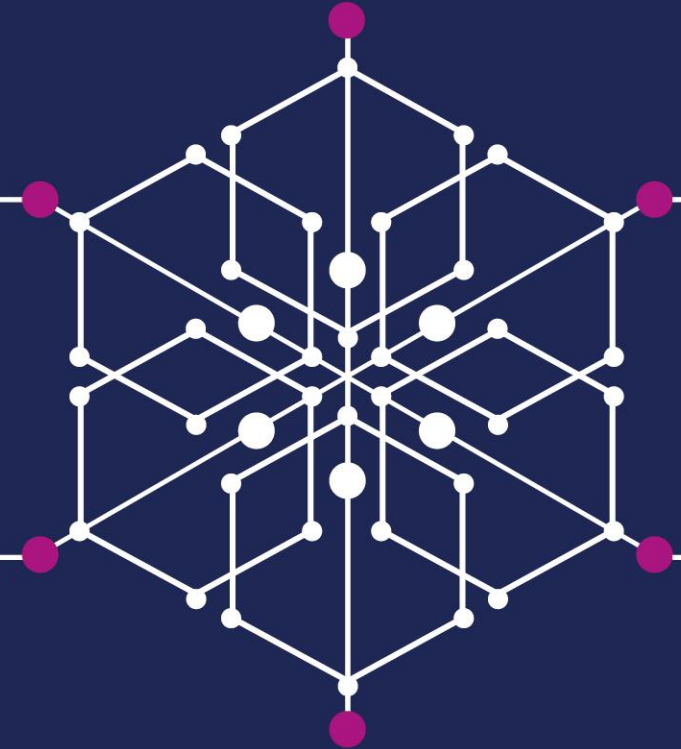
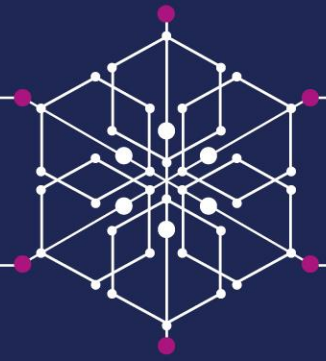


The 4 RCCE Core Capacities and the Emergency Lifecycle **Step 7:** **Creating and testing key messages**



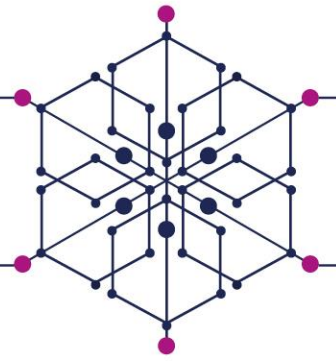
Risk perception



- What drives people's behaviours?
- What do they perceive as threatening or concerning?



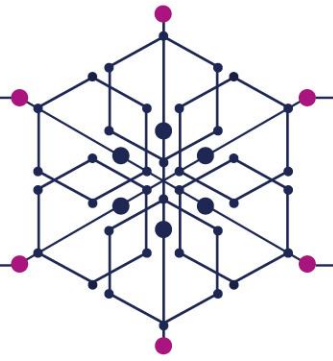
Risk perception



- **Perception = reality**
- Sandman's organizing principles:
 - The size of the hazard
 - The level of outrage or anxiety produced by the risk.
- Factors in perception:
- Is the hazard voluntary or involuntary?
Familiar or unfamiliar? Seen as fair or unfair?



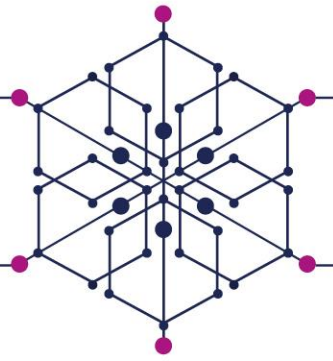
Risk perception – Hurricane Ian



“I didn’t leave after the evacuation order. Why would I? I grew up hearing my grandmother tell stories about our house flooding during a hurricane. It’s no big deal. We’ll be fine.”



