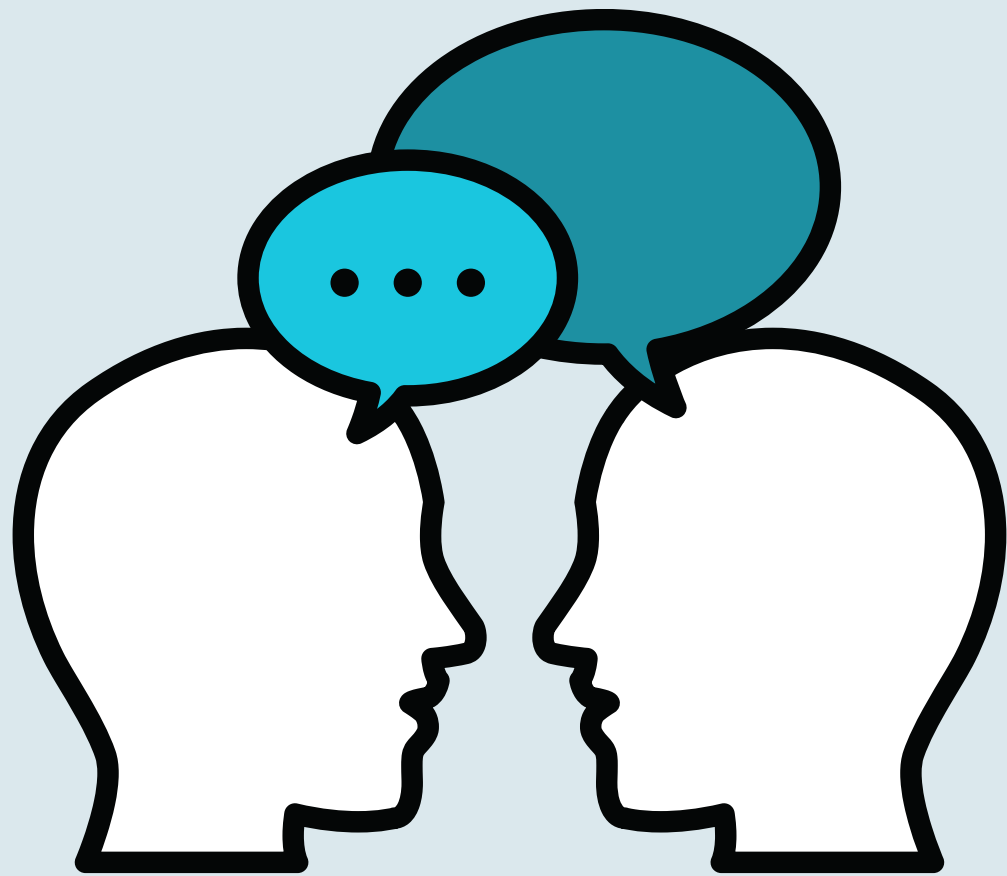
It's important to find a balance between describing a climate apocalypse and creating an overly optimistic image of the future. Be realistic, but emphasize goals, changes, and opportunities to be part of the solution.

# STEP FOUR: RESPOND

## 4. Don't use fear tactics Example

Less effective: “Have you heard about the storms, floods, and forest fires happening around the world? The world is ending because of climate change, so you have to be more sustainable.”

More effective: “There’s a lot of things most of us do that contribute to climate change without us realizing. I recommend signing the Global Climate Pledge if you’re looking for somewhere to start. They have lots of ideas for small changes we all can easily make.”



# EXTRA TIPS FOR SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES

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**College Students**  
**Parents**  
**Retirees**  
**Religious Groups**



# COLLEGE STUDENTS

Become a University Climate Ambassador:  
Join our international team of college students working to implement sustainability practices on college campuses.

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Take advantage of available courses:  
When registering for courses, search for electives that will teach you more about climate change and other environmental topics.

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Talk to your peers:  
Many students come to college with knowledge of climate change, but they have so much going on that they struggle to take action.

# PARENTS

Having children heightens people's awareness of the future effects of climate change, but many parents still don't know what they can do.

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Organize car pools or a group to walk to school together. Swap hand-me-downs instead of buying entirely new wardrobes.

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Talk to you kids about climate change. Plant a garden together, practice turning off lights and other appliances, and talk about science to help them understand the problem.

# RETIREEES

People over 70 use more household energy than any other age group.

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Older people will be more affected by the changes we are already seeing from climate change. Heat waves, diminished air quality and power outages are more difficult for older people to navigate.

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Engaging with environmental groups and organizing friends to help make a community more sustainable can help the environment, and can help older people have a stronger sense of purpose, improving their mental health.

# RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist, Christian, and climate communicator provides insight on this topic:

- ▶ Conversations between people who share a core value can be very effective.
- ▶ Be aware of the wording you use. Politicized terms like “climate change” can be replaced with neutral terms like “climate variability” and “long-term trends.”
- ▶ Focus not on feeling guilty about the past, but on a change in future trajectory.

# COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

## **Myth: The sun is causing these changes.**

Truth: The Earth's tilt relative to the sun is cyclical has caused significant variation in climate in the past, but not at this rate. Scientists have accounted for this and found that our current positioning corresponds with a decrease in solar energy.

## **Myth: Scientists don't agree on climate change.**

Truth: About 97% of climate scientists agree that humans are causing climate change. Dis-consensus that appears in media is not representative of the scientific community.



# COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

## **Myth: More CO2 in the atmosphere helps plants to grow**

Truth: CO2 in the air does fertilize some plants, but it harms others. As CO2 traps heat in the atmosphere, it contributes to severe weather events that are harmful to plants.

## **Myth: Climate change isn't affecting us yet**

Truth: Severe weather events such as droughts, forest fires, extreme storms, are already happening. Scientists agree that they are a result of climate change.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out our blogs on this topic:

[A Roadmap for the Climate Communicator](#)

[How to Spark Action: Battling Apathy.](#)





# SIGN THE GLOBAL CLIMATE PLEDGE TODAY

Whether you are new to the climate movement or you are already an international climate leader with many years of experience, this is for you!

Tackling the climate crisis is one of our generations biggest challenges, but we believe that TOGETHER, we can achieve success.

Start with this pledge and commit to take at least one new action.

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<https://www.globalclimatepledge.com/>

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