

Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change

Don't Even Think About It explores why topics surrounding climate change have become so divisive in public discourse. The author, George Marshall, explains the multi-faceted psychological reasons why people fail to perceive such pressing issues. This book is peppered with different points of view, yet Marshall successfully encapsulates what is really at stake.



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Climate change is now at the forefront of everyone's mind, from political agendas and media campaigns to social media platforms and promotional propaganda.

At first glance, this may seem like positive news, a step in the right direction towards a cleaner, safer and more environmentally conscious world. And indeed, deep down, it is a good start.

However, if you dig a little deeper, and look a little closer, all you will see are two groups battling over facts and figures, collaborating with their peers in order to at-

tract as many people as possible towards their business whilst making sure that in the face of it all, the brand is always right. This increasingly polarised landscape is certainly not conducive to the understanding of complex situations.

Are scientists pessimists?

The answer to this question should in fact be quite simple. Climate scientists are unanimous in their assessment of the effects of a warming atmosphere caused by anthropogenic activity.

A photograph of a forest fire. In the foreground, a large, cut log lies horizontally. Behind it, a fire is burning, with bright orange and yellow flames rising from a pile of wood. The background shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees, some of which are partially obscured by the smoke and fire. The overall scene is dramatic and highlights the impact of human activity on the environment.

The data we have at our disposal unequivocally shows how human activity has accelerated the destruction of our environment. It also demonstrates the catastrophic effect that continuing such practices could have on society, accelerating a downward spiral that is becoming increasingly difficult to halt. Does telling us that we must intervene today, and not tomorrow, make scientists pessimists?

People do not see the threat

There is no singular answer to solving the world's climate issues, yet, for a broad spectrum of reasons, most people do not see climate change as an immediate threat.



The purely scientific approach does not allow the human brain to instantly connect the dots and perceive the threat that is brewing around us.

George Marshall, founder of Climate Outreach and Information Network and author of *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* illustrates how human's, by nature, are wired to worry about imminent danger. The part of our brain that engages fear allows us to react fast when, for instance, a car is driving straight at you.

This concept goes back to when humans were hunters, however, “stay alert to the gradual warming of the earth's atmosphere which will inevitably lead to the collapse of society for future generations” doesn't seem to have quite the same fear response as, “watch out for that massive bear that's entering your cave”.

When it comes to climate change, the purely scientific approach does not allow the human brain to instantly connect the dots and perceive the threat that is brewing around us.

A lot of the information surrounding climate change is simply too technical and far removed from everyday life. Other topics are unable to captivate a large enough audience. Basically, they're boring. And finally, there is the socio-political and economic lens through which the information is filtered, manipulating information or challenging science in order to best benefit the system in which the source operates.

This is the reason why Marshall adopts a colloquial, easy-to-understand style that is able to captivate the general public. Even his decision to not include notes throughout the text (though they are available online for those interested in learning more) clearly reflects this "open" approach. It is almost like reading a logbook.

Across 40 chapters, Marshall engages scientists who are able to divulge information about global warming and with business leaders who responsibly seek efficient solutions to complex issues.

Among other dialogues, he seeks out the opinions of those who have a different point of view in order to provide a balanced account.



Rational scientific data can only lose against the compelling emotional story that speaks to people's core value.

— George Marshall

In one passage, Marshall recounts his encounter with members of the Tea Party, a politically and fiscally conservative party from the United States.

They consider climate change to be just one theory among other possibilities and that the pro-environmental decisions of governments and supranational bodies such as the UN are nothing more than an attempt to limit the freedoms of the people and create a single world government.

Ok science, we have communication problem

Marshall's explanation of the polarisation of opinions when it comes to science couldn't be more topical. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to unravel over a year after it started, the public is still struggling to decipher information about the virus and now the vaccinations.

The poor communication surrounding the pandemic has left people scared and unable to put their trust in scientific and governmental bodies.

The confusion fuels fear and hysteria, leaving people to cling to dated or unproven ideas and conspiracy theories whilst leaving them deaf to the appeals of the scientific community. The problem is both psychological and cultural, as Marshall states, "rational scientific data can only lose against a compelling emotional story that speaks to people's core value".

The ending reveals the future that awaits us

Marshall successfully engages the reader without judgement.

"PLEASE READ THIS BOOK, AND THINK ABOUT IT. LET'S GET TO WORK." —BILL NYE

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Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change by George Marshall is available to purchase at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

He brings to life the voices of the people he meets and their points of view to help the reader to open their mind and better understand what it means to face such an enormously global challenge.

Above all, Marshall highlights the clear psychological obstacles that dominate climate change denial. On one hand, we have rationality and science, but on the other hand, we find emotions and deep-rooted beliefs which can easily overpower the former. At the end of the book, Marshall

lays out a final scenario. That of a world where temperatures have risen by 4 degrees Celsius and the impact that would have on our lives and ecosystem.

He concludes by pointing out a series of solutions for dealing with the psychological prejudices that prevent humans from seeing the reality that climate change is not a theory, it's a scientific fact.