

COMMUNICATING CLIMATE

Strategies and Support for Engaging
in the Climate Change Conversation

by the Sustainable Living
Association

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WHY IS TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IMPORTANT?

It only takes one person, just like you, to make a difference in this world. Why not increase your ability to make a long-lasting impact by collaborating and conversing with others.

By initiating the conversation around climate change you become an environmental steward and catalyst for spreading awareness and information surrounding the climate crisis.

The scientific facts and evidence are prevalent and the more people who understand and join in the efforts to reduce our impact, the closer we will get to restoring balance.

We know there are conflicting opinions on climate change, and it can sometimes be challenging to talk about it with others. That's why we're giving you the tools to have these conversations, so you can help others relate to the impacts of climate change and how it affects them personally.

In this guide we provide you with the tips and strategies to make talking about climate change productive and meaningful and inspire engagement within your family, friends, co-workers, community and beyond.

LET'S GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED!



4 TIPS TO CONSIDER

WHEN HAVING A CONVERSATION ON CLIMATE

- 1 MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY'RE AT
- 2 MAKE A CONNECTION
- 3 UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA
- 4 BE INFORMED



1

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY'RE AT

You'll want to start the conversation in a way that shows you have an understanding of where the other person is at on the subject. Think about how **THEIR VALUES** relate to climate change. Maybe it's rising temperatures that increase wildfire activity or the reduction in snowpack which affects outdoor recreation. Talking about local impacts is always a good starting point if you don't know how to begin the conversation.

Be sure to listen closely to their interest so you can respond directly to their concerns, not your own. It's important not to argue or try to challenge their beliefs, just listen and learn where they are at on the topic.

Notice their level of understanding especially around the science and evidence aspects. Break things down to make information more digestible. Be patient and inspire learning and the pursuit of knowledge instead of making someone feel bad for not knowing or understanding.

Remember conversations are two sided. It is easy to dominate with content and information, but the recipient is often left overwhelmed. To promote dialogue, it is essential to **LISTEN** to their thoughts and ideas, even if they are contradictory or inaccurate, their opinion needs to be stated before you can begin to shift their perspective.

HOW CAN THIS BE APPLIED?

"I've noticed such a difference in the weather lately and I think it's related to climate change. What do you think?"

"Have you heard of/experienced [share a world event or well-known issue]? Do you think this has to do with climate change?"

Avoid language like "you are wrong", "why can't you understand?" Instead try "I see your perspective, but have you thought about...?"

Be a good listener and be sure not to interrupt them or raise your voice while having the conversation. Your body language says a lot too, so be sure to keep your cool.

2

MAKE A CONNECTION

Find what interests THEM.

What aspects of climate change may affect their daily lives or the lives of people, animals or places they care about? This could include their children or family members in another part of the world, endangered animals or threatened fish habitats, loss of beloved recreation areas or even the economic challenges of climate change.

Try to identify shared experiences, hobbies or memories of things that are meaningful to both of you and consider how climate change has or will impact these things in the future.

What do you have in common with them, what values do you share? Figuring this out will help you find ways to make a connection, because what you say will be more impactful if they can somehow relate.

People are more open to recognizing their need to make changes when they independently make the correlation and have an emotional attachment to the people, places and activities affected by climate change.

HOW CAN THIS BE APPLIED?

“Do you like to ski/snowboard? Have you noticed that the season seems to be getting shorter every year?”

“Is there still enough water in the lake near your cabin where you like to fish, or has it been drying up because of warmer temperatures?”

“How was your business affected by the change in climate this year?”

“Was your utility bill higher over the Summer from having to use your air conditioner so much more?”

3

UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA

We live in a digital era. Communicating, connecting, and sharing experiences and information online has become a new way of life. It has expanded access to new ideas and perspectives for many people with varied backgrounds, identities and opinions.

Social media platforms are an effective way to disseminate information and to advocate for climate change mitigation actions and initiatives. Be meticulous of what you post, check your sources and make sure that you are providing reputable and accurate information. Try including resources like scientific papers or journals, current events, and/or eco friendly activities and lifestyle choices. Look into various sources to back up the content you are posting because misinformation is easily spread through media and technology.

Try an “old school” approach and use your phone to call someone you know. Check in on how they are doing and ask if they were affected by one of the climate events we see worldwide, for example the fires or hurricanes. Connecting your listener to a personal experience is an excellent opener to the bigger conversation. Remember to maintain the focus on productive conversations. Use these technological resources to your advantage to inspire attention and reflection in the viewer or listener. You can be an effective messenger for change and the health of our planet.

HOW CAN THIS BE APPLIED?

Post or share information about this guide via media platforms to encourage others to initiate the conversation. Download the promotional flier [HERE](#).

