

Framing our Messages

Tools for Effective Communication
Prevention Hub Meeting 01/23/13

Communication Matters

- Within the helping profession, we have a history of reframing language to be more effective
 - Teacher says “You may want to look at this differently,” rather than “You did this wrong.”
 - “We want to talk with you about domestic violence” changes to, “Let’s talk about how you keep your family safe.”

What is Framing?

- “Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically ... to structure the social world.”

- Stephen D. Reese, *Framing Public Life*, 2001

What Research Says About Framing

- People use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world
- The way we hear information influences how we “file” it
- Most information about public affairs comes from news, which over time creates a dominant frame
- Over time we develop habits of thoughts & expectation to conform to this frame

Framing for Change

- We want people to think about our issues.
- How do we get them to think about our issues in a way that they want to solve them through public policy and not individual actions?

Framing for Change

- Communication resonates deeply with people's values & worldview
- When communication is *ineffective*, people default to existing frames
- When communication is *effective*, people can see an issue from a new perspective or frame

The Dominant Frame of Individual Responsibility

- Individual focus
- Warns & Informs
- Personal Change

The Dominant Frame of Individual Responsibility



- <http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/workshops/foodandfitness/>

Building an Effective Frame: It's As Easy As 1-2-3

1) Lead With a Value:

What's at stake?

2) Identify the Issue:

What is it about?

3) Explain a Solution:

How can a policy help?

An Overview of Framing about Disparities

- <http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/toolkits/race/avoidingtraps.html>

Building an Effective Frame: Lead With a Value

- Lead with a value: What's at stake?
- Use shared value frames that support your message
 - Opportunity for all
 - Fairness between places
 - Preventing future social problems
 - Ingenuity - we can fix the problem

Building an Effective Frame: Identify the Issue

- Identify the issue: What is the issue about?
- Use just one strong, compelling fact that underscores the problem.
- Too much data makes people feel as though they're being "sold" or that the problem is too big to fix

Building an Effective Frame: Explain a Solution

- Explain a solution: How can policy help? What are your specific policy goals?
- Solution focused messages are much more effective than those that emphasize the problem.

Building an Effective Frame: Keep it Simple

- Speak in plain language, and avoid jargon and technical language.

“ Health starts in our homes, schools, and communities.”

“ Lots of families are struggling to make ends meet.”

Framing Early Childhood Disparities: A Message Template

Our County's ability to achieve is undermined when not enough people have access to programs that strengthen opportunities for children. (*Value = Opportunity for all*). Because early experiences literally wire the brain for all the learning that follows, ensuring opportunity early in life is critical to children's future (*Issue: Early Childhood Development*) Presently, high quality early education program in our state are being threatened. We need to maintain funding for subsidized preschool so that children have equal opportunity to thrive (*Solution= Affordable Early Education*).

Other Elements in Messaging

- Tone
- Context
- Visuals
- Numbers
- Metaphors/Simplifying Models

Group Exercise

- Take a stab at addressing your issue with emphasizing the value, issue, solution approach

Framing Resources

- A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health
www.rwjf.org/vulnerablepopulations/product.jsp?id=66428
- Frameworks Institute www.frameworksinstitute.org
 - E workshops:
<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/eworkshops.html>
 - Toolkits:
<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/cdtoolkits.html>
 - Issues: <http://frameworksinstitute.org/238.html>
- Berkeley Media Studies Group
<http://www.bmsg.org>

Next Steps

- More Training
- Exploring Resources
- Developing Shared Messages