

A Background
Module for Facilitators

COMMUNICATING ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING & HEAT RISK:

Challenges &
Strategies

MODULE OVERVIEW:

This module introduces peer-trainers to strategies for communicating about global warming and heat risk to motivate behavior change. Note that this is a background module for peer-trainers (i.e., it is not part of the teaching modules/curriculum), but peer-trainers are encouraged to apply what they learn here in their presentations to community audiences.

SESSION DURATION:
25–30 MINUTES

SLIDE 1: Communicating about Global Warming & Heat Risk: Challenges & Strategies

PURPOSE: To introduce the background module and to emphasize that the strategies presented here for communicating about global warming and heat risk to motivate behavior change are not the only strategies that can be used. For example, peer-trainers may have their own knowledge of and experience in communicating information to motivate behavior change (e.g., on climate-related and/or other topics). Therefore, the strategies shared should not be considered exhaustive, and peer-trainers should be encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences during presentation of the module.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. This module is designed to provide you with strategies for communicating about global warming and heat risk with your audience(s) to motivate behavior change.
2. This module is not part of the teaching modules/curriculum but rather is meant to help prepare you for teaching the content in Modules 1-5/the curriculum.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 2: Objectives

PURPOSE: To introduce the objectives for the Background Module and to provide peer-trainers with an overview of what they will learn. This is the Background Module roadmap.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. This module has three objectives designed to help you communicate successfully about global warming and heat risk to motivate behavior change.
2. The three objectives are:
 - a. To learn how to use communication to motivate behavior change
 - b. To learn about challenges for communicating about global warming and heat risk
 - c. To learn about strategies for communicating about global warming and heat risk
3. During this module, we will talk about each of these topics in detail.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 3: Conversation Starter

PURPOSE: This conversation starter is designed to create a break in the presentation and to help peer-trainers think critically about how the characteristics, beliefs, and values of their audience(s) might influence how to communicate about global warming and heat risk. Presenters may choose to ask peer-trainers only to reflect on the questions or to discuss them with others. Note that this Conversation Starter is optional. Presenters are also encouraged to create their own questions (or their own Conversation Starters at other points in the presentation) that they know will resonate strongly with peer-trainers.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- 1. Let's pause for a moment.
- 2. What do you know about the characteristics, beliefs, and values of your target audience(s)? How might that knowledge influence how you communicate with them about global warming and heat risk?
- 3. Would anyone like to share their ideas with the group?



KEY TALKING POINTS

NOTES:

SLIDE 4: Communication to Motivate Behavior Change

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with an overview of key points for communicating to motivate behavior change. Subsequent slides will explore these points in more detail, but in short, it is important to emphasize here that simply providing information is not enough. Rather, tailoring communication according to what peer-trainers know about their audience(s) (e.g., in terms of their characteristics, beliefs, and values) will increase the likelihood that it resonates more strongly and ultimately motivates behavior change.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. Simply providing information is not enough!
2. Know your audience and tailor your communication so that it resonates more strongly, for example:
 - a. What are the characteristics of your audience?
 - i. E.g., Are some audience members part of an at-risk group?
 - b. What are the beliefs and values of your audience?
 - i. E.g., Do audience members acknowledge global warming?
 - c. What does your audience want or need to know?
 - i. I.e., It is important to meet audience members where they are in terms of their interests, needs, and what they can do.
 - d. How can the information be communicated with cultural competence?
 - i. I.e., Are your characteristics, beliefs, and values the same as or different from those of your audience?
3. Interpersonal communication is more trusted and more likely to spread through personal/social networks—genuinely connect with your audience (e.g., reach people personally).
4. Reinforcement and positive feedback are key to long-term change.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 5: Know Your Audience – the US

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with the understanding that audience member stances toward global warming and heat risk may vary, as they tend to vary across the US. Also, to emphasize that knowing how audience stances may vary can be important for tailoring communication so that it resonates more strongly and is better received. Knowing how audience stances may vary can also help peer-trainers identify “early adopters,” that is, the audience members who are most likely to make behavior change and encourage others to do the same. The statistics presented in this slide are from the “Global Warming’s Six Americas” webpage within the Yale Program on Climate Communication website. To access the webpage for more information, visit: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/global-warmings-six-americas/>.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. As we discussed during the previous slide, understanding the characteristics, beliefs, and values of your audience is key to being able to tailor your communication so that it resonates more strongly.
2. A 2021 study across the US found six stances toward global warming:
 - a. Alarmed (26%)
 - b. Concerned (27%)
 - c. Cautious (17%)
 - d. Disengaged (7%)
 - e. Doubtful (11%)
 - f. Dismissive (11%)
3. People who are “alarmed” and “concerned” are more likely to adopt behavior change (i.e., “early adopters”) and talk about global warming and heat risk with others.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 6: Know Your Audience – San Diego County