Create your own climate change crash course or awareness post and share on social media or via other technology sources

Call, text, or email family and friends to share your perspectives and hear their stance on the effects of climate change.

4

BE INFORMED



Climate change can be a polarizing issue. How we frame the topic and how we engage people is very important.

A valuable asset when talking about climate change is understanding the basic causes and effects. The evidence clearly tells us that the climate crisis is happening now and we must take action.

Not everyone shares your perspective but if they are open to a conversation you have an opportunity to plant a seed of hope. Use reason and facts to support your opinion and give them a chance to respond.

Talk about all the real-life examples happening around us. Remember to not fully rely on the scientific explanation, but to use it as a tool to help correlate the events occurring as a result of our daily actions.

In the next section we have included a basic scientific explanation and supplementary images on climate change and how it has accelerated due to the human impact.

HOW CAN THIS BE APPLIED?

When presenting your understanding of the causes of climate change you can include a brief description on the scientific processes that are taking place. Elaborate if needed.

“When you think about climate change what do you think is the primary cause? Do you think human actions affect climate?”

“Did you know that because of climate change (give a local example) is occurring.”

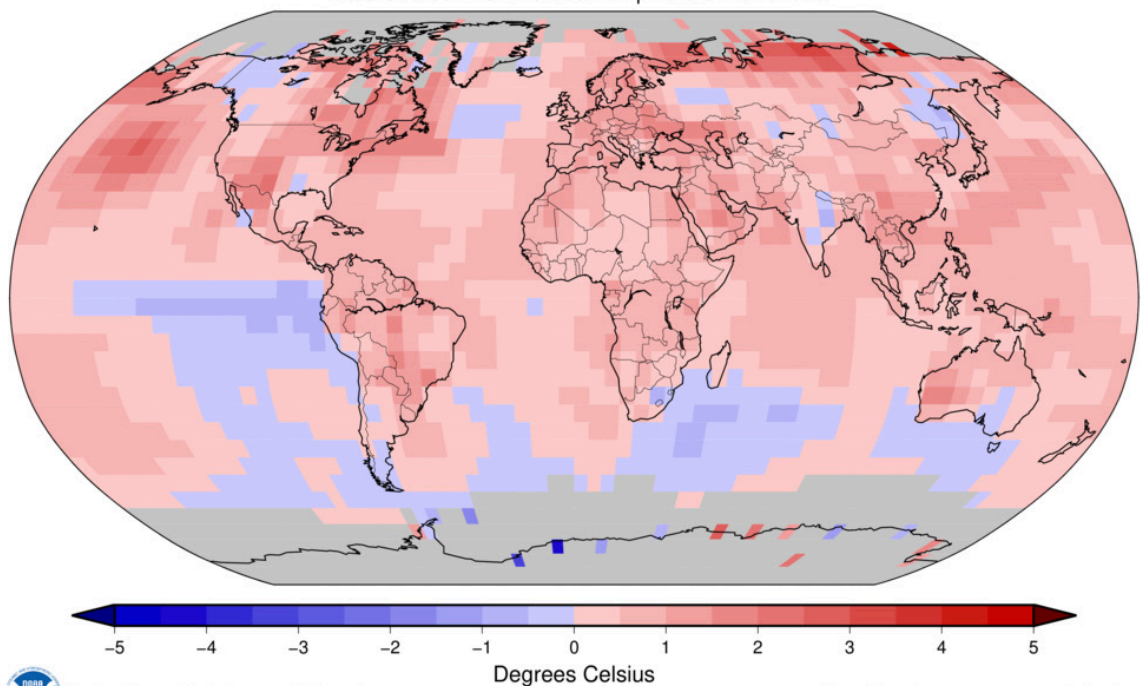
WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Earth's climate is now changing faster than ever before, primarily as a result of human activities. Climate change has already resulted in a wide range of impacts across every region of the country from changes occurring in temperature, wind-patterns and precipitation. Human activities, especially emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and other economic activities are the key factors in climate change.

RIISING TEMPERATURES AROUND THE WORLD ARE CLEAR SIGNS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Jun 2020–Aug 2020
(with respect to a 1981–2010 base period)

Data Source: NOAA GlobalTemp v5.0.0–20200908



National Centers for Environmental Information
GHCNM v4.0.1.20200907.qfe

Please Note: Gray areas represent missing data
Map Projection: Robinson

source: <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/202008>

WHAT CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE?

