

Just in Time for Thanksgiving: Discussing Sustainability and Climate Change

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“The most important things you can do to fight climate change: talk about it”

-Title of Katharine Hayhoe’s TEDWomen Talk, November 2018



Future of Storytelling, narrated by Katharine Hayhoe: <https://vimeo.com/151923918>



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While it may sometimes seem like no one cares about climate change....

- Most registered voters think global warming is happening (72%)
- Most registered voters believe global warming is caused by humans (60%)
- Most registered voters are worried about global warming (59%)
- 7 out of 10 Americans are Very or Moderately interested in climate change

-Susan Moser, *We Need to Talk* webinar, 10/10/19



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Why might it feel like so few care/take action?

- Priorities: For most voters, global warming is on the bottom half of their list of issues that they're likely to base their vote on, with an exception of liberal democrats
- My friends/family/community aren't doing anything about it, why should I?
- A majority of people believe humans can reduce global warming but only 6% are optimistic that we will.
- Perceived stability of climate (next slide)

-Susan Moser, *We Need to Talk* webinar, 10/10/19



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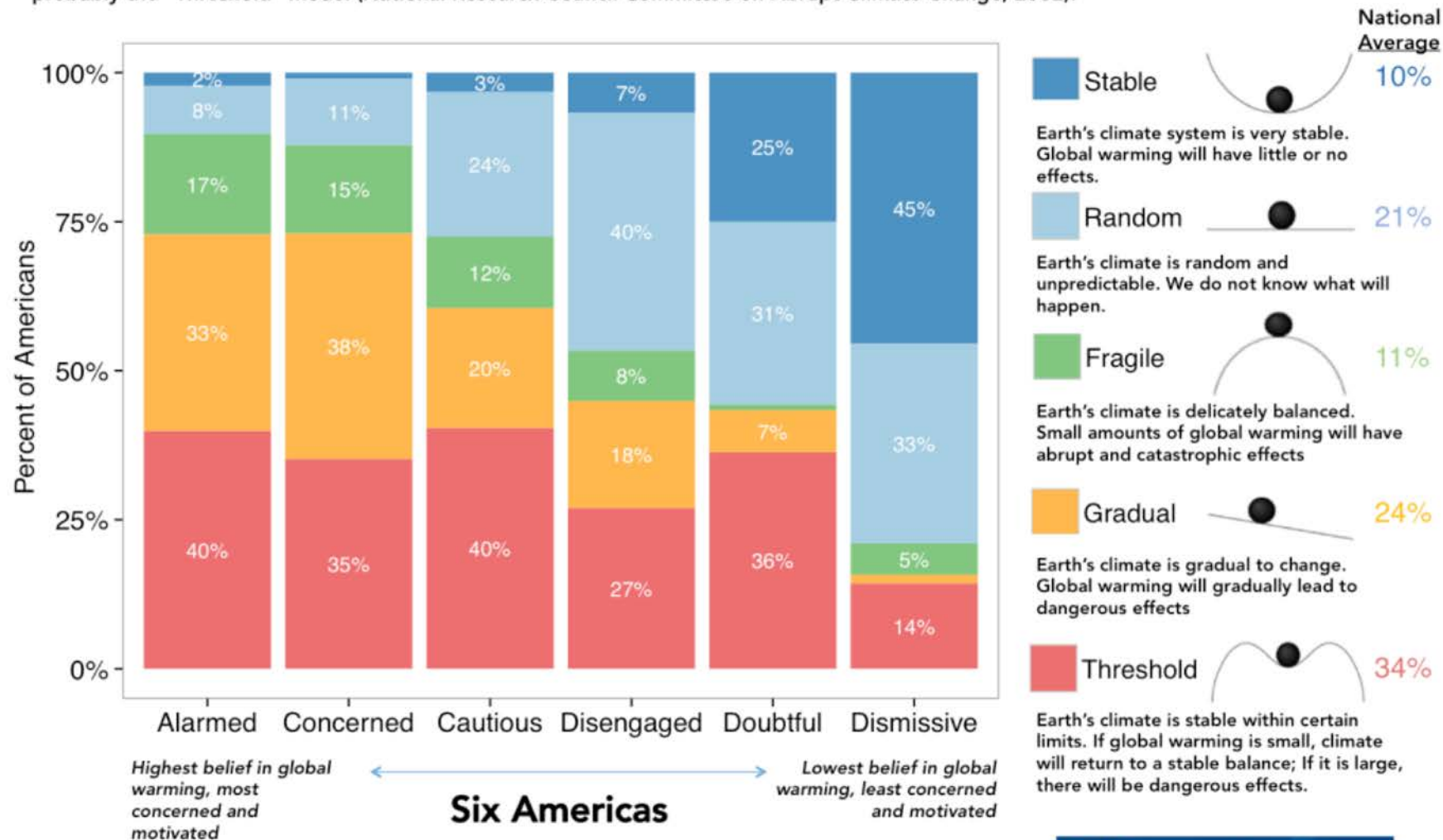
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6 Americas
+
perceived
climate
stability =
different
receptivity

