Awareness to Action

Until science is mixed with emotion and appeals to the heart and imagination, it is like dead organic matter

John Burroughs

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Climate change communicators have often (wrongly) assumed:

• More information is the answer (‘inspiration with information’)

• Fear and visions of catastrophes will motivate audiences to action (‘motivation by fear’)

• Communicating climate science is the most persuasive and relevant approach (‘one size fits all’)

• Mass communication is the most effective way to reach audiences (‘mobilisation through mass media’)

Moser and Dilling (2011)
• Engagement is not an activity that happens in museums, in a time-bounded activity

• Engagement is better thought of as people’s ongoing connection with a topic, through their thinking, feeling and doing- it is a STATE OF CONNECTEDNESS in their everyday lives beyond the museum

• Museums can support people’s ongoing connection through nurturing constructive climate change related thinking, feeling and doing

Lorenzoni et al. 2007, Moser and Dilling 2011
Lessons from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

- Thoughts create feelings
- Behavior reinforces thoughts
- Feelings create behavior
EVENTS (triggers)
- The world
- Other people
- Experiences
- Personal history
- Future
- Self

THOUGHTS
- Attitudes
- Rules
- Demands
- Beliefs
- Images/Symbols
- Meanings

FEELINGS/EMOTIONS
- Healthy/positive feelings
- Unhealthy/negative feelings
- Involuntary physical sensations

ACTIONS/BEHAVIOUR
- Constructive action
- Destructive action (or inaction)
Inspiration is the FEELING that moves us to ACTION

• Help people find that feeling, and apply it to the things they care about
• Doing positive things can help find motivation
• Change is difficult so use museums to test it out in a consequence-free environment
• Identify what gives each of us strength, feel creative, empowered, confident
• Find inspirational stories
• Build trust, creativity
• Make it multi-sensory and just fantastic
• Find inspirational individuals- take a leaf from their book, don’t beat yourself up for not being as good as them
• Images and metaphors
• Proverbs, quotes, icons
• Draw on well-respected sources
• Give people encouragement
• Provide challenge and support
Imagery- polar bear, ice sheet, scorched earth, desert
Showing constructive imagery that people can relate to is very constructive

- Images of actions from people’s daily lives are very constructive, connecting with people’s day-to-day activities and lifestyle choices with collective contributions

- That are enjoyable, rewarding, constructive, that show people overcoming challenge and enjoying it

- That are BELIEVABLE, not staged
Ask people what they think!
over 100,000 responses

• 73% of people care that the climate is changing

• 70% think they’ll be affected by climate change

• 83% of people care about nature

• 42% of people already eat thoughtfully (28% might)

• 44% of people try to be energy efficient (29% might)

• 49% of people already recycle (28% might)
More information and help

- Climate Outreach (climate visuals project)
- Action for Climate Empowerment Guidelines (UNFCCC)
- Education for Sustainable Development Learning Objectives (UNESCO)

- Museum Partnerships for Future Earth (MM with Tyndall Manchester and Future Earth)
Come to Manchester (UK) in April 2018

Conference on Climate Change and Museums: critical approaches to engagement and management