Communicating Science

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In communicating science, start with 1) an understanding of your audience and then 2) consider two parts - "What the message is" and "how the message is delivered". If these are done well, then people will listen.

Delivering the message

1. **Soft skills. In terms of message delivering, so called "Soft" skills are critical to make sure we are communicating.**

   These include

   - **Eye contact** - helps you make a connection
   - **Listen** – after all you are communicating – not downloading information
   - **What you wear** – while what you wear may seem superficial, it can influence how people respond to you and see your approachability.

2. **Strategies if things get heated**

   - **Keep calm!**
   - **People care.** Realize that people get upset because they care.
   - **Listen.** People want to know they have been heard. Try something like "I see this is important to you."
   - **The art of "Yes, and ...."** Try not to negate what others say even if you disagree; keep it moving forward. Try something like "Yes, this is going to be challenging, and that's why…
   - **Bridging techniques** - to keep the conversation focused. E.g., "That's interesting. And what the real problem seems to be is ...."

3. **Crafting the message - do it purposefully**

   - **Bottom line** - be clear on what is really important and what you want them to know
   - **Facts aren't enough.** Present so that people care - i.e., tell them why the topic is important *to them.*
   - **Avoid jargon!** Jargon presents unnecessary barriers. e.g., instead of "positive trend" say "upward trend"; instead of "Forb" say "wildflower"
   - **Analogies are powerful** - e.g., when discussing the problem of global plastic - language like "The bathtub is overflowing. Turn off the faucet."
   - Use simple, graphics.
   - Consider the main problems, and have a clear simple message.
     Use the **Compass message box** (link below) to help you craft your message.

Resources

- **Scripting your message:** Developing and refining your message: Use the **COMPASS message box:** https://www.compassscicomm.org/message-box-online
- **Alan Alda's Center for Communicating Science -** Learning Center: https://www.aldacenter.org/AKLC
- **UC Davis Strategic Communications**: http://strategiccommunications.ucdavis.edu/
  - **Target brief:** http://marketingtoolbox.ucdavis.edu/docs/document-library/Strat_Comm_Creative_Brief_Template.doc
- **UC Davis Science & Climate website** https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/