



GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
CENTER *for* CLIMATE CHANGE
COMMUNICATION

Communicating effectively as a health professional about climate change, clean energy & health

Medical Champions Webinar

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A guiding principle for spreading important ideas:

**Simple clear messages,
repeated often,
by a variety of trusted voices.**

About “Simple clear messages,...”:

- 1. The less you say, the more you are heard**
- 2. Say the things that have the most value (in achieving your communication objective)**
- 3. Audience research is the most reliable way to determine which messages have most value**

About “...repeated often,...”:

- 1. Repetition is the mother of learning (and liking, and trust)**
- 2. Adapt it, elaborate it, but no matter what...find ways to say it early and often.**
 - 1. When possible, reinforce (i.e., repeat) your messages with visual images, verbal images (i.e., metaphors) and illustrative stories.**

“There is a simple rule: You say it again, and then again and again and again and again, and about the time that you’re absolutely sick of saying it is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time.”

About “...by a variety of trusted voices.”:

- 1. You – doctors and nurses – are among the most-trusted voices in America.**
- 2. You are the most trusted voices on climate and health.**
 - 1. If your messages are simple and clear enough, other trusted voices – even members of your target audience – will start repeating them: to their friends & family, to their co-workers, and to others. Make that your goal.**

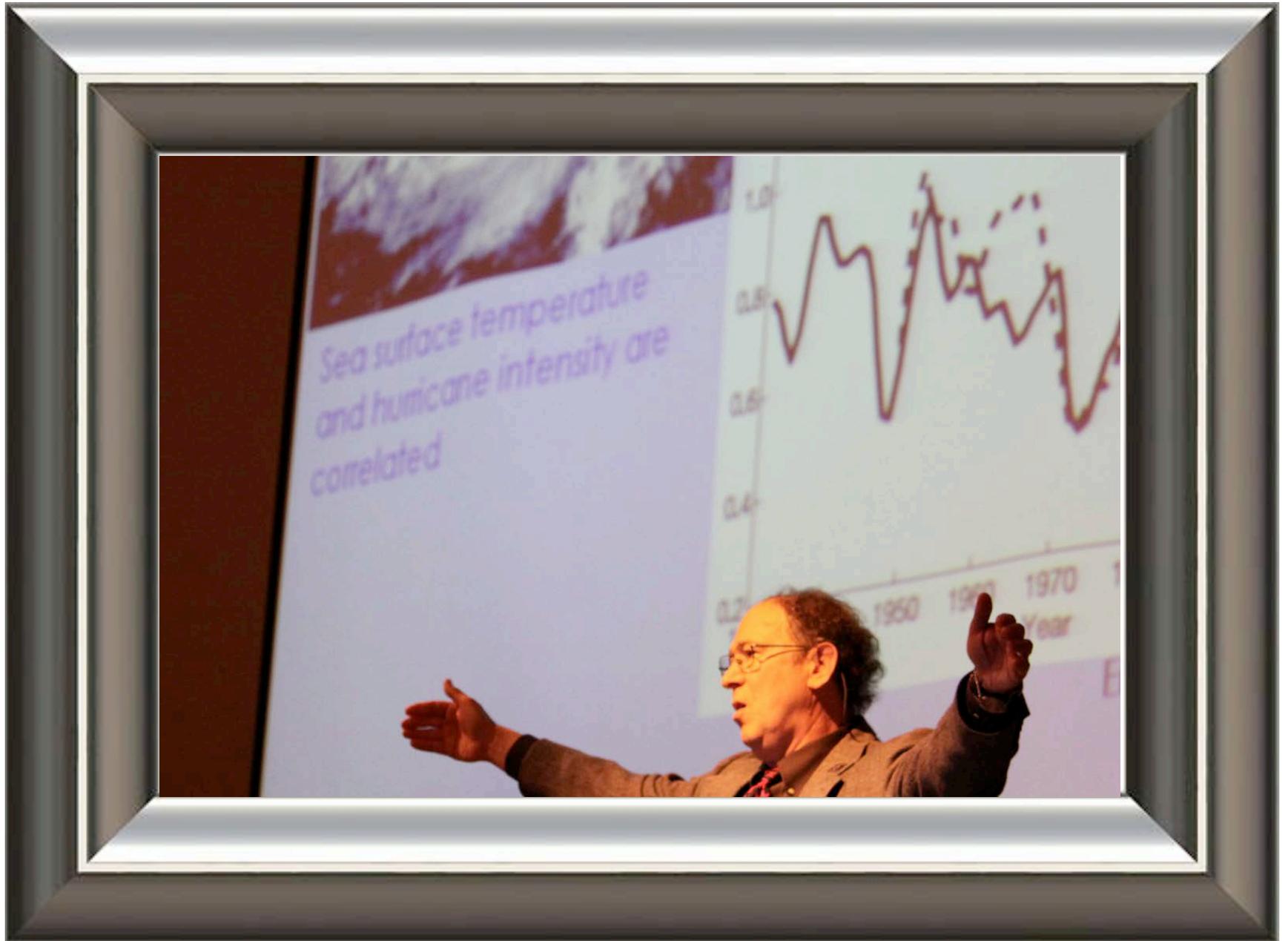
Audience research tells us that most Americans:

