

What is Risk Perception? Why Does it Matter

Dr. Betty Hearn Morrow
Governor's Hurricane Conference
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Palm Beach Convention Center

What is risk?

- As a NOUN:

**RISK = Situation involving
exposure to danger or loss**

What's **AT RISK** from hurricanes?

What can be lost or impacted?

- Life (including delayed deaths)
- Health (injuries, respiratory problems, poor diets)
- Economic status (home, possessions, businesses, jobs, savings)
- Emotional health (grief, stress, depression, self confidence)
- Society (neighborhood, networks, schools, recreational facilities)
- Structures
- Infrastructure

*What could be the **result** of taking a chance and losing?*

Highly dependent on circumstances:

Young vs. older person in an accident

Poor vs. rich man playing cards

Resiliency of structure impacted by hurricane

What is risk?

- As a VERB:

TO RISK = To expose to danger

To take a “calculated risk”

Willingness to Take Risk

Depends on

RISK PERCEPTION:

*How **likely** is it to happen?*

1 in 10 10% Could happen
Likely
Might happen Most Likely

A subjective judgment

–Based on a **mental model**
of what might happen

Affected by:

Knowledge

Experience

Social networks

Attitude about risk

Willingness to Take Risk

- Affected by **RISK ATTITUDE**
 - Optimist?
 - Thrill seeker?
 - Aggressive?



2018 Darwin Awards

Honoring Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, Darwin Awards commemorate those who improve our gene pool--by removing themselves from it.

Road-Rage-Aholics

2018 Darwin Award Winner
Confirmed True by Darwin

(20 February 2018, Poland) Darwin Double! After a road collision near Stary Krzew, two men emerged from their damaged cars and began arguing. The argument grew into a physical fight...then shrank down to bloodstains on the asphalt when the men lurched into the adjacent lane of traffic. A lorry weighed in on the fight, permanently terminating the road-rage between a 29-year-old from Krakow and a 40-year-old from Zambrów,

Victims of their own aggression, the men are Poster Children for Meditation Outreach.



What's worth risking?

What is NOT worth risking?

A **value** judgment

Not buying insurance

Driving over the speed limit

Not taking an umbrella

Playing \$20 Blackjack

Not wearing a seat belt

Skydiving

Not taking medication

Smoking

Surgery

Diving off a bridge

Taking a high-stress job

Availability of **ALTERNATIVES** is important factor:

Taking an umbrella

Walking away from card game

Quitting smoking

Using seatbelts

EVACUATION

Very difficult process

Requires resources

Takes great deal of initiative

IMPLICATIONS FOR RISK COMMUNICATION

- Emphasize **WHAT'S** at risk
 - what could be lost –
 - more than LIKELIHOOD of it happening

- Use risk as a **VERB**

Not something that just happens
but something that results from
HUMAN ACTION

Bottom Line:

What are you willing to risk?

Thanks for your attention.
Questions or Comments?

betty@bmorrow.com