

Influencing Attitudes and Behaviors about Climate Change

Optimistic or Anxiety-based?

- If optimistic or pessimistic, make it believable for the real world, not a picture of nirvana or heavenly peace, or apocalyptic disaster so bad and certain it is either unbelievable by the person or so defeating as to want to block it out.
- If invoking fear and anxiety, keep it mild to moderate. Doomsayers are seldom believed, and even if they are, the message may be ignored to avoid feeling so bad about the future. Portray your desired behavior as helping to make the future better or to reduce the problem.
- Fit the desired outcome into the person's value system so that it represents progress toward something the individual believes strongly in.

In-group vs Out-group Messaging

- We deem information more reliable if it comes from people (in-group) like us or organizations we already trust.
- People different from me are more likely to be distrusted because they may have some hidden motive to manipulate me.
- A messenger from a group or organization who gives a unsuspected surprising endorsement is influential. Example: an NRA official who says that a gun control regulation would be beneficial; or Sierra Club official who endorses nuclear power.

Following Social Norms

- We are more likely to accept an attitude or behavior if others like us are doing it. Could be relatives, friends, neighbors, or an organization that I am part of.
- I am less likely to accept or do it if the opposite is true.
- If I believe most people are doing the undesired behavior and will keep on doing it, I am less likely to change my behavior. Why bother?

Do not Challenge Worldviews

Evidence can backfire if it challenges an individual's worldview. Conspiracists perceive evidence contrary to their belief as further supporting the conspiracy. We must address specific misconceptions or fallacies and show why they are incorrect. Replace sticky fallacies with stickier facts from science. Dwelling on the fallacy will strengthen it; dwell on the best scientific evidence drawn from peer-reviewed scientific sources. Propose possible market-based solutions. Government regulations and taxes are strongly disliked and resisted.