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# Climate Just-The-Facts Talk Script for Elementary School Students

Climate change is affecting our children's physical and mental health, whether they are aware of the issue and talk about it, or not. In a 2021 survey of Gen Z Americans, 75% said they had experienced anxiety, depression, or stress as a result of consuming news about climate change. So it is important to talk to your child first, before they hear about it on the news. Here's a script for how to start the conversation with children in elementary school.

Adapted from a 2022 presentation by Claudia Benitez-Nelson, professor of Earth, Ocean and Environment at the University of South Carolina; Kate Marvel, climate scientist at Columbia University; Judith Van Hoorn, developmental psychologist; and John Fraser, conservation psychologist, educator and CEO of Knology.



## 1. Earth is the best planet.

Have you ever thought about how amazing the earth is?

What are some things you LOVE?

Everything that you love—your favorite food, our family, your friends, animals, toys, --out of the whole universe, these things can only exist here on Earth! We are so lucky to get to live on this planet. It gives us everything we need to stay alive in a way that no other place we know of in the entire universe does.

## 2. Earth is changing.

One of the ways that earth is perfect for living things is that it has AIR we can breathe. Other planets in our solar system don't have this! The air on earth is invisible, but it's made up of different kinds of gas. These include Oxygen that people and animals breathe, and Carbon Dioxide that plants breathe.

Carbon dioxide is a little, tiny part of the air, just a little tiny trace. But it is so powerful! It wraps the earth like a blanket and keeps the planet warm enough for animals and plants to live. (you can show this, with a Kleenex wrapping around a globe)



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## 2. Earth is changing (continued).

The right amount of carbon dioxide is like one blanket that keeps you nice and comfy. That's one of the things that makes the earth a special planet where people and animals can live.

But if you piled too many blankets on top of your bed what would happen?

It would get WAY TOO WARM. You would sweat and might even get a fever. Same thing, too much carbon dioxide and other gasses like methane, makes it WAY TOO WARM or even HOT.

And that's what's happening on earth right now. Those blankets are piling up. And not only is the whole planet getting hotter, in some places it's too dry, so there's not enough rain; there are bigger storms and hurricanes; not enough snow in the winter; big wildfires.

Where do we live, what kind of weather do we have?



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### **3. We know why.**

These blankets are piling up because of something called EMISSIONS.

EMISSIONS happen when people burn oil, coal, or gas to drive cars, fly in airplanes, heat and cool houses and other buildings, cook food, and make things in factories. These old fossil fuel ways of making energy by burning fuel are adding to the blankets. It's a really big problem.





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## **4. The good news is that we have LOTS OF solutions.**

We can have the things we need. We can get where we need to go. We can keep ourselves safe and comfortable without adding to EMISSIONS and making the planet hotter.

Do you know about choices that help the earth?

Go on a road trip or train vacation instead of flying, ride bikes, walk instead of driving in a car, switch to an electric stove and electric heat, waste less food, eat less meat. And just as important, there are things we can tell the people in power to do and help us do. Like put more solar panels on buildings, offer composting to everybody, build safer streets to ride our bicycles, and make electric trains and buses to get around.

A really big problem means you need lots of helpers. And I want to be a helper. Do you?