Risk perception – Hurricane Ian

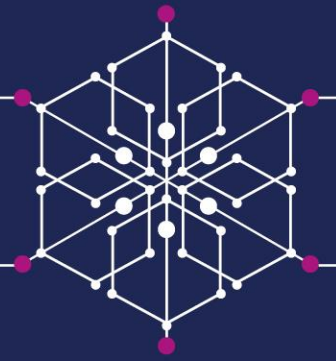


SOCO: People will leave the area impacted by the hurricane.

What key messages would help these Florida residents make informed decisions to protect themselves and their families?



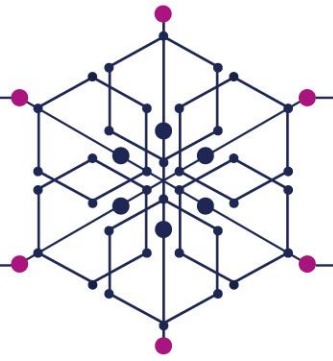
Framing a message



- Framing a message influences how people hear us, what they understand and how they act.
- ‘What’s the benefit?’ vs. ‘What’s the downside?’



'Gain' frame vs. 'Loss' frame



Gain frame: Engaging the behavior

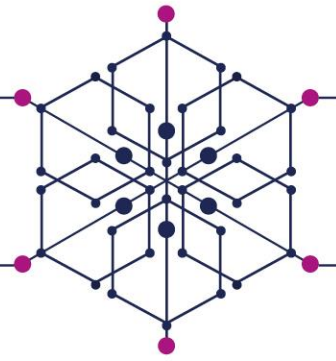
“Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 reduces the likelihood of severe illness and death.”

Loss frame: The cost of failing to engage the behavior.

“People who are unvaccinated face a much greater risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19.”



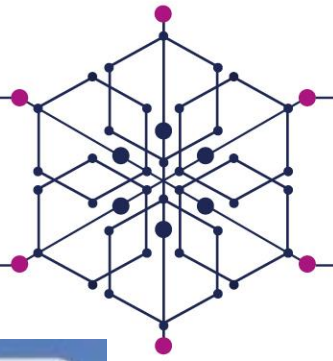
Mental noise theory



- People who are upset have difficulty processing information, including hearing, understanding and remembering the message.
- Mental noise can reduce our ability to process communication up to 80%
- Nonverbal communication overrides verbal when concern is high
- People under stress usually focus more on negative information than they do on positive information.



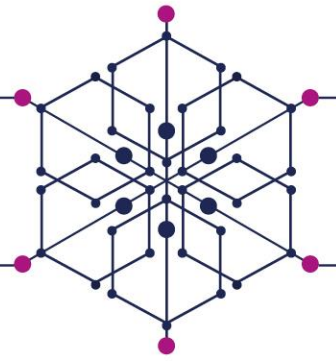
Communicating through mental noise



- Limit the number of key messages:
 - Three key messages
 - Three supporting facts for each message
- Keep messages short and to the point:
 - 27 words – print media
 - 9 seconds – broadcast soundbite
 - 3 messages – average number of messages reported in media coverage on your topic
- Put your most important message first.
- Put your most important message last.



Overcoming barriers



Promote the adoption of positive behaviors

- What benefits are there for me?

Use formative communications research in design and planning

- What do I know about my audiences? Who are they? What motivates them?

Focus on homogenous population groups

- Target and segment your audiences

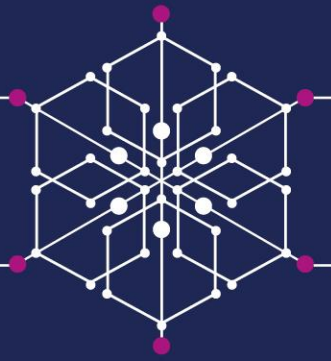
Have multiple executions of messages

- Three times – Curiosity, recognition, decision

Snyder, L. B. (2007). Health communication campaigns and their impact on behavior. J Nutr Educ Behav, 39(2 Suppl), S32-40. doi:10.1016/j.jneb.2006.09.004



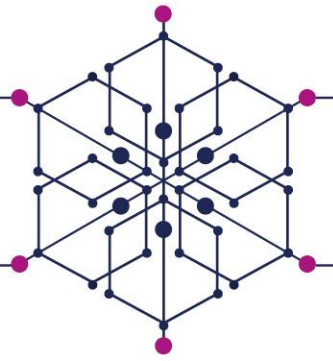
Key messages



- Key messages are the main points of information you want your audience to hear, understand, and remember.
- They are bite-sized pieces of information or guidance.
- Good key messages bring focus to the story YOU want to tell.



