

Tips for Having Meaningful Climate Conversations

How to talk about climate without ruining the party vibes!

On the whole, women are [more worried yet less certain about the facts of climate change](#). And it is this uncertainty that makes us so nervous to talk about climate



change with our friends and family. We get it! We don't want to say the wrong thing. What will others think about us? We don't want to ruin the party vibes!

It doesn't help that climate coverage in women-friendly media outlets is next to nil. Last year, our colleagues at Clean Prosperity surveyed "women's" media and found lots of fashion tips and home organization hacks, but almost zilch about climate.

How can we talk about climate change when it feels like no one else is?

And this silence leads to more silence... but the thing is, people do care! In fact, [91%](#) of Canadians believe climate change is a serious issue. But like silence leads to more silence, talking can also lead to more talking!! **Every time you talk or post about climate, you're showing that people like you care.** Each conversation you have about climate change creates a small ripple, which can lead to more ripples, and eventually waves of systemic change! Before you know it, that small wave becomes an unstoppable tidal wave of people demanding, supporting, or implementing

strong climate policy and meaningful climate initiatives. **And it all started with you!**

So, now that we know why talking climate is so important, how do we do it? In episode 3 of Talk Climate to Me, we share a few tips on how to have meaningful climate conversations in real life, without being that annoying person at the cocktail party!



Here are our top tips:

Share your story:

1. Share why it matters to you - 'my basement flooded last night' is more relatable than 'stop global warming.' Or, 'I'm sad that there's not as much snow as there used to be, and I'm worried that my kids won't get to enjoy cross country skiing.' Your personal story is way more effective than hammering people with facts. If facts worked at convincing people, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Listen with empathy and curiosity:

1. Don't shame or judge people for knowing less than you or not doing 'enough' about climate change. We are all on different parts of the climate journey and criticism will only shut people out.
2. Try to listen for their fears, worries, experiences, and what is important to them. And continue the conversation by connecting with those things. It'll show that you are truly listening, which will encourage them to share more!

Practice:

1. Talking gets easier with practice. Or at least it feels a bit less awkward to share your passion for heat pumps!

Puppets for Change (from [Climate for Change](#) and [Trash Puppets](#)) also knows how difficult these kinds of conversations can be. They offer their own useful [tips](#) on how to manage them! Here are a few of our favourites:

1. *“Pause and breathe. If someone says something you disagree with, it’s tempting to jump straight in and respond. Take a moment to pause and breathe instead. This will help you collect your thoughts and come up with a better response.*
2. *Listen actively. Reflect back on what you heard to clarify and to prompt the person to explain further.*
3. *Ask questions. Ask open ended questions that get to the heart of why the person feels the way they do... if you are tempted to offer an opinion or advice, try to ask a question instead - one that invites the person to see things from your perspective.”*



A helpful tip: Try not to judge or place blame on who you are talking to!



So, what does one of these conversations look like IRL?

“Alright, I get the tips, but I need a real example!”, you say. Okay, okay!

On [Jimmy Kimmel Live](#), climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe practiced one of these conversations with Jimmy Kimmel (with Jimmy Kimmel playing the role of the cranky, climate denying uncle at thanksgiving dinner). Here is how their conversation went:

“Jimmy: The climate is the climate and the earth has been going through these cycles for thousands of years and there is nothing we can do about it.

Katherine: That’s not true! According to natural cycles, we should actually be getting cooler right now, instead we are getting warmer... Uncle Ernie, did you know China is beating the pants off the United States when it comes to clean energy? Are you OK with that because I am not!

Jimmy: No, I’m not at all!

Katherine: Exactly! And you know where we have the most wind and the most solar energy potential? Right up the middle of the country where you live uncle Ernie!

Jimmy: You’re saying we [have] the most wind out of anybody?

Katherine: That’s right!

Jimmy: Well, that’s good news!

Katherine: It is! It is! And you know what? We have the biggest army base in the States in Texas and it gets almost half its power from clean energy and it is saving us tens of millions of taxpayer dollars! I love that! Don’t you uncle Ernie?



Jimmy: I do love that!"

While this conversation was meant to be a little silly, Katherine Hayhoe gave a great example of a few of the points we talked about above. She took a deep breath, and did not shame or judge “uncle Ernie”. She also pivoted the conversation to something he cared about!



At the end of the day, these conversations will not be perfect when you first start out. You might feel a little awkward, or maybe disappointed with how they go. But don't worry, it will take practice. You're not going to change someone's mind instantly. And remember, sharing is caring!

By talking to others about climate, you are showing that not only you care for the health of the planet, but for the wellbeing of future generations to come.

Want to learn more tips on how to talk about climate? Check out these links:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T6ruEx4bhg>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVjmGVufADk>
3. www.carbonconversationsto.com
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHPZw0zbHNE>
5. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190513-it-only-takes-35-of-people-to-change-the-world>