- 1. Are unable – top of mind – to name a single way that climate change harms our health, or identify which groups of people are most at risk.**
- 1. See climate change as a distant problem – distant in space (not here), time (not now), and species (not us)**
- 1. See climate change as an “environmental” problem, and/or a “scientific” problem, but much less so as a “people” problem.**

Climate Change



Climate Change



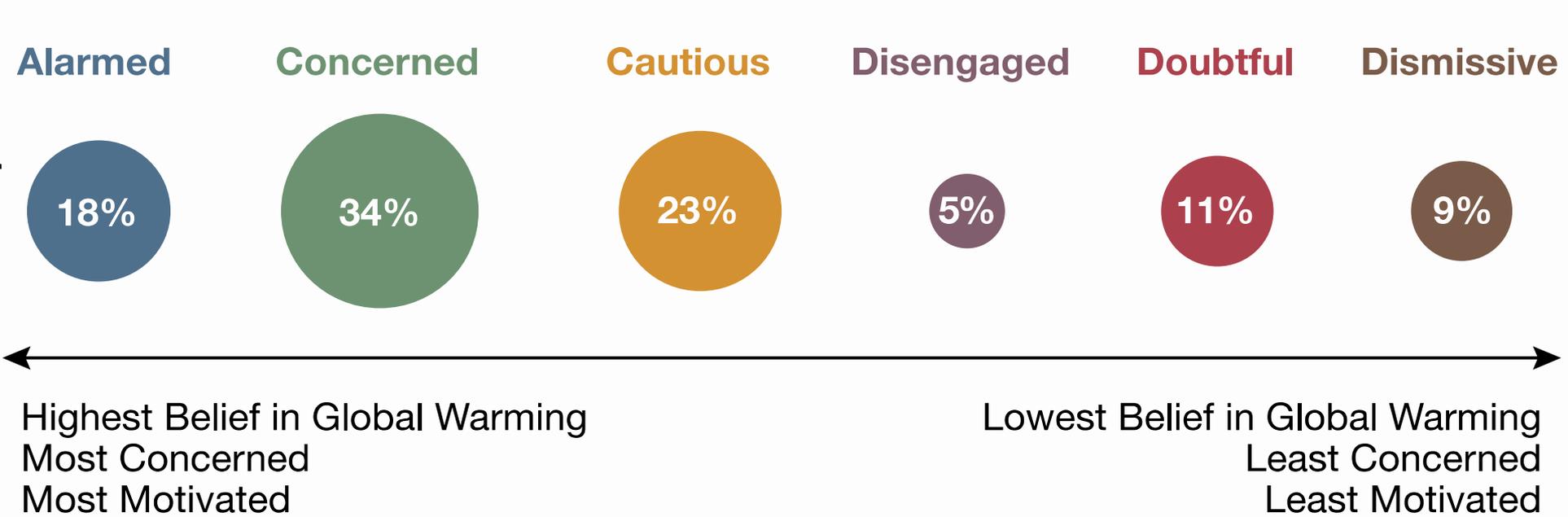
Climate Change



Climate Change



Global Warming's "Six Americas"



