



Transcript

Introduction video 2 | Framing with values

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Hi, this is Nicky again and this video is all about framing with values.

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Within our overall narrative around homelessness, values are our first and most important tool in opening up hearts and minds. Today we're going to explore what values frames are - and how you can use them.

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Values frames help us to answer the question of why homelessness matters in our communications. For those working in the homelessness sector, there are many, many important answers to this question. They are all valid.

But when we try to get across that list of all the different reasons - all the moral and practical reasons for change - it can be a lot for people to hear. And communications science shows that people often need a single motivating entry point to engage with an issue.

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And we see this playing out in real life in important ways. Take Brexit - an issue that was and is about lots of different things: our economy, our laws, our trade, our travel, to name but a few. The Leave campaign boiled it down to be about one thing. Can you pause the video to think about what it was?

The Leave campaign made Brexit all about control. You may have said freedom or sovereignty. It was about our national ability to choose for ourselves. This was values framing in action. And, for worse or for better, it worked. Can you think of another example of a campaign or an issue being framed with a strong guiding values frame? Do go ahead and pause the video. You may have thought about other political examples. Or campaigns on social or environmental issues.

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My favourite example of a values frames in action in recent years was in the campaign for equal marriage. Campaigners intentionally reframed same sex relationships based on an understanding of public attitudes.

"We settled on a values frame that hit on why most people get married: love, commitment and family" said campaigner Kevin Nix. This connected the issue of equal marriage to people's deep beliefs and sense of common humanity. It was successful in achieving important legislative change - which then helped drive further changes in public attitudes. And that's what values frames can help us to do.

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Values frames activate our deep beliefs, engaging us far more than facts, statistics or problem statements. They guide thinking, creating space for a different kind of conversation. They create shared grounds for action. They make issues collective and shared, helping people to see how they matter for all of us, not just “other people.” They establish a powerful unarguable truth. The right values frame, activated in the right way, is really hard to disagree with. So the right values frame is a powerful communications tool.

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But which values help us to frame homelessness? We answered this through our research by comparing the effects of a number of different possible values frames. I’m going to show you a snapshot of this part of the research.

Two possible motivating values on the issue of homelessness are:

Compassion. We believe in showing compassion and caring for other people. But right now many people in our country are are homeless. This values frame is used a lot in communications on homelessness currently.

We compared this with the effects of a moral human rights frame. All of us, as human beings, have a moral right to decent housing. But right now, many people in our country are homeless.

Both of these are true but which one had the most impact on people’s thinking?

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We used a survey to compare the effects of these frames. In this survey we are looking to see which of these values frames shifts people’s thinking around homelessness. We want people to believe that homelessness can and should be prevented. To see that homelessness requires robust policy change. It means we need a robust benefits system. And to feel moved to act personally.

These are not easy things to move people on. It takes a lot for people to see the need for a more robust benefits system, for instance. Let’s see how the two values frames performed. The compassion frame had minimal effects on people’s thinking. Statistically speaking, it was the same as saying nothing at all. The moral human rights frame shifted thinking in positive directions across the board. The conclusion, and the reason I’m sharing this geeky framing data? The moral human rights frame is an extremely powerful tool when communicating homelessness.

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And here’s a longer expression of this values frame. In our society, we believe in treating people with dignity and humanity, and upholding everyone’s basic human rights. All of us, as human beings, have a moral right to decent housing. Yet right now, many people in our country are homeless. Treating all people with dignity and humanity means making sure everyone can afford a safe and stable home.

Now it’s really important to say that you don’t have to use these exact words. It’s the idea that matters. And the key components of the idea are:

All people have a moral right to housing. It’s really important that this is a moral frame—not a legal argument.

At the moment we’re not treating everyone with dignity and humanity.

And we are all human beings.

This is a big part of why this frame is so powerful. It overcomes the tendency to see people who are homeless as different and other. And you can express this frame in lots of different ways.

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There is a lot of flex here. You can be more measured. Or you can sound more strident. Here are a few examples. You can say something like “Treating people with dignity and respect is simply the right thing to do.”

