Emerging Leaders in Public Health Convening - Session 4.1

Public Health Messaging Across the Political Divide in the Time of COVID

November 16, 2020
2pm – 5 pm EST
PHRASES Toolkit

Evidence-based tools and strategies to help public health professionals communicate more effectively. Get framing recommendations, sample emails, answers to tough questions, tested messaging, and more.

Get Started

Strategic Messaging

Stories from the Field

Sample Documents

Resource Library

https://www.phrases.org/
Becoming Better Messengers

Effective messaging of public health challenges and interventions is essential to public health practice and especially to implementing public health laws and policies in a polarized political environment. It is easy for public health leaders to become consumed with the ongoing political and resource shifts taking place in public health and health care. However, it is also clear that those in public health, at all levels, want to engage more deeply and meaningfully with communities of all backgrounds who are burdened by poor health.

https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/topics/trainings/becoming-better-messengers/
14% of America, roughly ½ left and ½ right, consistently shouts, posts and votes while 67% of us are exhausted.

The Hidden Tribes of America

**LIBERAL WING**
- Progressive Activists: 8%

**EXHAUSTED MAJORITY**
- Traditional Liberals: 11%
- Passive Liberals: 15%
- Politically Disengaged: 26%
- Moderates: 15%

**CONSERVATIVE WING**
- Traditional Conservatives: 19%
- Devoted Conservatives: 6%

*Source: October 2018 by More In Common. Chart: Adapted from Axios Visuals 10/17/2018*
BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH RISES SHARPLY

In a new national poll, voters across the country express support for the important work of public health departments and the role they play in keeping communities healthier and safer.

MORE VOTERS SAY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL

7 IN 10 voters say public health departments are important to create a healthy community.

In 2018, only 5 in 10 voters agreed.

The growth was highest among...

+23% Strong Republicans
+26% Men with a college degree or higher
+27% White men

VOTERS REPORT BEING MORE FAMILIAR WITH THEIR PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND ARE WILLING TO PAY MORE IN STATE AND LOCAL TAXES FOR THEM

Over the past two years, voters have continued to recognize the role of public health departments in their counties, cities, and towns.

61% of voters say they would be willing to pay more in annual state and local taxes to increase funding for services from public health departments.

60% of voters say they are very or somewhat familiar with their local health department—an increase from 49 percent in 2018.

VOTERS VALUE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Americans continue to support a full range of services to improve community health. The services that are most valued are:

- Help stop the spread of communicable diseases like Ebola or the flu (82%)
- Support women and children's health (81%)
- Reach out to people at greatest risk for poor health outcomes (80%)
- Ensure environmental health (78%)
- Work together with the broader health care system to address issues before they become health crises (77%)
- Provide non-biased information on how to respond to a crisis (76%)

Visit www.debeaumont.org/2020poll to see the full poll details and learn more about the need for public health funding.
Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second

Moral Foundations Theory
Understanding evolutionary moral psychology

Social and political judgments are particularly intuitive

90% = Intuitive Elephant
10% = Rational Brain
We resonate differently to six foundational moral values

| 1. Care / Harm | Compassion for the vulnerable; Intolerance of suffering |
| 2. Liberty / Oppression | Free choices & actions; Social intolerance of bullies |
| 3. Fairness / Cheating | People treated fairly, get what they deserve; Social intolerance of “free-riders” |
| 4. Loyalty / Betrayal | Personal trust, group identity Social isolation for those who betray |
| 5. Authority / Subversion | Competitive advantage of organized groups; Intolerance of those who subvert system |
| 6. Sanctity / Degradation | Part of human spirit is elevated & pure; Aversion to personal degradation |
Moral Foundations Theory (MFT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care</th>
<th>Liberty</th>
<th>Fairness</th>
<th>Loyalty</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Sanctity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harm</td>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>Betrayal</td>
<td>Subversion</td>
<td>Degradation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Liberal Moral Matrix

- Care --- Harm
- Liberty --- Oppression
- Fairness --- Cheating
- Loyalty --- Betrayal
- Authority --- Subversion
- Sanctity --- Degradation

Help those in need!

Heavy on caring for the weak, preventing harm; focused on rights & fairness as equality of outcome.
The Conservative Moral Matrix

Help those in need!

Preserve norms and treasured institutions!

