Telling the Washington State Prevention Story

A strategic communication workshop

Coalition Leadership Institute

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Today’s agenda

• Welcome!
• What makes a frame? Why does framing matter?
• Setting the stage for a new prevention story
• Framing Do’s and Don’ts
• Giving framing feedback
Framing Fundamentals
Framing Fundamental #1:

People have multiple ways of reasoning about any social issue, and some are more helpful than others.
Understanding cultural models is the key to strategic communications
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Multiple Models Available

Some More Productive Than Others

Choose the Cues That Avoid and Advance
Framing Fundamental #2:

Framing is about guiding your audience’s interpretation of an issue, so they reach more productive conclusions.
Framing is about choices:

- what to say
- what to emphasize
- what not to say

in order to shape people’s understanding of an issue.
Framing Fundamental #3: Which frames build public understanding of and support for an issue is an empirical question.
A frame that “works” shifts thinking in multiple ways

knowledge  attitudes  policy support
When a frame “works,” it moves thinking in multiple ways

knowledge

Adolescent substance use is a public health issue, and health care professionals have a role to play in addressing adolescents’ use of drug and alcohol.

attitudes

Our society can work together to reduce adolescents’ use of drugs and alcohol.

policy support

Health care providers should be required to have conversations about substance use with adolescents during routine visits.
A Well-Framed Story Arc:
Answering the public’s big questions about social issues

Why does this matter?
‣ VALUES

What’s this about?
‣ METAPHORS
‣ EXAMPLES
‣ EXPLANATIONS

How does this work?

If it’s not working, why not?

What can we do about it?
‣ PRINCIPLES
‣ SOLUTIONS
Setting the Stage
A few patterns in public thinking about Prevention, Wellbeing, Implementation and Substance Use

- Experimentation is Natural
- Individualism & Willpower
- Fatalism
- Environments Matter
- Dangerous Times

Solutions
- Better information for better decisions
- Government should... do something
- More programs = better programs
- Community feedback is essential

Just the Basics
Strategies to avoid

- **DO NOT** appeal to *Health and Happiness* when explaining why adolescent substance use needs to be addressed.

- **AVOID** reinforcing the idea that health and wellbeing are only about personal choices, without acknowledging the role of environments.
Strategies that require caution

- CAUTION: Avoid framing adolescent substance use prevention as an issue of economic wellbeing or prosperity.

- CAUTION: Think twice before using analogies to asthma or other health problems to explain protective factors and solutions for substance misuse.

SLOW DOWN!
Strategies to use

- **DO** combine the *Responsibility* value with explanations of the effects of adolescent substance use.
- **DO** use the *Human Potential* value to position prevention work as an element of wellbeing.
- **DO** use the *Boiling Over* metaphor to explain how to address adolescent substance use.
- **DO** use the *Construction* metaphor to explain how agencies and programs work together to support wellbeing.
Framing Challenges:
Individualism; Wellbeing = Financial Stability + Physical Health

Solution: Human Potential

When we support wellbeing, we make sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities.
As part of our mission to transform lives and help our community members thrive, [state agencies] work with our partners to leverage limited resources to help high-need communities. By investing in best practices and our states prevention workforce, we support communities in creating sustainable, healthy changes.
We have a moral obligation to keep youth out of harm’s way. Early use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs can be harmful - and so, we have a shared responsibility to prevent and reduce substance use among adolescents.
A healthy and thriving community has safe places to learn, work and raise a family. The people who live there enjoy equal access to quality education and healthcare, living-wage jobs and affordable housing. Overall there is a high quality of life for everyone.

Alcohol and other drugs can erode the health and safety of communities. This is why effective prevention services are vital for every community. When we prevent early use of alcohol and drugs, we also prevent the far reaching and high costs of substance use disorders and addiction.
Expanding on a key message

Washington state’s prevention system is set up to be community specific

How does this work? What is standing in the way of success?

Why does this matter?

Use the Human Potential or Moral Responsibility values

What can we do about it?
Framing Practice
Getting creative with the Human Potential value

Work with a partner to generate a list of keywords that express the Human Potential concept. Be sure to highlight the future, economic and social benefits, and community involvement.

• Find synonyms or related concepts for Human Potential
• Find antonyms or concepts to avoid (e.g., individual benefit, interrupted growth)
• Find common expressions or images that allude to Human Potential

Now that you have a list of Human Potential cues, prepare to practice using these values!

The facilitator will give you a prompt.
Framing with metaphors

• **Metaphor**: a poetic device that applies a word, phrase, or concept to new domain that is not typically applicable.

• For example, if an argument $\approx$ a journey…

  • I’m lost.
  
  • I can’t follow you.
  
