

Talking about prevention: Strategies for effective communication and messaging

Webinar for the Prevention Peer Network
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berkeley **media** studies group

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Berkeley Media Studies Group

- Research on news coverage of public health issues
- Media training and strategic consultation for community groups and public health advocates
- Professional education for journalists

Objectives

- **Summarize** the layers of strategy and how they can shape communication strategy;
- **Identify** challenges and opportunities to frame and reframe domestic violence as preventable;
- **Describe** how the components of an effective message can be used to develop prevention messages

Align DV agencies with homeless service providers to increase collaboration and support unhoused survivors

Provide age-appropriate, trauma-informed healthy relationships education for all students

CA is free of domestic violence

Ensure sustained funding for DV prevention services

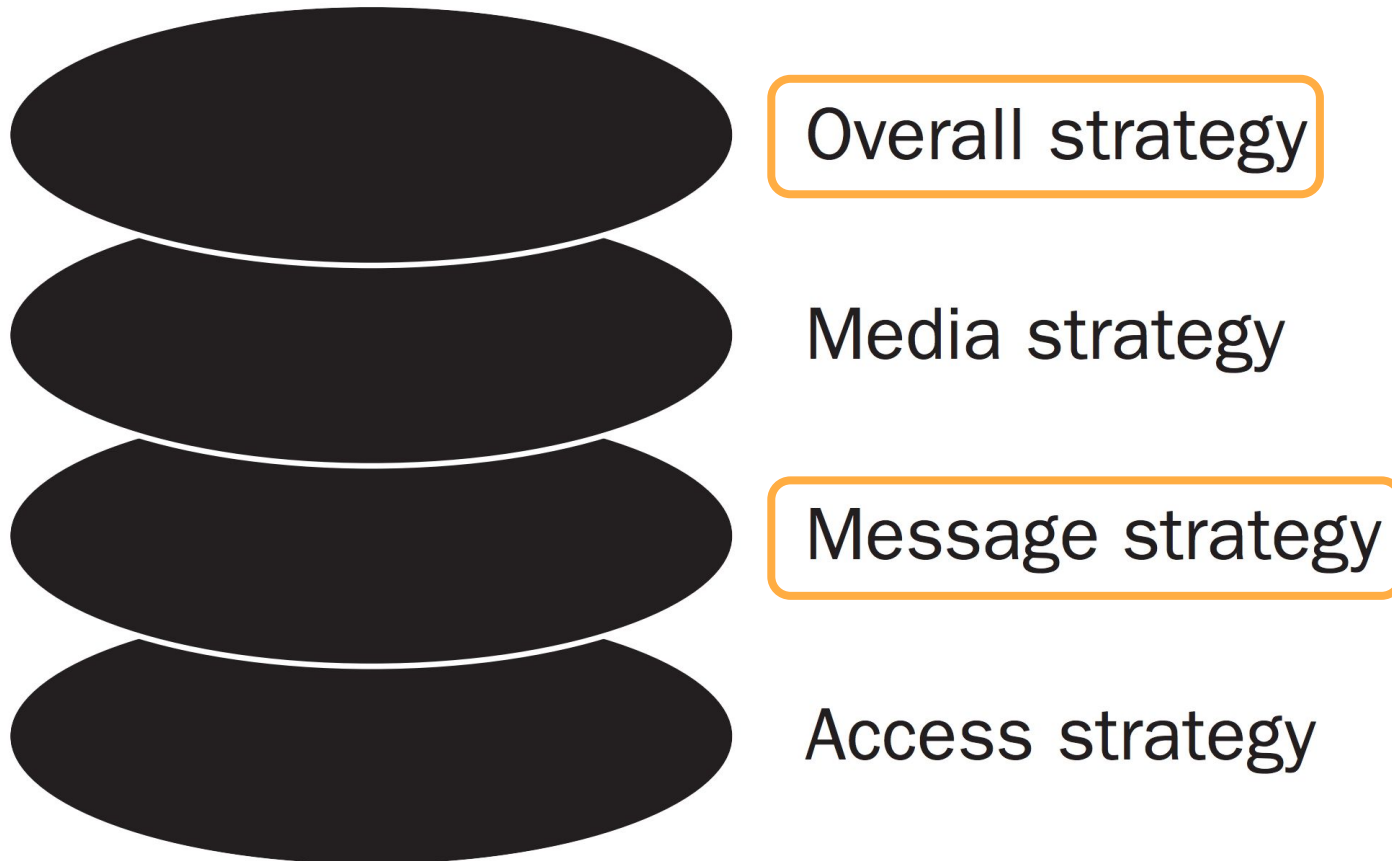
YOUR APPROACH

Strategic communication matters

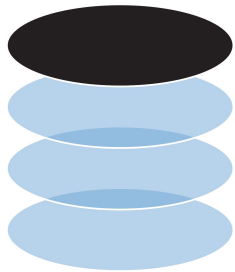
The way we communicate about domestic violence affects how audiences understand the problem and what to do about it.



Message is never first: The layers of strategy

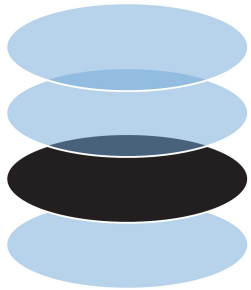


Overall strategy



- Define the **problem** you want to address
- Clarify the **policy solution** for which you'll advocate
- Identify the **target** with the power to make the change
- Enlist the **allies** who can help make your case
- Identify what **actions** you'll take to influence the target

Message strategy



Framing: how we talk about the issue

Message: what we say

Messenger: who says it

Target: who we want to hear it

A photograph of a railway track stretching into the distance, flanked by tall pine trees under a sunset sky. The tracks are made of metal rails on wooden ties, set on a bed of gravel. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with some clouds. The trees are dark and silhouetted against the sky.