Care --- Harm
Liberty --- Oppression
Fairness --- Cheating
Loyalty --- Betrayal
Authority --- Subversion
Sanctity --- Degradation

Includes first three (as equality of opportunity), but even more on the three “institutional” values.
Haidt calls this the “Conservative Advantage”

This framework gives us insight into a significant “Public Health Advantage” at this moment
Moral Foundations Profile: U.S. Public Health (n=248)
Responses submitted: July 29 - Nov. 15, 2020

Respondents’ Average Score, by Moral Foundation

- Care: 3.86
- Liberty: 2.63
- Fairness: 3.93
- Loyalty: 1.93
- Authority: 2.20
- Sanctity: 1.91
Moral Foundations Profile: NC PH Leadership Conference (n=116)
Responses submitted: January 23 – February 14, 2020

Respondents’ Average Score*, by Moral Foundation

- Care: 3.18
- Liberty: 2.60
- Fairness: 3.26
- Loyalty: 2.02
- Authority: 2.45
- Sanctity: 2.27

* Preliminary data
Moral Foundations Profile: NC Public Health (n=125)
Responses submitted: September 4 - October 20, 2020

Respondents’ Average Score*, by Moral Foundation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Foundation</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctity</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Preliminary data
Consider Knowledge vs. Self-Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Aware</th>
<th>Not Aware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What I Don’t Know</strong></td>
<td><strong>What I Do Know</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m aware I do NOT know this”</td>
<td>“I know this”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m not aware what I don’t know”</td>
<td>“I was NOT aware I KNEW this!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes you can surprise yourself!
Public Health resonates with all six MFT values

“The Public Health Advantage”

1. Care  Care
2. Liberty  Social justice
3. Fairness  Equity
4. Loyalty  The heart of Public Health: Community coalitions
5. Authority  Public Health is a police power: Quarantine, food inspection, etc.
6. Sanctity  The nobility of Public Health: When others are running away from the fire, we run towards Ebola
Public health has the breadth of moral values and can use them in a way:

- People across the political spectrum can feel safe engaging in relationships with us to improve their communities

...AND...

- Civil discourse is vital to the heart of public health

PH needs civil community discourse to occur

PH can add value to community dialogue
But What if the Discourse…
Looks Like This?

COVID-19 is also a public health communications crisis.

How can public health leaders gain trust and meet people where they are?
U.S. Public Now Divided Over Whether To Get COVID-19 Vaccine

Concerns about the safety and effectiveness of possible vaccine, pace of approval process

BY ELICIA THOMAS, COURTNEY CHAMBERS AND CARY FUNK

Drop in share of Americans who say they would get a COVID-19 vaccine if it were available to them today

% of U.S. adults who say if a vaccine to prevent COVID-19 were available today, they ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May '20</th>
<th>Sept '20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL ADULTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would get the vaccine</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would NOT get the vaccine</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May '20</th>
<th>Sept '20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REP/LEAN REP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would get the vaccine</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would NOT get the vaccine</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May '20</th>
<th>Sept '20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEM/LEAN DEM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would get the vaccine</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would NOT get the vaccine</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey conducted Sept. 8-13, 2020. “U.S. Public Now Divided Over Whether To Get COVID-19 Vaccine”

Both Republicans and Democrats cite masks as a negative effect of COVID-19, but for very different reasons

BY PATRICK VAN KESSEL AND DENNIS QUINN

Republicans mention masks or mask wearing more often than Democrats when asked how COVID-19 pandemic has made their life difficult or challenging

In an open ended question, % in each group who mentioned the following words or terms

- **Dem/Lean Dem**
  - 21% Family
  - 21 Work
  - 16 Friend
  - 14 People
  - 13 Able
  - 13 Home
  - 12 Time
  - 12 Job
  - 10 Mask
  - 9 Social

- **Rep/Lean Rep**
  - 19% Mask
  - 17 Work
  - 16 Family
  - 14 Wear
  - 13 Wear mask
  - 12 Home
  - 11 Able
  - 11 People
  - 11 Time
  - 10 Friend

Note: Each list contains the 10 words or phrases that appeared in the most survey responses from members of each party. Terms have been reduced to their root form (e.g., “wearing masks” to “wear mask”), and 339 common English words (e.g., “and,” “from”) were excluded. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020. PEW RESEARCH CENTER


Empathy is Key

Empathy helps us:
• Build relationships
• Reframe and connect
• Become trusted messengers

“Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it. In a way, empathy is predicated upon hope.”

— Cornel West
What Can We Do?

Be Candid and Look to Connect
• State my position clearly
• Explain/advocate my position
• What data and interpretations informed it?
• ___ data leads me to believe that ___ is the best option.

