

Another approach

Thank you for publishing “We can’t afford to wait” by professors Jim Kasting and Michael Mann.

They clearly explained how a scientific idea is investigated. They covered how explanatory theories enter the canon of “settled science,” even if details remain unresolved, and why in the case of potentially catastrophic outcomes, policy measures may be necessary before every detail is settled.

However, I wished they had concluded by focusing on the varying skills different people bring to societal problems, and our contrasting responsibilities to society. Perhaps saying:

Climate scientists have begun working with science educators and science communicators to explain their highly technical, mathematically dense conclusions to policymakers and the public. However, just helping politicians and the public understand settled science’s facts isn’t enough. Science communicators also need to stress the human side of climate change. When they tell stories about climate change impacts and the effects on real people, the stories encourage empathy in listeners. James Hansen often speaks about his grandchildren, and how and why storms will be more powerful and dangerous during their lifetime. This method of teaching is essential because climate change dangers and their probabilities aren’t just facts to learn and details to argue. The risks associated with various potential climate catastrophes are higher than real people would knowingly assume for their children — if they learned to approach the subject with love and empathy.

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