Or to be more strident: “We’re failing to live up to our core principles and basic human rights - the right to be treated with dignity and respect.” “This inhumanity is simply wrong. It goes against our fundamental human rights and shames us all.”

Or to be somewhere in the middle: “As a society we believe in dignity, respect and decency.” “We have a fundamental moral responsibility.”

Again, you don’t have to use these exact words, these are just ideas and yours will no doubt be far more creative and powerful. Crisis supporter, actor Gwilym Lee evoked this value when he shared a message on World Homelessness Day. Let’s see how he brought this idea to life.

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[Video plays - with subtitles]

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Now, let’s try a very brief exercise to explore how we could re-frame a headline to evoke this value.

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A BBC news headline from 2018 read “Reducing street homelessness ‘a matter of urgency.’” How would you change this headline to incorporate the moral human rights value? Pause the video and write your suggestion or suggestions on your worksheet.

In the example we prepared we changed only a few words to bring this value into effect: “Reducing street homelessness is ‘a matter of urgent human need.’” While this is a small tweak, we can be confident that the word ‘human’ is doing a lot of work. And in our research a second value proved extremely powerful in prompting collective thinking.

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This was the value of interdependence. In our society, what affects one of us affects all of us. When some people are struggling, it hurts everyone. Right now, many people in our country are homeless, and this affects us all. Making sure that everyone has safe, stable housing benefits us all by creating a stronger society.

Again, we can use this flexibly. But the key components are:

Reminding people that we are common members of an interconnected society—we depend on one another.

Showing how homelessness affects all of us.

And being clear that addressing homelessness strengthens our society as a whole.

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And to show you how this could look if we altered another headline. Instead of saying 'rising homelessness crisis will be felt for generations' which could prompt very fatalistic thinking. We could say 'rising homelessness crisis hurts us all.'

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We're now going to do a final exercise on values frames. And this is all about identifying how language can activate and evoke these values. I'm going to show you a piece of text and then ask you to pause the video to identify the particular words and phrases that activate a values frame. This is Crisis' response to figures showing the number of homeless people dying, so I must warn you that this is upsetting.

Crisis said: "It is heart-breaking that hundreds of people were forced to spend the last days of their lives without the dignity of a secure home.

"This is now the second year running where we have known the true scale of the human cost of homelessness, yet still the lessons from these tragic deaths go unlearned.

"Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us had talents and ambitions. They shouldn't be dying unnoticed and unaccounted for.

"It's crucial that Governments urgently expand the safeguarding system used to investigate the deaths of vulnerable adults to include everyone who has died while street homeless, so we can help prevent more people from dying needlessly.

"Because in this day and age there is no excuse for anyone dying without a safe place to call home."

Please pause your video and identify the words and phrases that will have activated the values frames we've been talking about: moral human rights or interdependence.

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There were a lot of strong language cues in this piece of text so you may have noted down quite a few. Here's what we thought was particularly important. Firstly, the combination of 'heart breaking' and lack of 'dignity' strongly evokes the idea of moral human rights. As does the repetition of the word 'human' - it's a powerful way to overcome the tendency to see homeless people as 'other.' 'Behind these statistics are human beings, who like all of us had talents and ambitions.' This is a potent reminder of our shared humanity. The word 'shouldn't' activates the simple but important idea that some things are just wrong and unacceptable. And then finishing with 'a safe place to call home' reminds us that this something all of us need and should have. We have a moral human right to this foundation.

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Thank you for exploring values frames with me today. As you begin to use and apply this approaches, I want you to remember three key things about values frames.

Values frames establish why an issue really matters. They drive shared action.

When using values frames, occupy the shared ground, not the high ground.

They are very flexible and you can bring them to life in all kinds of different ways.

So I urge you to be as creative as you can as use these insights.

If you've seen or thought of any good phrases - or spotted any good phrases - during this session, do write them down in your framing thesaurus at the back of your workbook.

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That's it from me today. Our next module is all about framing with metaphor.