

#TalkingClimate workshop

SCRIPT

This script is designed to accompany a training package commissioned by EIT Climate-KIC as a part of a citizen science #TalkingClimate project, a collaboration between Climate Outreach and EIT Climate-KIC. The resources include the #TalkingClimate Handbook, #TalkingClimate workshop: the trainers' guide, a slide deck and a script for running your own #TalkingClimate workshop.

Project team

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Terms of usage

This script and accompanying resources are freely available for anyone interested in running their own #TalkingClimate workshop. Permission to use these resources to deliver workshops is for non-profit use only.

Cite as: Webster, R. and Gellatly, J. (2020) #TalkingClimate workshop: script. Climate Outreach, Oxford.

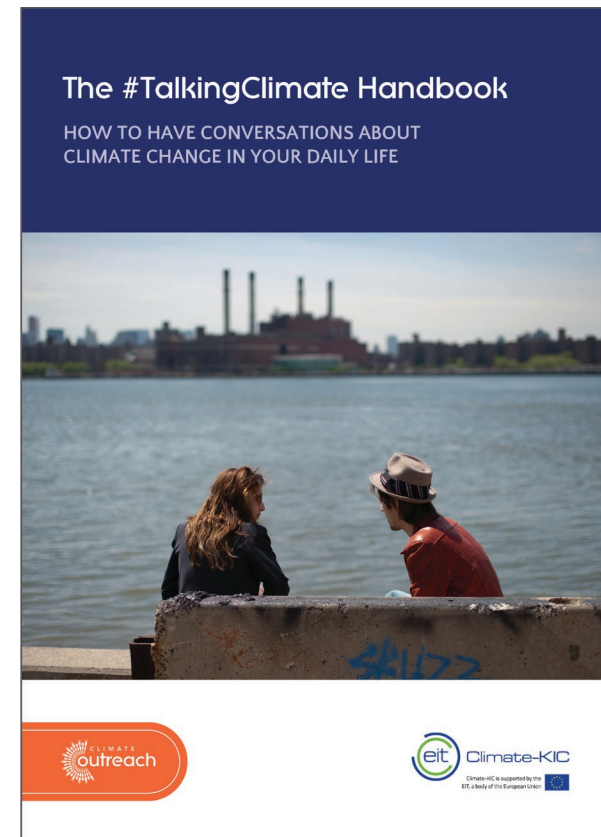
DECEMBER 2020



Background

The **2019 #TalkingClimate handbook** provides pragmatic and evidence-based principles for how to talk about climate change in daily life – on the bus, at work, at a sports event or at home over dinner.

The script below outlines a workshop exploring these principles. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the **#TalkingClimate handbook**, trainers' guide, and workshop slidedeck, also available at climateoutreach.org/reports/talking-climate-workshop.



The script

Facilitator activity	Script (in blue) or facilitator notes (in orange)	Suggested running time (mins)	Total time passed (mins)
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1. Arrival

Get everyone settled, provide a welcome, tea and coffee etc. If you're running your workshop online, allow a few minutes for everyone to arrive before getting started. Welcome everyone and run through the technology: how to mute / unmute themselves, how to use the chat box etc. Explain how they can get your attention if they want to speak or ask a question.		15 mins offline 10 mins online	0 (not counted as part of the two hours)
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2. Introductions and explaining #TalkingClimate

