

HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT EXTINCTION REBELLION

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OVERVIEW

CHALLENGE:

Either

- The road has just been swarmed, someone's put up a banner across Clifton Suspension Bridge, you've been blocking Park Street for 4 days....
If we don't reach out to let people know why we're just being annoying
- You're in your local area where no one seems to be concerned about climate breakdown and species extinction - if you don't spark up a conversation about it, people won't rebel!

AIMS:

- Get them on the streets (next time or straight away)
- Listen to them, find out what they think
- Empower people in letting them know they can change the world
- Make people shift their anger at you to anger at the system
- Get people to join XR
- Get people to go to a talk
- Come across as confident - We can do this!

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Practice with others to build confidence before getting started
- Don't forget **sign up sheets**
- Facts are good, too many facts make people switch off
- Every time is show time!
- You want to have a conversation, after 2 minutes you shouldn't be doing more than 50% of the talking
- Avoid blaming and shaming - We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame. If they call you out on something, be nice back (if we're blocking a road we're being pretty annoying)



EXAMPLE SCRIPT

This script, like all XR scripts, is not meant to be followed to the letter but to give a clear idea about what to say when and then for you to practice it so you effectively know it off by heart and can therefore say it with confidence and in a relaxed way. At the start of speaking to people you will be a bit unclear but don't worry – just persist and you will soon start to flow. The key to mobilisation is to get into a conversation with people and then listen to them. Only at the end do you suggest a pathway to action – ie what they could do.

OPENER:

“Hi, I’m from Extinction Rebellion could I talk to you for a minute about the climate emergency” (as you say this approach them to give them a leaflet... if they stop ...)

“I don’t know if you know but the The UN has warned us that if we do not act immediately, there will be global food shortages, mass starvation and social collapse across the world.” (wait for response ... if they stop...)

“For 30 years scientists have been telling governments that climate change will kill us. During that time emissions have been allowed to increase by 60% and they're still going up. So we are rebelling against the Government for its crimes against humanity.”

THEN ASK:

“Do you think the Government is doing enough to tackle the climate emergency?”

THEIR TURN:

At this point it's then if they go something like *“oh not interested in that”* then say *“that’s no problem – thanks”* and leave (remember we don't need to convince everyone!)

If they say yes then get into a conversation where you mirror back their comments in different words.

For example... (see next page)



EXAMPLE:

Passerby: *"Yeah I am actually – it's really scary and particularly this year"*

You: *"So you have been concerned about it – with all this hot weather we had over summer?"*

Passerby: *"Yeah I mean I've noticed a lot more people have been talking about it"*

You: *"So it's really become a bit of a topic of conversation?"*

Passerby: *"That's right – I mean no one used to talk about it but now my kids talk about it a lot"*

You: *"So you've got kids? How do they feel about it?"*

And so on.

You could draw out more details on the theme

"Okay so you're definitely worried about it – are there particular things you think about it?"

KEY REQUEST:

Once they are definitely in the conversational mode and relaxed with you then you can move to the key request:

"Okay thanks that's really interesting because I have been surprised myself about how many people I have spoken to in the neighbourhood who have said similar things – like it is becoming a real worry for a lot of people"

"So the situation is that lots of meetings are taking place here in xxx and actually around the country at the moment to tell people the facts on climate change and what needs to be done. Its going to be on Thursday night next week at 7pm at xxx church hall –thats just 10 minutes away on xxxx street. so it seems lots of local people will be going along"

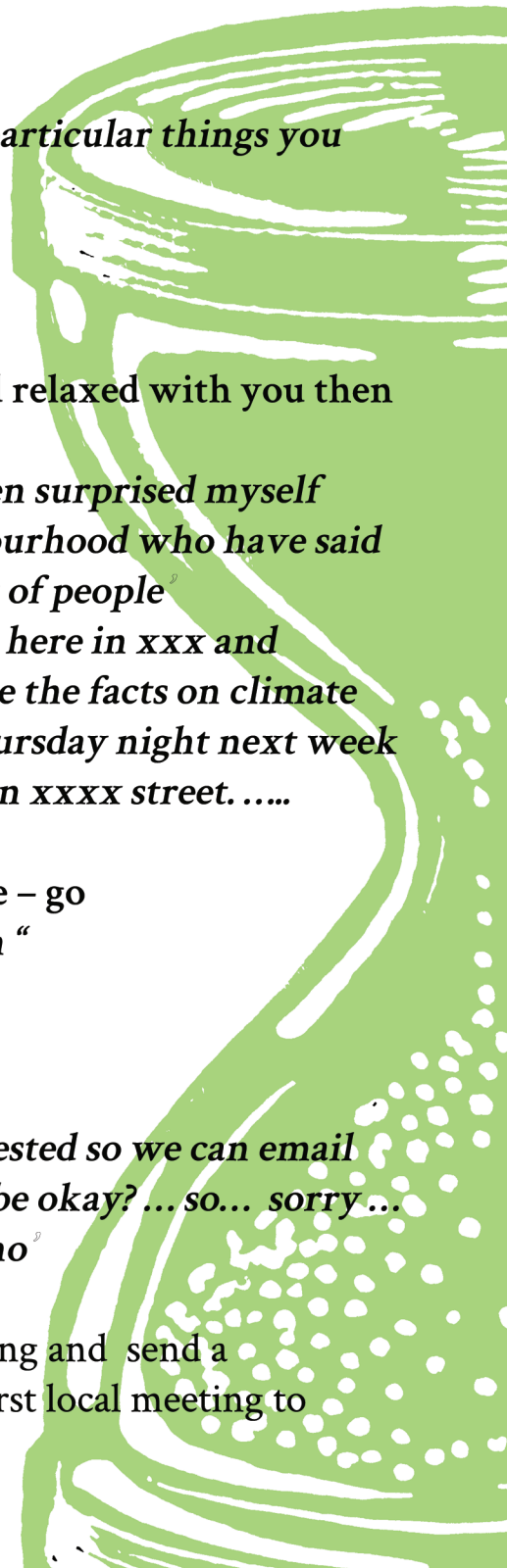
Repeat this information... and if they say they will come – go

