

## Common Attitudes Toward Global Warming

Exploitation. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, humankind has extracted and utilized coal, gas, oil, and metal ores. In addition forests have been cut down on a large scale to make room for agriculture and human habitation. People with this attitude believe that these resources are here for humans to use and when the resources run dry, we will develop new technologies or find new resources to take their place. Decisions are driven by economics the cheapest resources are the ones we will use first and the environment will take care of itself (as it always has). This also includes the attitude that any climate change will happen slowly enough as to not affect me or my generation. Why should we pay for something that has no immediate benefit?

Technical Fix. In the past humans have been so effective at developing new technologies to meet problems as they arise, we assume that this will always be the case. The technical fix implies that any damage can be corrected after it has been created rather than avoided in the first place. Proponents of the technical fix must consider the cost of changing now versus the cost of fixing a potentially huge problem later.

Wait and See. This attitude says that because we do not know for certain that global warming is occurring or what the future might bring, we should do nothing at all now. It is all right to continue to monitor and study the situation, but until we can determine more definite answers to the uncertainties, it would be foolish to act now. Furthermore, the Earth's climate has remained in a range suitable for human life for quite a long time, why not believe it will remain that way?

Responsibility to Future Generations. For many it is a basic instinct that we wish to see our children and grandchildren well set up in the world. We would like them to inherit from us an Earth that has been well looked after and not leave them difficult problems caused by our irresponsible actions. Although uncertainties exist in our understanding of global warming, there is enough evidence to warrant taking actions now to ensure that we do not ruin the Earth for future generations.

Unity of the Earth. Similar to above, except the main focus is that we have a responsibility for the larger world of all living things. Think of the views held by many native American tribes that all of nature is connected in a delicate balance. This attitude holds that humans are responsible for taking care of the Earth and all life, and action on global warming should be taken now since we are upsetting natural balances. For some, the responsibility to care for life was given by God.

Precautionary Principle. Lack of full scientific certainty does not mean that we should not take action. There is enough evidence and scientific basis about global warming for us to act now. Just as we take out insurance policies (that cost money) to cover the possibility of accidents or losses, there is enough of a threat that we should start spending money to make changes now. The cost of changing our ways must be weighed against the possible future costs of not changing our ways.

Back to Nature. This is the attitude that we all adopt a more primitive lifestyle and give up a large part of industry and intensive farming, essentially moving back to pre-industrial times. The back to nature approach will allow the Earth to heal in the short-term and allow humans to live in harmony with nature in the long-term. Two important considerations for this approach: can a population that is six times greater than it was 200 years ago be adequately fed by small-scale farming? In freezing technological development, is human creativity suppressed?

Drastic Actions should be taken now. This goes beyond the precautionary principle to say that we should deal with the global warming problem as if it will be certain doom for life on Earth if we continue to increase greenhouse gas concentrations. Since future changes are uncertain, we should prepare for the worst and not leave anything to chance. Industries and people should be forced to change regardless of what the costs are.