Climate of Possibility

Mistakes of Climate Comms:

We are fighting the wrong battle.

Much of the bandwidth of organizations and climate influencers is used trying to convince people that climate change is real. But most people, especially in the US and Europe, already believe that climate change is real and that it's a human made problem.

We think that fear will motivate people.

While many of us came into the climate movement because we are afraid about the future, most humans don't choose action when they are afraid, they freeze. If the goal of our movements is to catalyze action, we have to get people to fight, not freeze.

We don't assign a villain.

We often say "climate change is causing x". Climate change isn't something that feels tangible to fight. This empty blame is repeated by the media over and over.

The key this—people do things. We need to name those people. We need to be saying "[bad person] is causing x." Then there's someone to organize against.

We don't talk about solutions.

While most people believe in human-made climate change, most people don't know what to do about it. We need to show what's already happening, talk about big ways we've come together to solve large problems in the past, and give clear, simple ideas for solutions that are both digestable and will create impactful change.

Our urgency exhausts people.

The world is really hard right now. People are struggling to make ends meet and get through the day. So they don't want to listen to us when we are telling them that we only have 12 years, 10 years, that we're already out of time.

We have to hold two truths—this issue is urgent and we must act, and also, running around with our hair on fire is going to push away more people from our movement than it brings in.
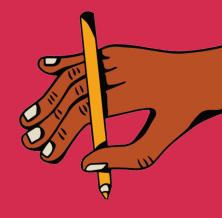
We don't make the impacts of climate change real for people.

By focusing on communities far away from our audiences, we reenforce the idea that climate change is something that's happening far away, to people not like us. We need to be talking about what's happening in people's backyards—and to the people and places that they love.

Learn more at ClimateOfPossibility.org

How we shift:

Principles that promote hope and catalyse action.

Spread hope and defiance.
Our fear tactics have been very successful at one thing: making many people—mostly young people— feel like there's nothing that can be done to stop a climate apocalypse.

We've already went over how that's not the place where we need to be, and in fact, most people (61% of Americans) aren't already hopeless (despite our best efforts!)

Let's stop trying to scare people, and start bring comfort to those that have fallen victim to our previous fatalism. This isn't about sugar coating things, it's about allowing people to find a way into the work.

Make things clear.
We need to use accessible language, and limit how much we rely on confusing data.

This doesn't mean we can't use scientific information, it means we have to be thoughtful about meeting people where they are at.

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Make winning seem possible.
We can make people want to be a part of our fight by making them feel like it's possible to win.

To do this, we need to talk about wins we've already had, how we've come together in the past, and celebrate when we have a victory.

Connect climate action and morality.
People in America, especially people of faith, are highly motivated by connecting climate change and morality[2]

We can bring people into our movement by making it clear that we are on the good and moral side of history.

Make things real.
We need to use stories and images that reflect the audiences that we're trying to move.

This helps to make our narratives real for people, which builds an emotional attachment and pushes people towards action. It's harder to give up on a fight when we see ourselves and the people we love as part of it.

Talk about solutions.
We need to talk about real solutions, about things we are already doing, and about what more is possible.

Give people easy to understand things to grab onto and organize around.

Make it sound popular.
No one wants to be on the losing team. We need to talk about how "more and more people" making changes. People are already taking action.

Present taking action as something exciting! Show images of people together. This isn't about sugar coating things, it's about making people have FOMO about sitting on their couch.