

VIDEO TRAINING WORKBOOK

Transforming the Narrative:
Health Equity and The Community

———— **Workbook for Video Training** ————

The video training that accompanies this toolkit will help you get started on understanding narrative, the power of narrative, co-creating an aspirational or transformative narrative, and integrating it into your work towards health equity.

This is group work, not to be done in isolation. Community does not happen in a silo. Neither does co-creating an aspirational narrative or building power for healthy communities.

This training is divided into sections, many of which include group activities to deepen relationships and understandings and to begin to strategize about narrative change work. Throughout the video, you will hear from participants in the narrative and ACEs project described in this toolkit.



“Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, or economic changes. In this sense power is not only desirable but necessary in order to implement the demands of love and justice.”

- THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.”

- ABRAHAM LINCOLN

“One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an antiracist.”

- IBRAM X. KENDI, *How to Be an Anti-Racist*

Training objectives:

1. Introduce and illustrate the idea and the power of public narrative
2. Increase participant understanding of why narrative change matters for their work
3. Describe and illustrate a process for co-creating an emerging/emergent narrative & point to toolkit(s)
4. Introduce and illustrate frameworks for narrative change strategy
5. Articulate the value of, challenges to, and strategies for established institutions & community power building organizations collaborating on narrative change

| TRAINING OUTLINE | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Section | Approximate video time | Estimated group work time | Estimated training time |
| Welcome and Introduction | 5 | -- | 5 |
| Dreaming Together | 8 | 15 | 30 |
| Grounding Values and Beliefs | 15 | 40 | 60 |
| Public Narrative Concepts | 5 | -- | 5 |
| Naming the Dominant Public Narrative | 10 | 20 | 30 |
| The Power of Narrative | 15 | 10 | 25 |
| Co-Creating Your Aspirational Narrative | 5 | -- | 5 |
| Narrative Change Strategies | 7 | 25 | 30 |
| Working Together for Health Equity | 10 | 20 | 30 |
| Moving Forward | 10 | -- | 10 |
| Total | 90 minutes | | 4 hours |



[Slides included in the training video](#)

DREAMING TOGETHER

If you could wave a magic wand...

What is one BIG change you'd want to see that doesn't seem possible right now?

Introduce yourself if needed. Take about one minute each.

Simply imagining the world we want, without limiting ourselves to what we think is possible, is an important exercise. Envisioning a better future can motivate and energize us as we work toward it.

One of the forces keeping us from making these big changes is a powerful dominant narrative that tells us that what we have now is all we can have, all that is possible; that some of us are more deserving than others; that our pain and our problems are our own fault; and that we are each on our own.

But many of us know in our minds and in our hearts that in fact something different, something better, is possible. That's why narrative change is so important.



GROUNDING CORE VALUE & BELIEFS EXERCISE

Public narrative draws on and is grounded in an underlying worldview, a set of values and beliefs, norms and assumptions that shapes our understanding of the world and how we act in it.

Take 10 minutes to complete the following questions alone:

Name three core values or beliefs you have about yourself that have shaped who you are today.

Myself

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Neighborhood/World

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the deep grounding values and beliefs that led you to the work you are doing?

What is a story about that connection? Who taught it to you? How are those values and beliefs guiding you now?

Talk in groups of 3 or 4. Each person gets 5 minutes.

Where do you experience these values being violated in our lives together?

