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# Inspire People

Humans are motivated by syntropic dreams of life and wholeness, not by entropic nightmares of death and collapse.

— Guy Dauncey

How can we motivate people to join the challenge of building a climate-friendly world? When it happens, the results can be amazing. (See #11 to #20.) For every household, business, church or school that has become engaged, however, there are 1,000 that have not. We have yet to find the formula that can motivate large numbers of people.

It is all about the "framing." After 20 years of communications about global warming, we have learned what does *not* work, but we are slow at discovering what *does* work.

Messages that dwell on scientific arguments, call for personal sacrifice; pass the responsibility to industry or government; emphasize complex policy solutions such as cap-and-trade or hightech solutions such as nuclear or clean coal; dwell on awful warnings about the future; urge us to change our light bulbs or ride our bicycles; or show us pictures of polar bears and remote islanders who are losing their homes because of sea level rise — none of these messages works.

Some succeed in making people distressed, but none makes people feel motivated and confident that their actions will make a difference. The whole climate-change discussion has been framed in the negative, rather than as a positive challenge to get engaged with the solutions.

So what *does* work? There is one particular framing that works both for climate change and the peak oil energy crisis. It talks in historical terms about a global transition to a green, post-carbon future and the birth of a new civilizational era. It conveys five core messages:

### 1. Fossil fuels have been amazing.

If we had not discovered the power of fossil fuels, we could not have harnessed steam, built railways, learned how to fly or built the world we know today. Fossil fuels are a gift from the past that enabled us to build the scientific and technological capital needed to design solar systems, electric cars and geothermal heat pumps. They are the launch ramp that will enable us to achieve lift-off into the solar age of permanent renewable energy.

### 2. The age of fossil fuels is almost over.

Regardless of whether oil peaks in 2010 or 2030, it will peak, followed by a rapid decline, and likewise for natural gas. The age of fossil fuels is a very brief, 200-year period of history, sandwiched between the past and the future. In the journey of human civilization, it is a stepping-stone between the pre-carbon past and the post-carbon future.

## 3. Climate change is Gaia's message, saying "Time's Up!"

Fossil fuels carry the solar energy gathered by ancient trees, plants and sea creatures over a period of 200 million years. When you release that ancient carbon into the atmosphere all at once, it is bound to have a destabilizing effect. If we don't stop almost immediately, the rising temperature will put us in extreme peril.

### 4. A climate-friendly world is doable, desirable and will generate a gazillion new jobs.

What makes us doubt that we can do this? We are *good* at this kind of thing. A hundred years ago we were all riding horses. The sun, wind, tides,



Hoping for a green, peaceful, sustainable Earth. with many new green collar jobs.

biomass, geothermal energy and energy efficiency offer us many thousand times more energy than we need. The zero-carbon revolution will bring innovation and a host of green-collar jobs that can stabilize the middle class and lift people out of poverty. If we stick with fossil fuels, our economies will collapse because of rising prices and the impacts of climate change. If we change, a whole new world will become possible. The carbon years are the launch ramp for the journey to the solar age.

#### 5. The Future Needs YOU!

Historically, when changes like this happen, they are led by the pioneering efforts of individuals and groups. We need to reinvent our buildings, suburbs, cities, transportation, farming, forestry, industry — everything that uses energy. There are so many opportunities. Those who succeed will be those who can combine a good idea with the skills and the determination to see it through. Think big. Dream big. Act big!

In Britain the Big Green Challenge, funded by the government agency NESTA, has challenged groups to achieve big CO2 reductions in their communities, putting £1 million on the table for the winning proposal. Of the 350 groups entered, ten were each given £20,000 to test their ideas during 2009. (biggreenchallenge.org.uk; community.wwf.ca/livingplanetcity)

- Continue to pass on the urgent warnings that the climate scientists are giving us and the warnings about the declining oil and gas supply.
- Reframe the government's climate messaging in a way that combines the very real urgency with a positive vision of a climate-friendly world, placing the shift in a historical context.
- · Don't be shy to present this message to the public. If you don't frame it this way, the climate deniers will frame it their way.
- · Support exciting challenges that draw out people's creativity.