Characteristics of good key messages



Complete and specific

- *Gives the audience what they need to know to make an **informed** decision*

Relevant

- *Appropriate to the situation; timely*

Concise

- *Short and to the point*

Understandable

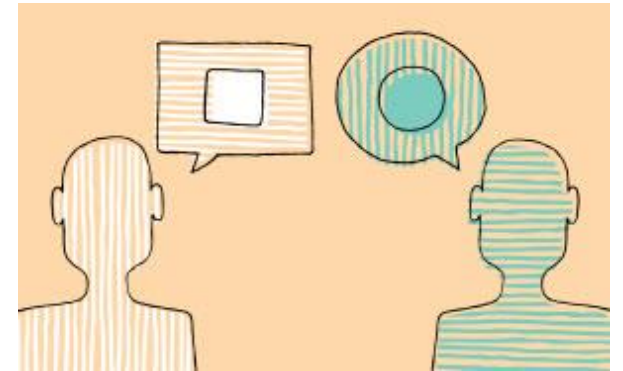
- *Encoded (adapted) in such a way that your audience understands it*

Memorable

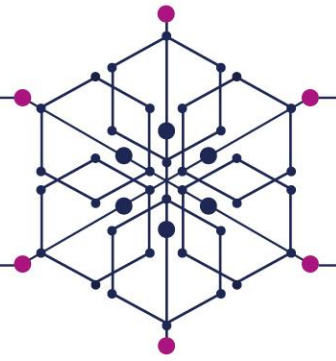
- *Encoded (adapted) in such a way that your audience remembers it*

Positive

- *Empathetic and encouraging*
- *Courteous and respectful of your audience's culture, values, and beliefs*



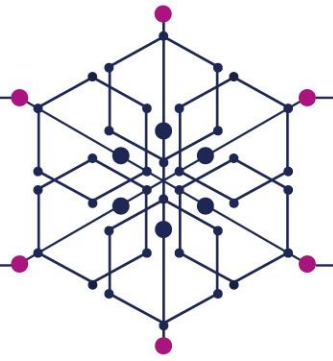
SUCCES in key messages



- **Simple:** They contain a single message or action.
- **Unexpected:** They around surprise, interest, shock, revelation or curiosity.
- **Concrete:** They are specific.
- **Credible:** They are based on evidence, delivered by credible spokespersons or influencers.
- **Emotional:** They have an emotional impact.
- **Stories:** They tell stories – painting a visual image that gives people something to connect the messages to.



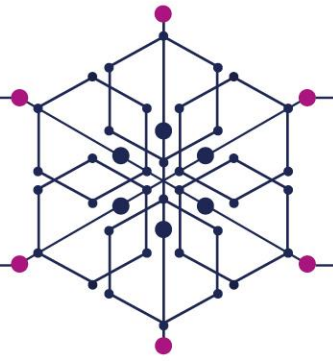
Smokey Bear and key messages



- Key message: “Only you can prevent forest fires.”
- Ad campaign started by the US Forest Service in 1947.
- More than 96% of adult Americans recognize Smokey Bear and the key message he conveys
- Message and campaign: Simple, unexpected, concrete, emotional, tells a story.



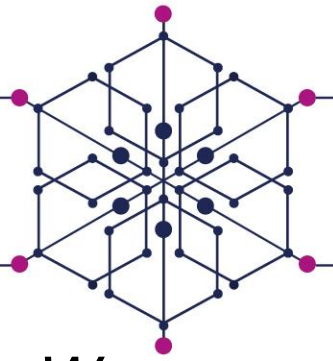
Follow the 7 C's



- Command attention
- Cater to the head, heart and hands.
- Clarify the message.
- Communicate a benefit.
- Create trust.
- Convey a consistent message.
- Call for action.