Proportion represented by area



Source: Yale/George Mason, November 2016; N=1,226

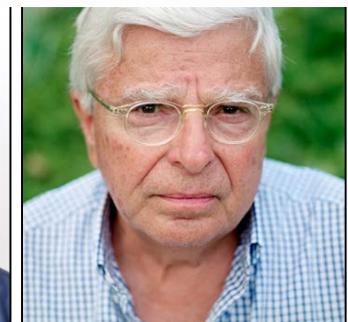
Global Warming's "Six Americas"



Highest Belief in Global Warming
Most Concerned
Most Motivated

Lowest Belief in Global Warming
Least Concerned
Least Motivated

Proportion represented by area



**Five key beliefs
about climate change**



**Various appropriate
attitudes & actions**

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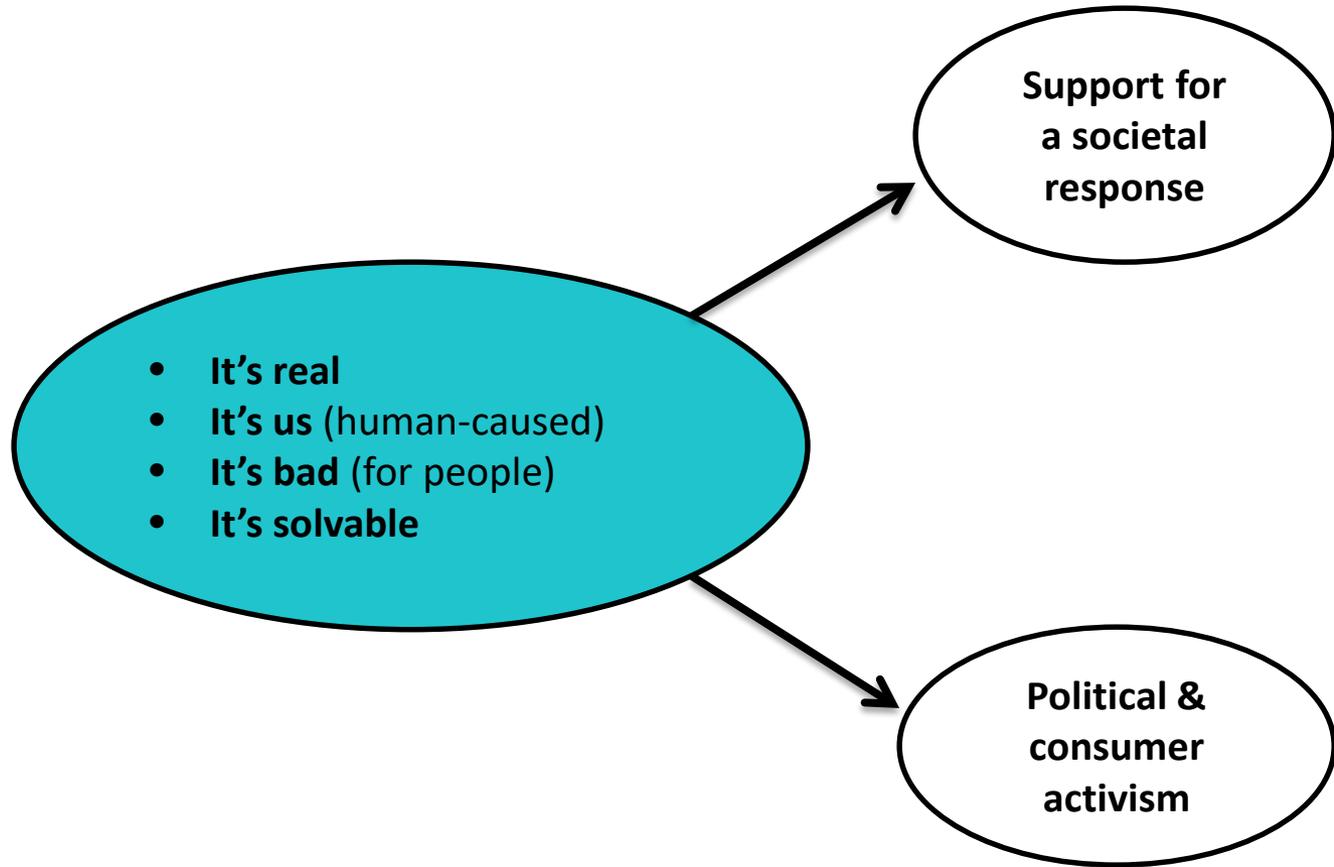
**Support for
a societal
response**

