

CLIMATE CHANGE

Having positive climate conversations

Five tips from author Dr. Rebecca Huntley on how to talk about climate change.

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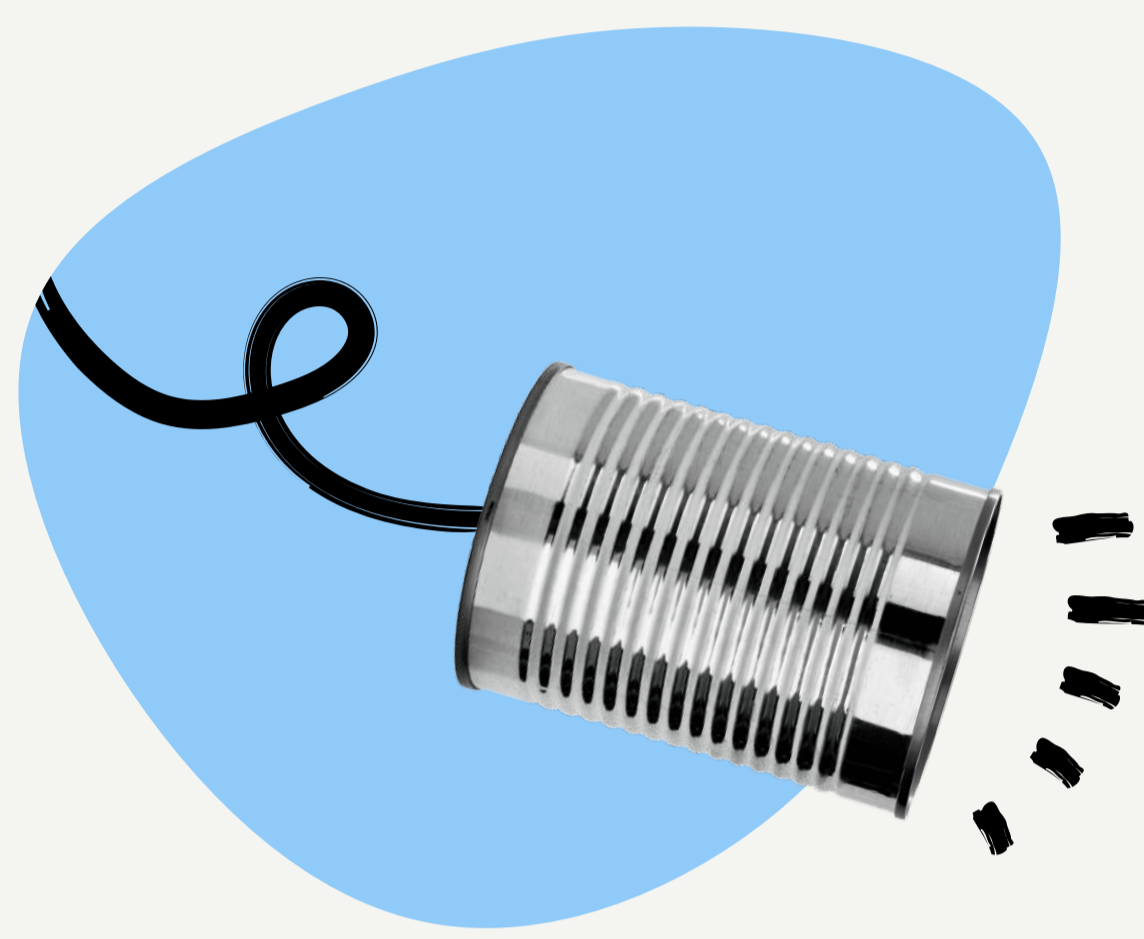
Conversations are the best way to shift general concern about climate change into effective and meaningful action. After all, we know most Australians want to do something about climate change. They just don't know where to start. Here are some tips to lead the discussion on climate change with confidence.



1. Ask questions – seek to understand

When we ask people open-ended questions, we prompt them to think. This is a great way to find out what matters most to them.