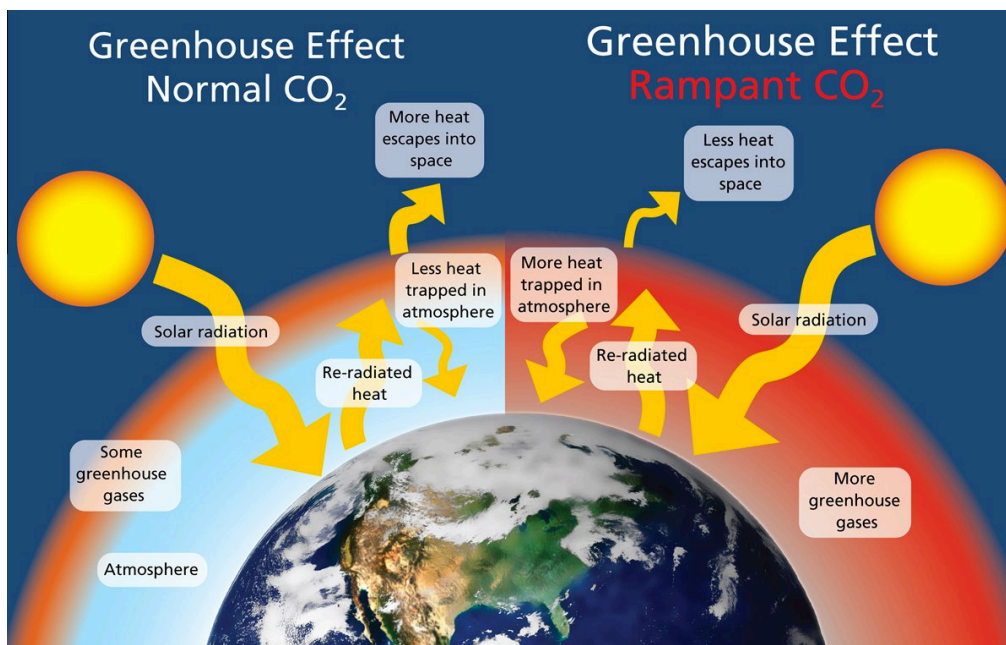
The primary driver of climate change is the greenhouse effect. Simply put, throughout the day the sun shines through the atmosphere and warms up Earth's surface.

At night the surface cools and releases that same heat back into the air. In the atmosphere, greenhouse gases trap and reflect a certain amount of that heat back to Earth.

This process, when occurring naturally, maintains the correct temperature for life on earth. However, the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has offset this balance in the system.

This results in an increasing amount of heat being reflected back to earth, thereby causing an increase in temperature and other climate changes.

Primary greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, among others.



source: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/climate-change-communication-dr-will-elder.htm>

CLIMATE CHANGE IN COLORADO

We've put together a list of climate impacts we're experiencing in Colorado and how they affect us directly. These ideas can help you start the conversation. For some global examples of a warming climate visit <https://climate.nasa.gov/>

Colorado's climate is changing. Most of the state has warmed one or two degrees Fahrenheit in the last century. Heat waves are becoming more common, snow is melting earlier in spring, [and less water is flowing through the Colorado River](#). Rising temperatures in the region increase the risk of forest fires, cost us more in utility bills and can adversely affect human health, especially our more vulnerable populations.

Changes in temperature and precipitation are affecting the amount of [snow that accumulates in the mountains of Colorado each year](#). The timing of snowmelt and runoff has shifted to earlier in the spring which can shorten the season for winter sports like skiing, snowboarding, ice climbing and other forms of winter tourism and recreation. With less runoff flowing through our rivers and streams our water supply is affected, causing impacts on agriculture, municipal supplies and affecting the availability of summer activities like rafting and fishing. Consider the economic impact this has on businesses who rely on outdoor recreation and our cities and towns who rely on tourism dollars to pay for basic services.

Warm and dry conditions associated with climate change also increase the frequency and extent of [wildfires across Colorado](#). That's because rising temperatures and earlier snowmelt mean that forests are potentially drier for longer. With increased lightning storms, dry vegetation and beetle killed trees, our forests are primed for ignition.

Wildfire seasons are increasing in length with [Colorado and California both setting records in 2020](#) for the largest fires in each state's history. Wildfires displace people who have lost their homes, they destroy businesses, and cost millions of dollars to fight. We see the destruction of animal habitat, a decrease in the water quality of our rivers and streams, and lose access to hunting, hiking and fishing areas that we know and love. Not to mention the effects on our air quality which can cause breathing and heart issues.

Learn more about the effects of climate change on Colorado at www.coloradotrust.org and www.conservationcolorado.org

Now is the time to act!
Find what motivates you and start the conversation.



YOU CAN DO IT!

TRY OUR TIPS IN YOUR NEXT CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION

The sustainable, healthy, happy and prosperous future of our planet and its inhabitants is still possible! But we must act now and encourage others to do the same. Initiating the conversation is the first step and you can do it!