**Political &
consumer
activism**

**Five key beliefs
about climate change**



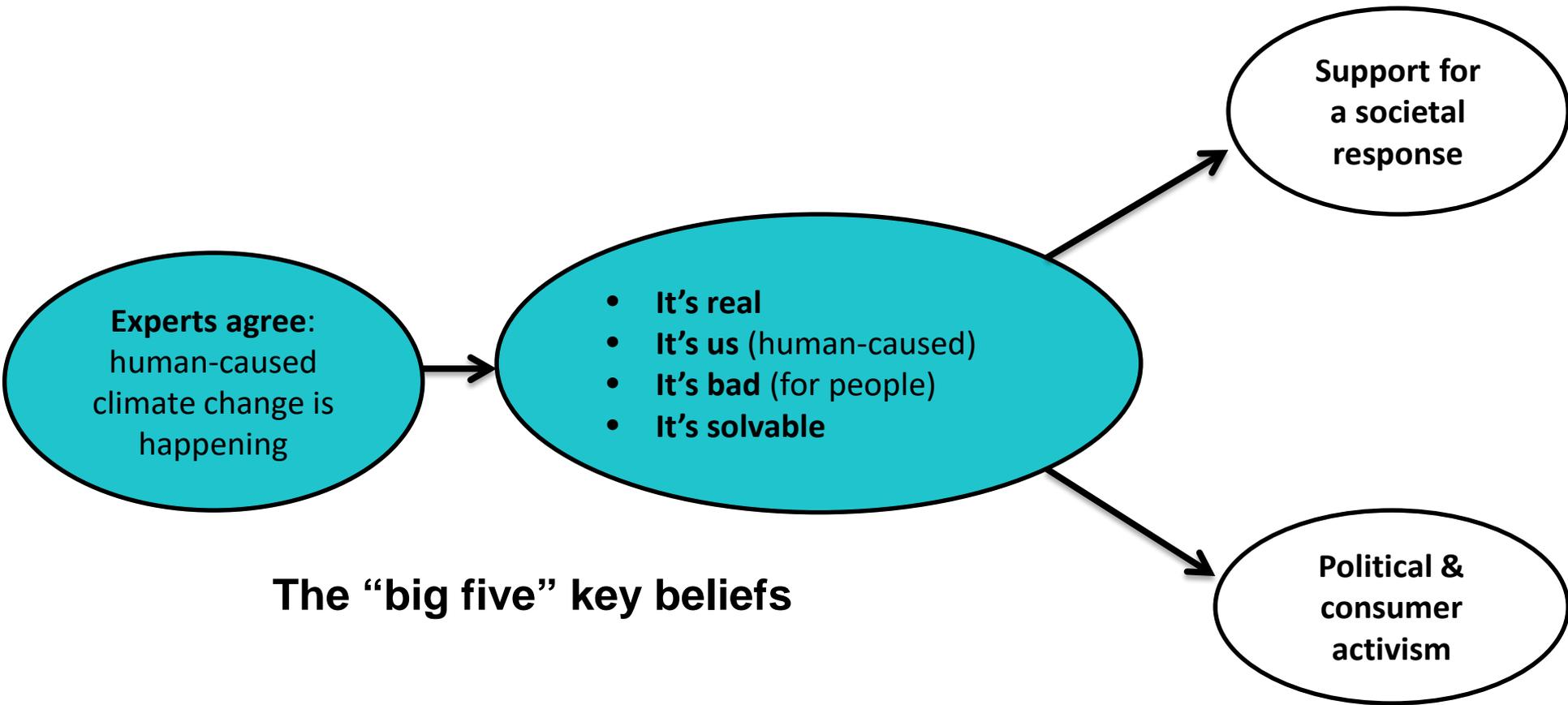