Climate Stability As Understood by Global Warming's Six Americas

When asked "Which one of the five pictures best represents your understanding of how the climate system works?", the Six Americas respond very differently. Although each model may reflect a particular aspect of the climate system at a specific scale, the best overall model is probably the "Threshold" model (National Research Council Committee on Abrupt Climate Change, 2002).



For details, visit: http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication/article/climate_system/

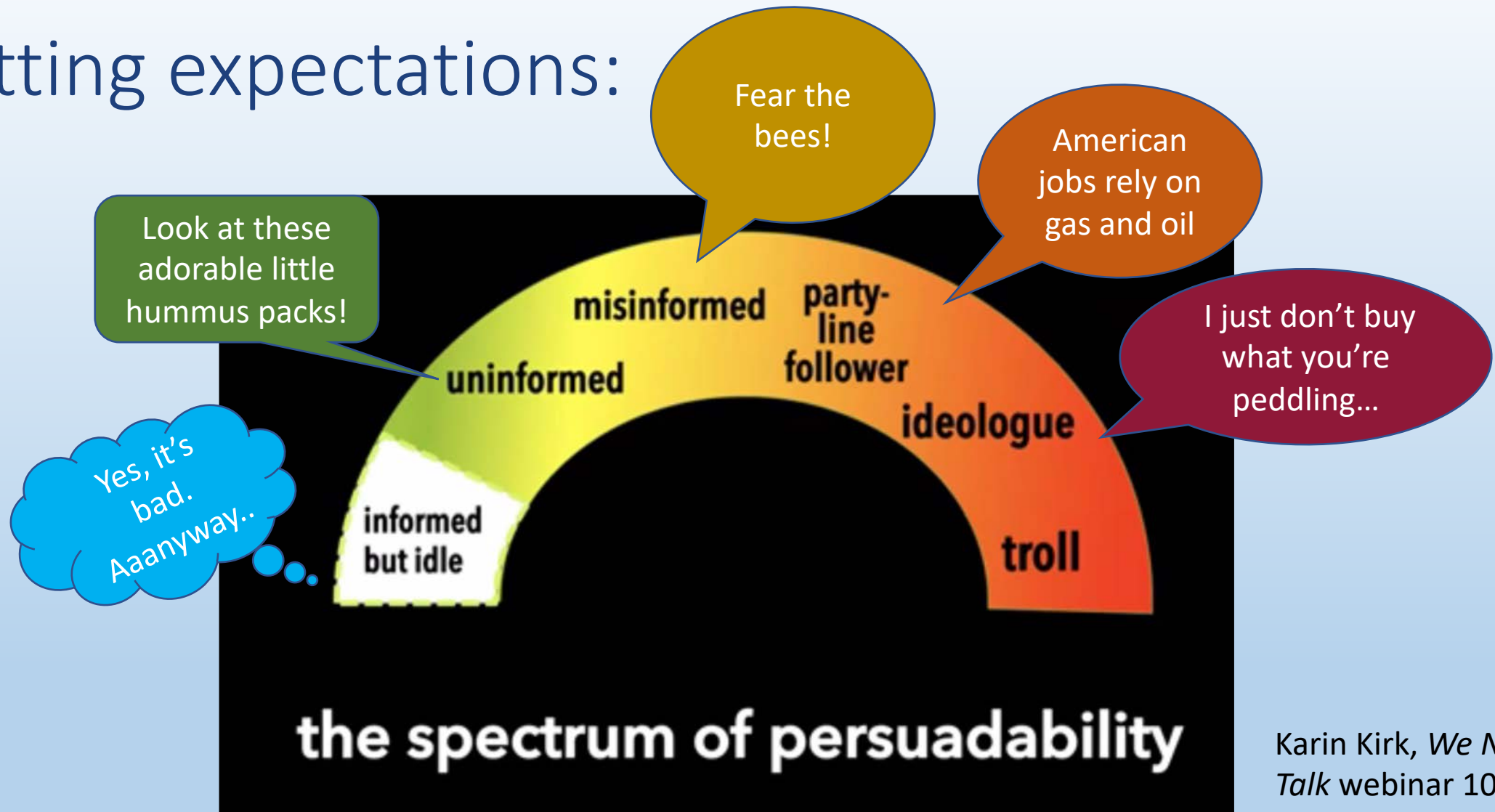


Setting the tone for the conversation

- Before engaging in conversation, commit to:
 - Being Respectful & Kind
 - Listening as you talk with eye contact and body language that signals you are hearing what is being said
 - Not interrupting
 - Keeping an open mind
 - Understanding that different backgrounds shape views
 - Having an exit strategy in mind, such as “I really appreciate you sharing your perspective with me. Maybe we can get together again and talk more when we have more time.”
 - “Leaving the door open”



Setting expectations:



Karin Kirk, *We Need to Talk* webinar 10/10/19

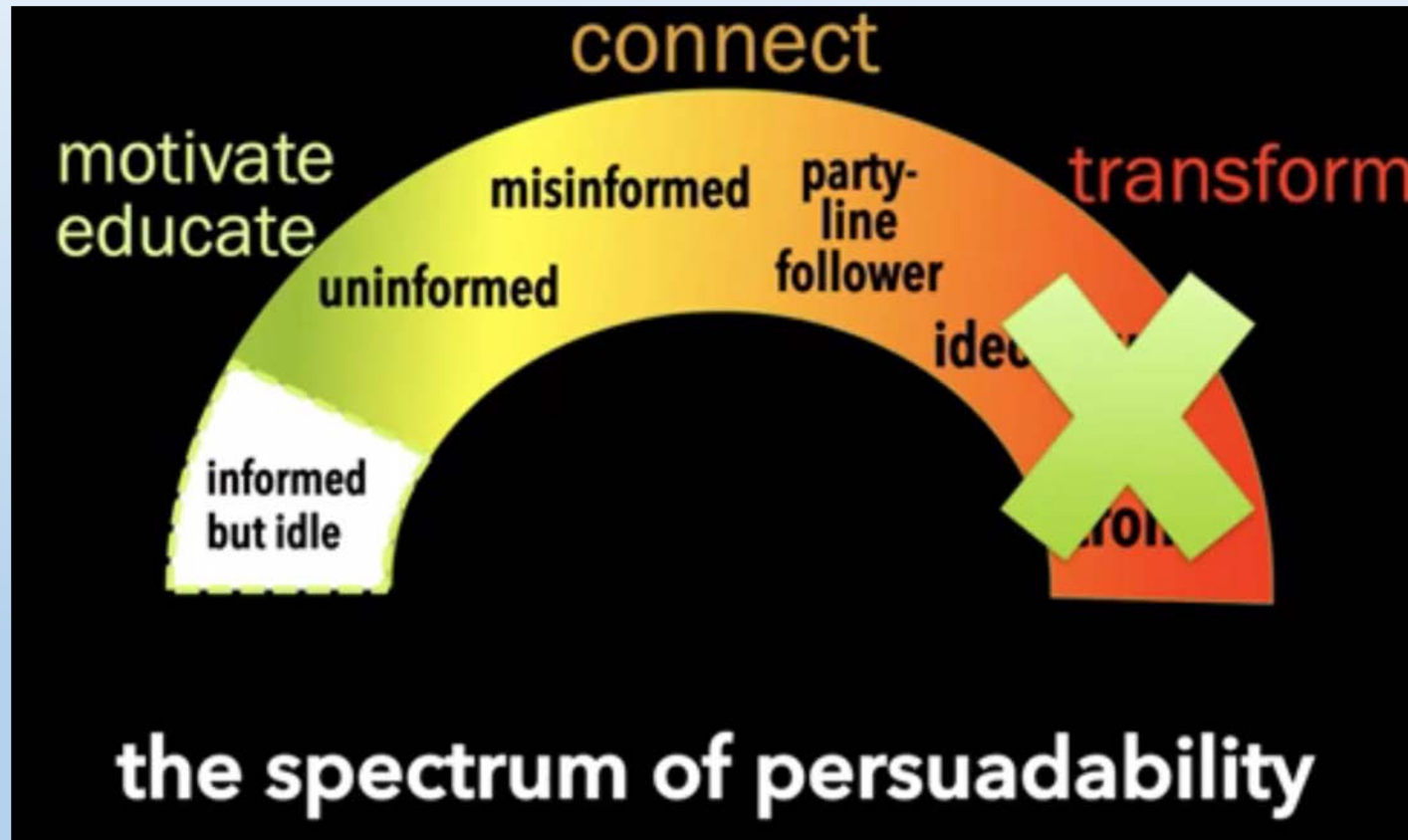


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Setting expectations...



Karin Kirk, *We Need to Talk* webinar 10/10/19



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How can we build trust and have open and meaningful dialogue?



Karin Kirk, *We Need to Talk* webinar 10/10/19



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Example:

An employee who bikes to work daily bumps into a colleague at an early morning work event. They live in the same neighborhood.

Colleague: Good morning! It looks like you biked in this morning!

Cyclist: I did, I actually bike to work everyday. Do you bike to work?

Colleague: Wow, good for you. No, I don't ride my bike to work.

Cyclist: Well you live so close to work, it would be so easy for you. You should really give it a try.

What do you think the colleague's response will be? How could this conversation have gone differently?



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Okay, let's talk! Where to start...

See what bubbles up in your natural conversation and identify things you all have in common:

- What sustains us sustains us all: good health, food, water, clean air
- No one is trying to be wasteful
- Saving energy saves money and resources
- Jobs are important
- Community is key/pride in the place we live
- We all live on Earth
- We are parents or care about the health of future generations
- A love for the outdoors and nostalgia for the past



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Challenges:

1) Sustainable...what?

There's no perfect definition of sustainability, but the Sustainable Development Goals are a good starting point and offer plenty to talk about that goes beyond climate change. The things that sustain you sustain us all.



The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that **all people** enjoy peace and prosperity.



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Challenges:

2) I don't believe in climate change.

“The way our identities work, it's like a jigsaw puzzle. You take one piece out and you just can't put another piece in. So you have to rearrange the entire thing, or it just doesn't fit anymore.” –John Kaiser

– John Kaiser, from the article “Former climate ‘denier’ regrets ‘how wrongheaded but certain I was,’” *Yale Climate Connections*, April 15, 2019

Climate change is not a belief system, it is something we know is taking place due to research, data and observations. Climate change is more similar to the law of gravity and than it is to belief systems politics and religion.



