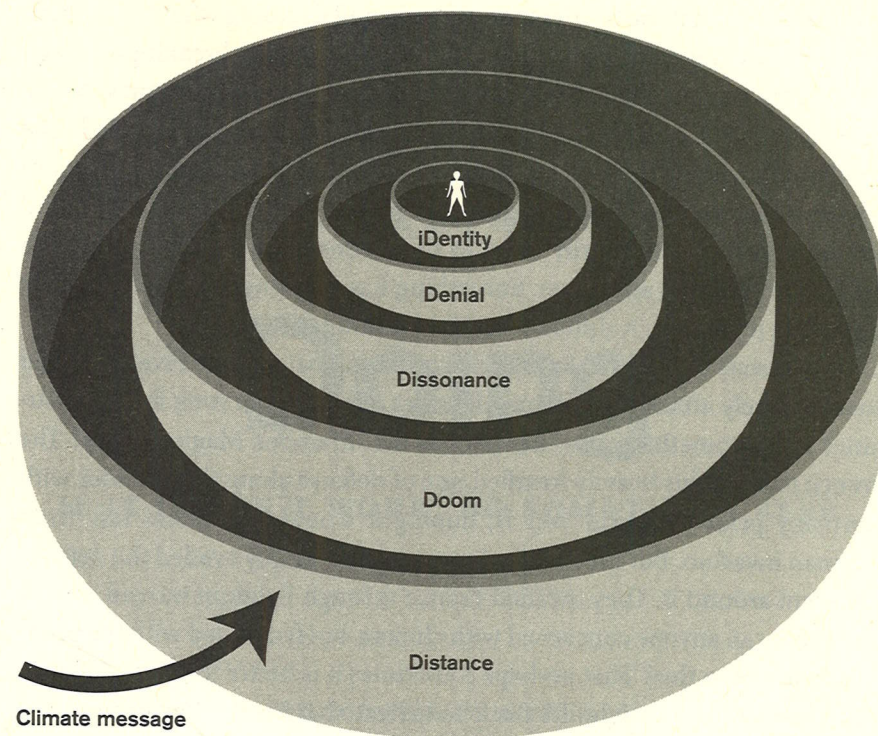


Let's call them, for easy reference, the five D's.

1. **Distance.** The climate issue remains remote for the majority of us, in a number of ways. We can't see climate change. Melting glaciers are usually far away, as are the spots on earth now experiencing sea level rise, more severe floods, droughts, fires, and other climate disruptions. It may hit foreign others, not me or my kin. And the heaviest impacts are far off in time—in the coming century or farther. Despite some people stating that global warming is here now, it still feels distant from everyday concerns.
2. **Doom.** When climate change is framed as an encroaching disaster that can only be addressed by loss, cost, and sacrifice, it creates a wish to avoid the topic. We're predictably averse to losses. With a lack of practical solutions, helplessness grows and the fear message backfires. We've heard that "the end is nigh" so many times, it no longer really registers.
3. **Dissonance.** If what we know (for instance, our fossil energy use contributes to global warming), conflicts with what we do (drive, fly, eat beef, or heat with fossil fuels), then dissonance sets in. The same happens if my attitudes conflict with those of people important to me. In both cases, the lack of convenient behaviors and social support weaken climate attitudes over time. But by doubting or downplaying what we know (the facts), we can feel better about how we live. Thus, actual behavior and social relations determine the attitude in the long run.
4. **Denial.** When we negate, ignore, or otherwise avoid acknowledging the unsettling facts about climate change, we find refuge from fear and guilt. By joining outspoken denialism and mockery, we can get back at those whom we feel criticize our lifestyles, think they know better, and try to tell us how to live. Denial is based in self-defense, not ignorance, intelligence, or lack of information.
5. **iDentity.** We filter news through our professional and cultural identity. We look for information that confirms our existing values and notions, and filter away what challenges them. If people who hold conservative values, for instance, hear from a liberal that the climate is changing, they are less likely to believe the message. Cultural identity overrides the facts. If new information requires us to change our selves, then the information is likely to lose. We experience resistance to calls for change in self-identity.



**Figure 7.1.** The Five D's: There are five barriers that block the climate message—preventing it from attracting enough concern to make climate a high priority. Crafting climate messages that work requires navigating around these five defenses.

These five barriers, or Five D's if you will, are all substantial and unyielding. Taken together they may seem invincible. They are interrelated, but still distinct. Think of them as concentric circles around the citadel of the self, with *distance* as the first line of defense and *identity* as the final, innermost defense—as depicted in figure 7.1.

The anti-climate movement has been successful in triggering each of these barriers in its battle against climate science. But inadvertently, climate communicators have activated them, too, for instance by conveying climate facts through abstract graphs and long time lines, using framing that backfires, not linking risks to opportunities for action, relying on bad storytelling, and provoking self-protective and cultural cognition by unnecessary polarization.