Let’s Talk Climate and Health:

Messages to Motivate Americans
Marching with a Message...
Communications: Today’s Presentation

- Building Climate Leadership
- What we know: Messengers & Audience
- “Let’s Talk Climate & Health” Communications Guidance
  - What works: Tested Phrases and Messages
  - Key Steps to Crafting Your Personal Message
ecoAmerica

Build a critical mass of institutional leadership, public support, and political will for climate solutions in the United States.

• Shift the national narrative
• Build collective impact
• Provide programs + resources
Offerings

- Resources
- Communications
- Summits and forums
- Organizational partnerships
- Sector-wide collaboration
Research
Who is Your Audience?

Americans and Climate Change: Research, Polling, Values
Concern

Americans are concerned about pollution’s impact on health.
- 66% worry about environmental pollution impacting their family’s health.¹¹
- 79% agree that keeping their communities free of toxic chemicals and pollutants is a personal right.¹⁷
- 83% agree that clean air is a personal right that should be available to all people.¹⁷

However, Americans are not making the connection between climate and health.
- 62% report being affected by longer and more severe allergy seasons; however, only 49% of Americans said that climate change is to blame.¹⁷
- 25% recognize that climate change is affecting human health.³ Probing further, fewer than 5% of Americans correctly identified health impacts of climate change, with two exceptions: 14% identified respiratory problems (including asthma and other lung diseases), and 6% identified illness, injury, and death caused by extreme weather.

There is an opportunity to help Americans understand the same pollution that compromises respiratory health also drives climate change.
- 58% believe that if the U.S. took steps to prevent climate change it would improve individual health³,⁴,⁸ (71% Democrat, 62% Independent, and 43% Republican).⁴
Health Professionals: Your Leadership Matters!
You Are The Most Trusted

GALLUP

Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields – very high, high, average, low or very low?

Dec. 2-6, 2015

- % Very high/High

- Nurses 85
- Pharmacists 68
- Medical doctors 67
- High school teachers 60
- Police officers 56
- Clergy 45
- Funeral directors 44
- Accountants 39
- Journalists 27
- Bankers 25
- Building contractors 25
- Lawyers 21
- Real estate agents 20
- Labor union leaders 18
- Business executives 17
- Stockbrokers 13
- Advertising practitioners 10
- Car salespeople 8
- Telemarketers 8
- Members of Congress 8
- Lobbyists 7

Yikes!
## Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Professionals (%)</th>
<th>General Public (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engage in the behaviors below</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn up the thermostat to save energy.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat vegetarian.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use public transportation.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike instead of using a car.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support these local community measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A community-wide energy savings program.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual disaster preparedness training program.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update building codes to increase energy efficiency.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create alternatives to driving.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2015 “Let’s Talk Climate” ecoAmerica and Lake Research Partners.*
Americans – Are They Worried about Climate Change?

Partisan Gap Widens on Worries About Global Warming

Percentage who worry "a great deal" about global warming or climate change

- **Republicans**
- **Independents**
- **Democrats**

GALLUP
American Policy Priorities

Source: January 2016 Survey of National Priorities, Pew Research Center
Let’s Talk Climate and Health

Practical Guidance
What Do People (really) Hear About Climate?

We have been warning about this for years, and did too little to stop it.

Subtext: it’s your fault for not listening to us
What Do People Hear About Climate?

The scientists agree that this is happening.

*Subtext: you are ignorant if you disagree, or are uncertain*
What Do People Hear About Climate?

You need to act now to save polar bears and stop global sea level rise.

Subtext: forget about your own needs, think about the planet
What Do People Hear About Climate?

Last month was the hottest month on record.

Subtext: too late, you blew it,
and we’re all going to die
What Do People Hear About Climate?

Weather disasters are going to keep getting worse.