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with some insight into how audience member stances toward global warming and heat risk may vary specifically within San Diego County, though the data presented here cannot be considered representative of all of San Diego County. Also, to again emphasize that knowing how audience stances may vary can be important for (1) tailoring communication so that it resonates more strongly and is better received, and (2) identifying “early adopters” (i.e., the people most likely to adopt behavior change and encourage others to do the same). The statistics presented in this slide are from the “Yale Climate Opinion Maps 2021” webpage within the Yale Program on Climate Communication website. To access the webpage for more information, visit: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. A 2021 study found these opinions about global warming in San Diego County:
 - a. 68% of people surveyed believe that “global warming will harm people in the US”.
 - b. 50% of people surveyed believe that “global warming will harm me personally”.
 - c. 64% of people surveyed believe that “global warming is already harming people in the US”.
 - d. 51% of people surveyed believe that they “have personally experienced the effects of global warming”.
2. As you can see, there is a fair amount of variation in opinions. The opinions of your audience members may vary too.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 7: Conversation Starter

PURPOSE: This conversation starter is designed to create a break in the presentation and to help peer-trainers think critically about applying their prior experience using communication to motivate behavior change to the communication of global warming and heat risk. Presenters may choose to ask peer-trainers only to reflect on the questions or to discuss them with others. Note that this Conversation Starter is optional. Presenters are also encouraged to create their own questions (or their own Conversation Starters at other points in the presentation) that they know will resonate strongly with peer-trainers.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. Let's pause for a moment.
2. Do you have experience using communication to motivate behavior change (on any topic)? Have you encountered challenges? Are there strategies you use to overcome those challenges?
3. Would anyone like to share their ideas with the group?



KEY TALKING POINTS

NOTES:

SLIDE 8: Audience Needs: Challenges & Strategies

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with some insight into potential communication challenges related specifically to audience “needs,” “views,” and “feelings” that they may encounter when teaching the curriculum and endeavoring to motivate behavior change, as well as strategies for addressing them. This slide covers communication challenges and strategies around audience needs. Subsequent slides will cover challenges and strategies around audience views and feelings.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- I. There are potential challenges related specifically to audience “needs,” “views,” and “feelings” that you may encounter when teaching this curriculum. Here we’ll cover a few of those challenges as well as strategies for addressing them, starting with audience “needs.”
 - a. One challenge is that people may need information or guidance about how to make change in their lives. Some strategies for addressing that challenge are to:
 - i. Show the behaviors/actions that you want to encourage, explain why, and make sure they are feasible and aligned with audience values.
 - ii. Target “trusted messengers” and “early adopters” – they are likely to share the information, and people tend to follow what others are doing around them.
 - b. Another challenge is that people may need to focus on other priorities, like meeting basic needs. A strategy for addressing that challenge is to:
 - i. Let people know that it’s ok if they can’t make changes right now, or that it’s ok to do whatever they can do.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 9: Audience Views: Challenges & Strategies

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with strategies for addressing potential communication challenges related specifically to audience “views” when teaching the curriculum and endeavoring to motivate behavior change.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- I. Here we’ll talk about some ways to address potential challenges related to audience views:
 - a. One challenge is that people may view global warming and heat risk as environmental or scientific problems, not as “people” problems. A strategy for addressing that challenge is to:
 - i. Establish (and emphasize!) clear relationships between global warming, heat risk, and individual/ community health.
 - b. Another challenge is that people may view global warming and heat risk as “distant threats” (i.e., something that impacts other places/people). Some strategies for addressing that challenge are to:
 - i. Use a combination of “universal” (or broadly applicable) and specific (or local/targeted) health and other information.
 - ii. Use images of people that look like the target audience.
 - iii. Use images of places that are familiar to the target audience (e.g., local neighborhoods).

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 10: Audience Feelings: Challenges & Strategies

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with strategies for addressing potential communication challenges related specifically to audience “feelings” when teaching the curriculum and endeavoring to motivate behavior change.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- I. Here we'll talk about some ways to address potential challenges related to audience feelings:
 - a. One challenge is that people may feel like they don't have the opportunity or voice to make change. A strategy for addressing that challenge is to:
 - i. Communicate not only about the problems but also about the solutions.
 - b. Another challenge is that people may feel like there is little hope in trying to address global warming and heat risk given the complexity and size of these issues. A strategy for addressing that challenge is to:
 - i. Tap into positive emotion and don't overwhelm.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 11: Sample Strategy: Saint Lucia Government

PURPOSE: To provide audiences with a real-life example in which many of the discussed communication strategies are utilized. This example is from a communication campaign initiated by the government of Saint Lucia, an island nation in the Eastern Caribbean. For more information on the campaign, visit:

