

## Exercise 9: Dealing with Climate Sceptics and Contrarians (optional)

### *Practicing Responsiveness without Getting Trapped*

**Important caution:** We are suggesting you do the following exercise with your chosen (or assigned) partner(s). However, due to the corona virus pandemic, we ask you to *do this exercise virtually*, i.e., to talk by phone, Skype, or any other social media app you feel comfortable with. If you cannot use any of the virtual options and are meeting in person, please adhere to all local guidelines on social distancing during the COVID crisis: maintain at least a 1.5 m distance to your partner(s) and other people. Behavioural guidelines during the pandemic are updated frequently and you can see the latest at the [WHO website](#) and, particularly, the [Seychelles Department of Health](#) guidelines.

### **Purpose of Exercise**

The purpose of this exercise is for you to:

- *Practice dealing with difficult communication situations*, particularly, where audience members attempt to undermine your message, your credibility, your efforts, or even attack you as a person.

### **Needed Supplies**

- Pen and paper or Notebook/journal

### **Time Requirement**

15-20 minutes (or longer, if desired; practice makes this easier over time)

### **Instructions**

1. **Practice with your training partner(s)**
  - One of you take on the role of the skeptic/contrarian
    - Use any and all of the “stages of denial” or embody the “5 D’s” of psychological defense
    - Put yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn’t want to change. Imagine some of the things you might say in response to or how you might argue back against the key messages someone is trying to deliver
    - Lean into this resistance (and have some fun acting out this position)
  - The other person practices a reply
    - Attempt to correct the misstatement (if you know)
    - Come as a “friendly” communicator (see the last page in this hand-out)
    - Affirm the identity/sense of self of the skeptical/resistant person
    - Reframe the issue
    - The practice A-T-M and deliver your key message (see the last page of this hand-out)
2. After you have had a few attempts, switch roles and do it again
3. When complete, debrief and discuss what you found difficult, where you got triggered and got pulled into the resistant person’s argument. Help each other find ways to do this even better.
4. Take notes in your journal and bring your questions and challenges with you to the next Zoom meeting.

Note: This is hard! Don’t give up. The only thing that makes this easier over time is *practice!* As such this is also an incredible opportunity! Think of yourselves as supportive coaches who are here to help the other person succeed. (And maybe you like and benefit so much from it that you might want to make that a new habit!?! Ask for help. Offer your help. You both win!

## Reminders:

### Come as a friendly communicator (the communicator as friend)

- Validate your audience
- Affirm their sense of self
- Appreciate past accomplishments
- Speak to what they care about, treasure, value, aspire to, who they are (identity, their connection to sense of place)
- Sympathize with their struggles, concerns, or worries (if you heard any)
- Connect climate action to something they already do or can do
- Tap into their curiosity/interests, their passion for something
- Don't leave without giving people hope, a sense of "can-do-(together)"

### Practicing message delivery when faced with counterargument and resistance

Practice: A<sup>answer or acknowledge</sup> – T<sup>ransition</sup> – M<sup>essage</sup>