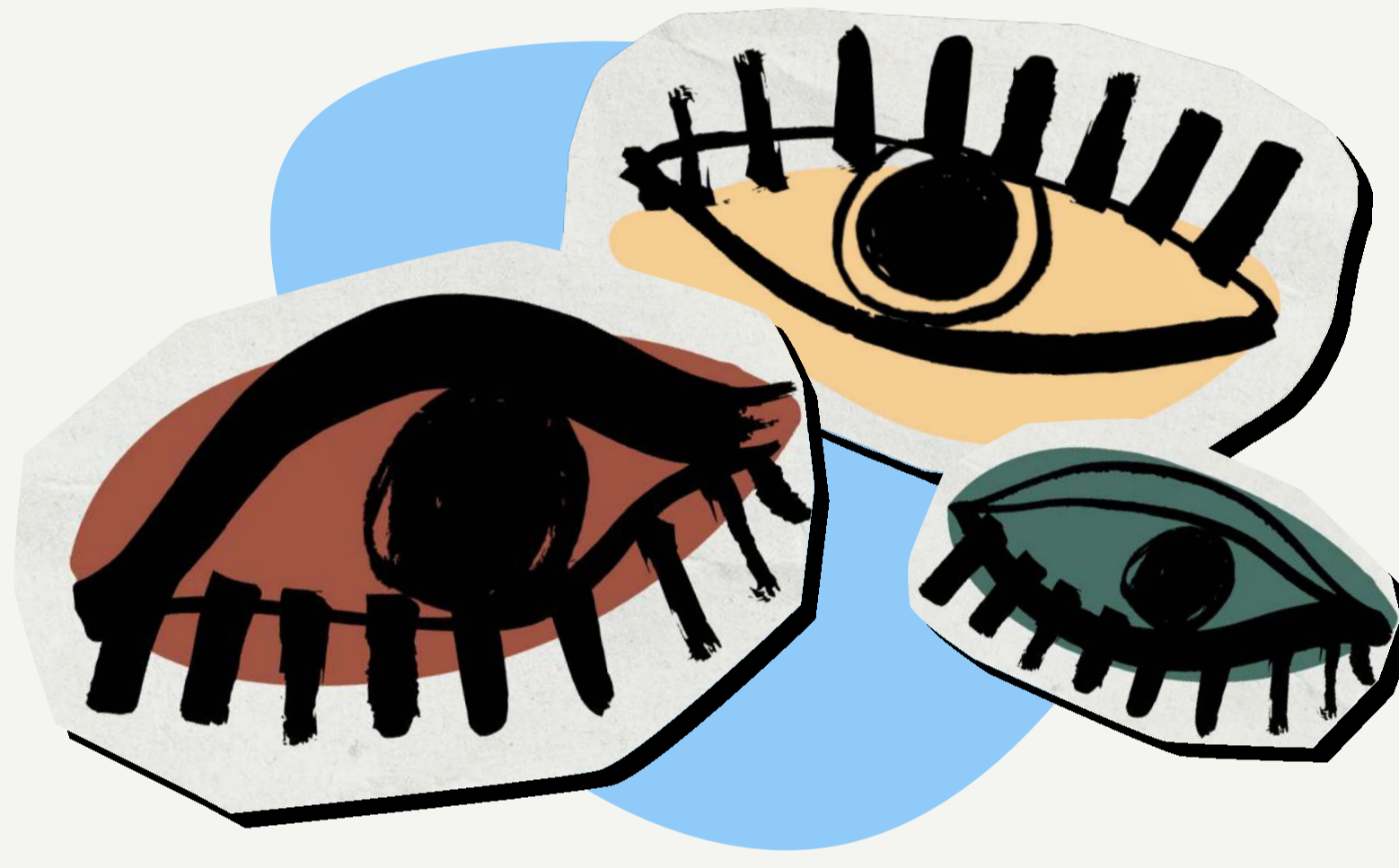
You could start by asking "How do you think climate change is impacting your life and the lives of people around you?". Then dig a bit deeper by asking "Why do you say that?" or "Tell me more?".



2. Listen without judgement

When you start a conversation with a client, listen without interrupting. Their answers will give you clues about how they understand the problem of climate change, and what may be holding them back from taking action.

In order to understand what they can do next, people need to feel heard and empowered to act with confidence.



3. Focus on the vision

Although people relate to bushfires, pollution, droughts and wildlife loss, focusing on the devastating impact of climate change can make people feel overwhelmed.