<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents/Parties/Saint%20Lucia%20Climate%20Change%20Communications%20Strategy.pdf>.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- I. Here is an example of a communication campaign initiated by the government of Saint Lucia that includes many of the recommendations we’ve discussed, including:
 - a. The information is framed within audience values: “Global warming affects what Saint Lucians value most (i.e., health of families, economic prospects for youth, preservation of natural environment. All Saint Lucians must act together to create change.”
 - b. The information contains a universal (broad) message: “Global warming will lead to more intense storms; increased flooding at some parts of the year and longer dry spells in others; and threats to public health due to increased pests and disease.”
 - c. The information also contains a specific (targeted) message: “Warmer temperatures will mean more mosquitoes. Protect yourself from the vector-borne diseases that mosquitoes carry - use bug spray and mosquito nets, and clear stagnant water where mosquitoes breed.”
 - d. The tone of the communication doesn’t overwhelm. Instead, it expresses urgency while also telling people what they can do (i.e., there is hope)
 - e. The communication channels are diverse (and include “trusted messengers”): Traditional news media (e.g., newspapers, TV, radio), social media, trusted messengers.

KEY TALKING POINTS

NOTES:

SLIDE 12: Conversation Starter

PURPOSE: This conversation starter is designed to create a break in the presentation and to help peer-trainers think critically about what (if any) challenges they might encounter in communicating about global warming and heat risk with their audience(s), and what (if any) of the strategies shared they could use to address them. Presenters may choose to ask peer-trainers only to reflect on the questions or to discuss them with others. After presenting the questions, it is recommended that presenters advance to the next slide which provides a summary of the strategies discussed in previous slides. Peer-trainers can then reference those strategies in thinking about which they could potentially use to address communication challenges they think they might encounter with their audience(s). Note that this Conversation Starter is optional. Presenters are also encouraged to create their own questions (or their own Conversation Starters at other points in the presentation) that they know will resonate strongly with peer-trainers.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. Let's pause for a moment.
2. Are there any communication challenges you think you might encounter with your target audience(s)? What (if any) of the strategies that we've discussed here could you use to address them? Are there other strategies (not discussed here) that you might use as well?
3. While you're thinking, we'll advance to the next slide which has a summary of the strategies.

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 13: Summary of Strategies

PURPOSE: To provide peer-trainers with a summary of the strategies discussed in previous slides for addressing challenges related to audience needs, views, and feelings. It is recommended that presenters share this slide after introducing the Conversation Starter (slide 12) so that peer-trainers can reference the strategies in thinking about which they could potentially use to address communication challenges they think they might encounter with their audience(s).

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. Here is a summary of the strategies we discussed in previous slides:
 - a. Show the behaviors/actions that you want to encourage, explain why, and make sure they are feasible and aligned with audience values.
 - b. Target “trusted messengers” and “early adopters” - they are likely to share the information, and people tend to follow what others are doing around them.
 - c. Let people know that it’s ok if they can’t make changes right now, or that it’s ok to do whatever they can do.
 - d. Establish (and emphasize!) clear relationships between global warming, heat risk, and individual/community health.
 - e. Use a combination of “universal” (broadly applicable) and specific (local/targeted) health and other information.
 - f. Use images of people that look like the target audience.
 - g. Use images of places that are familiar to the target audience (e.g., local neighborhoods).
 - h. Communicate not only about the problems but also about the solutions.
 - i. Tap into positive emotion and don’t overwhelm.
2. Again, here are the Conversation Starter questions:
 - a. Are there any communication challenges you think you might encounter with your target audience(s)?
 - b. What (if any) of the strategies that we’ve discussed here could you use to address them?
 - c. Are there other strategies that you might use as well?
3. Would anyone like to share their ideas with the group?

KEY TALKING POINTS



NOTES:

SLIDE 14: Summary

PURPOSE: To reinforce the objectives of this module by highlighting key takeaways.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

1. Simply providing information is not enough!
 - a. Know your audience(s).
 - b. Interpersonal communication is more trusted.
 - c. Reinforcement and positive feedback are key to long-term change.
2. Communication challenges exist but so do strategies for addressing them – remember to focus on “early adopters”.

KEY TALKING POINTS



ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) INFORMATION:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For more information on strategies for communicating about global warming and heat risk to motivate behavior change, visit:

- George Mason Center for Climate Change Communication: <https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/>
- Yale Program on Climate Change Communication: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/>
- Yale Climate Opinion Maps: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>
- Yale “Global Warming’s Six Americas”: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/global-warmings-six-americas/>
- Climate Change in the American Mind, November, 2019: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-november-2019/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Toolkit for Public Health Outreach on Climate Change: https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/site_resources.htm
- National Climate Assessments: <https://www.globalchange.gov/nca5>
- California Climate Change Assessments: <https://climateassessment.ca.gov/>
- Community Based Social Marketing: <https://cbsm.com/>
- Tools of Change: <https://toolsofchange.com/en/tools-of-change>
- County of San Diego, Community Action Partnership 2020 Needs Assessment: https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/sd/community_action_partnership/cap-needs-assessment-report/Community%20Needs%20Assessment%20-FINAL%20Combined%2008.2021.pdf