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**Five key beliefs
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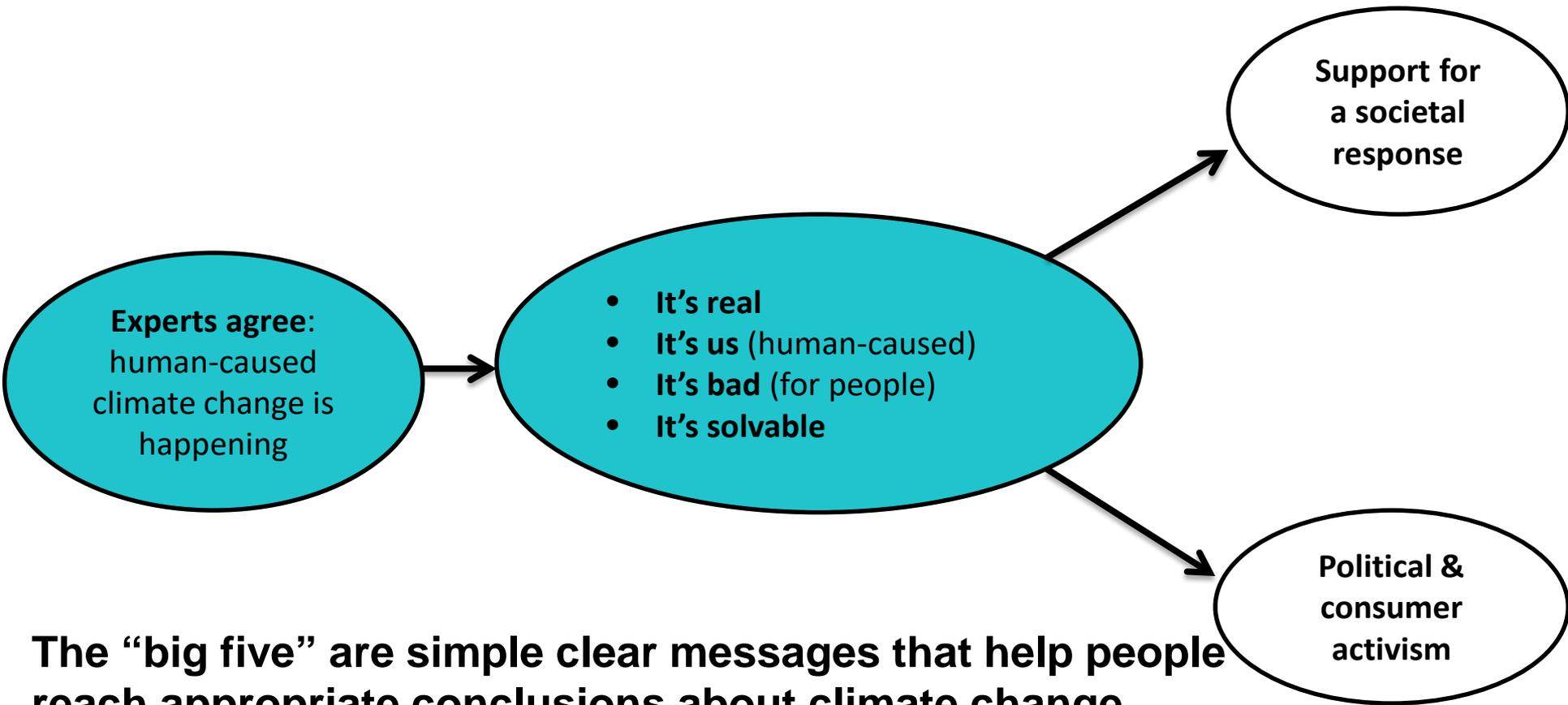


