



## The Psychology of Peak Oil? Some thoughts and some questions...

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on April 26, 2005 - 7:41pm

In [yesterday's post](#), I made the point that dropping one of those really complex, scary primers on peak oil into people's email boxes is like throwing a flaming bag of dog poo at their door and then running away: it's just not very nice (and true, neither was the metaphor...).

But, how else can you tell people about the evidence of peak oil?

As [I said in the Monday Conversation](#), for most people, prima facie, the big idea of peak oil is so complex that it's just hard to get a handle on...which means that most people put it on the shelf in their heads because of their perceived lack of efficacy in the matter: "if this is true, there's nothing I can do about it. if it isn't true, it's a waste of time. Ergo, I ain't gonna think about it." Sad, but true.

I think another thing that's at work here is that, when one first sits down with these notions, one cannot help but think back through the many charlatans and wrongseers of recent history. Let's be honest, at first glance, "peak oil" screams of tilting at windmills and a y2k redux.

"...it's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine..."

That is, until you actually sit down and think this through...

(I think the first thing you have to get through your own head, and then through the heads of others, are the notions of oil as a finite resource, and the basics of supply and demand. Even that is tough for many to grasp, but it's kinda the basics of the basics, isn't it?)

But, then, actually telling others about a series of events that are so dystopic is even tougher...on the teller, because they don't want to look like a fool or be considered "stupid" and on the tellee, because they don't want to hear this stuff. They'd rather be happy. They don't really WANT to know.

It's hard to make the public aware when they don't want to listen...and that's true of most advocates of most causes, green or otherwise. Change is hard. Doing something about something is even harder.

Most of the time, in my experience, even when you do start telling people about this causally, you get at least the "deer in the headlights" look, if not the "unsubtle subject change," or I've even gotten the "are you fucking nuts?"

You can't force people to listen, you can't just keep talking. They just tune you out. So, does that mean that you can only talk to smart people who are open-minded about this? If so, that means

Another tack, is there a good way to tell people about this? or do people have to go through the [Kubler-Ross five stages of grief before they get to where they can work with this?](#) (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance).

Can anything we do in presenting this to others get around this psychological process?

Or is there something different between thinking on peak oil and grief that makes it cut differently or even deeper (grieving for the world, grieving for your hummer, grieving for your lifestyle?)?

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