



# THE ART & SCIENCE OF CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

Some thoughts on finding your own  
climate change communication path

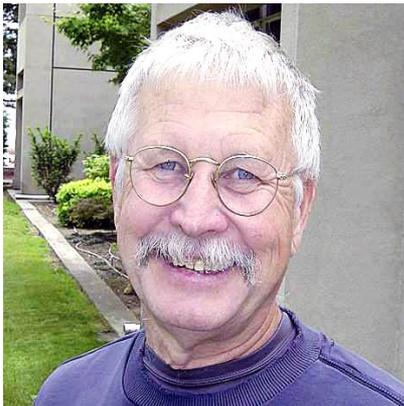
*UC ANR Statewide Conference*

**Faith Kearns, Ph.D.**  
**California Institute for Water Resources**  
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**When it comes to  
climate communication,  
if anything, we've mostly learned  
how complex it really is.**

**There is no one-size-fits-all.**



# The evolution of science communication & engagement

- Science communication has traditionally focused on filling an [information gap](#) (aka, deficit model) with awareness, education
- Largely based on formal teaching models: expert or instructor imparts knowledge to [“blank slate”](#) recipients
- Idea is “if people [knew x](#), they would [do y](#)”
- As a result, most of us were taught to talk [to](#) (or [at](#)) people
- This model is being [upended](#) everywhere – we only works in some circumstances



# The evolution of climate communication frameworks



R. Lertzman, author, *Environmental Melancholia*

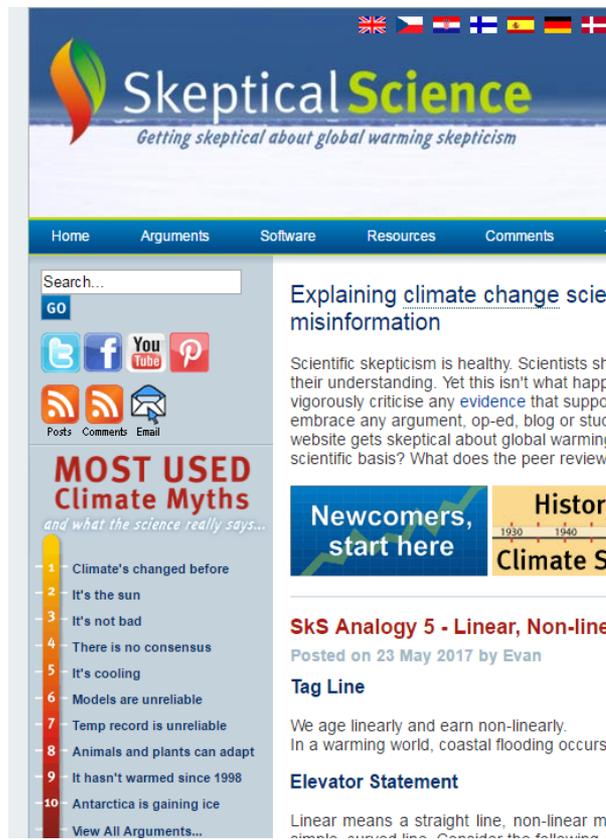
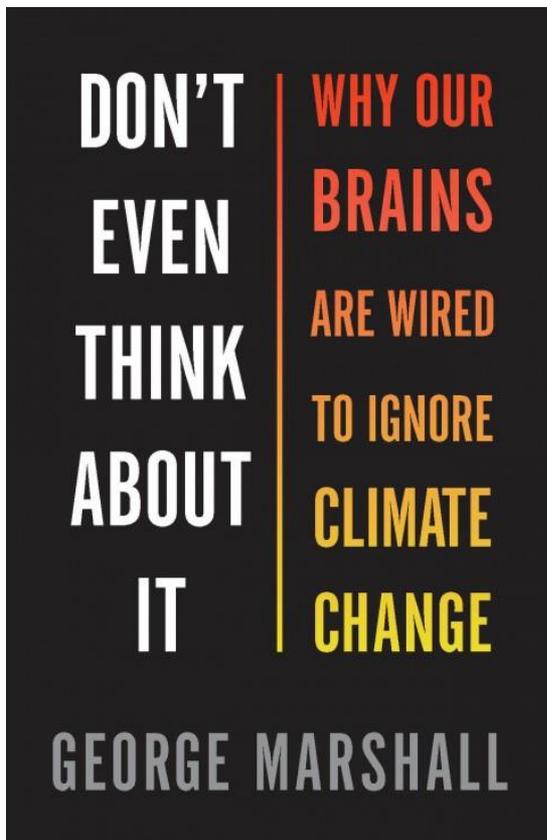


University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Cooperative Extension