The “big five” key beliefs

**Five key beliefs
about climate change**



**Various appropriate
attitudes & actions**



The “big five” are simple clear messages that help people reach appropriate conclusions about climate change.

Health professionals can reinforce the “big 5” key beliefs with 3 simple clear messages

Climate change:

- It's real
- It's us (human-caused)
- Experts agree
- It's bad (harmful to humans)
- There's hope (it's solvable)

More than 97% of climate scientists are convinced that human-caused climate change is happening.

Polluted air, polluted water & climate change are hurting our health, badly, and it's going to get much worse if we don't take actions to protect ourselves.

Every American (families, communities, businesses, states, and our nation) can take steps that will protect our health, and our climate: reduce energy waste; use and/or support clean energy.

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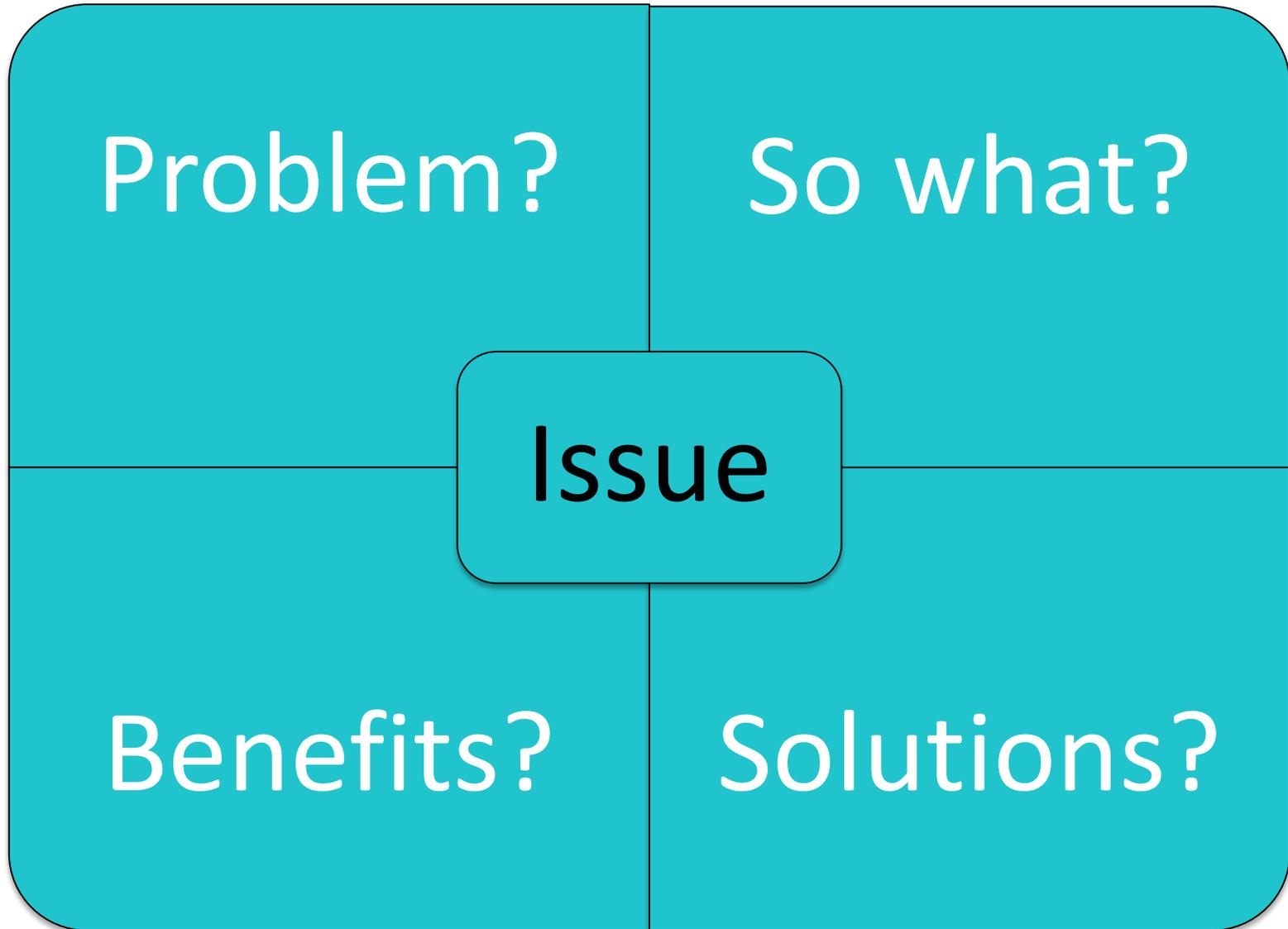
Every American (families, communities, businesses, states, and our nation) can take steps that will protect our health, and our climate: reduce energy waste; use and/or support clean energy.

