

A comprehensive description of the climate crisis, how to communicate it to the children in your life, and how you can work together to be part of its solutions.

— AL GORE



How to Talk to Your Kids

about **Climate
Change**

TURNING ANGST INTO ACTION

Harriet Shugarman

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Climate Action Organizing and Book Club Guide

Are you beginning to meet with friends, or thinking about getting together specifically to discuss your growing concerns around our climate crisis? The following discussion guide will work both for an established book club discussing this book and/or for a broad discussion with concerned friends and colleagues interested in coming together to plan, to discuss, and to share ideas on ways to organize both collectively and as a family around our climate emergency.

Broad Topics for Discussion

1. How does this book make you feel? Hopeful, determined, anxious, sad? Can you relate easily to what is being discussed throughout the book, or are the sentiments expressed difficult to reconcile with your current thinking? And if so, why?
2. Are most things in this book new news to you? Share where you are in your journey. Are you just starting out and trying to figure out how to become more involved, or are you already active with a climate-focused organization or group?

After sharing your thoughts about the book broadly, have a focused conversation on one of the three following questions. If time allows, consider expanding the discussion to a second or third question. Agree to convene at a time in the near future with participants who are particularly engaged, so that you can keep the conversation going.

Focused Discussion and Possible Actions to Take

1. How is our climate crisis impacting you, your family, your community? Discuss what you see, hear, feel, and understand.

Action: Create an “elevator pitch” to explain why you are concerned about the climate crisis. You should be able to deliver it in three minutes or less. Begin by writing out your story—not necessarily climate related. (Climate Generation¹ has a great story-telling guide, which may help with this.) Make your elevator pitch something that even your partner’s Uncle Bob will be moved by. Break into small groups or even just groups of two, and practice together; share your story, and have your partner share hers.

2. What is your vision for the future? Take time to consider it, write it down, and then share it with the group.

Action: Create a personal climate pledge. On one page of paper, highlight your vision for the future 5 years, 10 years, 20, and 30 years down the road. Begin by writing down your hopes for your children and your family; what do you see them doing? Where will they be in 5, 10, 20, and 30 years? Who will they be with? What will they be doing? On a second page, create an action pledge for your family to help actualize your vision, particularly in the near term. Date the pledge, sign it, and agree to revisit it together as a group six months from the date you signed it.

3. Acknowledge and discuss the immensity of the challenges at hand. Have an open discussion about how this makes you feel. What stage of grief are you at? How are you dealing with it? How are you moving from resolve, to hope, to action? Chapter 3 can be of help with these issues.

Action: Create a support group from members of your Book Club for this exercise, but consider inviting others outside of the Book Club to join you as a member of your personal climate support group. Meet on an ongoing and regular basis. Assign partners for each member of the group. Each person should have a person who, when fears or sadness become too much to handle, they can share their feelings with. Or conversely, when you experience a

personal climate win, create a family solution, or participate in a climate action, you can share this with your partner.

Action: Identify a local climate action group, and agree to go together to their next meeting or action.

4. What questions are your children asking you about our climate crisis? What advice, experiences, examples can you add to the conversation on ways to answer your children and engage them in age appropriate action?

Action: Share questions you are being asked by your children. Create a family, multi-family, or community climate action plan with your children. Follow up at regular intervals with family meetings to discuss how it is going and how your family or group is moving it forward.

E-mail questions, thoughts and ideas to: info@climatemama.com.

About the Author

HARRIET SHUGARMAN is executive director of ClimateMama, professor of Global Climate Change Policy and World Sustainability, and chair of the Climate Reality Project, NYC Metro Chapter. She is a nationally recognized influencer, connector, and trusted messenger for parents on solutions to our climate crisis. She is a recipient of the prestigious Climate Reality Green Ring Award and praised by Al Gore as “an outstanding Climate Reality Leader who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to her role as a climate communicator and activist.” She lives in New York and shares her message of hope and action at www.climatemama.com.



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