<p>Introduce yourself.</p> <p>Introduce the #TalkingClimate handbook and training materials (see script)</p> <p>Invite everyone in the room to take it in turns to very briefly introduce themselves by saying their name and one word that describes how they feel about taking</p>	<p>The script is based on the #TalkingClimate handbook. The handbook was created by a citizen science project in 2019.</p> <p>Core ideas behind #TalkingClimate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day-to-day conversations about climate change matter – even when they feel insignificant – because they are a part of wider social change. 	15	15
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<p>part in this workshop (reassure them there will be lots of talking in the workshop, this is just to get going!).</p> <p>(Introductions are invariably where timings can go off track, which is why we have recommended that participants simply say their name and one word to describe how they feel, as there will be lots of opportunity to learn much more about each other as the workshop goes on.)</p> <p>Introduce some useful tools for the workshop – shared airtime, communication methods, keeping to time.</p> <p>Thank everyone for being there and explain that you're really looking forward to the workshop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every community matters: Climate change conversations need to be taking place across different parts of society, or climate policies will be rejected. • Facts and figures are not enough: Providing more information about the causes and impacts of climate change is an important part of the puzzle in motivating people to take action – but it is not the whole story. Research shows that people are also strongly influenced by the stories we hear around us, our values, and the connections we form. #TalkingClimate is about providing the tools to build skills in this area. <p>The principles were developed through a process of synthesising evidence from the social science of climate change communications with insights from a wide diversity of sectors, including non-violent communication, non-violent direct action and advice for people talking about their sexuality, politics, faith and health choices, as well as a 2019 citizens science experiment where people tested the principles in action.</p>		
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3. Introducing REAL TALK			
<p>Write 'REAL TALK' down the left-hand side of a flipchart, or, if you're online, you could show a piece of paper or a slide with REAL TALK written down the left-hand side. Explain that you will be revealing more about this during the course of the workshop.</p>		2	17

4. EXERCISE 1: When do we talk about climate change – and when don't we?

Invite participants to choose pairs and discuss the following questions in their pairs (or, if online, you will need to explain the exercise, drop it into the chat box, and then put them into pairs) **(4 mins)**

- *Do you ever talk about climate change?*
- *When do you not talk about climate change? Who with and why not?*
- *What are some reasons people don't talk about climate change?*

When people have finished talking to their partner, explain that you'll take a few brief reflections from the room, popcorn-style. Listen to a variety of different reflections and ideas from participants. If you want, write them down on the flipchart. **(4 mins)**

Polls show that people are worried about climate change all around the world. But they also show that many **people don't talk about climate change much**. This informal, silent agreement not to talk about a topic that can feel frightening, distant or uncomfortable is known as '**climate silence**'.

This is changing, however, as people get more concerned about climate change, and it also varies a lot amongst different audiences. So, even if you talk about climate change a lot in your daily life, others may not.

Challenging climate silence matters because talking more openly feeds momentum for change. We've seen that before, with previous social movements around racism, sexism etc. Democratic governments are unlikely to take significant action without public support.

In a survey Climate Outreach ran in 2019 for the #TalkingClimate project, which involved 550 people from 56 countries around the world, people gave no. 1 below as the most important reason and no. 6 as the least important reason for not feeling confident about talking about climate change.

1. I don't know what to do about it.
2. People don't like feeling guilty about climate change.
3. It's overwhelming – people don't like talking about scary things.
4. It's separate from day to day life – people don't think it's relevant to them.
5. Some people don't believe in climate change at all.
6. I don't think other people care about it.

Around the world, people share the same reasons for not feeling confident about talking about climate change.

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5. EXERCISE 2: Talking with different audiences

Invite participants to choose pairs and discuss the following questions (or, if online, you will need to explain the exercise, drop it into the chat box, and then put them into pairs). **(4 mins)**

The pair quickly identifies between themselves someone who they might be having a conversation with. Example possibilities include a 'cool' teenager, a retired farmer, your dad, a conservative politician, a teenage mother etc. Whoever they want to choose is fine.

Invite participants to think about the following questions:

- Where would this person go on holiday?
- What are their three core values (one word each, e.g. success, friendship, curiosity)?
- What have the participants got in common with this person?

When people have returned from the exercise, ask for their reflections on what they have in common with the person they chose and what that might mean for having a conversation with them about climate change.

This exercise is designed to get participants thinking about the core principles behind having a good conversation.

It opens up the idea of approaching a conversation as a process of respecting each other and finding common ground, rather than treating it as an argument that you are going to win or lose. Arguments emphasise the difference between you, but the quality of your exchange is likely to be deeper and more open if you emphasise your similarities.

It also opens up the idea that different sorts of people will respond differently to the sort of language that is used in a conversation.