We believe all Americans should know the following:



1. There is a scientific consensus about human-caused climate change.
1. In communities across the nation, climate change is harming our health now.
1. The health of any American can be harmed by climate change, but some of us face greater risk than others.
1. Unless we take concerted action, the harms to health are going to get much worse.
1. The most important action we can take to protect our health is reduce heat-trapping pollution by reducing energy waste and accelerating the inevitable transition to clean renewable energy.

The message box



Problem:

In communities across the nation, climate change is harming our health now. Doctors know this because we're seeing the health of our patients being harmed. These harms included heat-related illness, worsening chronic illness, injuries & deaths from dangerous weather events, infectious diseases spread by mosquitoes & ticks, illness from contaminated food & water, and mental health problems.

So what?

The health of any American can be harmed by climate change, but some of us are at greater risk than others. Children, student athletes, pregnant women, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses and allergies, and the poor are more likely to be harmed.

Issue: Climate change is bad for our health

More than 97% of climate scientists have concluded that human-caused climate change is happening, and research has proven that it is already harming the health of many of us. As a health professional, I have a duty to protect people from further harm by taking steps to address climate change.

Benefits?

Unless we take concerted action, these harms are going to get much worse. The sooner we take action, the more harm we can prevent, and the more we can protect the health of all Americans. Everybody wants clean air, clean water, and better health.

A useful way to think about it: What's good for our climate is good for our health, and what's good for our health is good for our climate

Solutions?

The most important action we can take to protect our health is to reduce heat-trapping pollution by reducing energy waste and accelerating the inevitable transition to clean renewable energy. It is well within our power to accomplish this. ... Accelerating the transition to clean energy has the added benefit of immediately cleaning up our air & water so that we can immediately enjoy better health.