  • You’re going in circles.
Metaphors can help address key messages like…

- The state’s approach to prevention is a process that can create community specific solutions.
- Healthy and resilient communities are built; this is a long term process.
- Prevention plans differ by community.
Framing Challenges:
Individualism/Willpower, Black Box, Charity, Remediation

Framing Solution: Construction

Just as building a strong house requires certain materials, building well-being requires community resources, social relationships, and opportunities to thrive. When these materials are not available, people and communities may have difficulty weathering life’s storms.
Brainstorm how to use the *Construction* concept to explain how work in your region builds, maintains, and supports wellbeing in the community.

Consider these factors:

- **Expand on the concept of a building project.** Multiple people contribute to creating a structure. Who works on the building wellbeing project in Washington State?
- **Expand on the coordination theme.** Many elements hold up a structure. How is coordination an integral part of your work?
- **Expand on the idea of “materials” and “tools”.** What are the materials and tools that go into building wellbeing in your community? Are materials and tools unique to different communities?
- **Consider maintaining a structure.** What circumstances show that wellbeing needs improvement? What can damage the structure? Who maintains wellbeing?
Framing Challenges:
Fatalism, Experimentation is Natural

Solution: Boiling Over
A metaphor for how environmental changes prevent and adolescent substance use and its risks.

By creating environments that “turn down the temperature” for adolescents, we can prevent early substance use entirely or keep it from boiling over into a more serious problem.
Using boiling over as an explanatory tool

There are a number of factors—called risk factors—that can contribute to youth substance use boiling over into a bigger problem. By reducing these things at the individual levels, we are creating an environment that promotes healthy behaviors and relationships.

+ Community Level
+ Family Level
KEEPING THE HEAT LOW

By being proactive and fostering a healthy environment for kids in Norwood, we can prevent youth substance use from boiling over into a bigger problem. There are a number of factors (protective factors) at different levels—from the individual to the community—that can keep the heat down for adolescents in Norwood.

+ Community Level

I Want to Help Create a Healthy Norwood
Framing Practice

Applying Framing Tools to Messages
Expanding on a key message

Why does this matter?

What can we do about it?

How does this work? What is not working?

Use the Human Potential or Moral Responsibility values

Use the Construction or Boiling Over metaphors

What is the next step your audience should take?
Expanding on a key message

Washington state’s prevention system is set up to be community specific

- Why does this matter?
- How does this work? What is not working?
- What can we do about it?

Use the Human Potential or Moral Responsibility values

Use the Construction or Boiling Over metaphors

What is the next step your audience should take?
Framing key messages
Let’s practice
Expand on a key message:

We are engaging educators in making conversations about substance use more widespread.

How does this work? What is standing in the way of success?

Why does this matter?

What can we do about it?
Framing Practice

Expanding on a key message

• **Step 1:** Work with a partner to create a list of key messages (you can include a variety of audiences)

• **Step 2:** Select one key message and audience to create language for

• **Step 3:** Use the “Putting it all together” worksheet in your folder
Select a key message to expand on

- We need more encompassing treatment data to use for planning purposes
- Washington state’s system produces innovations in prevention science
- We are building resilient communities
- Substance use treatment resources are available
- Substance use and misuse impact everyone in the community
Putting it all together to tell a prevention story

Why does this matter?

[Insert key message here]

How does this work? What is standing in the way of success?

What can we do about it?
Giving framing feedback
How to review framing choices

1. **Understand what you’re up against.** Look for cues calling up faulty assumptions.

2. **Check what values are being appealed to.** Why do you say this issue matters?

3. **Look for gaps in explanation.** Lay out how complex processes and solutions work.

4. **Offer next steps.** Check for concrete, credible and collective solutions.
Recap and Wrap up
What Does it Take to Reframe an Issue?

Map the terrain

Develop a strategy to navigate to higher ground

Build a caravan, equip the travelers, and start moving
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What can we do about it?
Three things to know about framing

1. Frames are choices that communicators make about how information is presented.

2. Frames determine how audiences interpret information.

3. Using evidence-based frames helps the public think differently about an issue.
A frame that “works” shifts thinking in multiple ways

knowledge  attitudes  policy support
FrameWorks’ multi-method research tests which frames work

Descriptive

Values

- What needs to be communicated?
- How does the public think?
- What frames are in play already?
- Which reframes seem to work?

Prescriptive

- Which reframes are plausible?
- Which reframe drives policy preferences?
- How will this frame fare in the world?

Tools
- Design
- Cognitive Interviews
- On-the-Street Interviews
- Controlled Experiments
- Persistence Trials

FrameWorks' multi-method research tests which frames work
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Solution: *Human Potential*

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A metaphor for how environmental changes prevent and adolescent substance use and its risks.

By creating environments that “turn down the temperature” for adolescents, we can prevent early substance use entirely or keep it from boiling over into a more serious problem.
How to “check” a frame

1. **Understand what you’re up against.** Look for cues calling up faulty assumptions.

2. **Check what values are being appealed to.** Why do you say this issue matters?

3. **Look for gaps in explanation.** Lay out how complex processes and solutions work.

4. **Offer next steps.** Check for concrete, credible and collective solutions.
A shared framing strategy offers a field a shared language
A talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change.

Richard Rorty
Thank you!

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