Building trust



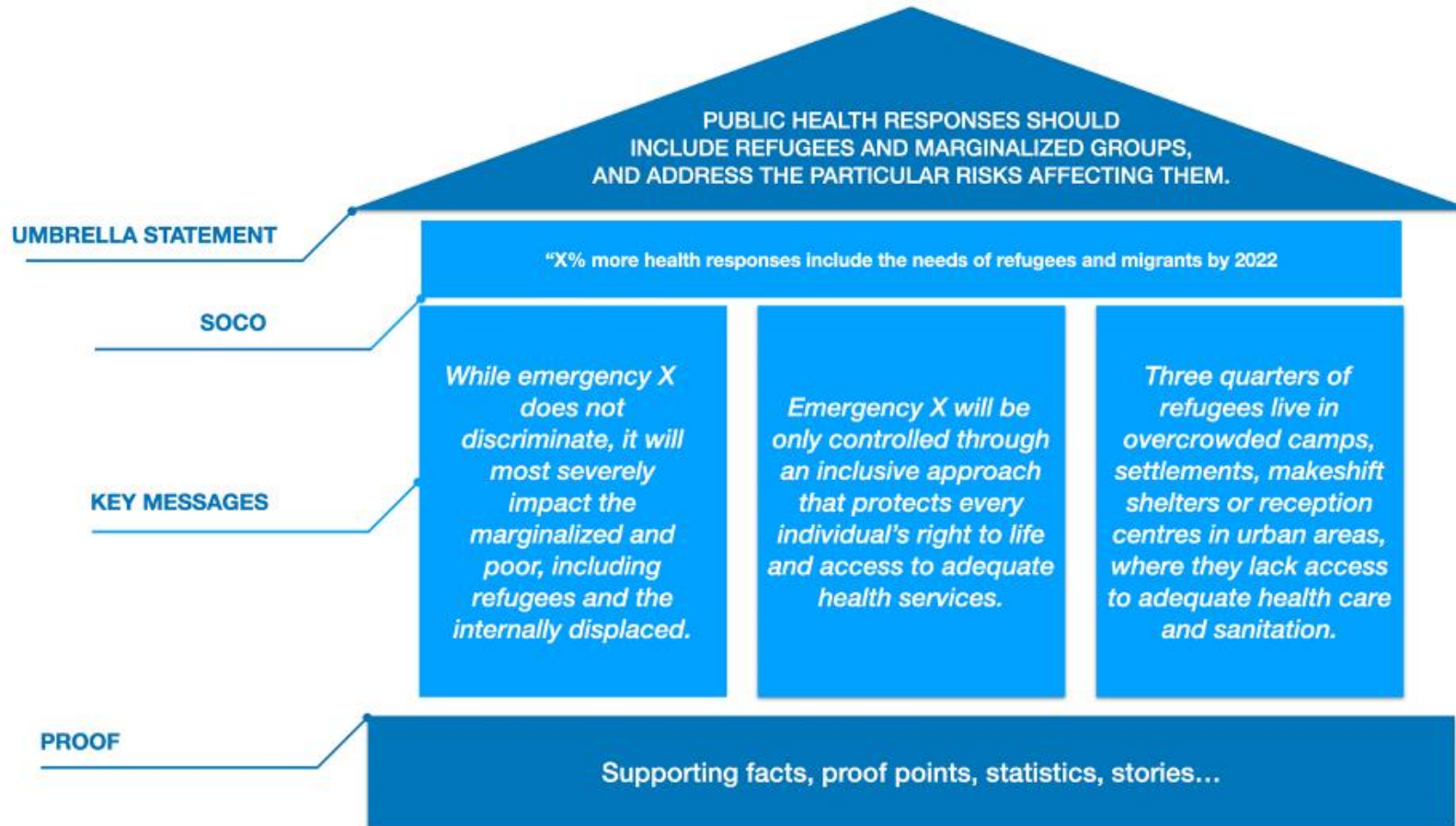
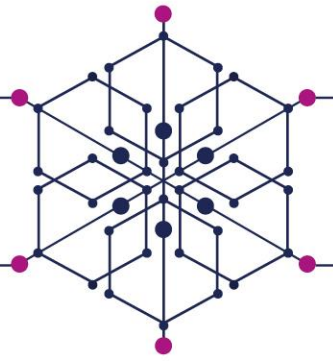
“First, I want to recognize that people are concerned about this situation. We hear from the public and from others about their concern, and we are worried, as well. Our concern has grown since yesterday in light of what we’ve learned since then.

