

Framing Recommendations for Substance Use Disorder

1. Begin communications with values¹

We know that Americans often default to Individual Responsibility frames when considering social issues. Addiction, as we discussed, is often seen ONLY as an individual issue. Research suggests² the effectiveness of two particular values to reorient audiences toward the collective stake in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and addiction – Ingenuity and Interdependence.

Here are examples of how one might implement these values in practice:

Ingenuity

We need to rely on what we know are effective solutions to address substance use issues. Innovative [*programs/cities/counties*] have been able to design highly effective solutions to address all kinds of substance use disorders. For example, [**therapies that have a strong focus on changing people's patterns of thinking and that last for a longer period of time than is typical of current addiction interventions.*] These kinds of innovations have solved problems in how we provide care for people with substance use disorder and have led to significant improvements in their lives.

**This is just an example; please replace this boilerplate language in the brackets with examples of local or model programs you wish to build support for.*

Interdependence

Mainers know that we are all better off when all members of our community have equal opportunity for health and well-being. That is why we need to support programs that have been shown to solve our health and social problems like substance use disorders, as well as programs that prevent the factors that put people at risk for addiction. Mainers/We have a long history of working together to use our resources to deal with problems. When we share responsibility for the health of our communities, this bonds our communities together and allows us to deal effectively with problems.

Both of these values are effective because they:

- Reinforce that solutions are known and they need to be implemented
- Appeal to people's sense of community/working together to solve problems
- AVOID direct reference to specific substances
- AVOID mentioning the role of the individual person in defining efficacy of solutions

¹ Adapted from Davey, L. (2011) *Talking about Addiction*. Frameworks Institute: Washington , DC. Available at: <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/system/files/report-files/Interim%20Msg.pdf>

² *ibid*

2. Consider whether the Frameworks Institute’s recommended metaphor of “Reward Dial” could help your communications:

Each of us has a reward dial in our brains that gets “turned up” to provide us with a feeling of reward in response to pleasurable experiences. It’s a bit like the volume dial on a stereo — some experiences turn the reward volume up in our brains.

Normally, that dial helps keeps us healthy and functional, keeping us going back for experiences that are positive and rewarding. But in an addicted brain, where the dial is continually cranked up too high, the brain reacts by recalibrating the dial to a lower setting.

People often think that addiction comes from a person’s desire to keep turning up the reward volume more and more. But research tells us a different story. Once the addicted brain sets the baseline volume lower than it should be, people seek experiences that turn the dial higher and higher in an effort just to hear any reward volume at all. Helping people get their reward dials recalibrated back to healthy levels is hard, but with time and the right technicians and supports, it can be done.

You don’t have to use this entire lengthy description; the idea is to use the concept of a reward dial to help explain the causes and solutions.

You can find more information about the testing of this metaphor, here:

<http://frameworksinstitute.org/pubs/testingusability/page13.html>

- 3. A final recommendation is to watch this addiction comedy series (yes, you read that right!), called “Life Coach.”** It does a great job of explaining the issue. Also, peruse the related website as it has some great, succinct descriptions and visualizations: <http://www.addictionbrainstory.org>

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