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6. Introducing the 'R' and (second) 'L' in REAL TALK

Use the previous exercise as a route into introducing two new concepts (below) for having good conversations from the #TalkingClimate handbook:

As you introduce new concepts you can start to fill in the REAL TALK mnemonic on your flipchart (or, if online, on your piece of paper or slide) for participants to see.

The first concept is:

Respect your conversational partner and find common ground.

The second is:

Learn from your conversational partner.

In the #TalkingClimate research, one principle emerged as particularly important:

Respect your conversational partner and find common ground.

Many people feel blamed and judged when they talk about climate change, which is likely to make them defensive or even cause them to withdraw from the conversation.

The idea of Non-Violent Communication (NVC) was developed in the 1960s as a way of helping people to relate to each other more effectively, particularly in situations where there is conflict. Observing the feelings and needs of someone else, without blame or criticism, is core to NVC, creating a respectful understanding of what others are experiencing.

Find out what you have in common with the person you are talking to and show them that you respect their concerns, priorities and values. Finding out what you have in common with each other will build trust and connection, while having an argument tends to emphasise the difference between you.

This also relates to another principle:

Learn from your conversational partner: See your conversation as a way to learn about how others think about climate change, about the topic itself – and about how to have a good conversation. Treat each conversation as a small, informal experiment, learning along the way.

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7. Introducing the 'E' in REAL TALK

<p>Ask how people feel in a good conversation – relaxed, tense, engaged?</p> <p>Use this as a jumping-off point to explore:</p> <p>Enjoy yourself</p> <p>If there's time, you could also ask the group to think about a conversation that particularly influenced them. How did they react at the time?</p> <p>In this situation, people quite often say that they didn't show how affected they were at the time, or that they argued back but then thought about what the other person said afterwards. This highlights that a 'successful conversation' isn't always obvious at the time, and we may have influenced someone else without realising it.</p>	<p>Enjoy yourself: If you enjoy yourself, you are far more likely to be authentically engaged with, and connected to, the person you are talking to – and they are more likely to feel positive about the conversation too.</p> <p>Here are some tips to help you enjoy yourself and relax into the conversation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's much easier if you are not stressing. Relax and take your time. • Pick your moment. • Use positive body language. • "Can we talk about this again?" Seek to end on a positive note. • Don't judge your conversation too harshly – treat each one as a little experiment, rather than as a major test. 	15	60
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COMFORT BREAK

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8. EXERCISE 3: Telling your story

<p>Invite participants to choose pairs (or, if online, you will need to explain the exercise, drop it into the chat box, and then put them into pairs). The pair should then designate a person A and a person B.</p>	<p>For person A, this is a deep listening exercise. Their job is to ask the questions one by one, and to give the other person the time to respond. Person A should not jump in with their opinions, experiences or ideas. Lots of people find this difficult!</p>	15	80
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For the first 4 minutes, person A is the 'asker' and person B is the 'teller'. Person A asks person B the following questions.

- *When did you start caring about climate change? Was there a particular moment that you can remember?*
- *What action are you taking on climate change now?*
- *How do you feel about that?*

Person A should not do anything except ask these questions. The only exception to this rule is if person B gets totally stuck – then person A could prompt them with some kind of open question, like “Was that difficult?”, “How did that go?”, just to help them along.

Person A should then spend 30 seconds feeding back to person B what it was like listening to the story and anything that really struck them in what person B said.

Then the pair should swap roles so person B is the 'asker' and person A the 'teller'.

They should then spend another 30 seconds reflecting on the experience together.

After everyone has completed the exercise the **facilitator** should invite a general discussion, with popcorn-style feedback to the whole room. Invite reflections first about what the 'telling your story' part of the exercise felt like, and then what the 'listening' part of the exercise felt like. **(3 mins)**

For **person B**, this is a **storytelling exercise**. In this exercise, people often tell interesting and touching stories about their history and relationship with climate change. They realise the power of their own story – and that they don't have to know every statistic about climate change to be able to communicate powerfully about it.