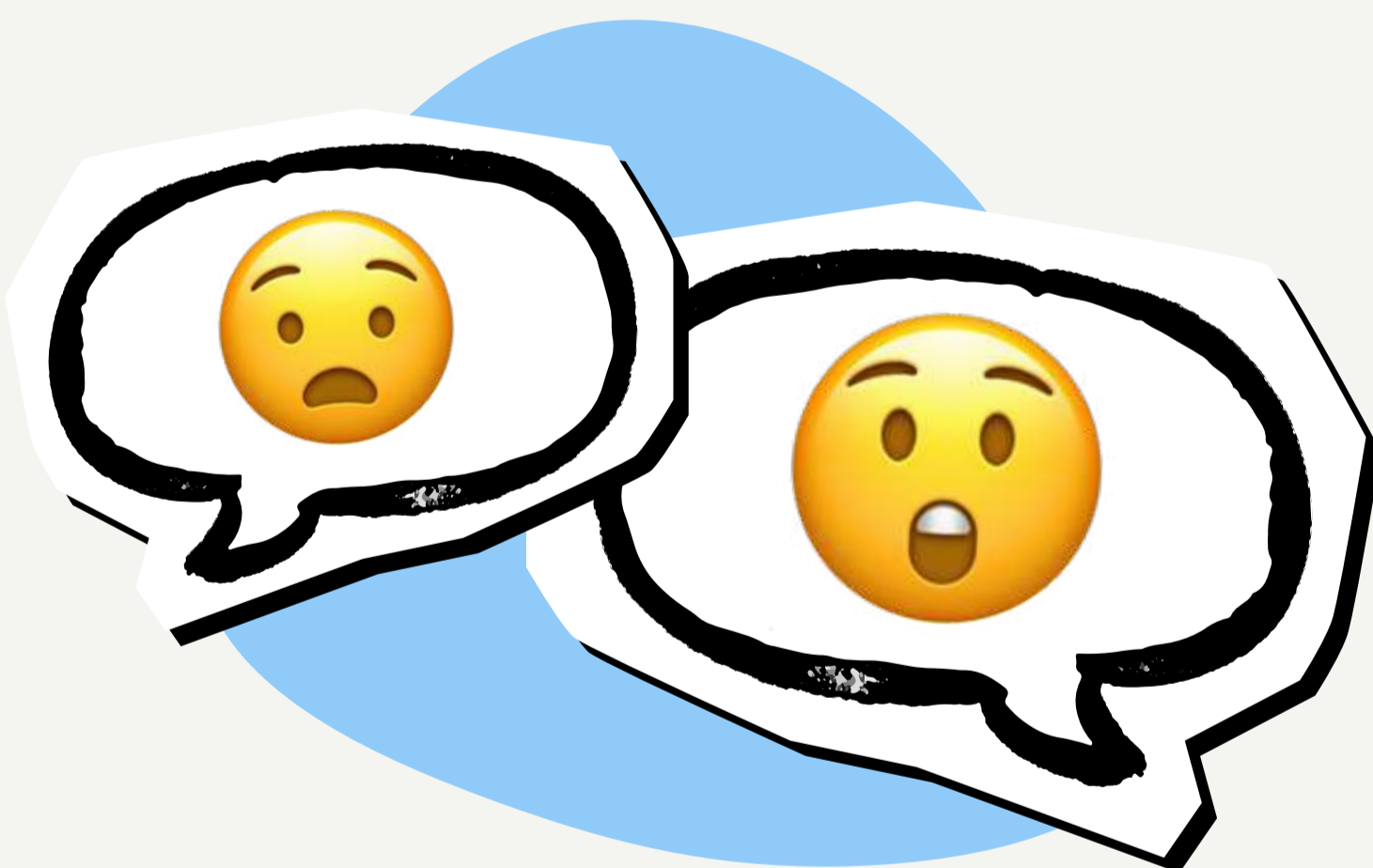
Instead, help your clients imagine a better future. Give them the confidence that it is possible to make a difference on climate change by investing differently.



4. Help people see their place in the solutions

Every client you speak with will have different perspectives about climate change. For some people, individual actions, like what they do (and don't) buy at the shops or donations, may be the first step. Others will be ready to take bolder action, like wanting all their investments to contribute to positive outcomes.

The key is to show patience and compassion in your conversations and avoid forcing information on your clients if they are not ready. By supporting people to start where they are, you can encourage them to keep taking steps towards greater action while preserving the good will in your adviser-client relationship.



5. Talk about your own feelings

Don't feel like you need to be an expert on all the science to be persuasive. By sharing your own individual story with clients i.e. why climate change matters to you, by being relatable and credible, you can build trust with the person you are talking with.

Remember, like you, most people are worried about climate change. And when it comes to understanding climate change, most people value the opinions of their friends, family and trusted advisers as much as they do the facts and figures from scientists.

The book

How To Talk About Climate Change in A Way That Makes a Difference is book is about understanding why people who aren't like you feel the way they do and learning to talk to them effectively. What we need are thousands - millions - of everyday conversations about the climate to enlarge the ranks of the concerned, engage the disengaged and persuade the cautious of the need for action.

About the author

Dr Rebecca Huntley is one of Australia's foremost researchers on social trends and author of numerous books including *How to Talk About Climate Change in a Way that Makes a Difference* (Murdoch books, 2020). She leads her own research and consultancy firm working closely with climate and environment NGOs, government and business on climate change strategy and communication and is the Chair of the Advisory Board of Australian Parents for Climate Action.