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Challenges:

What can we see/hear/experience that's real?

- Farming in PA is hurting the fishing industry in the Chesapeake
- It's raining more and flood insurance is going up
- Food prices are going up as droughts and floods affect reliability of crops
- Coal miners are losing their jobs as other energy sources are entering the market
- Increase in Lyme's disease in Pennsylvania

These issues affect people's health, living conditions and our economy. What can we do to help?



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Example:

In response to rollback on environmental regulations:

Frank: Stop with all the drama...I thank God for President Trump everyday!

Karin: Frank, good for you, but many of us don't share those views. Watching the environment that sustains us all get dismantled piece-by-piece is pretty awful. People who care about clean water, clean air, and public health are justifiably upset about this.

Frank: Global warming is a hoax, Karin, I just saw a petition where over 30,000 thousand climate scientists signed a petition agreeing on this

Karin: Frank, I'm sure dealing with factual information is important to you, and what you said about climate scientists disagreeing about climate change is completely false. Anyone could sign that petition and very few people who signed it are actual climate scientists. In fact the Spice Girls and many other fictional names are on the list. The petition is meaningless and is meant to intentionally misinform people. I know I don't like to be misinformed, and since you probably don't like to be either, you may want to stop citing that petition and get your information from more scientific sources. Scientists agree that climate change is happening and are working hard everyday to find ways to mitigate and adapt to its effects.



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Frank: Well even if global warming is happening, it's just the Earth's natural process. Taxing everyone and everything isn't going to change that, it's only going to deplete our bank accounts!

Karin: I completely agree that taxes aren't necessarily the answer. Can you think of other ways to slow down pollution and the impacts of a warming climate? I think it would be great if we stopped subsidizing fossil fuels. Why should you and I give our money to hugely profitable industry. And now that renewable energy is actually cheaper than fossil fuels, that helps all of our wallets when we have more efficient ways to heat our homes and power our vehicles.

Frank: I get what you're saying but you can't rely on wind and solar energy, it's just not dependable. And when you look at the energy it takes to build wind turbines and the maintenance and installation, it adds up fast!



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Karin: Actually a wind turbine pays back 18 to 20 times the energy it takes to maintain and build it, and solar energy can be used to heat molten salt which can store heat really well. Americans are proven innovators and problem solvers and I look forward to seeing the U.S. compete in these market. It's a great opportunity for our country to be recognized leaders in the clean energy industry.

Frank: Agreed. Just no more taxes because that just makes us less competitive in the world market.

Karin: Agreed. This was fun, Frank, and I appreciate your point of view, thanks for sharing your thoughts with me. I think we both agree that there are ways to pollute less without raising taxes in this country.

Frank: Thanks Karin. It's always fun to learn new things.

3) There's no point and there's nothing we can do anymore. It's...all...over...

Coping mechanisms for hopelessness, despair and worry:

Coping Mechanism/Efficacy	Personal Well-Being	Environmental Efficacy & Engagement
Emotion-focused coping	X	
Meaning-focused coping	X	X
Problem-focused coping		X

Maria Ojala, Young People and Global Climate Change: Emotions, Coping and Engagement in Everyday Life, first online August 2, 2016



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WHY PENN STATE
RECYCELES...
AMERICA RECYLES DAY 2019

Let's talk recycling with Lydia!



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Congrats! Having this conversation made a difference

- You sent a social signal just by discussing this topic today!
- Continue speaking with your friends and family who are paying attention to what their friends and family are doing.
- Don't expect immediate change in the span of your conversation
- Understand when it's time to move on to another topic
- Can you write down 3-5 names of people who you can talk to about climate change
- Not sure where to start? Try "How do you feel about climate change?"



Thank you, let's talk!

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