I want to acknowledge the importance of uncertainty. At the early stages of an outbreak, there’s much uncertainty, and probably more than everyone would like. Our guidelines and advice are likely to be interim and fluid, subject to change as we learn more.”

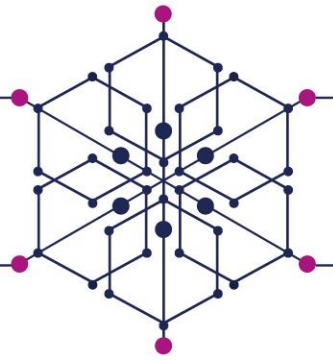
Dr. Rich Besser; April 24, 2009; 2009 H1N1 flu



The Message House Framework



Why invest time in message development?

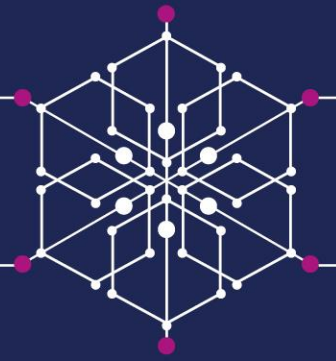


- To ensure accuracy and consistency
- To increase your confidence/comfort level
- To increase your chances that the message you want to communicate is what gets heard or seen

The message development process can shed light on where there is disagreement about what we should say or a lack of data to support what we want to say.



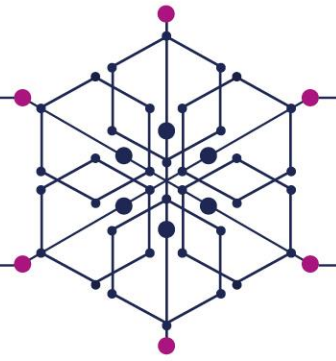
Message testing



- Are your messages working?
- How can we increase their effectiveness?



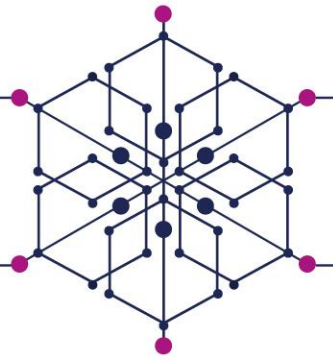
Considerations for message testing



- Is the information accurate?
- Does the tone, voice and style match your audience?
- Will the message resonate with your audience?
- Are images and language appropriate for your audience?
- Is there anything in your materials that might be considered offensive to your audience?



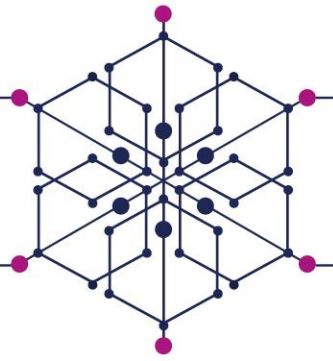
What are you testing?



- **Comprehension:** Does your audience understand the message?
- **Strong and weak points:** Which parts of the message are effective? The language? The graphics? The delivery channel?
- **Personal relevance:** Does your audience identify with the messages and materials?
- **Sensitive elements:** Does anything in the materials make your audience uncomfortable?



