

ACTIVITY 3

Science and the Media

Why is it so difficult to engage the public on climate change? Awareness-raising on the topic has proved to be a challenging issue.

For some, the topic can seem abstract and intangible. For others, the abstract statistics that define the climate discourse can feel distant from their day-to-day experiences. In some nations, the issue is politically polarised; in others, the absence of a public and political discourse is the problem.

Do you think it is a problem of not communicating effectively?

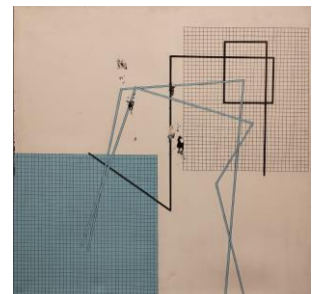
It is possible to communicate climate science in a way that makes that message easier for non-scientific audiences to understand and makes it more relevant to their lives and experiences. It is vital for scientists to become experts in effective communication with business leaders and the public alike.

With only 6 months left to prepare for the disaster, the two of them go above and beyond by presenting the data to the White House, making multiple appearances in a morning show, and ultimately starting the 'Just Look Up!' movement as a last resort in the hope of opening people's eyes. Needless to say, the comet becomes just another distraction in the political arena, and the so-called gladiators of politics get too caught up in their own games and interests. As per usual, they make great efforts to cover the truth, and, thanks to the power of media, they manage to hide the obvious from their audience by merely telling their followers 'don't look up'.

Exercise 1

Discussion points

- What do you think the problem is the first time Dr Mandy is allowed to see the president and her son? Also, when he is allowed on a television programme. Do you think the problem might have been that he uses scientific jargon to talk about the issue? This makes them bored and he loses their attention.
- What kind of tools could he have used to arise and keep their interest?
- Do you think scientists should be appearing more in climate discussions?
- Do you believe that more emphasis should be put on bridging the gap between research and practice?



Exercise 2

Most scientists consider visibility in the media important and responding to journalists a professional duty. The problem is how they present that information.

In pairs make a six-principle guide for scientists to follow in order to become good communicators when addressing non-scientific audiences.

Handbook for effective science communication

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Exercise 3

Where can citizens get science facts right? There are some specialty sources that are more likely to offer that – documentaries, science magazines, and science and technology museums. Which ones do you get scientific news from?

Social media, while prominent as a general news source, appear to play a modest role in informing about science. Do you think we get enough scientific information on social media and the news media? If not, who is to blame for it? The media, the scientific world, the users?

These are ways in which people can engage with science information in everyday life, including participation in citizen science research projects, hobbies, and consumption of entertainment programming built around science, medicine or technology. Can you think of any other ways?