Frames are mental pathways that help people understand the world.

The need to reframe



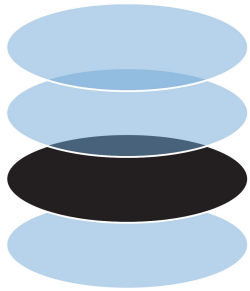
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How is domestic violence framed?

Domestic violence is often framed as ...

- a “private matter” that **affects only the people directly involved** in an incident;
- a criminal justice issue for police to address **after the fact**;
- limited to **isolated, extreme acts** of physical abuse;
- a problem only in **certain communities** (including communities of color).

Message strategy



Basic components of a message:

- Statement of problem
What's wrong?
- Value dimension
Why does it matter?
- Systems change solution
Who should do what by when?

Example: What's the problem? The solution?

Problem

Many teens in this community are affected by domestic violence - and not all of them see healthy relationships modeled at home. That's why what they learn at school is so important.

Solution

This resolution will ensure that schools have resources to provide prevention education and youth engagement around healthy relationships for every student.

Example: Why does it matter?

Evoked shared values

As educators and parents we all have a responsibility to equip every kid in this community with a strong foundation to healthy and safe relationships. Through this program, our students will have trustworthy adults they can turn to.

An effective message about preventing domestic violence...

- Evokes shared **values**
- Concisely describes the **problem**
- Names a concrete **solution**
- Acknowledges negative feelings
- Illustrates success
- Uses plain language

Acknowledge negative feelings

- People have complex, divided, and difficult feelings about domestic violence and what to do about it. It's not necessary to fully resolve those feelings!
- Phrases like “I know this can be a hard topic to discuss” or “maybe you've been through initiatives before and are wondering what makes this different” can be helpful.

Illustrate success

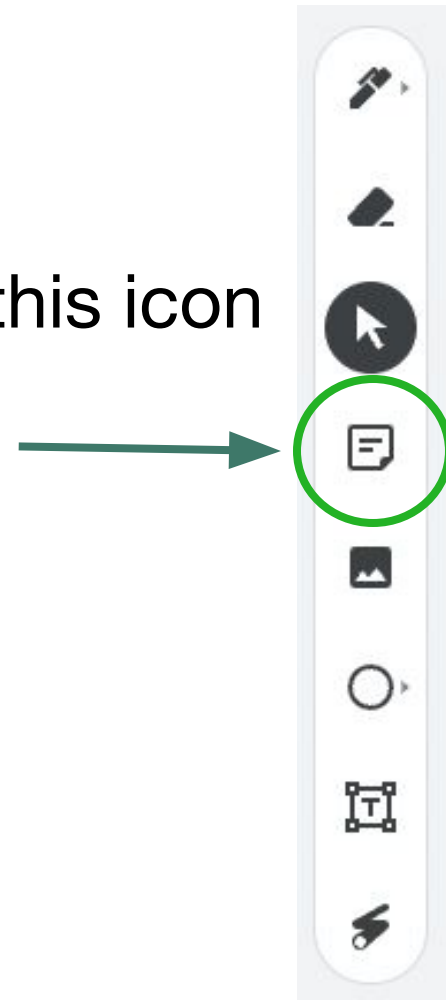
Success is *incremental* – success measures probably won't be dramatic, and they don't need to be.



**Stop DV
before it
happens**

What's been going well? What are you proud of?

- Link to Jamboard in chat
- To add your example, click this icon



Use plain language

Example: “toxic masculinity”

Insider language or jargon

Preventing domestic violence **requires us to challenge and dismantle toxic masculinity**, which equates masculine behavior with being unemotional, aggressive, violent, powerful, in control, competitive, and sexually accomplished.

Plain language

In our society, **some of what we've been taught about what it means to be masculine is unhealthy**. Often, we are taught that to be masculine is to always be in control, win at all costs, and show no emotion. These myths hurt everyone.

Final thought: Who's in your “messenger mix”?

- Audiences are most likely to believe in and connect with speakers they *identify with* in some key way.
- Speakers from a range of backgrounds (race, gender, orientation, age, etc.) are important.



Your turn: Who's in your messenger mix?

- What communities are you part of?
- How can you leverage your role?
- Who else in your network should be part of the mix?

Please use the Jamboard to answer.



Overall takeaways

- Default frames about domestic violence focus on the individual and undermine or obscure prevention;
- You cannot have a message strategy without an overall strategy;
- Effective communication takes time and practice
- We are here to help!

Questions and next steps

- What do you want to try first?
- What do you think you'll need help with?
- What would you like to learn more about?



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THANK YOU!

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Useful links

Layers of strategy hand out:

http://www.bmsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/bmsg_layers_of_strategy.pdf

Overall strategy worksheet:

<http://www.bmsg.org/resources/publications/media-advocacy-worksheet-overall-strategy/>

Message development worksheet:

http://www.bmsg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/bmsg_message_development_worksheet.pdf

reframing sexual violence:

<http://www.bmsg.org/resources/publications/moving-toward-prevention-guide-reframing-sexual-violence/>

accompanying blog:

<https://www.bmsg.org/blog/sexual-violence-framing-prevention-what-advocates-need-to-know/>

the case for prevention:

<http://www.bmsg.org/resources/publications/sexual-violence-prevention-messaging-guide/>

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