

Moving people

The aim of your talk is to move people: move in both senses of the word; to touch people's hearts and move them emotionally; and move them forwards into taking personal responsibility and action.

The starting point should always be yourself. What moves you personally, makes you angry and makes you want to do something? Is there anything in your life experience that you draw on to understand this problem and what it means? Things you've seen, places you've visited, memories from your childhood or your experiences as a parent?

We still have very little idea of what the arguments are that act as the 'magic bullets' that motivate people to do something.

Your experiences in talking to people can be of great help so if you find arguments that work please share them with us. Here are some ideas of arguments that we have already found can work:

1. Why are people not doing more?

People find it hard to understand why climate change can be such a huge problem when there seems to be so little said or done about it. Before they can take action they need to understand that two powerful psychological forces are at work at all levels of society, fed at every stage by the powerful lobby of corporations that want to prevent any tangible action.

Denial: there is a mass denial of the problem and failure to engage with it. It seems so huge and so unapproachable that people prefer to pretend that it's not happening. There is outright denial in some of the media, or the partial denial we hear from politicians who use strong words to describe the problem but fail to follow through with any meaningful action.
Diffusion of Responsibility: everyone is waiting for someone else to do something. The public often waits for direction and leadership. Governments wait for voters to demand action. Business waits for governments to regulate.

But by recognising these forces we can also break the cycle of denial and diffusion - as soon as people become active and vocal in sufficient numbers.

2. Crime

The destruction of the weather is the greatest crime ever committed because it is the theft of the future. In order to fund our desire for ever more things, ever more energy, ever higher consumption, we are sacrificing that future. And the failure to do anything is no less a crime. We cannot now claim ignorance. In legal terms we are all now 'accessories before the fact' - we know the crime is being committed and we must do everything we can to prevent it.

3. Social justice

If we are privileged members of the rich world, then we are the cause of the problem.

But those who will suffer most are the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world who already live on the edge of survival: subsistence farmers in drought areas, people killed by storms, floods droughts and famines, people who live and survive on flood plains such as in Bangladesh, who will lose their land with nowhere to go. As climate chaos mounts, millions of people will be killed or displaced as a result of our behaviour.

4. Building a better world

It doesn't have to be like this. People spend hours every week sitting in a car, choking in traffic jams, to commute to jobs they don't enjoy, to earn the money to pay for that car, to buy unhealthy convenience food grabbed in the superstore or buy the holiday they need to recover. We are working longer hours than ever, more stressed than ever, families break up under the strain of just keeping on top of the debts - and all to buy things that don't even make us happy.

So it's not just about stopping climate change, it's about a better world where people can live more simply but better. And it's about social justice too - providing good cheap (free?) public transport, local services, good housing and safe streets for our children.

5. Social justice in Britain

All the measures to combat climate change- better insulated homes - more public transport, supporting local products and markets - are desirable in their own right to confront social inequality in Britain. We have the oldest, most energy inefficient housing stock in Europe. Every year sixty thousand people die in Britain from cold-related causes, half of them because they can't afford to heat their homes. A warm efficient home is a basic human right. So is mobility: a third of people have no car. They live with the pollution and danger of cars but have to use the worst public transportation in Europe. Combating climate change means providing good, well-insulated housing, cheap, efficient public transport and supporting local communities, not transnational corporations and global markets.

6. Political transformation

Confronting climate change is the key to confronting global capitalism. This can be the issue that finally persuades people that things have to change because many of the causes are structural and result from the power of corporations and the ever-expanding global markets.

7. Future generations

We are spending our children's inheritance. We all want the best for our children but we are bringing them into a world of increasing instability and weather chaos. They will have to deal with our failure to act and they will have every right to turn to us and say 'How could you do this when you knew what would happen?'

8. Economics

If we wanted to, we could create thousands of new jobs and new industries by embracing the challenges of climate change and investing in insulation, energy efficiency, solar power, and new transport mechanisms. North Sea oil is already running out and soon we will be spending tens of billions of pounds importing oil from some of the most repressive countries in the world.

9. Global stability

Climate change threatens to bring instability throughout the world with new wars being fought over water resources or land. The fossil fuel economy already creates global instability, forcing us to fight wars to protect the flow of oil or forcing us to support regimes that viciously repress their own people. Already access to water is creating tensions throughout the Middle East.

10. Mass extinctions

Many people care deeply about the protection of the world's environment, of endangered species or tropical rainforests. But climate change is the biggest threat they have ever faced. Vast areas of the world will turn to desert or burn down. The Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) estimates that just one hundred years of climate change will drive a third of the world's species to extinction. And that's just the start.

11. Personal memory and change

All the things we know, love, and remember will change and many will go forever. Snow is becoming rarer and rarer and soon many children will never experience a snowball fight. Birds like the robin will disappear. Trees will die in ever worsening droughts. Our entire countryside will change and new weeds will take over. Many of the favourite plants in our gardens no longer able to survive the new weather.

12. The absurdity

We are facing climate chaos and we are buying bigger and bigger cars and houses, flying half way around the world for a week in the sun, then eating food flown half the way round back for us. People looking back from the future will be amazed at our stupidity.

These are a few ideas on how you can move people in your talk, but if you want a 'template talk' click here: <http://risingtide.org.uk/resources/factsheets/template>