

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT SOLUTIONS

The solution to climate change is simple- we have to dramatically cut our greenhouse gas emissions and move out of the fossil fuel age. Reductions come from three methods: reducing demand for energy, increasing the efficiency of the energy we do use; and replacing fossil fuels with so called renewable energy. We need to do all three of these together.

1. RENEWABLE ENERGY

Renewable energy draws on new technologies- solar, wind and tidal/wave power- which use natural energy sources rather than burning fossil fuels. Many electricity company in Britain already offer to supply consumers with electricity from renewables. There are many pilot projects already running which show the potential of renewables:

- wind power- by 2010 Denmark will produce a third of its national electricity from renewables.
- solar electric panels (called photovoltaic panels) By 2020 Germany will install 100,000 houses.
- solar hot water-many people in Britain already heat their water directly with solar energy.

The price of solar energy is already falling dramatically and the new wind technologies are already producing electricity at a lower price than coal generation. All that is needed is sufficient investment and an end to the huge hidden subsidies to fossil fuel generation.

- **Ask if anyone has solar hot water or buys "green" energy from their electricity company.**

2. INCREASING EFFICIENCY

Our use of energy is wasteful and highly inefficient. Increasing efficiency involves achieving the same service with less energy.

Strangely the single biggest producer of Greenhouse Gases is not heavy industry, it's our homes- using nearly half all the energy in the country. In Britain we have the oldest worst insulated housing stock in Britain and it's the poor and old people who suffer most. Every year 60,000 people die from "cold related" illnesses- half of these directly related to cold damp housing. Britain needs to totally renovate its old housing, and recognise that people have a right to warm housing that they can afford to heat.

Electricity is the first place to look for efficiencies- so much energy is wasted in generating, transmitting and then using electricity that it delivers only one quarter of the energy in the original fuel. Using electricity for heating and cooking is clearly extremely wasteful. A new domestic condensing gas boiler delivers more than three times as much heat from a unit of gas than heating using electricity generated from that same gas. Electrical appliances can be very inefficient too- new models of fridges and freezers (half the electricity use in the average home) use half as much energy as old models.

- **Draw attention to wasteful things you've seen recently.**
- **Point out wasteful things in the room you're talking in that are wasteful-single glazing on the windows, heating on in summer, air conditioning rather than ventilation, old style light bulbs.**

3. CHANGING OUR ENERGY INTENSIVE LIFESTYLES

We have to think carefully about how we live and find ways of living more simply. Simple ways of reducing demand include:

- turning down our home heating, especially in rooms we don't use much.
- stop driving cars everywhere- they cost a fortune, pollute the atmosphere, clog up the roads, kill thousands and destroy neighbourhoods and local shops. Even if we do have cars, we have no reason for gas-guzzling sports utility vehicles like Rangelovers and the Ford Explorer which use twice the petrol of a normal car (and are more dangerous too).
- jet planes are HUGE oil consumers. We must rethink air transport.
- buy local food and support local farmers- or even grow our own vegetables.
- stop filling our houses with ever larger piles of "stuff".
- re-using materials as much as we can.
- **Ask the audience if we really need all these wasteful things. For example ask: Do we really need out of season green beans flown from Kenya in Africa? Do we really need to drink mineral water in a plastic bottle trucked from France? Do we really need a new heated conservatory that doubles our heating bills or sit outside a pub on a cold day under a heater? Why do we need to fly to Scotland or Paris to save 2 hours on a train?**

4. BUT HOW DO WE GET THERE?

We're told that we can't change the world, but of course nothing is ever going to change if people believe that and don't even try. In reality it's not that hard at all, as history shows us again and again, all it needs is a few people to believe they can make a difference. Everyone knows we have a problem and everyone's waiting for someone to do something. We can be the start.

- **Give historical examples of where individual protest has been decisive in changing things — civil rights in the USA, campaign against apartheid in South Africa, banning slavery, creating safe working conditions.**

What is more- when everyone is united in overcoming a common threat (such as happens in wars, natural disasters) anything is possible. In the Second World War, the whole economy and society changed almost overnight. Why can't we find this motivation in peace time against a threat that is even greater?

- **If there's anyone old enough to remembers the Second World War, ask if they remember what it was like when everyone had a common purpose.**

There are four stages of what people in the audience can do:

Level one is in our own lives. By accepting the scale of the problem and our own involvement in it, by setting goals for reducing our own emissions. After all we can't ask other people to do something that we refuse to do.

- **Give examples of changes you've made in your life-such as giving this talk!**

- **Ask who in the audience still uses old style electric bulbs not low energy models. Suggest that replacing all their bulbs can be their very first action (only £1.50 each from Ikea-pardon the advert!).**

Level two is acting locally. This could be as simple as talking to your friends and people at work, spreading information encouraging them to make changes. It could involve putting pressure on your employer, the local council, local organisations or companies. It could be forming a local protest group. There are any number of issues to work on: wasteful energy use, transport, information and education

Level three is acting nationally. Get political- challenge the government and national organisations and companies- demanding that they make changes. Supporting national campaigns and protests.

Level four is acting internationally. This is harder, but there are still many ways that we can put pressure on international companies, foreign governments such as the US, and demanding that our own government takes a lead in pushing for real change.

- **Draw on examples you know of ordinary people who simply decided one day that they would do something on climate and started initiatives.**

5. THINGS TO AVOID

OVERPLAYING THE GUILT

If you harass people too much and try to make them feel guilty they will simply stop listening.

You need to say that you recognise it is very hard for most people to change the way they live, and that they can start with a few simple changes at home (which will save them money anyway). You can also encourage people to focus their frustration over the need for a car on pushing for local and national changes in public transport and transport policy

OVERPLAYING THE RENEWABLES ARGUMENTS

The campaign for renewable technology is strong and well supported by environment groups. Its sexy and exciting and futuristic. But don't make people think this is the whole solution- it's cutting emissions that counts, which needs dramatic changes in efficiency and demand changes.

OVERPLAYING THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFESTYLE CHANGES

The scale of the problem is so huge and global that people will rightly feel that their personal changes are going to make a tiny contribution. They need to know that this is just a start, and that the real change comes from spreading the word, persuading other people to change and political organising.