We must renew our relationship with nature and remind ourselves that human and environmental health are interconnected.

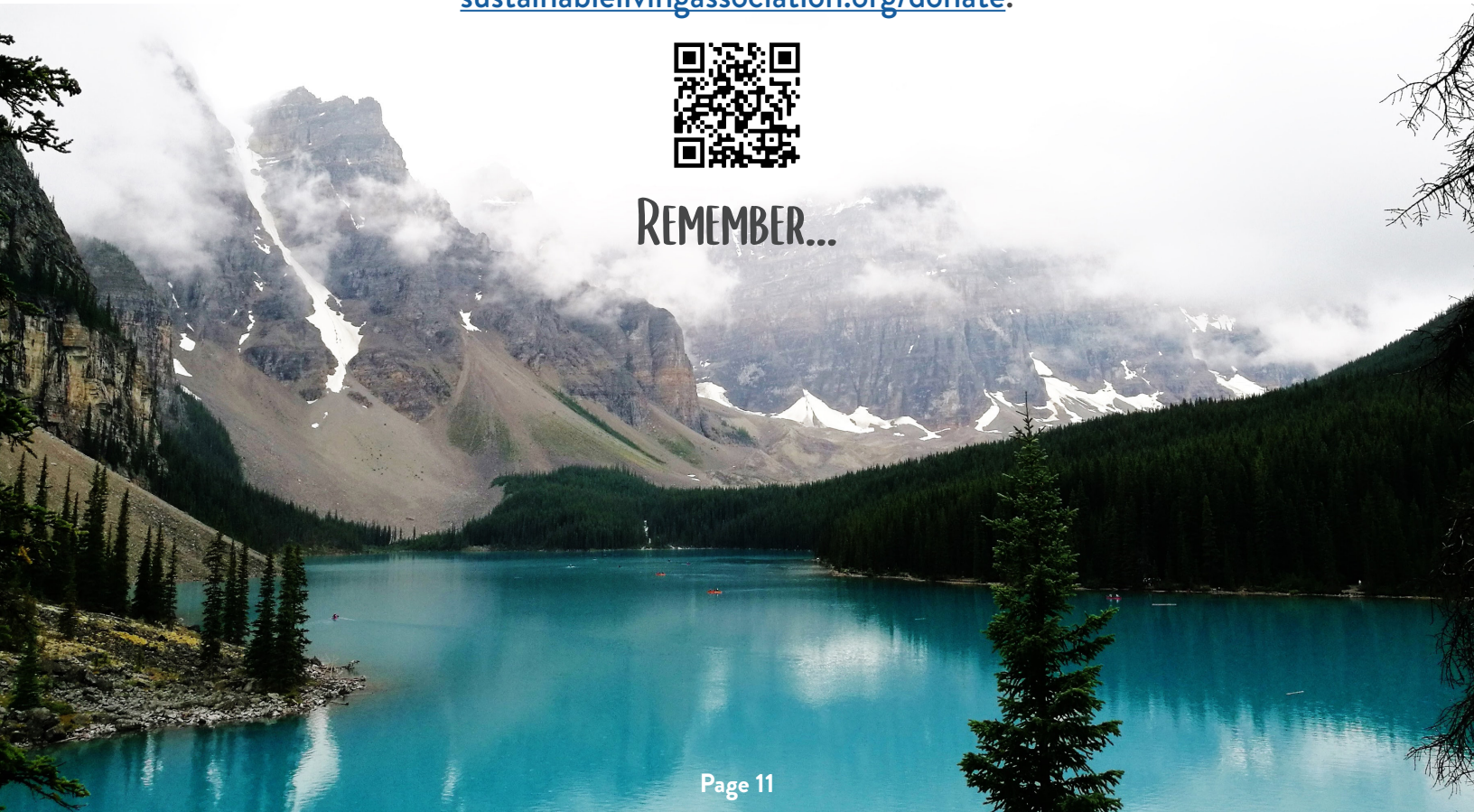
Bringing attention to this topic and engaging people to connect to it personally makes a big difference. We know you will do an amazing job and play a pivotal role in bringing awareness to the need of healing our earth.

Keep us updated on your progress and experiences by filling out the quick survey we will send you in a couple of weeks. Your feedback helps us empower others to start the conversation on climate change. Share this guide with others by giving them [this link](#).

We believe in your power to bring about change! You can further your contribution by supporting the Sustainable Living Association's work to educate people and communities on healthy sustainable choices that will protect our planet for years to come, donate online at sustainablelivingassociation.org/donate.



REMEMBER...



CHANGE STARTS
WITH YOU

