



Innovative Solutions for the Common Good

Telling Effective Public Health Stories

Public Health Communications Training #4
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Why Stories?

“Curiosity is the gateway to empathy. There is much we can do in storytelling to boost people’s attitudes and to get them to talk about these things.”

Dr. Neal Baer

Stories are “...putting knowledge into a framework that is more lifelike, more true to our day-to-day existence.”

Made to Stick

“When you help people understand what you do, you’ll be more successful in attracting support for your work, forming partnerships and building credibility in your community. That’s where stories come in, whether you’re talking to community leaders, business executives, elected officials, or the media.”

Soledad O’Brien

Today's Training

- 1) Dive into what Made to Stick says about stories
- 2) Review FrameWorks research on storytelling for social change
- 3) Become familiar with the PHRASEs Strategic Storytelling for Public Health Professionals Toolkit to become better “storycrafters” and ultimately better storytellers
- 4) Discuss different types of storytelling needs and the appropriate resource to use



Made to Stick—Review

Simple

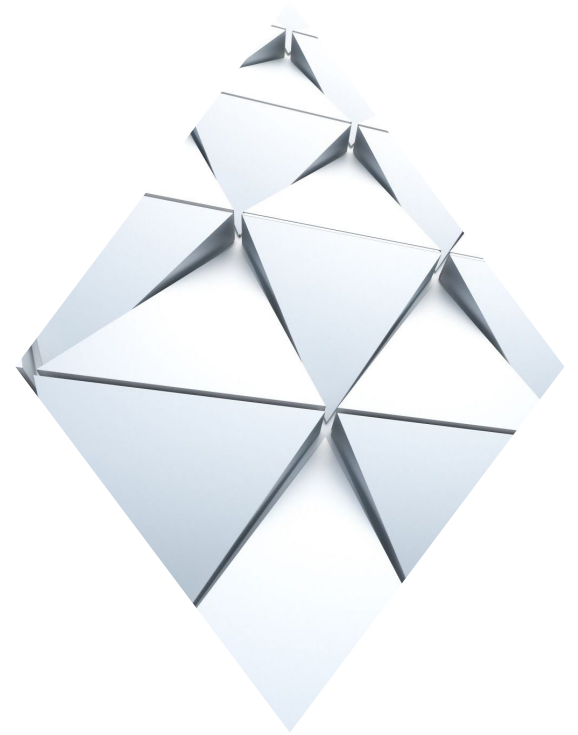
Unexpected

Concrete

Credible

Emotions

Stories



Made to Stick *Stories*

Components

- Flight simulators for the brain
- Mental practice
 - Active not passive listeners
 - 2/3 benefit of actual practice
- Key Points without the story lose effect

Note – These story components are to help people remember not necessarily act



Jared's Story

Simple: Eat Subs, Lose Weight

Unexpected: A guy lost a ton of weight by eating fast food!

Concrete: Before and after photos showed the change

Credible: Antiauthority with photo proof

Emotional: Young guy dead by 35 if he didn't do this

Story: Yes!

Story Plots

Three main types of *effective* story plots:

1. Challenge Plot – David and Goliath
 - Helps people want to set higher goals, take on new challenges, work harder
2. Connection Plot – Good Samaritan, Coke's Mean Joe Green, Titanic
 - Helps people want to work with others, reach out and help, be tolerant
3. Creativity Plot – Newton's apple, MacGyver, Eureka moments
 - Helps people want to try new things, be creative themselves

FrameWorks Story Research



FrameWorks Research

Social Change Communication

“...a society where everyone has a fair and equal chance to reach their full potential and experience positive well-being now and in the future.”

“...we must move people to see, think and feel differently about social issues and how they work so that they respond differently...”

People think, understand and remember in stories.

The Power of Stories

Depending on how we frame stories they can:

- Open up space for discussion; or shut it down
- Shed new light on an issue; or reinforce existing beliefs
- Motivate people to act; or depress engagement and dampen hope

Note: FrameWorks research is most effective in reaching and engaging the “undecided middle” and is meant to help facilitate social change

Framing Research Story Core Principles

1. Stop communicating like you are your audience
2. Facts do matter
3. Use explanation, not logic
4. Avoid crisis messaging
5. Watch out for resonance

Oh and one more:

Don't recreate the wheel

FrameWorks has done the research on what works. Use what they have whenever possible



Stop communicating like you are your audience

Avoid:

- False consensus bias – overestimating the degree to which other people think like us
 - Thank God for Mississippi

What Works:

- Frame story with effective/appropriate values
 - Use effective metaphors
 - Offer solutions
-



Facts do matter

Avoid:

- Assuming we live in a “post-fact” world
- Using data in isolation

What Works:

- Integrate facts into a story that is framed with an effective value
 - Values + Facts = powerful story
 - Peak-End Rule – help people remember key points by reminding them of the peak (best/worst moment) and end of story
-



Use explanation, not logic

Avoid:

- Curse of Knowledge
- Using rhetorical language/tone (vs. reasonable which is not polarizing)

What Works:

- Explaining how things work
 - Cause and effect relationships
 - Activating mirror neurons
-



Avoid crisis messaging

Avoid:

- This at all cost.

What works:

- Creating narratives that balance urgency with the strategic framing principles of ideals, simplifying models and solutions
 - Connect with people through emotions other than fear
-



Watch out for resonance

Avoid:

- Stories simply because they resonate with you – they may not resonate with others
- Stories that resonate for the wrong reason
 - Fear inducing messages can resonate, but induce apathy and depress engagement
 - Polarizing stories can reinforce one-sidedness

What Works:

- Test stories for outcomes other than resonance like:
 - Understanding
 - Efficacy
 - Engagement
-

PHRASES Project

Our Strategy

To open the door to effective partnerships, public health professionals need to understand what matters to other sectors and how to craft messages that resonate with them.

1

What's Needed

Because health and well-being are largely driven by upstream factors, **collaboration** is needed between public health and other sectors, such as housing, education, health systems, and business.



2

The Gap

Many leaders in other sectors don't understand the value of collaborating with public health—and many public health professionals lack the **training and skills to effectively communicate** their value to other sectors.



3

Filling the Gap

PHRASES provides evidence-based **framing and messaging tools** and resources to help public health professionals communicate and collaborate more effectively.



4

Driving Change

PHRASES supports public health professionals and their institutions **In achieving a forward-thinking vision for public health.**



PHRASES Storytelling Advantages

When done well, stories help people:

- Understand cause-and-effect relationships
- See patterns in important information
- Empathize with people
- Pay attention

Small Group Exercise #1

Take 10 minutes in your small group and discuss if the following information is supported by Made to Stick, FrameWorks or both:

Stories help people:

- Understand cause-and-effect relationships
- See patterns in important information
- Empathize with people
- Pay attention



Science of Storytelling

Understand cause-and-effect relationships

- Shortcuts for brain to understand “this causes that”
- Focuses us on people affected by problem, the cause, the fix
- Especially important in complex systems

Made-to-Stick and FrameWorks

See patterns in important information

- Desire to identify patterns keeps brains/people engaged
- What’s going to happen next?
- Patterns point to a system-based solution

Made to Stick and FrameWorks



Science of Storytelling

Empathize with People

- Mirror neurons
- Builds support for public health systems

Made-to-Stick and FrameWorks

Pay Attention

- Stories engage the whole brain
- Makes information more compelling, memorable and sticky

Made to Stick and FrameWorks

PHRASES

Story Crafting Essentials

Stories affect your audience in three ways:

1. Increasing their awareness (KNOW)
2. Changing their attitude (FEEL)
3. Inspiring them to action (DO)

When crafting stories for collaborators start by determining what you want them to KNOW, FEEL and DO as a result of your story.

<https://www.phrases.org/>

PHRASES

Research-based tools to communicate effectively about public health

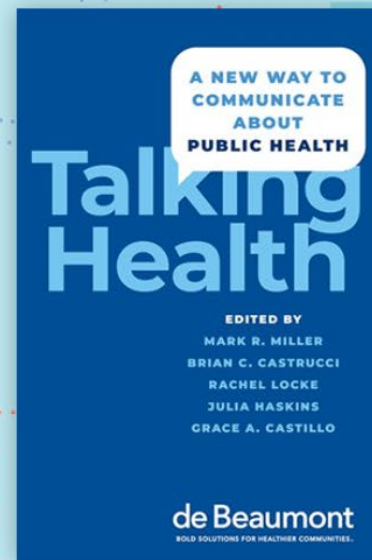
Public Health Reaching Across Sectors (PHRASES) supports an “all-hands-on-deck” approach, with tools to build communication skills and strategies designed for success.

Get the Book

Talking Health: A New Way to Communicate About Public Health

Take the Training

Framing and messaging to improve partnerships and health outcomes



Tie it all together

Three different resources for storytelling:

- 1) Made to Stick – sticky stories are more memorable
- 2) FrameWorks – Systems-level stories inspire systems thinking
- 3) PHRASES – Sector-specific stories facilitate partnerships for public health

Small Group Exercise #2

In your small groups come up with an appropriate scenario for each storytelling resource:

- 1) Made to Stick – sticky stories are more memorable
- 2) FrameWorks – Systems-level stories inspire systems thinking
- 3) PHRASES – Sector-specific stories facilitate partnerships for public health

Report Out

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Thank You!



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