"thats really great – I will see you then – thanks so much "

TAKING DETAILS:

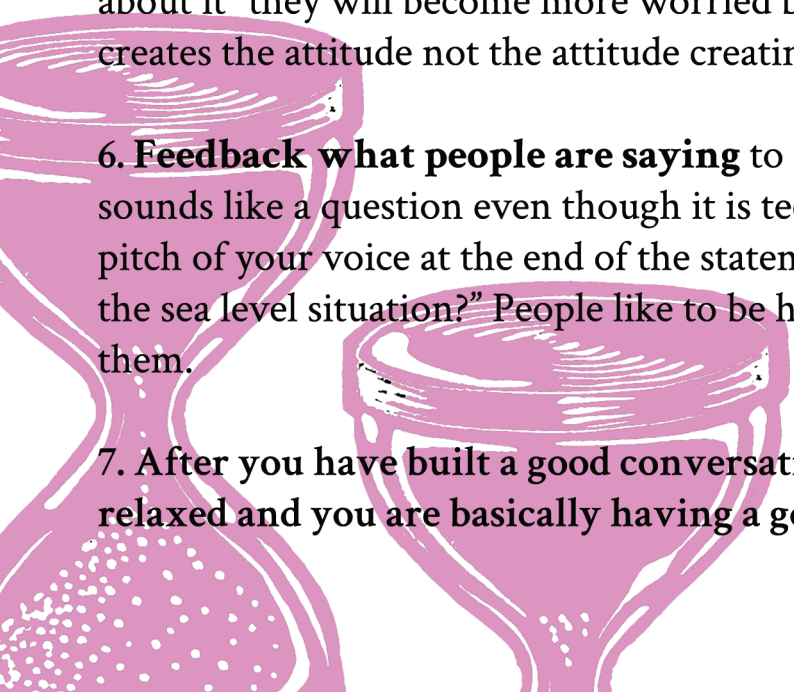
"yes so we are taking the details of people who are interested so we can email you some information like our newsletter. Would that be okay? ... so... sorry... your name is And your email address... and your tel no"
(if they don't want to give it go "that's no problem")

Then text / email them a reminder 2 days before the meeting and send a summary of the actions follow up from the meeting – eg first local meeting to organise lobbying/direct action.



KEY PRINCIPLES:

1. **Timing is crucial** – get a time when you know people will be around and sociable (lunchtime, before dinner)
2. **Always always start with the apology**, give your name and where you are from – this humanises the situation – you’re not some anonymous salesperson if you are from “down the road”
3. Once you mention Climate Change then you will immediately find out if someone is keen or not. If not, then be super pleasant – “that’s no problem – thanks” and go – do not get into an argument with a denier etc – you want to speak to the people that count and speak to as many of those as you can in the limited time slot you have.
4. Give information about what “is happening” and what people “are thinking” – **ie always use the descriptive 3rd person** – not “what I think” or even worse “what I think people should think”! This is because people are persuaded about something by becoming aware of what the prevailing mood of their community/group is, not always by the arguments themselves and certainly not by being told what to think by a stranger.
5. The next key move is to encourage them to speak about **how they see the situation** – the key psychology here is that the physical act of speaking (embodiment) is the key mechanism through which the mind becomes attached to what is being said. Once a person says “ yeah you know I have been worried about it” they will become more worried because they have said so – the speech creates the attitude not the attitude creating the speech.
6. **Feedback what people are saying** to amplify their beliefs, and say it so it sounds like a question even though it is technically a statement – ie raise the pitch of your voice at the end of the statement. “So you are pretty worried about the sea level situation?” People like to be heard and talk about things that worry them.
7. After you have built a good conversation – ie they are relaxed and you are relaxed and you are basically having a good chat - then move onto the request.



8. Present the request as a descriptive statement – “Okay so the situation is that lots of people are going to find out more at this meeting next Thursday”.

The question is implicit in using the third person statement.