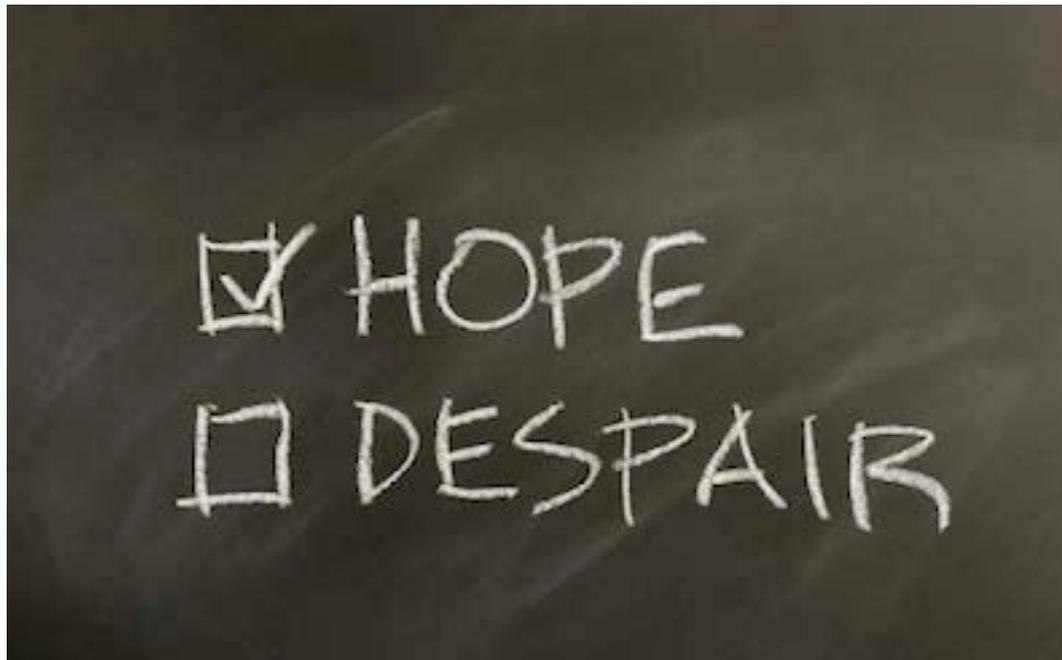
How should you communicate these messages?

1. Be the health professional that you are (because you're trusted), but also feel free to express your concerns & hopes as a person (e.g., as a parent).



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1. Be the health professional that you are (because you're trusted), but also feel free to also express your concerns and hopes as a person.
2. Show appropriate concern and a sense of urgency, but remain optimistic.



Hope and optimism attract; despair repels.

How should you communicate these messages?

1. Be the health professional that you are (because you're trusted), but feel free to also express your concerns and hopes as a person.
2. Show appropriate concern and a sense of urgency, but remain optimistic.
3. Make clear that a range of actors should be taking action – citizens, businesses, and government officials. Each of them can take steps to accelerate the inevitable transition to clean energy.



How our health is harmed by climate change

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[From bacteria to parasites: Physicians urge action to reduce climate change's harmful health effects](#)

Features Consortium Director, Dr. Mona Sarfaty, outlining climate-related health risks in the Midwest.



[Half of U.S. doctors alarmed about health effects of climate change](#)

Features Dr. Rob Bryon, speaking during the launch of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health in Washington, DC. Published in the

Billings Gazette.



[The Cleveland Plain Dealer: Climate change is making Americans sick, national medical societies warn](#)

Latest News

[Letter to President Trump](#)

As President Trump meets with members of his administration and outside experts on Tuesday to weigh whether or not to stay a party to the 2015 Paris agreement, America's doctors are asking him to honor the commitment made by the United States.



Upcoming Events

[May 16-18 – CleanMed 2017](#)

Connect with environmental thought leaders in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

[May 16: Dialogue with Minnesota Leaders: Climate Change & Public Health](#)

This event is open to everyone and will occur in conjunction with CleanMed 2017.

[May 23 or 24 – Free Communication Training Webinar for Champions](#)

Join us for a webinar, designed for our Medical Champions for Climate & Health – Learn effective communication tools for how to educate your patients, your colleagues, and the public about climate and