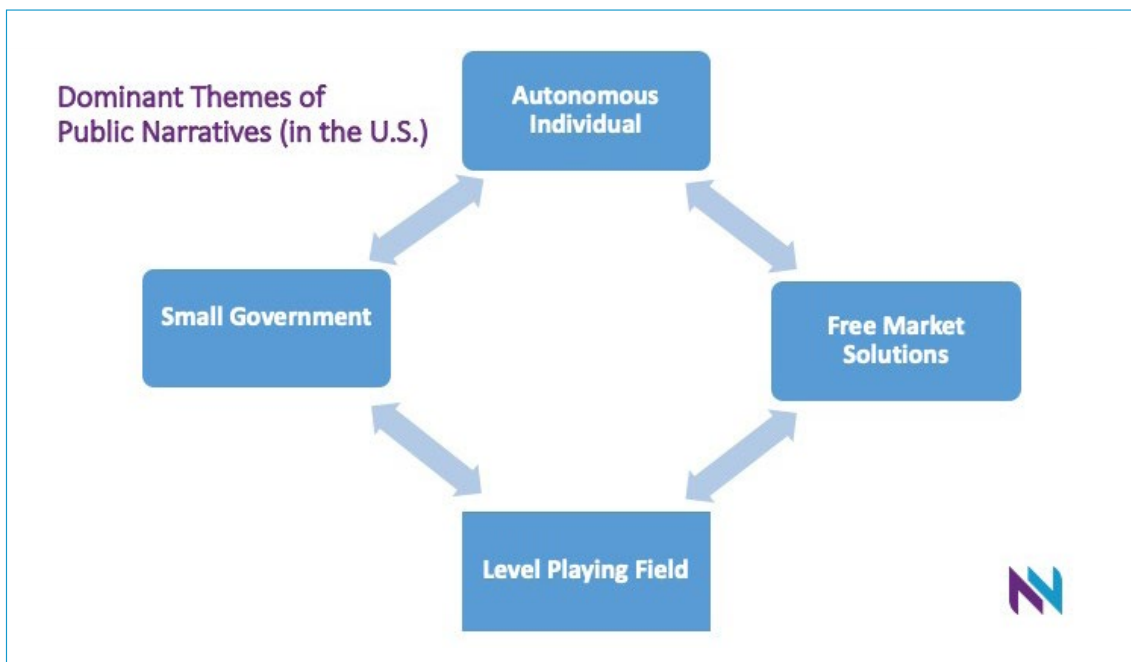
PUBLIC NARRATIVE CONCEPTS

Public narratives are stories about how the world works that are told in many different ways, and can *shift public consciousness and change what is possible*

- Grounded in and reinforce a set of values and beliefs.
- Make sense of the world, provide an understanding or interpretation of people and situations.
- Serve a purpose: They shape possibilities and outcomes
- Are more powerful than facts in changing outcomes

A dominant public narrative is one that beats out other narratives and has the most power to shape what is possible

- We hear and experience dominant narratives all around us, in the media, from other people, in popular culture and more.
- They are embedded in our institutions, structures, and norms. Most of the time, we are hardly even aware of them, much less the way they shape our understanding of our experiences.
- Dominant narratives become dominant because they are shaped and promoted by a group of people for a purpose.



NAMING THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE

Making the dominant narrative visible is a key strategy in narrative change.

What are some elements of the dominant public narrative about the problem or issue you are working on?

The Power of Narrative:

The dominant narrative has real power. It can marginalize us, make us feel ashamed, frustrated or powerless. It can keep us from doing the work we want to do, from solving problems, from achieving our goals.

What is the impact of the dominant narrative you named?

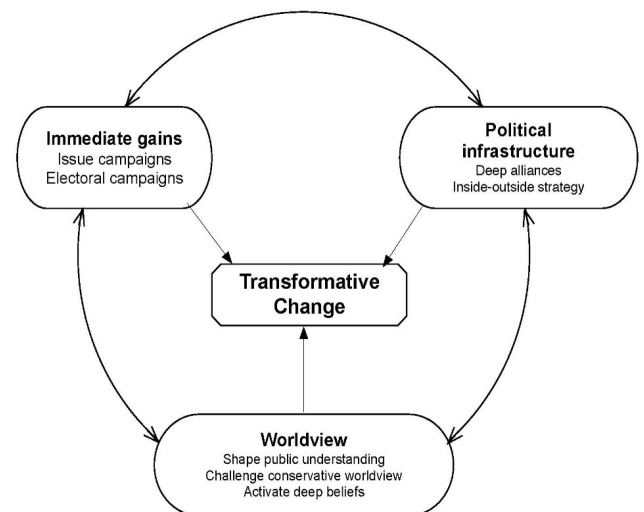
On you?

