

Everyone has seen it. Constant wildfires, hurricanes, floods. People displaced in their home countries, destroyed homes floating in murky water. What do these scenes look like? From a quick glance, it is extremely shocking. Yet, people turn their face when they see such negative scenes. The big question arises: why do people turn away from these disasters?

Climate change communication is the official term for spreading information about what is happening to the environment and recommended actions to take. There have been many ways activists, politicians, and others have tried to spread the message of our doomed planet. One of the most famous is Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Scenes include wildfires, melting glaciers, and other disasters on the planet today. In other methods of communication, activists protest in the streets with signs about polar bears and animals losing their habitats and dying. Politicians show images and statistics of Earth's beauty slowly eroding as the number of CO₂ and other pollutants increase in the sky. These are all true events that are happening right now in our world. However, these tactics of spreading the dire consequences of our neglectful actions are actually ineffective and sometimes harmful.

There have been several points proven on how current climate communication doesn't necessarily work. According to psychologist and economist Per Espen Stoknes in the video *Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change* by Vox states, "[When listening to negative messages,] it makes people passive, because when I feel fearful or guiltful, I will withdraw from the issue and try to think about something else that makes me feel better." To clarify, Stoknes affirms that when people hear negative things about the doom of our species and our environment, they tend not to listen to these warnings because they don't want to feel negative emotions. Also, according to the article "Why People Aren't Motivated to Address Climate Change," people do not take action upon climate change even with several warnings because they do not feel it as an immediate issue, do not see the long term benefits of taking action for climate change, and do not see climate change and its effects as something close to their homes.

The next big question is then posed from this issue: what are the consequences of these actions, or lack of action in climate change? If people do not take action for the long term, there will be more unnatural changes in the seasons and the cycles of plants and animals, there will be more fluctuating temperatures, there will be more ocean water rising, and hurricanes will become more dangerous (NASA). However, the consequences that I am listing here are just the same ones that activists, politicians, and normal people constantly caution of. So, the next question is asked: what are some better modes of communication and ways to motivate people to take action for climate change?

Though it seems the only way to spread the information about the climate is to tell others about the consequences, there are other ways to encourage awareness and change. One way to improve climate change communication is to encourage a positive mood when speaking about the topic. If one addresses climate change with hope, more people will be encouraged to

act as they feel positive about the future they have. Not only that, spreading the word about climate change does not need to be just reports from the science field. Using methods such as storytelling or other forms of media such as videos may create a wider audience of listeners (Matthews). To add on, if messages about climate change are more personal and issues such as children's health are addressed, people tend to take more action ("Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change"). If science and the effects of climate change need to be addressed, using normal terms to explain the scientific ones and having reliable sources state the information may be more effective (Matthews). However, using direct communication to speak about climate change is not the only way to foster change. Indirect methods such as competition among neighborhoods for better efficient electricity use is quite effective ("Why humans are so bad at thinking about climate change"). Therefore, there can be many more efficient ways to communicate about climate change than the ones people currently use.

In conclusion, climate change communication is flawed but can be changed. The reason why one must strive for better climate communication is because people will take more action for climate change. Subtle acts like decreasing small amounts of energy or lowering the amount of trash one produces creates impactful benefits on the planet. Everyone must work towards spreading the news and finding ways to bring more people to create change.

Sources

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