9. Introducing the 'AL' and 'T' in 'REAL TALK'

Use the previous exercise as a route into introducing the following concepts, from the #TalkingClimate handbook, for having good conversations:

Ask questions

Listen, and show you've heard

Tell your story

Introduce each concept using the script opposite. As you introduce each concept you can start to fill in the 'AL' and 'T' of REAL TALK on your flipchart (or, if online, on your piece of paper or slide) for participants to see.

Tell your story: If you're not a scientist it's easy to think that you are not qualified to talk about the climate crisis. But research shows that humans aren't motivated by statistics: we are motivated by stories. Your personal story is a powerful tool of communication, whoever you are talking to and however much technical information you know. It can bring the issue of climate change, which can often feel distant from day to day concerns, closer to home.

Ask questions: Rather than lecturing your conversational partner about your views, ask about what climate change means to them. Give them the space to reflect on their own experiences and views on the issues.

Listen, and show you've heard: Climate change can feel like a distant problem, separate from day to day concerns. Asking someone else questions about their concerns, feelings and responses to climate change can help them connect with the issue.

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10. EXERCISE 4: Taking action

Invite participants to choose pairs (or, if online, you will need to explain the exercise, drop it into the chat box, and then put them into pairs) **(4 mins)**:

- Name one action that you know of that is being taken to address climate change that has inspired you.

Then

- Name one action on climate change that you would like to take, but haven't managed to do yet.

Invite the room to reflect on their conversations. **(6 mins)**

Then fill in the 'A' in 'TALK' with 'Action makes it easier' and explain the findings from the research (see script). **(5 mins)**

Action makes conversations easier: In the research for the #TalkingClimate handbook, Climate Outreach found that people who were taking some kind of action – even if it felt small, personal and not in line with the extent of the problem – found it was much easier to start a climate change conversation. The idea of doing 'something' makes the topic easier to address, and the intimidating information about climate change easier to cope with.

Action doesn't only matter in and of itself, but also because it influences others: People make decisions about their behaviour partly based on what others they respect and trust are doing. Talking about what you've done may move the person you are talking to closer to a position where they want to do something themselves

Encouraging 'efficacy': Communications research shows that people need a sense of efficacy in order to take action – a belief that they can personally do something, and that the thing they do will be effective. In presenting your own actions, emphasise that they are doable and realistic. But also encourage your conversational partner to reflect on their own path and what makes sense for the person they are.

Action makes you happier: Research shows that people taking action to reduce their emissions also tend to be happier! A growing body of work suggests it is possible to live better by consuming less.

Write 'Action makes it easier.'

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11. Introduce 'Action makes it easier, but doesn't fix it'

Add 'but doesn't fix it' at the end of 'Action makes it easier', so that it now reads:

Action makes it easier (but doesn't fix it).

It's likely that the conversation above will cover topics of being overwhelmed and grief. Whilst we're not going to go into this in depth in this workshop, as it is a huge and important topic in and of itself, you can explain the opposite and give people some pointers for more information (see script).

In the #TalkingClimate research, more than one in 10 conversations struggled because of a feeling of being overpowered by the size of the problem, experiencing a sense of individual powerlessness in the face of the need for systemic change.

If this happens it can help to:

- explicitly acknowledge the sense of paralysis and helplessness – to speak openly and honestly about it, without drowning in it
- pair conversations about the impacts of climate change with discussion about potential solutions – particularly sharing what you feel able to do (see discussion above)
- re-emphasise the link between individual and systemic change

It's not something we're going to go into in depth in this workshop as it's such a big topic, but for more information on how to deal with the grief and paralysis that can come up around climate change, one recommendation is the 'Work That Reconnects' by Joanna Macy and, in particular, her work and book *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy*, which is available in multiple languages. We'll include this in a list of recommendations that you can write down at the end of the workshop.

