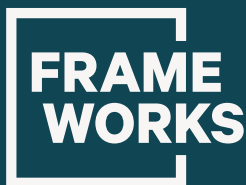# Communicating Now: Framing for Health Equity

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FRAME WORKS

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to Communicating Now, a toolkit to help you communicate effectively about community-led, collaborative approaches to eliminate health disparities.

Even as political and policy environments change, there are commitments and values that must endure. We can't walk away from the work of addressing uneven and unfair health outcomes experienced by communities of color, rural communities, LGBTQ+ people, and other marginalized groups—it's too urgent and important.

The importance of communicating effectively only increases in noisy and contested times. Better communication won't resolve every challenge facing public health and the movement for health equity right now. But our communications are one aspect of the current environment where we can exert some control, and there are important steps we should take. We can recognize that our words matter—and choosing them strategically is one way we can build, amplify, and exercise our power to create change.

The framing strategies in this toolkit are designed to help community-based organizations and public health entities build understanding and support for policies and programs that address health barriers in communities facing discrimination, economic exclusion, and other forms of injustice.

These tools and ideas were developed for and with community-based advocates, public health practitioners, and others involved in the Strategies to Repair Equity and Transform Community Health (STRETCH) Initiative, a collaborative effort to advance health equity by strengthening relationships between health departments and community-based organizations. The recommendations draw heavily on original studies of culture and communication conducted by the FrameWorks Institute, while also integrating insights from best practices in strategic communications and crisis communications.

The toolkit is organized according to dilemmas and scenarios that health equity communicators across the nation face. That's why the table of contents is arranged by "When you need to..." scenarios. We hope the scenarios help you find timely guidance as you continue your vital work.

Balance immediate and longer-term communications goals

When major factors like policies, funding, or personnel are in flux, it's challenging to know where to focus. However, moments of cultural upheaval also present great opportunities. Social disruptions can reveal flaws in existing systems, making people more receptive to new ideas. Strategic communicators can leverage these moments to shift harmful narratives and entrenched mindsets. During turbulent times, the most strategic approach balances immediate needs with long-term goals.

1. **Adopt a both-and approach.** Don't accept a false choice between addressing urgent, immediate needs or pursuing long-term goals for social change. The threats to public health are coming from both discrete, current actions *and* broader, long-term structural forces and dynamics in culture and politics. Strategic responses must address pressing issues while simultaneously working toward longer-term goals, like changing narratives and shifting cultural mindsets.

2. **Focus your communications on a few core mindsets.** Remember that even in uncertain times, people's fundamental ways of understanding the world tend to remain consistent. No matter what unexpected news is breaking on your topic, it likely connects to a familiar, identifiable cultural mindset. Try prioritizing one or two mindsets to shift or build over time. (See the next resource for ideas.) Keep these longer-term priorities in mind as you craft individual, timely communications. In this way, immediate actions contribute to a larger, coordinated strategy to shift public thinking.

3. **Use framing as a dual-purpose tool.** Fundamental framing strategies—such as values, explanations, and solutions—aren't just for the long haul. They are powerful tools for immediate communication. Articulate the framing strategies you'll use again and again, across contexts. Then rely on them in fast-moving situations: build them into leadership quotes for the media, rapid-response posts on social media, or public statements on major events. Use them in communications materials you build over time, too: major reports, new website copy, and longer-term social media campaigns. In both immediate and long-term communications, framing strategies can help to clarify stakes, replace confusion with understanding, and offer hope.

4. **Organize, strategize, and harmonize with allies.** Remember that you don't have to go it alone—and you shouldn't. Coordinated communication is essential for amplifying impact and achieving sustained change. Shared framing efficiently streamlines messaging and resources. Joint strategizing allows for comprehensive approaches that address both immediate needs and long-term goals. By working together, communicators can contribute to collective impact that transcends individual efforts, driving meaningful results.

To further explore the connection between short-term and long-term change, check out Moving Mindsets: A Playbook for Building Momentum.

Make sense of mindsets to move in this moment

If you've been advocating for health equity, it's a good bet that you recognize that widespread beliefs often present obstacles to the policies and practices that could eliminate health disparities. This makes it vital to understand how these beliefs—or cultural mindsets—work.

Cultural mindsets are widely shared, assumed patterns of thinking that shape how people make sense of the world. They are mental models, or "pictures in our heads," of how things work. As members of a shared culture, we have all been exposed to both unproductive and productive models. Future experiences and contexts—including public health communications—can reinforce those models, whether they normalize the existing social order or involve questioning the status quo.

Understanding cultural mindsets gives communicators a strategic advantage. By carefully choosing our words, explanations, examples, and images, we can sideline unproductive mindsets on health and elevate productive ones. This resource outlines the basics.

Unproductive mindsets

To shift the public conversation on health disparities, we need to steer clear of language that reinforces three common ways of thinking: individualism, otherism, and fatalism.

When it comes to health, these mindsets surface in different ways, shaping how people understand health issues—and getting in the way of progress. Shifting thinking away from them is essential for advancing equitable solutions.

Individualism

Don't reinforce the narrow view that the causes and consequences of social problems lie with individuals. When it comes to health, individualism shows up in many ways, including the mindsets below:

- **Health individualism.** People assume health outcomes are exclusively the result of personal lifestyle choices. *To shift thinking:* Expand the understanding of health to include social conditions and policy contexts.

- **Health reductionism.** People tend to assume that "not sick" equals healthy. *To shift thinking:* Paint a broader picture of health that includes physical, mental, social, and relational wellbeing.

- **Bad apples.** People tend to assume that some problems, (e.g., abuse, suicide, or violence) can't be prevented because they are caused by "sick" people. *To shift thinking:* Make the story about upstream factors, such as adverse childhood experiences (ACES) that can drive these problems.

Otherism

Don't reinforce narratives that emphasize negative views of people who face racism, discrimination, or economic marginalization. When it comes to health, replace stories of "them" with stories of "us."

- **Health otherism.** People tend to blame social groups for health disparities. *To shift thinking:* Focus on uneven, unfair policies rather than health behaviors or burdens.

- **Zero-sum.** Don't feed the thinking that helping one group means taking resources from another. *To shift thinking:* Frame targeted policies as ways to live up to shared ideals of fairness and achieve community health and wellbeing.

- **Government as "them."** People tend to think of government as a nameless, faceless entity that fails to meet its stated goals. *To shift thinking:* Offer concrete examples of ways that public sector partners are part of the community, and have benefited the community.

Fatalism

Don't add to Americans' pervasive sense that social problems can't be solved and that we're each on our own to manage the mess. On health issues, fatalism presents in many ways:

- **Threat of modernity.** People can romanticize the past and fear progress. *To shift thinking:* Focus on how research helps to find practical solutions to today's problems.

- **Unconnected dots.** People typically don't grasp how racism impacts health. *To shift thinking:* Use explanations and examples to show how unfair and uneven systems undermine health in communities of color.

- **System is rigged.** Americans increasingly believe that regular people are powerless against exploitation. *To shift thinking:* Emphasize collective power and solidarity.

Productive mindsets

Compared to unproductive, dominant mindsets, these productive mindsets are weaker, but they do exist and are widely shared. To reinforce and elevate productive mindsets, look for ways to remind people of these ideas through your wording, examples, illustrations, and more. (Note that the labels are shorthand, so we don't recommend using the names of the mindsets as messages.)

Contextualism

Look for every opportunity to emphasize that "what surrounds us, shapes us." Show how living conditions and social dynamics affect a broad range of health issues:

- **Health as overall wellbeing.** Expand definitions of health to encompass physical, mental, social, and relational wellbeing.

- **Place affects health.** Illustrate how the physical environment and neighborhood design impact community health.

- **Policy affects health.** Provide examples of how policy decisions can lead to disparities or promote positive health outcomes.

Shared fates

Build on the understanding that people within a society are interconnected and that our wellbeing is linked. When it comes to health, cue up ideas that activate shared-fates thinking:

- **Solidarity.** Focus on unity and mutual support within a group, emphasizing collective action in the face of shared challenges.

- **Interconnection.** Highlight the web of relationships where actions in one area can influence others, stressing the broader impact of decisions.

- **Can't do one without the other.** Show how various aspects of health are interdependent, and progress on one issue is often tied to the progress of others.

Efficacy

Reinforce the belief that collective efforts can achieve positive change and address shared problems. When it comes to health, emphasize ideas that ward off fatalism and cue up can-do thinking:

For more on how to balance a sense of ambition with a sense of feasibility, check out this post.

- Pragmatism. When possible, strike a practical tone and illustrate realistic approaches to solving collective issues, focusing on achievable and impactful solutions.

- Collective power. Underscore the increased strength and influence that comes from individuals working together toward a common goal.

- Historic triumphs. Remind people of the power of shared action by highlighting successes from the past that were achieved through collaboration.
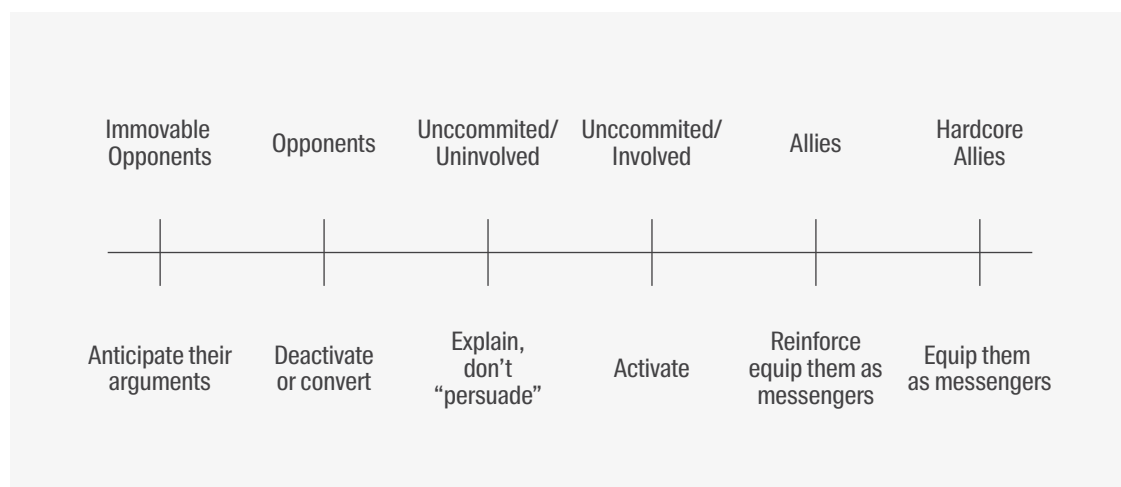
For more details on these patterns of public thinking—and to learn about additional cultural mindsets that matter—see Talking about Health Disparities in Rural Contexts. You may also appreciate a short primer on cultural mindsets.

Make strategic decisions about who you're trying to reach and why

Prioritize audiences to maximize communication impact and avoid using limited resources on efforts that won't pay off. In situations where extreme or disingenuous rhetoric affects the communications context, segmenting your audience by traditional demographics like political affiliation, race, or gender might lead to missed opportunities or wasted effort.

Instead, keep your focus on audience alignment with your ideas, and set achievable goals tailored for those audiences who reject your view, those who could be persuaded, and those who already support your view.

Immovable Opponents	Opponents	Unccommited/ Uninvolved	Unccommited/ Involved	Allies	Hardcore Allies
Anticipate their arguments	Deactivate or convert	Explain, don't "persuade"	Activate	Reinforce equip them as messengers	Equip them as messengers

Don't focus on "immovable opponents" who are entrenched in their position. Instead, consider who they are trying to reach and find ways to engage that audience with more productive ideas.

Remember that directly and publicly rebutting opponents' arguments can fuel further polarization. If your immovable opponents are using deceptive or misleading messaging, engaging them directly risks amplifying their disinformation.

Even if your goal is to change a policymaker's mind, don't forget about public audiences. Engaging the public can shift incentives for policymakers as widespread public support demonstrates the breadth of concern. When the public understands and supports an issue, it's harder for policymakers to ignore an issue or dismiss it as fringe. Additionally, mobilizing the public can create a sense of urgency and accountability, pushing policymakers to act.

Be effective in a contested conversation

If you aim to create a shared dialogue on civic issues, these framing moves can help overcome resistance, encourage productive conversations, and build consensus. Though not suitable for every situation, they are especially useful for engaging people who are not involved yet and/or unexpected allies on politically charged topics.

Do	Don't
Distill and deliver *your* perspective. Focus on crafting concise, positive messages that help the public grasp your point of view.	Don't adopt your opponents' frame. Rebutting critics' arguments point-by-point wastes precious time and public attention.
Adopt a measured tone. Position yourself as a reasonable partner in an important, inclusive conversation. Think of yourself as inviting newcomers into the conversation.	Don't use charged language. Overly dramatic language, an oppositional stance, or sensational examples can alienate listeners who could be persuaded.
Lead with widely shared values, not an appeal to scientific authority. Focus on principles like wellbeing, dignity, and fairness. Talk about research as a tool for problem-solving to achieve these goals.	Don't imply that science is the only answer or that people should accept it without question. Avoid phrases like "the science is settled" or "trust the science" as these can invite skepticism.
Talk about facts as mainstream knowledge. Use words like "widely acknowledged" or "long-established" to normalize ideas grounded in evidence.	Don't repeat dangerous or deceptive ideas. Restating misleading messages amplifies them. Instead, talk about their harmful intent or impact.
Strive for framing that appeals broadly. Avoid jargon and make your ideas easy to understand. Remind people of common ground. When possible, highlight the benefits of your idea for everyone, regardless of political affiliation.	Don't use partisan language. Partisan framing (e.g., "Republicans are blocking health care access reforms") can cause uninvolved people to view your communication as "just politics" and dismiss it. Take care to avoid word choices, themes, and examples that people associate with a particular political perspective.

Manage pressure to change language that's central to the work

When facing pressure to change your language as a public health communicator, there is no one-size-fits-all answer, but there are systematic ways to think through your decisions. These strategic questions can help you navigate distracting, politicized reactions to wording and focus attention on the work that's needed:

1.   Do you have a choice? If so, how are you making that choice?

Public sector professionals facing mandated changes are in a different position from nonprofit or private sector professionals who are navigating real or perceived pressure from political figures, board members, or other leaders.

■ Are you under a mandate to stop using an important term? If you must give up an important term, concentrate on how to focus attention on the essential work, not the words. Can the problem be resolved with a suitable synonym, or do you need to make a bigger shift?

■ Are you censoring or silencing yourself out of fear or worry? If so, consider staying the course. It's essential that important ideas, like health equity and the social determinants of health, remain in the public discourse, especially when efforts to suppress them are causing a "chilling effect."

2.   Beyond external pressures, are there other solid reasons to reconsider the way you talk about an essential topic?

■ Does your preferred term promote understanding among your key audiences, or is it just jargon? Jargon and shorthand might be efficient for experts but they hinder public understanding and can be misconstrued by opponents. Use everyday language to make complex ideas more accessible, relatable, and understandable to a broader audience.

■ Are you focusing on the explanation, and not just the label? Naming is not all there is to framing. The explanation of a concept has a major impact on understanding and support. Are you unleashing the "power of how" to help people grasp the causes, effects, and systemic factors at play?

3.   Who else should you engage in a conversation about framing your issue?

■ How can you initiate discussions with partners about language and framing? At a minimum, it can help to let close partners know about forthcoming changes and the reasons for them.

■ How can you align your language with allies? A harmonized approach strengthens your impact by harnessing the power of repetition.

■ How can you work with others to prevent misinterpretation or mischaracterization? When aligned partners collectively reinforce framing that conveys the intended meaning, it can help to pre-empt misunderstandings or counterarguments.

Engage skeptical audiences in conversations about health disparities

When conversations are fraught or stuck, it's time to find a new framing strategy—a different way of talking about the topic. FrameWorks has found that these framing strategies worked with audiences who were initially skeptical about health equity, leading to productive conversations about steps to ensure that every person and community have a full and fair opportunity for health and wellbeing.

Lead with the Value of Dignity to Ground Conversations

To open people's minds to promoting health in marginalized communities, start by expressing the ideal that every person has inherent dignity—and that we all have a responsibility to honor people's dignity by promoting and protecting health and wellbeing.

Why this matters for health equity now:

Grounding conversations about health equity in dignity helps to sidestep polarizing terminology while keeping the focus squarely on what matters most: ensuring every person and every community can thrive. Leading with dignity keeps the focus on shared humanity while reinforcing the idea that addressing health disparities is about upholding the fundamental worth of all people.

> **Grab-and-Go Language:**
>
> *"Each and every person has inherent dignity and worth. Our public health policies, practices, and programs should reflect and demonstrate respect for the dignity of people and communities."*

Remember that this value frame is a theme, not a script. That means you can evoke and express this value in multiple ways rather than using the exact same wording each time. Given the effectiveness of this values-based message, it's crucial to rely on it often.

Explain How Systems Shape Health, Safety, and Wellbeing

Use plain language to talk about social conditions and policy contexts, showing how health is primarily influenced by contexts we create through collective decisions. In some cases, it may be helpful to talk about structural racism as an example of how the "system is rigged."

Why this matters for health equity now:

Focusing on systems and environments shifts the focus from blaming individuals to understanding the broader factors that influence health. This is especially important now, when individual responsibility narratives dominate and powerful voices are undermining systems. By consistently showing how policies create the conditions for health, safety, and wellbeing, we emphasize that disparities are not inevitable—and that there's a role for systems and institutions in addressing shared civic problems.

Focus on Solutions to Show What Works and Why Prevention Matters

To build support for health equity efforts, consistently emphasize system-level solutions that prevent harm before it happens. Focusing on solutions helps people see that progress is possible, which wards off fatalism—the sense that the problems we face are too big or too entrenched to solve.

Why this matters for health equity now:

In today's polarized environment, health equity efforts are often framed as zero-sum—as though investment in improving health outcomes for some must come at the expense of others. By focusing on prevention-oriented solutions that benefit everyone, we disrupt that false narrative. Solutions-framing offers a hopeful vision for progress at a time when cynicism about government and public health is running high. Emphasizing prevention solutions, rather than just describing disparities, helps people understand that systemic change is possible—and that they have a stake in it.

For more ideas and examples like these, see Reframing Health Disparities in Rural America: A Communications Toolkit and Explaining the Social Determinants of Health.

Make the case for devalued public health domains

Newly prominent narratives pit different domains of public health against each other. One example: suggesting that chronic disease should be the only focus while weakening ways to protect against preventable contagious diseases, or saying we don't need public health to focus on preventing injuries and violence. Frames like these erase the lived realities of marginalized communities, who often face overlapping risks from chronic disease, violence, and infectious diseases all at once.

We know all aspects of health are interconnected, so neglecting one area will have ripple effects. To build this understanding among the public and persuadable decisionmakers, effective strategies and framing can help.

Call Out False Dilemmas or Other Misleading Rhetorical Tactics

When prominent voices mislead, we can help people spot and resist disinformation by naming the tactic.

Grab-and-Go Language:

> *"By supporting our public health agencies, we can work on multiple aspects of health simultaneously, as we always have. And as we should. It's misleading to suggest that we must choose between addressing chronic diseases and other threats to health like infectious diseases, injuries, or violence. Whether it's preventing traffic injuries, tackling the causes of violence, or ensuring everyone has access to vaccines, we're all working toward a common goal: reducing harms we know we can prevent and increasing overall wellbeing."*

Frame Prevention of Injuries and Infectious Disease Prevention as Core Public Health Work

Make the case that reducing injuries, violence, and infectious diseases is essential, not optional, work to protect the community's health and wellbeing. Emphasize that public health succeeds when we focus on creating the conditions that keep people safe, healthy, and thriving.

Grab-and-Go Language:

> *"Public health is about making sure all of us have what we need to live healthy, safe lives—no matter where we live or who we are. That includes preventing chronic diseases, but it also means stopping the spread of infectious diseases and ensuring our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces are safe. When we work to steer clear of predictable problems, we create stronger, healthier communities for everyone."*

> *"We can build a future where all people are safe where they live, work, travel, learn, and play. Injuries aren't random or inevitable accidents; they follow predictable patterns. Public health studies help us spot these patterns, and public health partnerships allow communities to find and adopt approaches that keep kids, adults, and older people safer.*

> *"Injuries erode the foundations of community health—but they don't have to. When our public health agencies are strong, well equipped, and well staffed, they can make a remarkable difference in preventing injuries across the lifespan, whether it's the risk of drowning as a child, of being involved in violence as a young adult, or falling in later life."*

For more ideas and examples of explaining the value of public health, see Explaining the Value of Public Health and visit www.phrases.org.

Talk about how systemic racism undermines health.

Talking about the impact of racism on community health can be challenging. Here are some evidence-based strategies to help you communicate effectively and promote positive change.

1. **Start with Dignity**

- Begin by affirming the inherent dignity and worth of every person.

- Use this value of dignity early and often in your communications.

- Express the shared belief that all people deserve a society that respects and protects health and wellbeing.

  For more on how to use the value of dignity in messaging, see the Grab-and-Go language on page 11.

2. **Connect the Past to the Present**

- Explain—don't just assert—how historical injustices have led to current health inequities. Be careful to show a cause-and-effect relationship between the past and the present.

- Give concrete examples of how past policies have harmed the health of specific groups and communities—and show how the past affects today.

- When addressing rural audiences, FrameWorks research has shown that it can help to start with examples of policies or practices that have contributed to local health disparities before discussing racialized, minoritized, or other underserved groups. After establishing common ground, move to topics and groups commonly painted as "other."

3. **Paint a Vision for the Future**

- Don't skip this step: It's not "fluff." In this moment, aspirational messages are an essential antidote to otherism, pessimism, and fatalism.

- Describe what the future would look like if we took steps to ensure that all communities have the resources needed for good health.

- Give examples of how the local community can play an active role in making this vision a reality.

4. **Emphasize Policy and Other Systemic Change**

- Highlight that health is strongly influenced by policy.

- Explain how policies at all levels affect access to the conditions and resources that promote health and wellbeing.

- Stress that unfair policies are a main cause of health disparities.

- Emphasize that collective power can change our systems to improve community health.

- Consider framing systemic racism as an example of a "rigged system."

For more details on the evidence behind these ideas—and for more examples—see these resources: Reframing Health Disparities in Rural America, Piecing It Together: A Communications Playbook for Affordable Housing Advocates, Talking About Racism in Child and Family Advocacy, or How to Talk about Rigged Systems: A Quick-Start Guide.

Talk about immunization with audiences that include skeptics

Use the "bridge and pivot" technique to keep conversations from going off track.

If a face-to-face conversation about immunization with a community member starts to derail, don't worry—you can steer it back on track by using the "bridge and pivot" technique, a simple three-step formula. (If you're responding publicly to a vocal vaccine denier who is actively spreading misinformation, seek advice tailored to that specific scenario.)

Step One: Analyze

Figure out which underlying patterns of thinking you're responding to. Good-faith, everyday pushback to immunization tends to rely on patterned, predictable mindsets. Be on the lookout for the most common:

> *Personal choice. This mental model involves the assumption that because people have bodily autonomy, the decision to vaccinate is a highly personal one.*

> *Natural > artificial. This model contrasts nature with human society. Nature is seen as pure, safe, and healthy. Human intervention is viewed as "artificial" and inherently risky because humans make mistakes.*

> *Risk > reward. This model assumes that tangible risks should drive people's decision-making because the rewards of vaccination are less observable.*

Step Two: Bridge

When someone says something that might take the conversation off course, you first need a "bridge" between what they said and what you want to say. Acknowledge the person you are engaged in conversation with, but don't restate or try to rebut the assumptions in their message.

Use an innocuous bridging phrase to redirect the conversation:

- "Let me answer you by saying ..."
- "Another way to look at this is ..."
- "What's really at stake here is ..."
- "That speaks to a bigger point ..."

Step Three: Pivot.

Select and introduce the framing strategy that will get the conversation back on track.

When You Encounter This Mental Model	Pivot to This Framing Strategy
Personal choice	Our communities are safer and healthier when "community immunity" makes it harder for contagious diseases to spread.
Natural > artificial	Our immune systems respond to a vaccine by learning to "read" a disease so our bodies can react and resist right away.
Risk > reward	Widespread immunization leads to an immediate, concrete benefit: Children who stay healthy stay focused on growing, playing, and learning.

Keep in Mind

The "bridge and pivot" technique is often the most strategic option available, but it doesn't always lead to an immediate breakthrough. Remember that success comes in many forms. In the best-case scenario, you may change your conversation partner's opinion. In other cases, the impact may be providing a new perspective for others listening in. Sometimes, success may simply mean preventing a disagreement from escalating into an argument, leaving the door open for future conversations.

Here's What It Looks Like

Scenario 1	
Community Member	I'm not taking any more vaccines, and I only do the bare minimum for my kids. That's my right as a person and as a parent.
Voice for Public Health (Thinking)	*That sounds like the "personal choice" mindset, so I should respond by emphasizing the idea of community.*
Voice for Public Health (Response)	"I hear you. Another way of looking at it is from the perspective of the community. When enough people are immunized, it's harder for a disease to spread. This "community immunity" benefits our loved ones, our neighbors, and community members who can't be vaccinated."

Scenario 2

Community Member	"Some of my friends and family have stopped vaccines because of the ingredients in them. They say they're toxic and who knows how long they are wreaking havoc in our bodies."
Voice for Public Health (Thinking)	*That sounds like the "natural is better than artificial" mindset, so I should respond by emphasizing the immune system's response.*
Voice for Public Health (Response)	"I'd be happy to talk with your friends and family if they have questions. For now, let me answer you by saying a little bit about how our immune systems respond to vaccines. Our bodies learn from immunizations like children learn to read from simple beginner books. Just like we remember how to read long after we've given up the ABC books, our immune systems can remember a virus long after the vaccine has left the body. By giving our bodies an early start in reading a virus, we help our immune systems get ready to spring into action when we encounter a disease."

Scenario 3

Community Member	"With the side effects of these vaccines, plus unknown risks, I don't think the government should be mandating any vaccines to enroll in school."
Voice for Public Health (Thinking)	*That sounds like the person is working from a mindset that assumes "the risks outweigh the rewards," so I should respond by emphasizing the concrete rewards for children.*
Voice for Public Health (Response)	"What's really at stake here is making sure our schools and childcare centers are safe, healthy places for kids to learn and grow. Contagious diseases spread quickly in a closed network like a school, to kids and teachers and their families. When we can prevent a disease through immunization, it helps children stay on track with their learning, their development, and all the activities kids love to do."

Dig Deeper

For more on communicating publicly about immunization, see FrameWorks resources created in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Boosting Public Discourse: Reframing Childhood Immunization

Valuing Community: Framing Childhood Vaccines in Rural America

Concluding Thoughts

In the face of today's political challenges, it can be tempting to treat bigger-picture or longer-term strategies for shaping public thinking as a luxury we can't afford—something to set aside until the current upheaval subsides. But strategic framing isn't just about the long view. Insights from decades of framing research offer tried-and-true wisdom we can rely on in tricky or unpredictable contexts. These strategies can anchor our communications when things feel unstable and offer clear, hopeful ways forward, even amid fast-moving challenges. Framing helps us craft messages that work in the short term by cutting through confusion and clarifying what's at stake, while also laying groundwork for deeper shifts in understanding over time.

In fact, one of the most comforting insights from framing research is the persistence and durability of the mindsets we all hold. Even when it feels like the ground is shifting beneath us, many of the ways people make sense of the world endure—and that's something we can work with. By focusing on how we frame our messages in ways that move mindsets, we're not just surviving the present— we're drawing from a well of knowledge that can steady us now and help us build the healthier, more equitable future we're striving for.

About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a non-profit think tank that advances the mission-driven sector's capacity to frame the public discourse about social and scientific issues. The organization's signature approach, Strategic Frame Analysis®, offers empirical guidance on what to say, how to say it, and what to leave unsaid. FrameWorks designs, conducts, and publishes multi-method, multi-disciplinary framing research to prepare experts and advocates to expand their constituencies, to build public will, and to further public understanding. To make sure this research drives social change, FrameWorks supports partners in reframing, through strategic consultation, campaign design, FrameChecks®, toolkits, online courses, and in-depth learning engagements known as FrameLabs. In 2015, FrameWorks was named one of nine organizations worldwide to receive the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Learn more at www.frameworksinstitute.org

Acknowledgments

Communicating Now

Framing for Health Equity

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