On your community?

On your work?

On the problem you are addressing?

The Three (Interrelated) Faces of Power



Key resource: [Paper from Grassroots Policy Project describing the Three Faces of Power model](#)

CO-CREATING AN ASPIRATIONAL/ TRANSFORMATIVE NARRATIVE

Co-creating an aspirational or transformational narrative together that is grounded in your shared values, beliefs and assumptions, that expresses your own deep understanding of your area of interest can be a powerful experience.

The process of co-creating your own narrative is an important ingredient in narrative change work. It is a generative and energizing process. It solidifies and strengthens the aspirational narrative among group members, creates ownership, empowers group members, and leads to more impactful narrative change work.

Your aspirational narrative is meant to define what can be - your aspirations for your communities and the people and institutions in them, grounded in your deepest values, beliefs, and commitments. It represents what you believe could and should be.

It is:

- An internal document to ground your work
- Designed to represent what you believe and want to achieve
- An articulation of values and beliefs that drive you in your work
- An expression of your collective imagination of the world you are working toward
- A way of reminding yourselves and others that something different is possible

It is not:

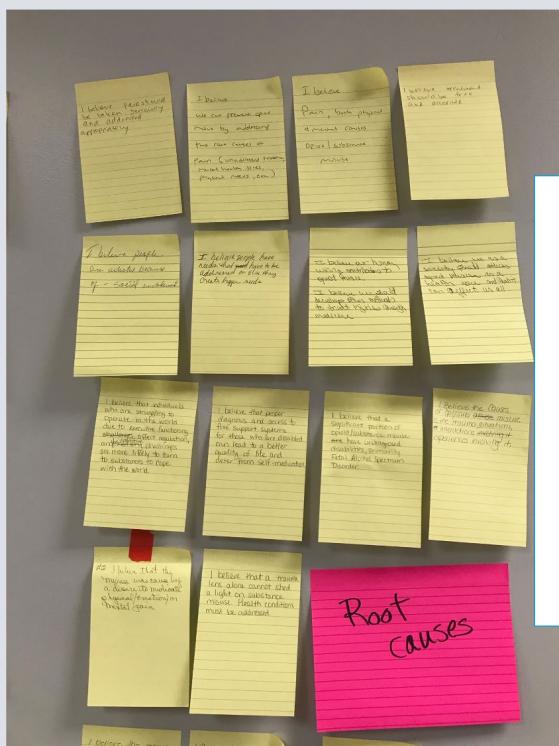
- About what is wrong with the world as it is
- A response to or refutation of the dominant narrative. Remember, when you argue directly against a dominant idea, you actually animate and reinforce it
- A messaging document
- A set of policy proposals
- Limited to what you believe is possible today

As you move through the steps of co-creating your aspirational narrative, check in on these points, especially those about what it is not. It is easy to fall into old habits. The “Small Group Guidelines for Generating Elements of an Aspirational Narrative”* can be helpful in re-orienting yourself or your group.

The above text can be found in [“Aspirational Narrative Is”](#)

[*Small Group Guidelines \(Generic\)](#)





Generating a New Narrative



- Do not worry, for today, about a public message
- This is not a writing or editing exercise – this is a chance to generate ideas
- Stay open to ideas that emerge from within you and from others
- Be open to non-linear thinking – tap the creative imagination in you and in others
- Do not focus on a 'response' to the dominant narrative
- Avoid policy proposals – address the underlying beliefs and outcomes you want



Key resources:

CJPH Narrative Development toolkit – Describes and outlines a process for developing an aspirational narrative
https://humanimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CJPH-Narrative-Development_Toolkit.pdf

Grassroots Policy Project process document – Outlines a three-step process for narrative co-creation
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CnUtMaSPqU7Soo_re8PaZpcNC0C71CRS/view?usp=sharing

Example Aspirational Narratives:

The Minnesota Department of Health with the Healthy Minnesota Partnership and community partners have developed 'emerging' narratives about number of key public health areas:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/narratives/index.html>

A draft narrative synthesis including themes from three communities participating in the narrative and ACEs project:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BIYhnRPkMDd3Q_yPkrbE84D4JRIROQVvWqTUCTOeQ4k/edit?usp=sharing

NARRATIVE CHANGE STRATEGIES

Nearly everything you are already doing likely can be strengthened by looking at it through a narrative shifting lens.