Be Humble and Curious
• What’s your perspective?
• Test my position – what am I missing?
• Tell me more about that.
• Can you give me an example?
Empathetic Messaging for COVID-19

- Avoid shaming & name calling
- Offer a sense of control
- Enlist trusted partners
- Emphasize benefits over threats
- Acknowledge the pushback; then tell them what you’re doing & why you’re doing it

Empathy cat

Wants to walk in ur shoes
Empathetic Messages Bridge Divides

Granville Vance Public Health social media campaign collaboration with North Carolina Institute for Public Health

DEEPER TRAINING

New opportunities for skill-building training for our workforce on these deeper values

Ability to frame individual issues to resonate with each of the 6 foundational values

Useful both to frontline PH workers in the community AND to leadership officials advocating to decision-makers for law & policy change
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Foundation</th>
<th>Your Public Health Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Care** (pairs with Harm) | - Protect yourself and others  
- Help those most vulnerable  
- Public health can assist you  
- Stay healthy and safe |
| - Reflects the base of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Security, Shelter, Food, Water, Warmth) | |
| **2. Liberty** (pairs with Oppression) | - Coronavirus can threaten our safety and freedom  
- We want our community to be free from fear of contagion  
- The quicker we beat this, the quicker we recover and return to normal |
| - Physical and Mental Freedom  
- Social Intolerance of Bullies | |
| **3. Fairness** (pairs with Cheating) | - Everyone has an interest in beating his outbreak  
- Those at home all need to have resources to stay there  
- Infection does not discriminate  
- We have an interest in everyone getting appropriate care |
| - Equality of Opportunities  
- Social Intolerance of “Free-Riders” | |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Your Public Health Message</th>
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</table>
| **4. Loyalty** (pairs with Betrayal) | - Do your part, wash your hands and don’t be a risk to others  
                                   - We need to protect our community  
                                   - Limited resources should go first to responders, HCW’s and those caring for us.  
                                   - I’m loyal to you and want to keep you safe |
| • Personal Trust, Group Identity, Patriotism |                                                                                                           |
| • Social isolation of those who betray |                                                                                                           |
| **5. Authority** (pairs with Subversion) | - Scientific evidence and common sense: protective measures work  
                                   - Listen to your local public health official  
                                   - Respect HCW’s and the risks they are taking  
                                   - Quarantine and social distancing may be necessary  
                                   - Be a good role model for others |
| • Competitive advantage of organized groups |                                                                                                           |
| • Deferece to “good” leaders |                                                                                                           |
| • Social intolerance of those who subvert the system |                                                                                                           |
| **6. Sanctity** (pairs with Degradation) | - Public health does not run, it stands by your community  
                                   - Support those taking risks to care for your loved ones  
                                   - Look for ways to serve others  
                                   - Help nurture the spirits of those needing comfort  
                                   - Be willing to sacrifice your wants for community needs |
| • Not simply a religious value |                                                                                                           |
| • Respect for the human spirit |                                                                                                           |
| • Social aversion of personal degradation |                                                                                                           |
Centering Equity in Public Health Messaging

- The WHAT and the WHY
- Audience considerations
- Creating a narrative
- Other language considerations
- Engaging the community
The WHAT and the WHY

• What does it mean to center equity?
  • Focusing on equity in the CONTENT of the message
  • Focusing on equity as an OUTCOME of the message

• Why should we center equity?
  • Share solutions that ensure that everyone has what they need in the way they need to have the best health possible
  • Normalize conversations about what leads to differences in health outcomes

Naming and Framing...

We can’t get to the America we want without talking about racial equity, structural racism, and racial and ethnic discrimination. But if communications aren’t framed carefully they can reinforce misconceptions about people of color and set back change.
Audience Considerations

Resistant  Curious  Aware  Advocate  Champion

Unaware  Resistant  Neutral  Supportive  Leading

OR
Audience Considerations

Since the death of George Floyd in May, have you personally taken any actions to better understand racial issues in America?

- **Overall**: 36% Yes, 35% No, 9% Don’t know
- **White**: 30% Yes, 61% No, 9% Don’t know
- **Black**: 41% Yes, 48% No, 10% Don’t know
- **Hispanic**: 51% Yes, 42% No, 8% Don’t know
- **Asian**: 49% Yes, 44% No, 8% Don’t know

NPR, August 27, 2020, [https://n.pr/3iQ6ga4](https://n.pr/3iQ6ga4)

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**Democrats and Republicans split on systemic racism**

Share of respondents who think that white people have a better chance of getting ahead in today’s society than black people, by party

- **Democrats**: Increasing trend from 2012 to 2020
- **Republicans**: Decreasing trend from 2012 to 2020

FiveThirtyEight, June 17, 2020, [https://53eig.ht/3dtN3d](https://53eig.ht/3dtN3d)
Audience Considerations

Assume most of us want the same things...
...racial equity
...health equity
...economic stability

How do different groups define these concepts? What language resonates?

