Narratives for Health
change what's possible



Narratives for Health Guide

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Project Overview

Vision

We can collectively imagine and build transformative narratives to accelerate health equity and racial justice.

By shifting dominant narratives that support the status quo and creating and promoting transformative narratives, we can nurture a set of values rooted in equity, justice, care, and sustainability, and open up more possibilities for structural changes that will lead to a world where everyone can thrive.

Goals

Long Term: Our goal is to change the conditions and structures that impact health by building power that shifts worldviews in the Public Health ecosystem. We do this by building a broad infrastructure for health equity advocates who have been politicized (meaning that people's consciousness has been raised about societal problems and shared grievances, who is responsible for them, and who has the power to confront them), share an analysis of the root causes of inequity, are aligned around a set of values and beliefs, are prepared to advance a collective vision of the world we want, and are actively doing so. These advocates share an understanding of narrative as a form of power, the dominant narratives we're up against, the role narrative plays in advancing structural change and equity, and their institution's role in narrative change.

Short Term: We bring additional partners into the project by having them go through structured narrative conversations and trainings, training them to facilitate these conversations with their allies (staff, members, boards, partners, etc.), and supporting them as they 1) lead those conversations, 2) embed transformative narratives in their work and organizations, and 3) disseminate and deploy transformative narratives in their communities.

Project Overview

Project Outputs

Infrastructure for core partner organizations and their narrative cohorts who have built and are exercising their narrative capacity; they understand the importance of narrative power, are politicized, and apply, adapt, and disseminate the joint transformative narrative in their work.

A community of partners who support one another in this work, have space together to discuss narrative work, and are connected to experts in narrative strategy.

A set of tools partners can use, including:

- A jointly developed transformative health equity narrative
- Training materials and conversation guides
- Case examples of applications of the narrative
- Narrative power explainers

Benefits to Partners

Participation in Narratives for Health has several key benefits that will vary from individual to individual and institution to institution. These include:

- Gaining a **deeper understanding** of narrative power and how narratives influence the ability to achieve health equity goals
- **Co-creating a transformative narrative** framework to guide health equity work, including communications, campaigns, programs, and strategy
- **Raising consciousness** among staff, members, and/or allies about inequities and shared grievances, who is responsible for them, and who has the power to confront them
- **Developing and articulating a shared narrative** analysis alongside fellow staff, members, and allies to support identifying strategic actions to advance health equity
- **Building relationships**, connecting folks involved in social movements for equity, and contributing to the broader infrastructure necessary to shift narratives, changing what is considered achievable for health equity
- **Support** in embedding and deploying narratives to accelerate health equity and racial justice

Project Overview

Partners

We appreciate the generosity and partnership of the following organizations in making the development of this resource possible.

American Medical Association

Berkeley Media Studies Group

Community Partnerships for Health Equity

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Dave Mann (Grassroots Power Project)

FrameWorks

Healthy Democracy, Healthy People

Healthy Places by Design

Human Impact Partners

Minnesota Department of Health

Narrative Initiative

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

NeighborWorks

Othering & Belonging Institute

Population Health Improvement Partners

Public Health Awakened

Praxis Project

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Contact

You can learn more about Narratives for Health by visiting our webpage or emailing the co-leads of the project.

Webpage: http://narrativesforhealth.org

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps: narrativesforhealth@chrr.wisc.edu

Human Impact Partners: info@humanimpact.org

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Narrative Concepts + Definitions

Narrative

Narratives are the values-based themes of stories that we use to understand our world. A narrative communicates and reinforces a worldview and engages people in considering their own understanding of the world around them.

Public health's ability to advance health equity is greatly limited by current **dominant narratives**. Over the last fifty years, people interested in limiting the role of government and limiting oversight of corporations have advanced a set of narratives that keep equitable policy changes far outside mainstream debates.

New, **transformative narratives** can shift public consciousness, which changes how we think the world operates and what we view as the problem and its solutions.

Narratives change what is possible to achieve for health equity.

Among other things, **narratives**:

- Provide an understanding or interpretation of people and situations
- Are grounded in, and reflective of, a larger set of values and beliefs, or worldview
- Serve a purpose – they are designed to shape possibilities and outcomes
- Are most powerful when they draw on the values and beliefs that people already hold

Narrative Concepts + Definitions

Dominant Narrative

Dominant narratives are:

- Narratives held by many people at this moment in time
- In our heads and actions without us being aware of them
- Embedded in our institutions, structures, and norms
- Not naturally occurring - they are created, advanced, and maintained by people to intentionally shape possibilities and outcomes
- Drawn from a subset of the values and beliefs held by those in power
- More powerful than facts

Shifting dominant narratives requires:

- Exposing the dominant narratives
- Uncovering and elevating new narratives
- Contrasting the narratives and offering a choice

Shifting narratives is not about winning an argument. It is about engaging people to explore values, beliefs, and assumptions that they already hold.

Adapted from Grassroots Power Project

Narrative Concepts + Definitions

The Relationship Between Narratives and Messaging



Messages

How we communicate the story we want specific audiences to hear. We use verbal and non-verbal messages to communicate frames, narrative, and worldview. Messages may vary with audiences and situations, but they should be consistent.

Frames

Lenses that bring some aspects of a picture, or situation, into focus while distorting others. Part of the power of a frame is that it points the audience toward particular solutions that are grounded in a particular narrative and worldview.

Narratives

A way of communicating and reinforcing a worldview and engaging people in considering their own understanding of the world around them.

Worldview

The rich variety of values, beliefs, and assumptions, both formal and informal, that we draw upon and inherit from the larger social world in which we live.

Imagery adapted from Narrative Initiative, "Waves: A model for deep narrative change"

Three Faces of Power

A framework for thinking about building power for health equity

1 Organizing people and resources to influence decisions

Short Term Focus
Visible Power



Influence:

- Policies, laws, rulings, regulations made by public officials, administrators, etc.
- Elections

Actions:

- Educate (e.g., research reports)
- Advocate and lobby
- Support issue-focused organizing campaigns
- Register voters

2 Building infrastructure to influence what's on the agenda

Short + Long Term
Hidden Power



Influence:

- Which issues are being addressed
- Who is at the decision making table

Actions:

- Build collective capacity (e.g., developing leaders and skills)
- Build infrastructure (e.g., establishing grassroots orgs and coordinated alliances and networks)
- Shift or expand the political agenda

3 Changing narratives + worldviews to shape what is possible

Long Term Focus
Invisible Power



Influence:

- How people consciously and unconsciously think about and interpret the world around them and what they see as possible

Actions:

- Define and reinforce key themes that bridge the issues on our agenda
- Activate key values and beliefs to shape public debate
- Challenge current dominant narratives

Adapted from Grassroots Power Project

Data, Evaluation, + Research

Comms

Policy Advocacy

Relationship + Container Building

Strategic + Program Planning

Applying Narrative

There are many ways to apply a transformative narrative to your work. What follows are just a few areas for implementations, along with some real world examples from health equity narrative projects in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Data, Evaluation, + Research

- Refer to the narrative to help inform which data and measures you choose and how you talk about them.
- When data reflects a dominant narrative, what added community and historical context could deepen your audience's understanding? Challenge the dominant narrative with a transformative narrative.
- What new research or evaluation would help advance the transformative narrative?
- How might you conduct research and evaluation differently using the transformative narrative? How would your collaborations change?

Communications



- **Draw from the transformative narrative to create talking points** for a campaign, a speaking engagement, or for responding to the press/media.
- **Integrate elements of the narrative into your written communications** (newsletters, social media, website content, reports, and publications). Pull specific concepts from the narrative to ground your messaging in your transformative vision.
- **Check your communication frames against the transformative narrative.** When creating or reviewing materials, ask yourself: Does this piece reflect the values embodied in the transformative narrative? Does it unintentionally repeat or strengthen dominant narratives?

Policy Advocacy



Use the transformative narrative as a tool to evaluate and deepen your policy and advocacy work:

- Are there policies you could propose that advance the transformative narrative, even as "messaging bills"?
- Do the policies you're already advocating for advance the transformative narrative or the dominant narrative?
- Are the communications in your advocacy advancing the transformative narrative?
- What activities could you integrate into your advocacy campaign that demonstrate and embody the transformative narrative?

Strategic + Program Planning



Consider the narrative changes you'd like to see as you engage in strategic planning and program planning:

- Are there new programs or activities you'd like to start that would advance the transformative narrative?
- Are there programs or activities that you're currently doing that unintentionally support dominant narratives?
- What might you do differently?

Relationship + Container Building



- **Share the transformative narrative** with your colleagues, coworkers, and movement community.
- **Use it as a discussion tool** to help define shared values and to talk about the dominant narratives we are up against.
- **Use the transformative narrative to co-create group agreements** and set a container that grounds your relationships and work together.

Case Examples

Healthiest State Initiative

University of Wisconsin - Madison Population Health Institute

Healthy Minnesota Partnership

Minnesota Department of Health

The story: Healthiest State Initiative

Members from the Healthiest State Initiative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute worked to identify dominant themes in the public health narrative in Wisconsin, and the resulting messages, policies, and practices that hindered health equity efforts. The group developed a transformative narrative, which was quickly deployed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Elements of the narrative were then observed in the Governor's remarks and local health department messaging.

The story: Healthy Minnesota Partnership

The Healthy Minnesota Partnership brought together community partners and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to reveal dominant narratives about what creates health. They then engaged in conversations with a wide range of people to identify and promote new narratives. These were deployed to support specific issue areas, including a report on the connection between income and health. This report ultimately influenced the debate on an increased to the minimum wage in Minnesota.

Additional Resources for Applying Narrative

Redefining Who Belongs: Narrative Strategy for Belonging - Report from the Othering & Belonging Institute offering key learnings and case studies of how different groups have put narrative into action.

Race Class Narrative Resources - Materials from We Make the Future's Race Class Narrative with examples and frameworks for translating a narrative into messaging and communications.

Guidelines for Shifting Narratives

DO

- Expose – Name the dominant narrative when you see it at work. Point out that what you just saw on the news or heard from a friend, or the law that was just passed, was based on particular values and beliefs. “The way you are talking about public health makes it sound like it is solely about access to health care.”

- Elevate – Name the values and beliefs that you want to see lived out in the world. Connect it to places where your audience may see that happening already. “I believe that public health is about …”

- Contrast – Lay out what might be different if your values or convictions were the ones shaping what happens in the world. Be specific about how we have the choice to approach situations through a different belief system. Invite a rethinking of the situation. “I guess we have to decide if land is simply a commodity or if it has more value to our community and we should be treating it and those who live on it differently.”

- Draw on your own journey - While it’s important to personalize this, it’s also important to do it in a way that anyone can see themselves in it. Describing your own realizations and shifts will help others find their own way in the conversation. “I can understand your reaction, there certainly is a lot of pressure to quantify the value of land – we get lots of messages that reinforce that idea. It’s taken me a while to really understand the importance of land in my life and to our community."

- Sustain your efforts and connect with others – Shifting narrative does not happen quickly. It takes sustained effort, over time, with many people working at it.

- Demonstrate narrative - Don’t just write or talk about it. Our actions say as much or more about our values and beliefs as our words.

Guidelines for Shifting Narratives

DON'T

- Focus on challenging facts or interpretations of information – This will not challenge narrative thinking. Your arguments, as convincing as they may be, will ultimately lose out to the dominant narrative.

- Attack people for their narrative – Many people operate out of the dominant narrative, even if unconsciously. Shifting public narratives will take personal conversations and transformation. You cannot move people if you attack them.

- Name the dominant narrative as "wrong" - Our assumption is that competing values & beliefs live within people. We want to provide people a chance to choose the ones they want to live out and/or balance competing narratives (e.g. the desire to have personal f inancial security with the desire to see new farmers on the land).

- Try to convert or convince people – We are trying to bring out the best of what is already in people, help them find the resonance for themselves. This is, in part, an emotional journey and our usual approaches to argument and logic don't work so well in this arena.

Developing Issue-Specific Transformative Narratives

1. Identify a key issue to be addressed

- Examine available objective and subjective data. *What are the causes of persistent health inequities in the community?*
- Obtain new data to help you clarify and define the issue you want to address with a transformative narrative. *What do community members say they care about?*
- Consider existing decisions and policies that need to be changed to achieve better health equity. *What policies are creating systemic harm?*

2. Build relationships with narrative partners

- Form allyships with people and groups who care about the issue. *Who has expertise and experience addressing the issue? Who has direct lived experience with the issue?*
- Build and maintain trust and meaningful relationships with narrative building partners. *What are your partners' experiences, values and beliefs?*

3. Co-develop a shared understanding of narratives

- Ensure partners are operating from a common definition of "narratives." *Are all partners clear that narratives are grounding values and beliefs?*
- Expose current dominant narratives that are getting in the way of health equity. *What harmful messages do you hear from powerful decisionmakers and in the media?*
- Understand the power of narratives. *What are the values underlying current harmful policies and practices?*

4. Co-create transformative narratives

- Engage in open and iterative conversations about shared values and beliefs that influence your partners' commitment to health equity. What are your partners' health equity experiences and stories?
- Document key values and beliefs that will shape a transformative narrative. What are the core set of values that need to be expressed to offer an alternative view?
- Enlist writing partners who can draft main text and subtext for the transformative narratives. How can main narrative statements be written in bold and compelling ways?

5. Apply and disseminate transformative narratives

- Identify how each partner can apply the transformative narratives within their professional and personal efforts. *How can each partner meaningfully use the transformative narratives?*
- Agree upon collective actions that the group can take that will result in complementary and integrated impact. *What unique assets can each partner leverage for collective impact?*
- Enlist support to build ongoing narrative capacity. *What training does your partnership need?*

6. Engage in ongoing development of narratives

- Stay aware of the dominant narratives that are operating at a given time. *Have new dominant narratives appeared that are challenging health equity?*
- Regularly and intentionally review the transformative narratives and make necessary updates. *Are there any values and beliefs that need to be more strongly conveyed to achieve your vision?*

Transformative Narratives
for Health Equity

The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way a person looks at reality, then you can change it.

James Baldwin

In dreams lie power. As we work together to build a world where everyone has what they need to thrive—food, health, a safe place to call home, as well as stability, dignity, love, and belonging—we must also take time to pause, reflect, and dream. If we want to build a just world, we need to imagine one first.

Hope is an act of resistance. When those in power limit our imagination, our dreams can open new possibilities. In the face of violence, inequality, and a long legacy of structural oppression, a vivid imagination can fuel our fight.

We reject narratives of individualism, competition, scarcity, and fear. These dominant narratives concentrate power in the hands of the few while sapping the strength of our communities. They block paths to change. They obscure the fundamental truth that my wellbeing is bound up in your wellbeing. In the words of the great civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer, no one is free until everybody's free.

Through organized collective action, we can make possible what some may deem impossible.

So in the spring of 2022, people from all across the country–urban and rural, young and old, impacted community members, doctors, public health workers, and visionary organizers—reached across the Zoom void to imagine a future we can believe in. To inspire collective action, we undertook collective imagination.

This is what we saw.

Let this vision guide you as we walk together. Let it carry you when you need it.

Transformative Narrative
for Health Equity

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Make sure to keep to the shared values and beliefs highlighted in this draft. It is a working document meant to support your own work to build collective action for health and equity.

Reach out with any feedback to narrativesforhealth@chrr.wisc.edu

Learn more about Narratives for Health at: http://narrativesforhealth.org

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Transformative Narratives
for Health Equity



All people are worthy of dignity, love, and respect.

The bedrock of social justice is the dignity of every individual. We honor the fundamental value of every person, wherever they live, whatever they look like, whomever they love or worship. We work together to restore our sense of self-worth when it has been damaged and help everyone see their inner light.



Healing is interconnected.