The core narrative shifting strategies are:

- Unmasking dominant narrative
- Elevating your narrative
- Contrasting or offering a choice between the two

Elevating & Animating

- Always start with values and beliefs.
- Focus on vision and possibilities.
- Not an argument, or a refutation.
- When we argue directly against a dominant idea, we actually animate and reinforce it.
- And - no one hears about what we believe or value.
- An invitation: What if...? Have you ever thought...?

The more that you can embody, illustrate, and give people an experience of what you believe is possible, the more you will draw them in, and build the power of your transformative narrative.

Strategic Communications: Consistently and persistently saying the right thing, to the right people, at the right time, to mobilize social power and advance your narrative, so you can accomplish short-term objectives and set up long-term victories.

Sell Your Brownies! 👍



NOT the recipe! 👎



Sell your brownies, not the recipe! When we buy a box of brownie mix, the picture of the luscious, chocolaty, moist finished product that will make our taste buds happy is what faces us in the aisle and encourages us to buy it - not the small print instructions on the back. We know that what's inside is just gray powder, and that we'll have work to do before we taste those brownies.

Too often in our work, we forget to lead with the brownies, the vision of what is possible, the end goal, healthy and equitable futures for our communities. Instead, we try to sell people on the ingredients or the recipe or the work we have to do. If we want to engage people, we need to lead with the 'brownies'.

Narrative frames are lenses that...

- Couch a specific issue arena in the context of a grounding narrative
- Shape understanding of what needs to happen in the issue arena from a values/beliefs perspective

Narrative frames can...

- Define how shared values/beliefs are being violated or not
- Redefine concerns in the context of shared values/beliefs
- Reshape or expand our understanding of the causes and solutions of shared concerns



What are the opportunities in your work where you could begin to unmask the dominant narrative, uplift your own narrative, and/or offer people a choice?

Who else needs to be involved?

Resources:

Shifting Narrative Guidelines – Person to Person (Generic)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nEKXUoGT2KUaMxJlOl1t8TeUgl66nXtgKf8zQXXioZc/edit?usp=sharing>

Race Class Narrative Checklist

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fd0f29d0d626c5fb471be74/t/6020970d4ef9b65741d7c459/1612748558024/RCNA_Checklist.pdf (also uploaded)

Race Class Narrative Example Language

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fd0f29d0d626c5fb471be74/t/60872802a6358614c024dc26/1619470344763/We+Make+The+Future+Narrative+Checklist+FINAL+4.26.2021.pdf>

Examples:

Minnesota 2017 Statewide Health Assessment, framed around conditions for health, narrative themes

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/sha.html>

Minnesota Department of Health 2015 White Paper on Paid Leave

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/reports/2015paidleave.pdf>

Opinion piece on childcare, leading with values/beliefs

<https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-must-stop-stiffing-child-care-providers/600067227/>
(users may encounter paywall)



WORKING TOGETHER

“Building community power is an approach to shaping the conditions needed for healthy and equitable communities by the development and implementation of policy, practice, and structural change... Our growing edge in public health is to shift the purpose of our community engagement to be in service of community power building.”

Shifting and Sharing Power: Public Health's Charge in Building Community Power

By Lili Farhang and Megan Gaydos, Human Impact Partners

NACCHO Exchange, Winter 2021

<https://humanimpact.org/hipprojects/shifting-and-sharing-power-public-healths-charge-in-building-community-power/?strategy=>

Who are your current or potential collaborators?

What barriers have you encountered in the collaboration, or might you encounter as you build these relationships?

What are some strategies for avoiding or overcoming those barriers?