Subtext: too late, you blew it, and we’re all going to die
Motivated Avoidance

Fear
Confirmation bias
Techno optimism
Conflict avoidance
Competing priorities
Social norms
System justification
Fatalism & resignation
Message Evolution

- **<‘08**
  - Armageddon
  - Global Warming

- **‘08**
  - Social Benefits
  - Opportunity

- **>‘08**
  - Personal Relevance
  - Family and Health
Personal Relevance

**SALIENCE, CLIMATE IMPACTS**: With your own eyes. Link to daily/local lives.

**UNAMBIGUOUS SOLUTIONS**: Proven solutions that solve the problem and benefit the economy, our health and our security.

**AGENCY, EMPOWERMENT**: You, your community, company, and nation can act.

**MORAL IMPERATIVE**: Responsibility to our children, families, and communities.
Let’s Talk Climate and Health: Communication Guidance For Health Professionals

climateforhealth.org/lets-talk
Writing a letter to an editor

Giving a speech

Informal conversation

Talking with elected officials
#1 Successful Tested Message = Health

“Our families’ health matters. When the American Lung Association tells us that toxic pollution in the air we breathe is affecting the health of nearly half of all Americans, we need new solutions. Kids seem to carry inhalers almost as often as lunch boxes. Seniors are stuck inside when weather shifts dramatically to extreme heat or freezing cold. Thankfully, we have a plan for a healthier future. We can use safe, clean energy, like wind and solar, that helps make every breath we take a healthy one. We can walk or bike more often to improve our fitness while cutting down on pollution. And we can make our cities more sustainable so that we can live our best lives. We can care for our climate to care for our health.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPLACE</th>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
<th>BECAUSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global warming, climate crisis, climate change, climate risk</td>
<td>Damage to the climate</td>
<td>“damage” implies human causation, which can be prevented or protected against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientists agree</td>
<td>[a trusted health messenger]</td>
<td>Americans think “science” is debatable but trust the American Lung (or Heart) Association on pollution and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to the environment/air</td>
<td>Air we breathe</td>
<td>Visual language connects more closely with our primary health needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk and bike (alone)</td>
<td>Walking and biking improves fitness and reduces air pollution</td>
<td>Walking and biking for fitness is more universal/compelling than for recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t endanger our health by burning fuel</td>
<td>Live our best lives</td>
<td>Alarming language is scary. A hopeful visual is more motivating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural fuels</td>
<td>Wind and solar energy</td>
<td>Coal and oil are considered by some to be “natural fuels”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop/mitigate climate change</td>
<td>Create healthy and safe communities, protect our families’/children’s health</td>
<td>Focusing on positive outcomes and personal benefits motivates people to act</td>
</tr>
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KEY TALKING POINTS

You can make a difference with your colleagues and patients and in your community on health and climate. These talking points provide a starting point, tailor and use them in your conversations, speeches, and writing to build support for climate solutions.

1. I am a health professional because I care about the health of everyone in our community. I want to help people, but it’s even more important to prevent the causes of illness and injury.

2. Healthy people and healthy communities require clean air and water to grow healthy, root and prevent respiratory disease and other illnesses. We have a fundamental right to clean air and water.

3. Fossil fuels damage our climate and are dangerously unhealthy. We know these dirty fuels pollute our air and water. The basic pollution we’re adding to the atmosphere is not going away. The pollution is steadily building up to dangerous levels.

4. Each breath we take should be a healthy one, and caring for ourselves means caring for our climate. We can prevent further climate change and protect our health at the same time.

5. If we stop pollution from fossil fuels, we stop climate change and improve our health.
   - We reduce diseases, illness, and injury brought on by pollution and severe weather.
   - We slow the rising temperatures that are changing weather patterns and causing more intense storms and heat waves, all of which impact food prices and create health threats.

6. Some people are more vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change, including children, the elderly, the sick, low-income, and some communities of color. Our efforts to stop pollution help all of these groups live longer, healthier lives.

7. It is up to us, as respected community leaders, to lead on climate and health. We need to understand the various ways climate change impacts health so that we can then speak with authority to our patients, communities, peers, and local leaders on the climate-health connection and the benefits of stopping climate pollution.