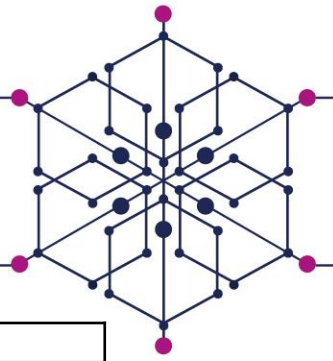
Does the message...?



- Encourage action?
- Build trust in the response?
- Demonstrate empathy and compassion?
- Make people feel safer?
- Reduce people's intent to take risks?
- Give people a greater sense of control over the risks they face?
- Make people feel empowered to communicate or advocate for prevention measures?



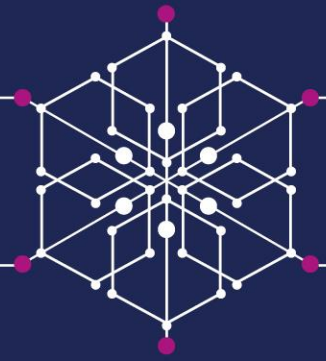
Overview of testing techniques



What is it?	Good because ...	Less good because ...	How to do it on a budget
FOCUS GROUPS Small groups of people (usually 6–8) who are brought together for an hour or so to have a discussion about a topic or product.	They give rich data on how people think about a topic, offer multiple perspectives, and give us a sense of social desirability (what is judged to be OK to think and say in society).	The conversation can be strongly affected by the dynamic of the group (e.g. when some people dominate the conversation); they take a lot of time; and you do not get the input of a large number of people.	Use a snowball sample, ^b free venues, or ask a contact in a university if students would be interested. Discussions can be analysed straight from audio or video recordings. Seek advice from trained moderators.
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS One-on-one conversations that follow a script loosely, with flexibility to follow the thoughts and interests of the participants.	They can give you detailed insight into an individual's attitudes and reactions and encourage people to share things they might not be confident or comfortable enough to share in a group setting.	They can be time-intensive, so you cannot test many people. They also depend on the participants feeling comfortable to speak freely.	Do them in public spaces, stopping random members of the public to have a conversation about the messages.
ONLINE SURVEYS Surveys to test messages will usually involve asking people to read a message and then answer some questions. The results will tend to be analysed with statistics.	They allow you to collect bigger samples of people that are more representative. Because they yield numerical data, the data are presented as objective and factual, which can be persuasive.	They do not get the detail you get when talking to people.	Use a free platform, such as SurveyMonkey or Google Forms. You can find participants with the help of your networks. This won't be very reliable, but it will give you some data.
THE ASK-A-FRIEND TEST Asking someone to give you a quick response to the message.	Even a short conversation can help to check whether your intended meaning is coming through.	Your friend probably isn't your main audience, so beware of drawing strong conclusions!	Talk to someone who is unfamiliar with the campaign. Ask them how it makes them feel.
THE TELEPHONE GAME Testing if your message is memorable.	A fun and easy way to test whether your message is memorable or sticky. Get a sense of what is strong, weak or confusing in your message and adapt it.	It won't give you any insight into whether it has shifted anyone's thinking.	Like the game, you pass a message from person to person and see how it comes out at the end. See what's forgotten and what gets transformed or twisted.



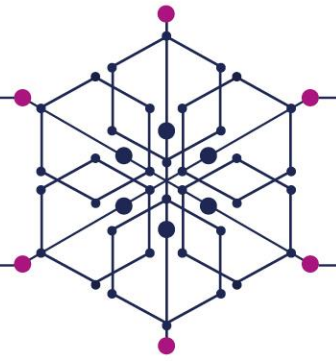
Message testing exercise



- Scenario:
- It's October 2022. COVID-19 continues to circulate, and flu season is upon us.
- People are tired of COVID-19 prevention messages and measures.
- You have just received an email telling you that WHO will be “releasing revised COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness estimates.”
- No other data is provided to you in the email.



Message activity



- List 3-5 questions you think you would/should ask the subject matter expert about the data and its planned release?
- Identify a SOCO
- Create three overarching key messages and supporting points to rely upon when communicating about the data.
- Identify 3-5 questions that your agency should be prepared to answer from media and the public.



Thank you!