If you are trying to make sense of Florida's vote to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour AND reelect Trump, I'd like to remind of the upper-left hand quadrant of this chart I made back in 2017. Lots of voters are socially conservative and economically liberal.
Creating a Narrative

• Lead with Values
• Connect to history when possible
• Draw a through-line to the issue today
• Focus on solutions

1. Care
2. Liberty
3. Fairness
4. Loyalty
5. Authority
6. Sanctity
Creating a Narrative

**Focus on places or conditions** rather than people (or systems over individuals)

- Instead of...African Americans in this community have higher rates of diabetes.
- Consider...Diabetes is more common in neighborhoods that don’t have access to healthy foods
Other Language Considerations

• Use language that is meaningful to your audience... and meaningful to you

• Take an asset-based perspective

• Be aware of cognitive biases: the Framing Effect and Authority Bias

Engaging the Community

...to develop messaging
...to lead with the message
...to create opportunities for community storytelling
...to recognize and appreciate the differences in communities
...to build community trust

What do people want to know versus what we as public health professionals want to tell them?

https://www.mobilecause.com/storytelling-for-your-organization/
Communication as an Essential Public Health Service: Tying it all together

- Developing and disseminating accessible health information
- Communicating with accuracy and necessary speed
- Using appropriate communications channels
- Developing culturally and linguistically appropriate and relevant communications
- Employing the principles of risk communication, health literacy, and health education
- Actively engaging in two-way communication
- Ensuring communications are asset-based

3 Take-Away

1. Public health has a *vital role* to play amid this polarization.

2. Public health cannot afford the luxury of *contempt* or being *condescending* towards those in our communities who do not happen to share our viewpoints.

3. We must build the skill-sets of our entire workforce in order to change law & policy to meet many new challenges.

[How do we reach out to the underserved white working class?]

*Try to find the goodness in every human being.*

*Don’t ever give up on that other person.*
Becoming Better Messengers

Effective messaging of public health challenges and interventions is essential to public health practice and especially to implementing public health laws and policies in a polarized political environment. It is easy for public health leaders to become consumed with the ongoing political and resource shifts taking place in public health and health care. However, it is also clear that those in public health, at all levels, want to engage more deeply and meaningfully with communities of all backgrounds who are burdened by poor health.

https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/topics/trainings/becoming-better-messengers/
QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

(Please use the chat box function on your screen.)

While waiting, feel free to indicate to us if you have been exposed to this foundational value content material before?

If so, has it been helpful to you in your work?
We’re public health experts. We need to do a better job of talking to conservatives.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/10/12/were-public-health-experts-we-need-do-better-job-talking-conservatives/

**Washington Post**

October 12, 2020 by Lindsey J. Leininger and Harold Pollack
THREE STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME POLARIZATION

HOW WE FRAME ISSUES CAN BUILD COMMON GROUND, WHICH IS ALL TOO RARE

SOURCES OF POLARIZATION

- EXTREME POLITICAL RHETORIC
- NO POLITICAL MIDDLE GROUND
- POLICYMMAKING GRIDLOCK

AMPLIFIED BY

- COVID-19
- SYSTEMATIC AND STRUCTURAL RACISM
- ECONOMIC IMPACT/ JOB LOSSES
- IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

HOW CAN WE Move BEYOND DIVISIVE RHETORIC?

USE COMMON-GOOD VALUES
- Everyone is anxious and scared.
- Position safeguarding our physical and economic well-being as in everyone's interest.
- Focus conversations on what all Americans need.
- Avoid harmful stereotypes and generalizations.

USE METAPHORS CAREFULLY
- Poorly chosen metaphors can create confusion and lead to wrong actions.
- We don't compare COVID-19 with heart disease, drowning, and motor vehicle accidents.
- COVID-19 is more like a forest fire. Only quick and decisive actions can keep it from spreading.

EMBRACE THE UNIQUE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT—but hold it accountable
- We need government to take actions that benefit everyone.
- Agencies and officials at all levels should be held accountable.
- Government can efficiently and effectively set and enforce rules that keep us safe and well.
- Policies are important tools for economic recovery.


de Beaumont
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE