Building Vaccine Confidence

Strategies That Work (Differently)



November 10, 2026

FRAME WORKS

Here’s how we’ll share space today

- We will share the slides and recording
- Please mute your microphones unless you are speaking.
- We want to hear your voice! Please raise your digital hand to be recognized.
- Please keep your cameras on as much as possible (no judgment if you can’t!)
- Please feel free to interact in the chat and use reaction emojis.
- We’ve made you a folder with resources and workspace. Find yours!
- Please take care of yourself!



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FrameWorks is on a mission...

to help advocacy organizations frame the public discourse and build public will for progressive social change.

www.frameworksinstitute.org

We can’t achieve health justice without powerful communication.

FrameWorks' Health Justice Program is designed to support the field (you!)



Original Research



Framing & Narrative Strategy



Deep Reframing Partnerships

After this workshop, you'll be able to:

- Open vaccine communications in more powerful, effective ways
- Make two important shifts that reframe the public conversation about childhood vaccination
- Respond to common myths and concerns in ways that work
- Apply these strategies to your own materials

Today’s flow

Welcome & Warm Ups	Overview of Research Base	Mindsets on Vaccination	How to Start (and Not Start)	Break
Two Major Shifts	Reviewing Your Materials	Managing Misinfo	Break	Discussion + Closing Activities

Earlier, you said you were hoping for...

- New or refined skills and strategies for better communication
- Skills in sounding “real,” not clinical or preachy
- More confidence and willingness to engage in vaccine-related conversations

Specific questions you shared ahead...

- Scale vs. 1:1 Messaging: How should we adjust our framing when moving from large-scale communications campaigns to 1:1 clinical interactions?
- Balancing the Data: How can we urgently highlight concerning regional data (e.g., rising non-medical exemptions) without causing alarm, while still showing that the vast majority of parents choose to vaccinate?
- Presenting the Schedule: When informing a parent of the schedule, should a provider distinguish between "required for school entry" vs. "recommended," or simply present all shots as the standard recommended vaccines?
- Legislative Conversations: What strategies have proven most useful for speaking with legislators—specifically for building rapport and sharing information in a way that truly resonates?

Word Cloud:
What challenges are you facing?

We’re building on the work of a team

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Conducted in partnership with AAP



Reframing the Conversation about Child and Adolescent Vaccinations

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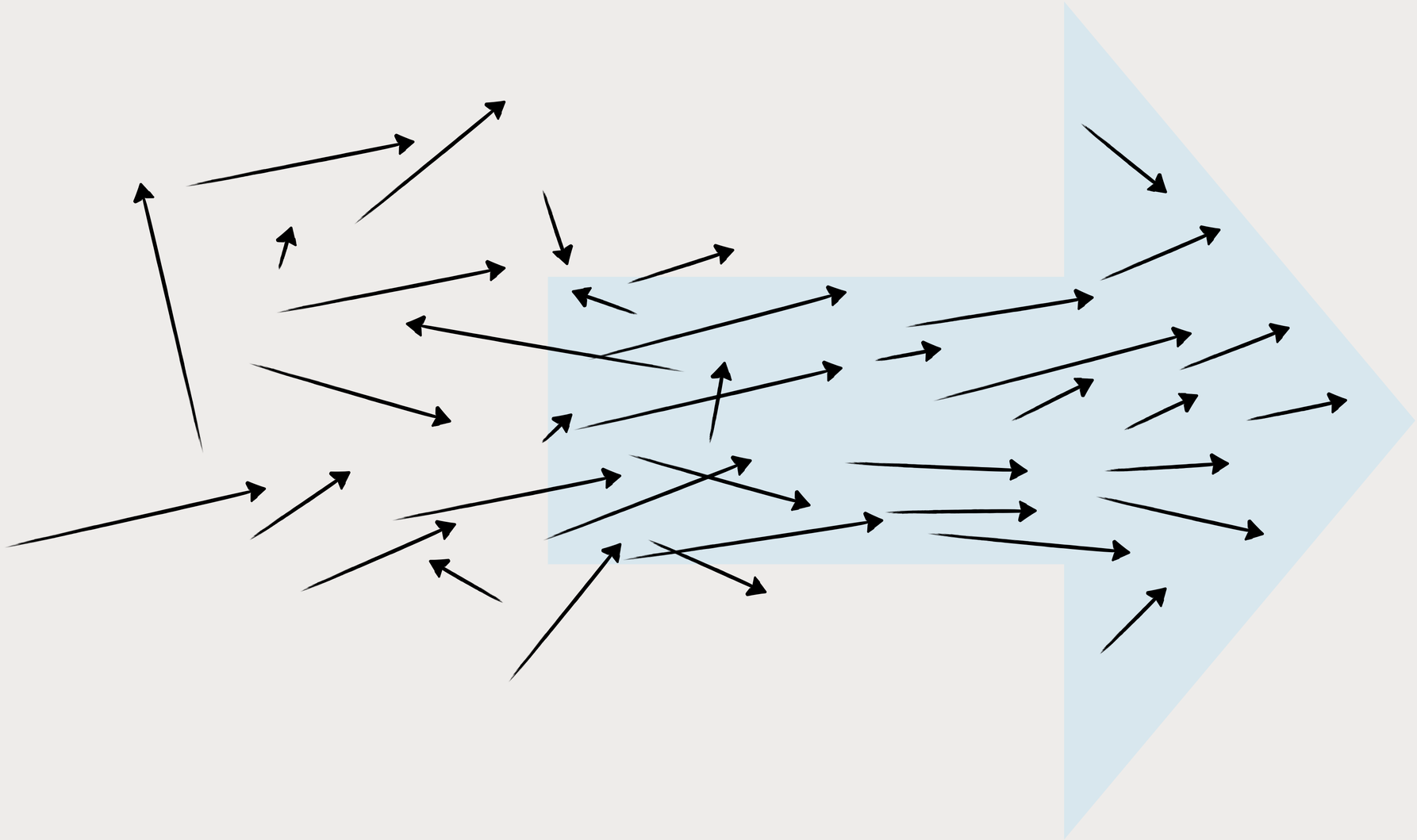
JANUARY 2023

FRAME WORKS

Shared Framing Can Shift Public Thinking



13,000+ Americans queried from 2021-2026

Multi-method communications research conducted nationwide in partnership with American Academy of Pediatrics

Nationally representative sample

US residents whose preferred language is Spanish

Focused research & message testing with rural and Black communities

Focused research with parents of children 0-6 who express vaccine hesitancy

Examples of communications outcomes we tested for



knowledge

A vaccine is effective if it prevents a vaccinated person from getting seriously ill with the disease.



attitudes

We, as a society, are responsible for making sure that all children get vaccinated.



policy preferences

We should set up federally funded vaccination centers that operate year-round in every community in the U.S.

we didn’t test these strategies for use in clinical settings



our project is about changing the cultural surround sound



Photo by Kevin Woblick on Unsplash

Mindsets on Childhood Vaccines

When we rely on **military language**, people conclude that any transmission of disease indicates a failure of the vaccine.



Photo by Kevin Schmid on Unsplash

When people compare childhood vaccines to **medicine**, they become more concerned about side effects and “overwhelming” the body.



Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash

Formula for Moving Public Mindsets

This approach is different, and more indirect than classical persuasion

1. Identify the widely shared mindsets people are using
2. Discern which are productive and unproductive
3. Limit activation of unproductive mindsets
4. Increase activation of productive mindsets to reinforce them
5. Repeat, repeat, repeat

Less of this

This is about scary, deadly diseases

Benefits outweigh the risks

Vaccines are safe

those are not the facts!!!

More of this!

This is about healthy childhoods

Benefits to our community

Our immune systems learn from vaccines

We can help sort fact from harmful fictions

1

How to Start the Conversation (and How Not To)

Ways not to start the conversation

Stacking Up Stark Statistics

Can spark blaming, us-vs-them attitudes
Can be seen as emotional manipulation

Narrating the Controversy

Reinforces the opposition's frame, makes hesitancy seem more widespread than it is

I Know Sooo Much Better

A paternalistic, "shaking my head" stance alienates potential supporters, animates opposition

Vaccine Safety and Risks

Risk already drives people's thinking.
"Safe and effective" can sound like a canned talking point.

*Healthier Communities tested especially well with rural and Spanish-preferring audiences, and more effective than Child Development with Spanish speakers.

Framed with “protection from disease”

On-time vaccination throughout childhood is essential because it helps provide immunity before children are exposed to potentially life-threatening diseases.

Reframed with “preparation for development”

Vaccinations prepare children’s immune systems to recognize and resist contagious diseases, keeping them healthy so they can keep growing, learning, and thriving.

Framed with “narrating the controversy”

Like many of my public health colleagues across the country, I’m getting more and more questions from families about whether vaccines are safe. Sometimes parents want to delay, space out, or even skip certain shots, which just has no evidence behind it at all. It’s dangerous. As hesitancy grows, vaccine coverage is declining. It’s no surprise that we’re now seeing outbreaks of measles - with babies dying as a result. Let me be clear about what the science says: vaccines are safe and effective. Vaccines save lives.

Reframed with “partner and resource”

With so much health content online, it’s hard to know what’s trustworthy. As someone who studies how diseases spread through communities, I worry when I see advice to modify the ages when kids get vaccines. The recommended pace is carefully timed for when a child’s immune system will respond best and when exposure risks begin. Spacing out shots isn’t supported by research and leaves a gap in protection. I love it when people ask questions. It’s important that answers come from people who really understand the science!

Which opening statement is “on frame?”

	"Vaccines serve as a powerful shield to protect your child in the ongoing war against dangerous, deadly viruses."
	“When children are fully immunized, they stay healthier and can focus on growing, playing, and learning.”

Which opening statement is “on frame?”

	“With so much noise about vaccines, it can be hard to sort it all out. If you have questions, talk with your pediatrician or someone who truly knows the science.”
	“As an expert, I want to reassure you that vaccines are thoroughly tested for safety, and the risks of serious side effects are extremely low."

Which is the best answer to a reporter’s question about growing rates of RSV hospitalization?

	Detail the terrifying details of the ICU stay to startle viewers into recognizing the immediate gravity of the threat.

	Move quickly from the worst-case scenario to the explain that even mild illness interrupts important developmental milestones like babbling, playing, and exploring.

Which is the best answer to a reporter’s question about a child death during a measles outbreak?

	Talk about how widespread immunization keeps measles from spreading in a community, which protects children too young or too sick to get the vaccine.
	Emphasize that one family’s “medical freedom” is another family’s nightmare, and the death could have been prevented.

Imagine these are the toppers of one-pagers. What unintended consequences might these lead-ins have?

About The Childhood Vaccination Schedule

Most parents choose to vaccinate their children according to the recommended schedule, but many parents may still have questions about the vaccines recommended for their child.

About Vaccine Safety

Vaccines are very safe. The United States' long-standing vaccine safety system ensures that vaccines are as safe as possible. Currently, the United States has the safest vaccine supply in its history. Millions of children safely receive vaccines each year. The most common side effects are very mild, such as pain or swelling at the injection site.

What might you swap in as a title and first paragraph?

What’s on your mind?

What questions about how to start/not start did this surface for you?



Let’s apply what we’ve learned!

Spend 5 minutes incorporating what we just heard into our communications

- Open your Content Review Guide
- Based on what you just learned, is there anything in your communication that might be less effective? Look for:
  - How your communication opens
  - The examples you use
- Make a note of where you could rewrite with more effective framing



2

Moving from Individual to the Collective

people think about health in highly **individualistic** ways



Photo by Ella Olson on Unsplash

to make the case for a
public response,
we need to talk in terms of
public health



Photo by Kraken Images on Unsplash

Reframe: From individual to collective

- Never imply that collective concerns outweigh individual autonomy. But do lean toward a common good frame.
- Simply stating ”this is a public health issue” is underpowered –people don’t really get it.
- Say “widespread vaccination” or “community immunity” instead of “herd immunity."
- “Widespread vaccination is part of our system of collective caregiving for our children and our communities.”
- “When immunization is widespread, it’s harder for contagious diseases to get a foothold in the networks of our schools, hospitals, and communities.”

COMMUNITY

“When children are vaccinated our whole community benefits. High childhood vaccination rates create widespread immunity, which protects the health of everyone. By coming together to support vaccination programs, our community can ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.”

Less of this

Vaccines are not only safe, they are highly effective, protecting your children from dangerous, disabling, and even deadly diseases. To keep ourselves, our children, and our loved ones safe, we need all families to vaccinate their kids. Talk to your doctor if you have questions.

More of this!

In our state, we have a proud tradition of looking out for each other. We love our communities and want what's best for everyone. It's important we translate that into making sure that everyone — especially children — has full access to vaccination services.



LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

stronger immunities. stronger communities.

Thanks to vaccines, we can maintain stronger immune systems to protect against serious, often preventable illnesses like measles, flu, COVID and more. Protecting more than just our own bodies, vaccines keep us healthier as a family, community and state allowing us to build stronger immunities that lead to stronger communities.

Campaign collateral from 2023

3

Moving from Vaccines to the Immune System

When people compare childhood vaccines to **medicine**, they become more concerned about side effects and “overwhelming” the body.



Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash

When people compare childhood vaccines to **instruction**, they reason in ways that are more in line with science.

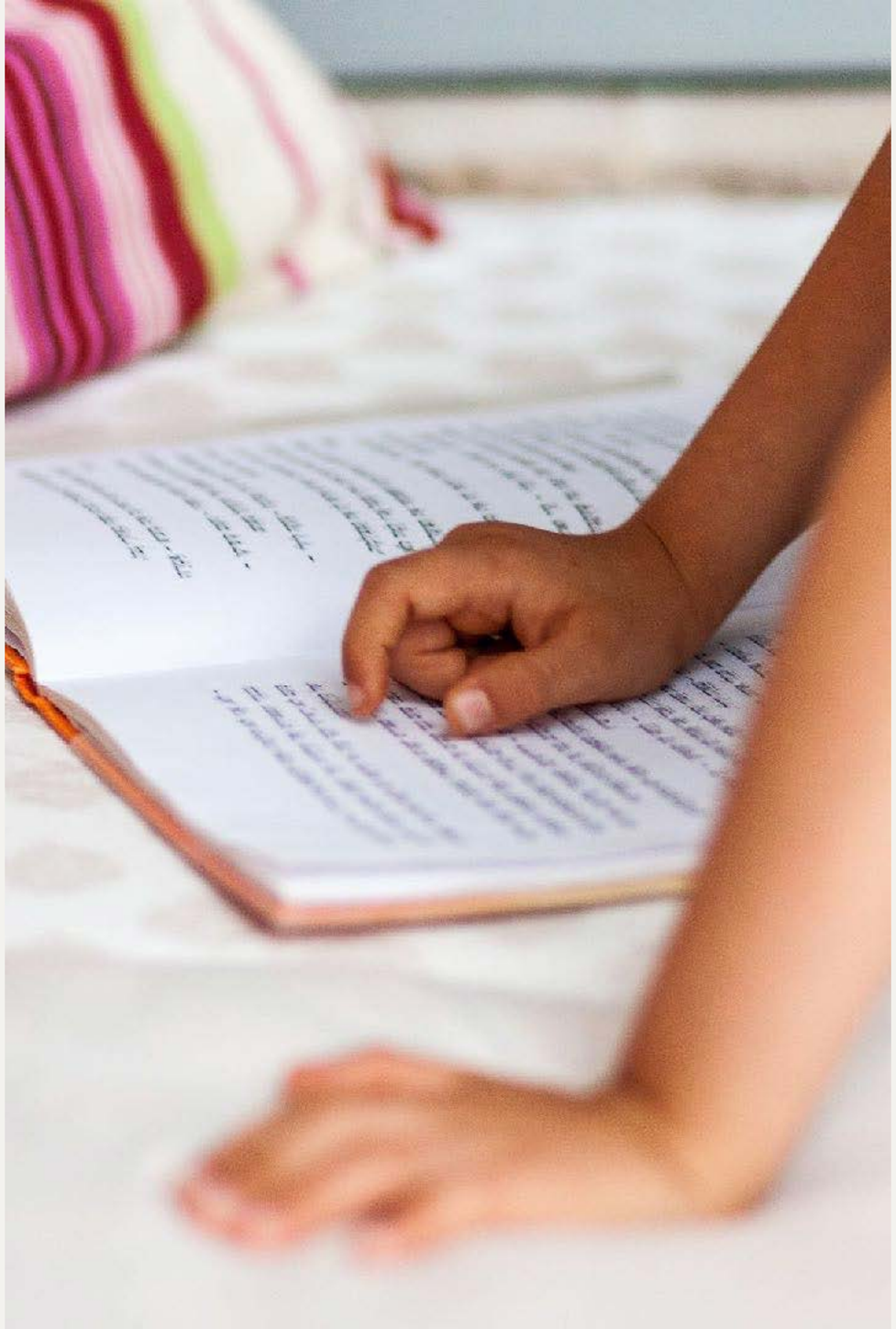


Photo by Ravi Perchik on Unsplash

Sample letter to the editor

Our immunization coalition specializes in keeping children healthy. I do this work because nothing brings me more joy than seeing young people thriving, growing, and learning. That's why I think of vaccinations—as routine as they may be—as a vital part of what our community does on behalf of children and families.

Vaccinations prepare children's immune systems to recognize and respond to contagious diseases, and they also protect our community as a whole.

“Your child’s immune system is amazing. It’s in constant learning mode, and it loves to get ahead. Getting multiple vaccines in one shot doesn't overwhelm the immune system — it gives it helpful practice.”

“The most important ingredient in any vaccine is the information it gives your child’s immune system. It gives it a head start in learning to recognize and resist a contagious disease.”

Applying the “from vaccine to immune system” shift to presumptive advice

~~“Your child is due…”~~

Can sound arbitrary, and like the doctor dictating.

“Your child’s immune system is ready for…

Puts emphasis on the child’s development

The why behind the when

Grounds the timing of a shot in a child's natural biology and immune development, explaining the logic behind "the schedule"

"HPV is a common virus spread easily by skin-to-skin contact—almost everyone encounters it by age 30. While most cases get better on their own, the virus quietly increases the risk of several types of cancer.

Why do medical researchers recommend it for pre-teens, between 9 and 12? Because pre-teens mount twice as strong an antibody response than older adolescents.

Making “the schedule” about differing policy positions

“Our state has decided to follow the AAP schedule for childhood vaccinations, not the CDC schedule. It’s important to understand how the CDC’s guidance differs from the AAP schedule. The CDC recently moved several vaccines from routine, universal recommendations into 'shared clinical decision-making,' which reduces the federal baseline from 17 diseases down to 11. However, the AAP's expert panel determined that all 17 should still be routinely given to every child. So, while federal guidelines now treat certain shots as optional discussions, pediatricians still recommend following the complete AAP schedule to protect community health."

Making “the schedule” about immune system development

"When our state chose to adopt the American Academy of Pediatrics’ vaccine recommendations, our decision came down to one core scientific principle: how a child’s immune system develops.

Just like children reach developmental milestones—learning to roll over, crawl, and walk—their immune systems grow in predictable stages. The AAP’s pace and timing was built to match that biology, giving children’s bodies the right immunological lessons at the exact moments they are most ready to learn and respond. Recent federal changes to the schedule seem arbitrary rather than evidence-based, leaving children with unnecessary gaps in protection when they are most vulnerable. Our state is sticking with the road map that America’s doctors trust—one grounded in children's biology, designed to keep them healthy, active, and thriving."

Let’s apply what we’ve learned!

Spend 5 minutes incorporating what we just heard into our communications

- Returning to your communication, look for:
  - Where you’re relying on an individual (rather than a collective) frame
  - Where you’re talking more about vaccines than immune systems
- Make a note of where you could rewrite with more effective framing



Let’s work together!

Spend 15 minutes in your small group reflecting on your vaccine communication

- What opportunities did you notice to reframe your existing communication?
- What ideas do you have for how you might frame future communications differently?

Use this time to workshop together and compare and contrast what you’ve each noticed in your communication.

Let Zoom bring you back to the full group room.



4

Strategies to Counter Misinformation

Classical persuasion methods, meet the modern world

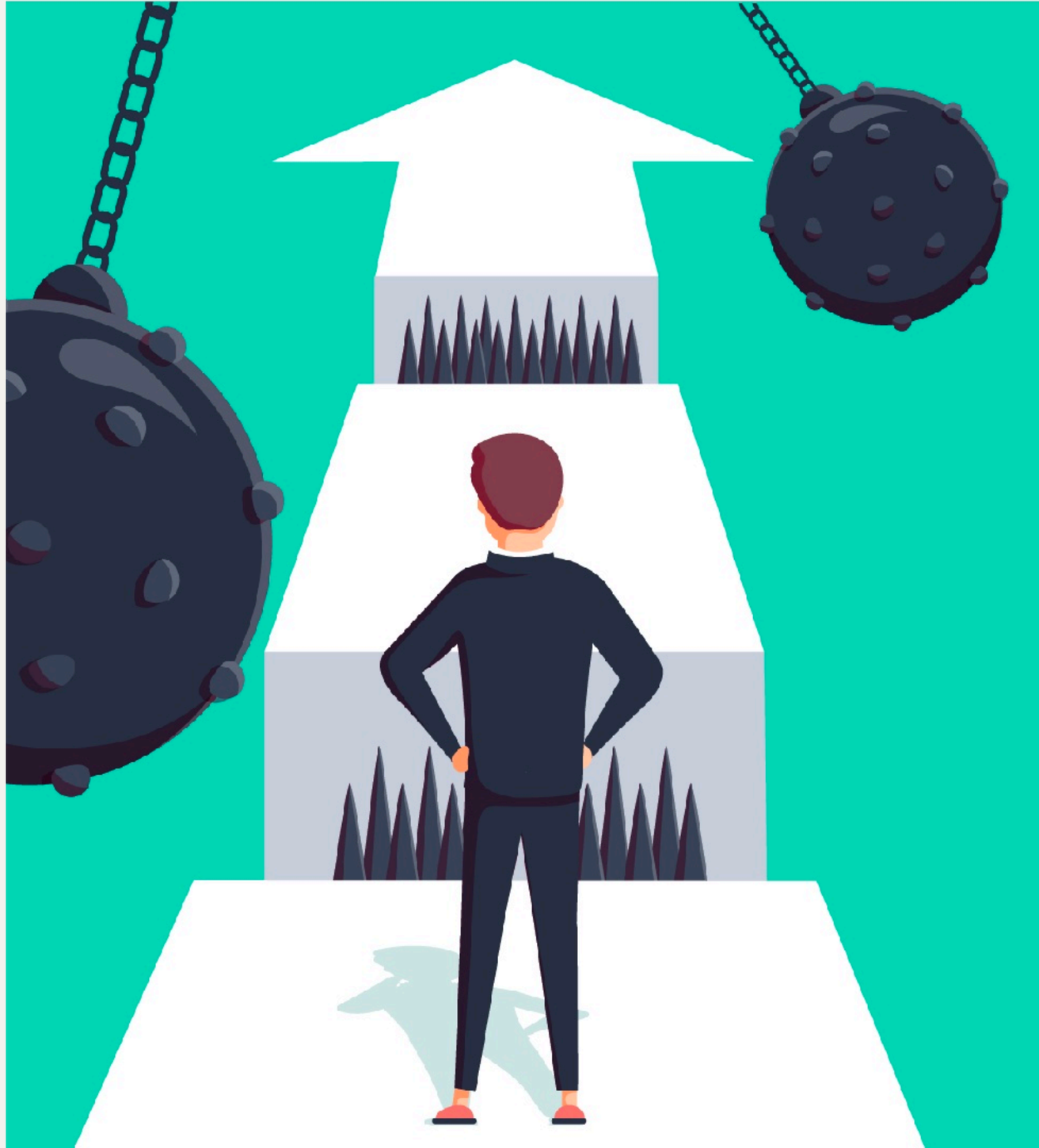
Media fragmentation
The shift from a few major news sources to countless specialized ones means there are fewer shared spaces for collective, public meaning-making.

Partisan media.
Outlets catering to a specific political ideology harden in-group beliefs.

Social media platform design choices.
False ideas can spread more rapidly than ever before.
Algorithms prioritize engagement, which amplifies negativity and misleading content.

Affective polarization and motivated reasoning:
Growing emotional and social distance between people who identify with different political parties limits receptivity to “outside” information.

When the work gets harder, it gets more important, and more important to be strategic.



We all need to master these “new basics”

1. Avoid restating harmful ideas, even to debunk them.
2. Don’t play in “their” frame.
3. Don’t be polarizing.
4. Instead, say what is true. Make it clear and compelling.
5. Repeat, repeat, repeat.



+ Strategic, key audience
+ Short, everyday words
+ Concise
+ Does not lean into fear

X Restates the misinformation
X Comes off as impersonal
X Only addresses “risk” side of thinking
X “Best” could be heard as paternalistic

Keeping Kids Healthy During a Measles Outbreak

1. To keep children from catching measles, **we can rely on the measles vaccine.** It trains the body's immune system to recognize the virus and respond.

2. Remember that **measles spreads very easily.** Children with measles should stay away from people who aren't immune. Unvaccinated kids should avoid crowds and sick people.

3. **If your child gets measles, talk with your child's doctor.** Untested "home remedies" can be dangerous.

Engaging in a manufactured controversy (safety)

Across the nation, health care providers are getting more and more questions from families about whether vaccine ingredients, vaccine combinations, and the cumulative set of recommended vaccines are safe for their children. Doctors, nurses, and researchers agree: The answer is yes, in general vaccinations are not only safe, they are highly effective. (Some children have severe allergies or immune system conditions that make them the rare exception to the rule.)

Redirecting the conversation to a productive topic (access)

Across the nation, health care providers are hearing more and more stories from families about practical difficulties in keeping up or catching up on routine vaccinations. Sometimes the issue is a lack of insurance coverage. Sometimes medical records aren’t available. It doesn’t have to be this way. We can take steps to ensure that childhood vaccinations are widely available, easily accessible, and always affordable.

Less of this

Our state is rapidly becoming ground zero for vaccine ignorance, driven by anti-science politicians who spread dangerous myths. Vaccine deniers claim childhood vaccines cause autism, overload young immune systems, or are just a cash grab for big pharma, but there's little or evidence for any of these conspiracy theories. Mandatory school immunization laws exist for a reason: to protect our communities. It's time to stop listening to anti-vax misinformation, stand up for strict school mandates, and mandate compliance for every child, and do what's right for public health.

More of this!

For many kids, the best part of school is being with friends: sharing crayons, playing at recess, and sitting together in class. All that togetherness makes it easy for contagious diseases to spread quickly through the network of students, teachers, and families. That's why our state requires students to be up to date on routine childhood immunizations before they enroll. Widespread immunity keeps serious diseases like measles, polio and chickenpox from getting a foothold in the school community. When everyone in the school is vaccinated, it's harder for diseases to spread and easier to keep the learning going.

The term “misinformation” is becoming a partisan cue

Try instead:

False claims
Misleading ideas
Harmful rumors



Photo by Andy Feliciotti on Unsplash

We tested 4 different messages about misinformation

The core of the problem is that…

- Parents are **overwhelmed by information** and it's hard to trust it.
- Public leaders spread false claims **to serve their own interests.**
- Social media spreads misinformation and **doesn't prioritize kids' health.**
- Not all sources are reliable. **Stay curious. Ask questions.**

Pointing fingers at bad actors didn’t build trust in us



Sample recommended message

Being a parent means sorting through a lot of news and advice. It can be tough to know if what you hear or read is true. When it comes to vaccines, false information can harm your child’s health. Pediatricians and doctors look to science, not rumors. Stay curious. Ask questions. Talk with your child’s doctor or another expert to get reliable answers.

We all need to master these “new basics”

1. Avoid restating harmful ideas, even to debunk them.
2. Don’t play in “their” frame.
3. Don’t be polarizing.
4. **Instead, say what is true. Make it clear and compelling.**
5. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Rebutting with facts (less effective)

Secretary Kennedy is repeating a myth that has been debunked many times. Scientists have conducted more than 40 high-quality, peer-reviewed studies since 1998, involving over 5.6 million people across seven countries. All found no connection between vaccines and autism.

The truth: Vaccines are safe and effective. Childhood vaccines are best way to protect children from several preventable diseases that can cause long-term complications and even death.

Countering with a sticky story (more effective)

It is upsetting to hear leaders repeat stories that play on people's fears, but don't hold up to the facts. Here is the real backstory on the MMR vaccine. Years ago, a scientist faked his data to make it look like the measles vaccine was linked autism. It turned out he had a patent on a vaccine that could replace it. He got caught and lost his medical license.

Even so, doctors took the concern seriously and checked it out. Since then, 40 large studies looking at more than 5 million people found the exact same thing: vaccines do not cause autism.

Assertion

"Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, can be especially dangerous for infants. It was the leading cause of infant hospitalization in the U.S. before the introduction of RSV immunizations."

Explanation

"Respiratory viruses, like measles, RSV, or the flu, can be especially dangerous for infants. Why? Because a baby's airways are tiny—about the width of a straw. Any swelling can restrict breathing fast."

A good explanation can double the impact of a communication

Efficacy

Test of Time

Ingredients of a Great Explanation

Forgotten History

The Why Behind the When

The why behind the when

“Babies are born without a fully developed ability for blood to clot. Before the 1960s, about 1 in 100 infants developed internal bleeding in their first weeks.

Forgotten history

When Nobel Prize-winning doctors discovered that supplementing Vitamin K prevented this, it was a game changer. One dose in an newborn’s muscle makes an infant 80 times less likely to develop sudden internal bleeding.

Efficacy and test of time

That’s why it’s been recommended by the AAP as part of a newborn safety bundle since 1961, with over 60 years of continuous study. Pediatric researchers estimate this vitamin shot has saved 350,000 U.S. infant lives.”

The why behind the when

“A newborn's immune system is born ready to learn. Giving the Hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours is an important time to build protection. Many infected adults carry this virus without any symptoms. Mothers can unknowingly pass it to newborns during delivery.

Forgotten history

When the US only used screening to recommend the vaccine, we saw about 20,000 cases of childhood liver disease develop from Hep B every single year. When we switched to recommending the vaccine for all newborns in the early 90s, we reduced childhood Hepatitis B infections by 99%.”

Efficacy and test of time

Framing principles for addressing deceptive discourse

explanation > assertion

real-world effects > fact-checks

trustworthy > credentialed

Let’s apply what we’ve learned!

Spend 5 minutes reflecting on your communication

- How might you apply these framing strategies to your communication?
- Do you notice places where you are restating misinformation, playing into the opposition’s frame, or stating rather than explaining?



Let’s work together!

On your own, consider these three scenarios in which you, as a health communicator, might encounter misinformation:

1. In the comments of a social media post about the Covid-19 vaccine, a community member cites misinformation and raises concerns about the risk of myocarditis from the vaccine.
2. Your health department is offering flu shots at a farmers market or health fair. A community member comes to the table and claims that flu vaccines cause the flu.
3. In a hearing on state vaccine requirements for schools, a state legislator challenges the need for Hep B and HPV vaccines because “those diseases only come from risky behavior.”

Take a few minutes and consider how you might respond to each.

Next, we’ll explore these scenarios further in small groups.



Let’s work together!

In groups of three:

- You will each take a turn responding to one of these scenarios (you get to pick which one!)
- Each person will take 2-3 minutes to practice their response to the scenario for the group
- Then you’ll have 2-3 minutes for feedback
- All three members of the group should get a chance to practice

As your colleagues practice these scenarios, take notes:

- What strategies or language did your colleagues use that were particularly effective? What might you borrow in your work work?
- Where did the group get stuck?



Let’s debrief!

Did you hear something from one of your colleagues that you plan to steal in the future? Put it in the chat!

Let’s talk about places where your group got stuck.



FrameWorks has research you can access on numerous health topics

Child and youth health
- ACEs/childhood adversity
- Adolescent development
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child development
- Child mental health
- Immunization
- Maternal & infant health
- Parenting

Social Determinants of Health
- Built environment
- Food/nutrition/obesity
- Geographic health drivers
- Housing
- Connectedness
- Racism as public health threat

Chronic Disease Topics
- Aging
- Alcohol policy issues
- Oral health
- Substance use prevention
- Tobacco-related health disparities

Injury & Violence Topics
- Child abuse & neglect
- Gun violence prevention
- Elder abuse

Cross-cutting
- Value of public health
- Climate change & health
- Health equity

Health Care/Health Systems
- Patient Safety
- Public health informatics
- Systems of care

Let’s stay connected!

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“A talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change.”

Richard Rorty

About FrameWorks

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit 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, multidisciplinary 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.