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12. EXERCISE 5: Making a commitment

<p>Go around the group and ask everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they feel differently about having climate change conversations now • if they are willing to make a commitment to having a few climate change conversations – maybe 5?– and seeing how they go <p>Introduce</p> <p>Keep going and keep connected</p> <p>If they're comfortable with it, participants could take each other's numbers or email addresses to keep supporting each other in the future and to keep sharing experiences.</p>	<p>Some of the participants in the #TalkingClimate research told us that the most useful part of it wasn't the advice we provided: it was the sense of being part of a wider effort, which encouraged them to keep having climate change conversations when they might not otherwise have done so.</p> <p>They highlighted 'community' as the most important factor encouraging them to keep having climate change conversations in the future.</p>	5	115
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13. Close and feedback

<p>It is helpful to gather feedback at this point, either informal verbal feedback or a simple form to fill in, so that you can learn and improve for future workshops.</p>	<p>We would be very open to any feedback you have about the structure of this workshop.</p>		
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Changing times and optional extras

If you don't have very much time:

If you only have a small amount of time – say 25–30 minutes – we recommend that you run **Exercise 3: Telling your story**, then briefly present the REAL TALK mnemonic to the group. This exercise encapsulates the core learning in the #TalkingClimate handbook, giving participants the opportunity to focus on telling their story, as well as listening and respecting someone else's experience. It often prompts interesting conversations, and gives participants the opportunity to connect with and learn from each other in a small amount of time.

If you want to use 'telling your story' as a starting point:

You can also encourage participants to jot down some notes from Exercise 3: Telling your story about what experience they found themselves describing. This can be used as the beginnings of a 'script' for talking to people about their climate story. It also creates an opportunity for them to talk about the evidence base behind climate science in a powerful way. If they want to, they can look up facts and figures afterwards, to weave into their story, so they feel really confident about telling it.

If you want to explore role-playing and exploring open questions:

OPTION 1 - Invite the participants to reflect on useful phrases to use when seeking to connect with someone who they may not agree with. Then present a few ideas. Here are some that we have come up with:

Sample useful phrases

- "I really agree with you on that."
- "I find that really hard as well..."
- "I hadn't really thought about that before/thought about it that way before."
- "That's a good point, I never thought of that."
- "Like you said..."
- "I respect the way you..."
- "We don't agree on this but..."
- "You know what it's like to have experienced that..."

OPTION 2 - Invite the participants to role-play a conversation with someone about climate change, with a particular emphasis on asking open questions, respecting the other person and really listening to the response. Bear in mind that only a few people may feel confident enough to do this, so you may want to invite someone who does feel confident enough to role-play in front of everyone else.

One way of exploring this is to experiment with the impact of asking different sorts of questions, and what that might mean for the conversation.

For example:

Very challenging or confrontational questions:

A: ... *And so climate change is a huge problem I'm really concerned about it. Are you concerned?*

B: *No not really, I've got a lot of other things to worry about.*

This question was too confrontational. The person might have said yes, but in this case they responded honestly and in reaction to the challenge.

Closed questions:

A: ... *I work on climate change. Would you be interested in knowing more about how it will affect your life?*

B: *No thank you.*

Open questions on safe subjects that encourage participation:

For example:

A: *The reason I've come to be so concerned is that the weather is changing so much. It's so variable and extreme – those floods we had last month were the worst on record. Have you seen any changes in the weather or weird weather over your lifetime?*

B: *Yes it's definitely not the way it used to be when I was a kid...*

Then follow up:

A: *Tell me, I'm really interested – how was the weather different when you were growing up?*

B: *(Explains)*

A: *Do you think these changes are because of climate change? It's what the scientists are saying, after all.*

Role-play building a question around your current situation (for example, a train journey) and then weaving in climate change.

A: ... I could have taken the car to go to see my mother, but I wanted to take the train because I think it's important that we use cars much less and use public transport. And it's so much nicer isn't it?

B: Yes it is nice... It's fast and you get to meet people and talk to them.

A: I also think it's important to do something on climate change. I'm very concerned about what the scientists are telling us and I'm trying to really reduce my pollution to make some contribution. Is that why you take the train?

B: No, not really – but I do try to do other things to make a contribution: I really try to recycle as much as I can.

A: Oh I completely agree – I hate waste. But I also try to do some of the other things around what's causing climate change. So, for example, I try not to fly – that's difficult but I think it's those bigger things that are really important.