POINTERs AND COUNTERPOINTEs ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE

1. “Climate change does not affect me.”
   - The causes and consequences of our changing climate are impacting personal and public health now, across the nation, and this will accelerate if we don’t curb carbon pollution.
   - Americans are suffering from a higher frequency and intensity of diseases, illness, injury, and other health impacts brought on by pollution and severe weather.
   - Our communities are experiencing notable climate impacts, including rising temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, higher producing prices, and intense storms and heat waves, all of which result in impacts to health.
   - Climate change affects us all because it affects the world our children will live in. Of all the things we love to leave our children and future generations, a healthy place for them to raise children of their own may be the most important.

2. “There is nothing I can do to stop climate change.”
   - In nearly every aspect of our daily lives, we can do something to prevent climate change.
   - From saving energy at home to recycling, eating local fresh food, driving fuel-efficient cars, walking and biking more, and taking public transportation, we can reduce energy consumption and emissions that damage our climate and protect and enhance our health at the same time.
   - In addition, we can leave our children and future generations a healthier community where the air is clean and the water is safe by using affordable solar and wind energy to power our homes and businesses.

3. “I am more concerned about my (family, health, job) right now.”
   - We all have a variety of pressing daily concerns that compete for our time. However, when the American Lung Association (or the American Heart Association) tells us that toxic pollution in the air we breathe is affecting the health of nearly half of all Americans, we have a problem.
   - We all want to live in the best place for our families. We need to take steps toward a healthier future. Let’s ensure our families have clean air, clean water, and safe communities to live in, now and in the future, by moving away from the dirty fuels that make us sick and shifting toward safe, clean energy, like wind and solar. Let’s make every breath we take a healthy one. Caring for our climate is caring for ourselves, family, and health.

4. “Why should we load when other countries aren’t?”
   - America has always been a yes-we-can kind of place. We led the way into space and to cell phones and the Internet. Today, the next big thing is clean energy. Affordable, local wind and solar power made here and now. In fact, since 2013 America has more than doubled the supply of solar energy.
   - America has solved great challenges before, and we can lead again with innovations that fuel a cleaner, safer, and healthier world for our families.

5. “Why should I do something when our government isn’t?”
   - We see climate change occurring here, in our backyard. And we can’t wait for politicians in Washington to solve our problems. Right now, in our own communities, we can reduce pollution and improve our health by producing and using clean energy. We can protect our cities by leaving dirty fuels behind. We can let our local leaders know we support climate solutions.
   - A community with sustainable solutions is the place I want to call home.
Crafting A Successful Personalized Message
1. Start With People, Stay With People

- Show your audience you care about them
- Start from their perspective
- Use tangible and relevant health concerns
- Move from people to climate
2. Connect On Common Values

- Understand your audience’s priorities and concerns
- Common values are powerful motivators
- Connect shared values to caring for health and climate
- Build rapport
Top Common Values in America

1. Family
2. Health
3. Security
4. American ethos: We-can-do-itism, compassion
5. Personal rights to clean environment for all
6. Responsibility to do something about climate
3. Acknowledge Ambivalence

- People have different levels of climate concern
- Respect different perspectives
- “We might not all agree on the cause for the recent extreme weather events, but we can agree that it affects our families and neighborhoods…”
4. Make It Real

- Focus on local realities people can see and feel
- Assume the realities, don’t argue the science
- Use one or two health-related impacts
- Pivot quickly to solutions
5. Emphasize Solutions

- Highlight the co-benefits of solutions
- Point to local solutions that protect our families’ health
- Avoid sacrifice
6. Inspire & Empower

- Doom and gloom doesn’t motivate
- Focus on hope and opportunity
- We can make a difference
- America can lead on climate
7. Focus On Personal Benefit

- Personal relevance
- Climate action doesn’t come with a cost on lifestyle
- Always emphasize the co-benefits of solutions
8. End With Your Ask

- Turn awareness into action
- Give examples that align with your audience’s goals
- Make the ask accessible
- Provide one or two ideas
Thank You!

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