9. Don't use direct questions - ie NOT “so would you come to this meeting on Thursday”. It puts unneeded pressure on the person.

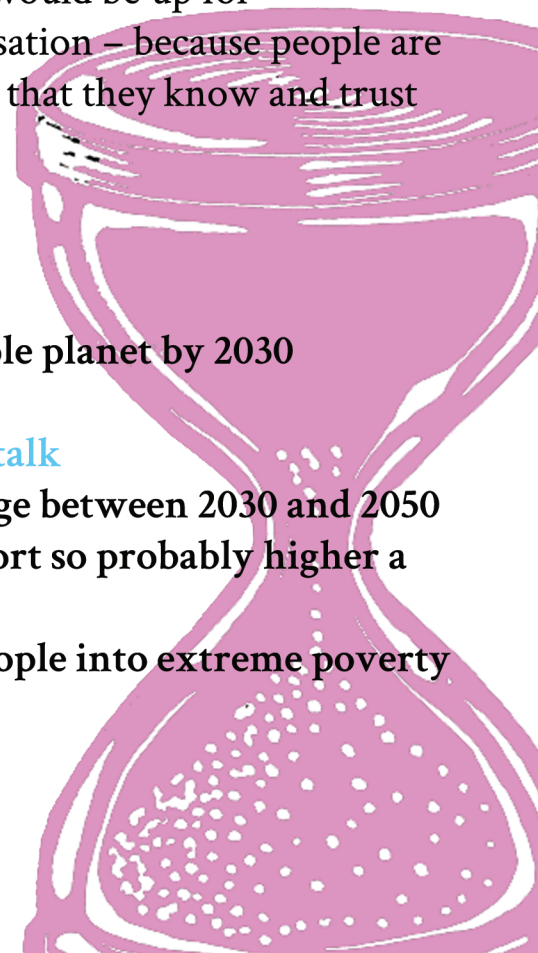
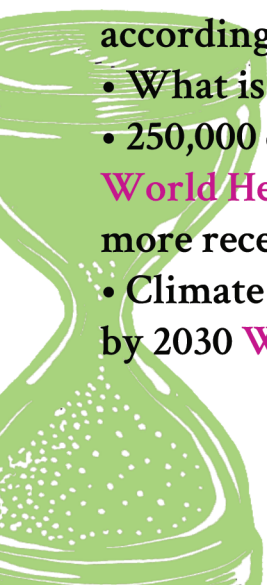
10. Mirror the language and cultural orientation of the person you are speaking to – people are very different in how they speak even along one urban street so change your language accordingly – polite and considered for middle classes older people – casual jokey and matey for younger hip people etc

11. One of the key aims of canvassing to identify the real movers and shakers in the community and those who are definitely animated on the issue ..
“fuck yeah this climate situation is just completely mad – everyone's been talking about it – why the fuck is nothing happening” (younger generation)
or “well I will let you know something young man – I think the whole situation is an absolute disgrace – now give me a some leaflets so I can pass them onto my friends” (older generation).

12. Always have a stock of leaflets to give to anyone who is interested so they can give to friends and neighbours. These are the people that will get more people to come and it would be good to ask them if they would be up for volunteering in the future – they are gold dust for mobilisation – because people are primarily mobilised by being asked to take part by people that they know and trust NOT because of the rational case of the issue itself.

KEY FACTS:

- We need to drop global emissions by 45% for the whole planet by 2030 according to UN.
- What is a citizens assembly - [Citizens assembly TED talk](#)
- 250,000 deaths a year additionally from climate change between 2030 and 2050 [World Health Organisation 2014](#) - from 2014 IPCC report so probably higher a more recent report predicts 529,000 [Lancet 2019](#)
- Climate change could push more than 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030 [World Bank 2016](#)



FREQUENT QUESTIONS:

Just some examples, keep it as a dialogue and let them speak

But what can I do?

Join us! The standard thing has always been pushing for personal responsibility, and that's great but it'll only get us so far - we need co-ordinated Govt action. Civil disobedience works and I see it as my responsibility.....Find your courage and power through connecting with others, this is how things change.. That's why the only way to tackle this is to get the government to start treating this like the emergency that it is. And so I think it's my duty as a citizen to get them to do that, otherwise I'm not sure what I can say to my kids in the future about why we didn't try more/ I'm scared for myself let alone the younger generation

(At Actions) This is pretty annoying, aren't you just pissing people off?

We really wish this wasn't necessary, but civil disobedience works and we need the Govt to be taking this seriously.

What's the point if America and China aren't doing anything?

This is already affecting millions of people, and it's really unfair, people have a responsibility to do something about it.

Haven't the government already declared a climate emergency?

Parliament have but the government hasn't so they still haven't acknowledged it. You don't see any cabinet ministers saying this is an emergency.

Haven't the government just said they're going zero by 2050?

2050 is nowhere near quick enough - it only gives us a 50-50 chance of stopping the worst of the predicted catastrophic change"

Haven't they declared a citizens assembly?

Our 3rd demand is that Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice. The current proposal is asking the wrong questions and would not be binding.