



Explanatory Metaphor

Climate's Heart

A metaphor for the role of the ocean in the climate system



The story you're telling:

Just as a heart circulates blood and regulates the body's temperature, the ocean controls the circulation of heat and moisture throughout the climate system.



Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

- Change Is Natural/Fatalism • Climate = Weather • Climate System? What System?
 - Nature Will Heal Itself • Ocean and Land = Separate Worlds
- Ocean Is Too Big to be Harmed • Ocean Problems = Material Pollution
 - Science Is Uncertain



Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- **The ocean regulates the climate system the way your heart regulates the flow of blood throughout your body:** conveys the centrality of the ocean within the climate system.
- **As the heart of the climate's circulatory system, the ocean maintains the earth's temperatures:** after making this analogy, fill in critical information about how the ocean functions like a circulatory system. (Specify how the ocean controls the earth's climate by moving heat and moisture via currents and winds, and stabilizes the earth's temperature by absorbing heat and transferring it to different parts of the climate system.)
- **When we burn fossil fuels, our carbon dioxide emissions trap heat in our atmosphere. This heat puts stress on the ocean, damaging its ability to keep the climate stable:** facilitates thinking about how the ocean can be harmed by human activities and frames the problem as one of energy use.
- **As a result of this stress, sometimes the ocean pumps too much heat and moisture throughout the system, sometimes too little:** provides an explanation of why there are differential effects of climate change in different parts of the world.
- **A heart must be monitored and cared for to ensure overall health and functioning, and the best care is preventative care:** opens up the conversation to the frame element of Solutions, allowing for a productive consideration of meaningful, collective actions.
- **If we think about the ocean as the heart of the climate, we can see that we need to prevent further damage to it. We need to rethink our society's reliance on fossil fuels for energy:** communicators can use this language or other preferred solutions, but it's important to close



User Notes:

- **Avoid cueing up crisis thinking:** don't talk about fatal heart attacks, or death from heart disease, and don't explicitly state that "we can't live without our heart."
- **Avoid individualizing the issue:** a major goal of this metaphor is to help the public understand the climate as a system. Talking about individual solutions, such as "riding your bike to keep your heart, and the climate's heart, healthy and strong," undoes the important work of setting up systems-level thinking.
- **Avoid anthropomorphizing the earth, atmosphere, or ocean:** limit the analogy to human anatomy to the essential comparisons only—e.g., hearts are essential; circulation works like so; avoiding stresses to the heart is a good way to take care of it.