

How to have Climate Conversations

In the framework of Our Climate Declaration, we want to make changes in the way we live and we want to do that with other people. We want to make big changes, with lots of other people. We need to talk about Climate. We'd like to enthuse other people to action, ideally alongside ourselves. How can we have good climate conversations, and lots of them?

We want both to nurture the relationship with the other person or people, and to inspire them to action. There are transient conversations you might have with the person sitting next to you on the bus, or at a party. (Who knows how you might influence that person in 10 minutes?) And there are conversations you might seek out because you'd like to generate some climate action in your group or organization. It makes sense to choose to talk to those most likely to be oriented to action on climate change. Let's consider such a conversation with a colleague.

Conversation with someone you know

Thoughts ahead of time

Your goals: Nurture the relationship, enthuse them about the issue and enlist their help in climate action.

Their readiness: Best scenario: they may be clearly worried about climate change and grateful for an opportunity to do something constructive. But we don't always have a best scenario. People are at various stages of readiness for climate action, and the conversation must be tailored accordingly..

Your demeanour: Empathic, honest, enthusiastic but not pushy. Listening carefully to doubts, fears, anxieties.

Opening a conversation:

Our Climate Declaration is a splendid tool for this. "I'm really impressed with this. I endorsed it online. I'd like to go further than that in acting on it. Take a look." Note that it takes several minutes to read. Your colleague

may want to take it away and think about it. Points to emphasise early in the conversation are:

- This is not a petition to sign and forget. We do want people in large numbers to endorse this Declaration, but also to see it as a gateway to action at all levels which will eventually lead to action at a government level.
- Values you know you share with your colleague, for example, caring for Nature, the future of our grandchildren, the issue of the projected economic costs of climate change, a religious or spiritual perspective.
- Encourage your colleague to go to the website to read more and to endorse the Declaration. Or to sign it on your paper sheet.

Moving to Action

You wish to ask your colleague to help you to bring your organization into action on climate change. You may refer to the conclusion of the Declaration where it says ‘We will work together at every level of society...’ or you may ask your colleague if any action ideas occurred to them. You may give an account of the action plan of an organization similar to yours (business, school, church, local council). You may outline your idea of calling a meeting to discuss this, and refer to some of the possibilities of action.

Responding to doubts, fears, anxieties and ambivalence

“I’m very worried about climate change, but I don’t want to stick my neck out and be seen as a stirrer.”

“You know what Ernie and George think about climate change. They’d never agree to do anything as a group.”

Listen carefully to such comments. Don’t rush to dismiss them. You might respond with a question: “Do you think if some of the low emissions ideas were also cost-saving that Ernie and George might come around?”

Having fun, valuing relationships

Many folk who take action on issues say that one of the best things about doing so is the opportunity to work with wonderful people. It’s good to be aware of this. In the words of a seasoned activist, ‘Make every meeting a party and every party a meeting.’ Meet over a coffee or a beer. Find ways

of bringing fun or humour to your larger meetings. Treasure these relationships.

PS It may be helpful to carry a plastic folder of several copies of the Declaration and a copy of the sign-on sheet around with you in your handbag or briefcase.

Conversation with someone new to you

Let's go back to that bus conversation, or a conversation with someone you haven't previously known. We're social beings and we love to tell others about what we're doing, reading and thinking about. For those reading this website, sometimes that's Climate Change. This is a natural conversation starter. On the other hand, Climate can be a difficult issue, and you may avoid it in your social interactions because of this.

Your goals: Enjoy the moment, enjoy the brief encounter; see how far this person might walk with you towards climate action.

Their readiness: You'd like to understand a bit about this person's worldview and values. Asking what's important to them, what they care about, what they're passionate about can take you a fair distance in a short time toward understanding essential aspects of this person.

Your demeanour: And of course, you might reciprocate by talking about what you care deeply about.

From there, if the person is receptive, the pathway of the conversation can be quite like the one with a colleague, as above, using the Declaration (which, of course, you have with you) as a basis.

Action on Climate Change

1. Endorse the Declaration, on the website or on paper.
2. Read further on the website.
3. Print out the Declaration to encourage endorsement by others.
4. Consider taking the Declaration to an organization to which you belong – workplace, school, church etc.
5. Put it up on the noticeboard.

6. Talk to others who share your values about the idea of a climate action plan for the organization.
7. From here, refer to our guide to [forming a climate action plan](#).