# Big focus on behavior change and dealing with skeptics



# A shift to thinking culturally | Seeing people as different



**Alarmed**



**Concerned**



**Cautious**



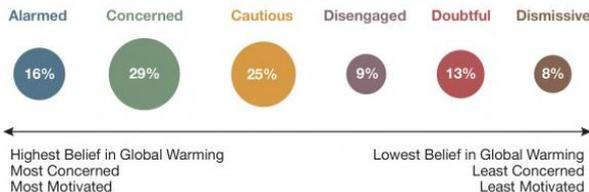
**Disengaged**



**Doubtful**



**Dismissive**



Yale Climate Change Communication program/A. Leiserowitz

# Beginning to see emotional appeals from scientists

 <p>the guardian</p> <p>news / opinion / sport / arts / life</p> <p>environment / climate change / wildlife / energy / pollution / more</p>  <p>Climate scientists, mourning Earth's losses, should make their voices heard</p> <p>Climate scientists are feeling the need to engage in social leadership before it's too late</p>	 <p>grist</p> <p>BRIEFLY GRIST 50 SECTIONS NEWSLETTERS DONATE MORE Q</p>  <p>TOPICAL DEPRESSION</p> <p><b>Climate depression is for real. Just ask a scientist</b></p> <p>By Madeleine Thomas on Oct 26, 2014</p> <p>f Share Tweet</p>	 <p>Stay interesting.</p> <p>FAST FORWARD</p> <p>IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD — HOW DO YOU FEEL?</p>  <p>WHY YOU SHOULD CARE</p> <p>Because even lab coats need hugs sometimes.</p> <p>By Meghan Walsh</p> <p>THE DAILY ISSUE • AUG 27, 2014</p>
<p>IS THIS HOW YOU FEEL?</p> <p>HOME THIS IS HOW SCIENTISTS FEEL? HOW DO YOU FEEL? FOR TEACHERS</p>  <p><b>The Scientists</b></p> <p>What follows are the words of real scientists. Researchers that understand climate change.</p>	 <p>limn</p> <p>Issues Contribute Blog About Us</p> <p>ISSUE NUMBER THREE: SENTINEL DEVICES</p> <p><b>The scientist as sentinel</b></p> <p>Climate scientists have a frightening message, but the publi Naomi Oreskes argues that the dispassionate ideal of sci</p> <p>f Read Naomi Oreskes</p>  <p>Scientists have been warning the world for a long time about the interference in the climate system," but they also struggle with ho People don't experience the climate system, people experience v inevitable that a day or two after "Superstorm" Sandy hit New Yor ask if it though Sandy would be a tipping point. Would this be the otherwise skeptical American public that climate change is under My immediate thought was that this event should be a tipping poi another matter. Virtually as soon as the floodwaters stabilized in I proclaimed "bleep!" were spinning their usual arguments, that r systemic climate change.</p> <p>These folks are formally correct, but then so was the tobacco ind lung cancer death proved smoking caused cancer. Ho one event definition climate is a pattern, and patterns can only be proved by made up of individual contributions. and for some time now scien</p>	 <p>NEW REPUBLIC</p>  <p><b>Fighting Climate Change Will Take More Than Science</b></p> <p>BY FAITH KEARNS December 15, 2008</p>

# Katharine Hayhoe, Texas Tech climate scientist & Evangelical Christian

- **Bonding and appreciating**: What do we have in common that we care about and can genuinely appreciate?
- **Connecting**: Given our shared values, why might we care about climate change?
- **Explaining**: Why is this happening? Why might we care?
- **Inspiring**: How can we work together to tackle this problem in a way that is compatible with our values?

## *Katharine Hayhoe, a Climate Explainer Who Stays Above the Storm*

By JOHN SCHWARTZ OCT. 10, 2016



Katharine Hayhoe photographed at Bull Run Park in Centreville, Virginia. "Katharine Hayhoe is a national treasure," said Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. Lexey Swall for The New York Times

LUBBOCK, Tex. — A member of Katharine Hayhoe's church asked her a question after service a couple of weeks ago: "Do you think our weather is getting more extreme?"

At the time, the question might have been the start of an argument with [Dr. Hayhoe](#), a climate scientist at [Texas Tech University](#) here. Instead, it led to a friendly discussion of the kinds of things they had both seen: Because of [climate change](#), the always shifting weather in West Texas was showing greater extremes, including more severe drought and fiercer inundations when storms came.

When she started her work spreading the word about climate change in Texas, very few people in the Lone Star State believed it was

## Sarah Myhre, University of Washington climate scientist & intersectional feminist

- Isn't afraid of making [waves](#).
- Considers herself an [advocate](#), not just for science but also feminism & anti-racism.
- Says: "Our job is [not to objectively](#) document the decline of Earth, so what does scientific leadership look like in this hot, dangerous world?"

We don't need to all agree with each other – [dissent is healthy](#). But, we do need to summon our voices and start shouting from rooftops."



theStranger

THINGS TO READ ▾ THINGS TO DO ▾

# SLOG

SCIENCE

## Does Being a Nice Personable Scientist Make Sense in Trump's America?

by [Sarah Myhre](#) • Jul 14, 2017 at 11:15 am

We face not so much a  
communication challenge  
as a relationship challenge.



# What does this mean for climate communication in cooperative extension?

- We are working in human-to-human, relationship-driven process. Think in terms of communities, not audiences.
- Learning to effectively engage calls on subjective skills – ability to navigate your own and other people's emotional states.
- Listening becomes equally important part of the communication process. Empathy and conflict tolerance are key!