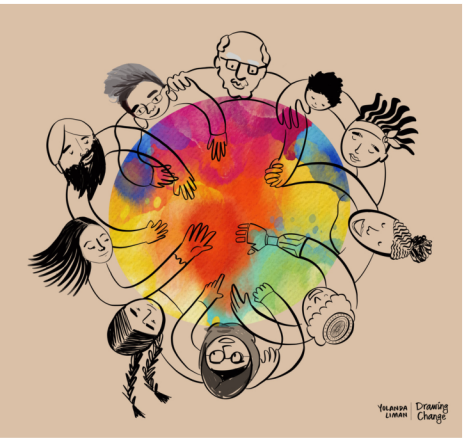
We take care of each other, because we all do better when we all do better. We make sure everyone has what they need to be at ease, not just physically but also mentally and spiritually — because love, joy, belonging, and creativity are basic needs. Our wellbeing is also connected to the health of the planet and the other living beings who share it with us.



We can organize a world where everyone thrives.

We subscribe to a radical belief: it is possible for all of us to have what we need, not merely to survive, but also to thrive. By practicing sustainability, we avoid excess, waste, hoarding, and the misuse of resources. Together, we shift resources to people and communities who need them most. We use our collective people-power to remedy the scarcity caused by capitalism, reimagine how to produce and distribute resources, and share the abundance of this earth.

Transformative Narratives
for Health Equity



Diversity is our greatest strength.

Our differences make us powerful. Ancestral knowledge, family stories, oral histories, queer histories, and other truths that are missing from history books can help us solve the big problems we face. We center the lived experience and wisdom of communities who have resisted the status quo and embodied alternative ways of being over generations. We practice empathy amidst difference. In the words of Maya Angelou, "in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."



We can dismantle systems of oppression and heal our wounds.

Creating a just future begins with understanding how our world has been constructed by powerful elites at the expense of the rest of us. We are all impacted by systems of violence and oppression.* Moving forward requires a long-term process of liberation: dismantling systems of oppression, repairing wrongs, and healing from trauma. We continually learn from our history even as we write a new story, this one grounded in racial justice.



We are guided by people most harmed by oppression.

People who are most impacted by oppression have the wisdom, knowledge, and experience to chart the path to liberation. We celebrate the leadership of Black and Indigenous people in particular, as well as immigrants and refugees, people of color, people with disabilities, queer people, and all those who have long been working to build a transformed future.

*Including racism, anti-Blackness, xenophobia, white supremacy, capitalism, slavery, genocide, war, imperialism, colonialism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, patriarchy, and classism.

Transformative Narratives
for Health Equity



Participatory democracy is essential to create a shared future.

In a democracy, everyone has a voice in deciding how our society is structured. An inclusive democracy creates opportunities for every person to participate actively in shaping the conditions that affect our lives. As we build a world where everyone belongs, we ensure everyone has an equal voice in deciding how systems and institutions function.



Our public sphere prioritizes collective wellbeing.

Government is the terrain that institutionalizes our collective power. We call for a government serving the common good and an economy promoting the regeneration of people and the Earth. We imagine a public health system that advances the social determinants of health and prioritizes community wellness, healing, and mutual accountability. We value life over corporate profit and the wellbeing of the many over the gains of the few. Our systems cultivate space and time for creativity, innovation, and joy.



We have the power to transform the future.

Change is natural and necessary. Through organized collective action, acting out of love not fear, we have the power to build a transformed future in which everyone can thrive.

Transformative Narratives
for Civic Health

Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The starting point for this document was a transformative narrative about voting and health developed with the Healthy Democracy, Healthy People project in 2020. The Narratives for Health Civic Health Action Group made up of partners from all across the country came together in a collaborative brainstorming and drafting process to modify it in 2024.

We need to take back our democracy, and changing these narratives is an important step in doing so.

We undertook this process to offer up a choice between dominant narratives around individualism, hopelessness, and skepticism and this document which lays out our own hopeful shared vision of a future that all of us can help shape through a democracy that works for everyone. Current dominant narratives about civic participation include the following: not everyone deserves to vote or to be part of our democracy; voting does not matter and does not create change; our government will never represent my views; our government and our democracy are corrupt and will never change; not voting is a form of resistance.

We hope these narrative statements can help guide your own work, shape a common vision with your partners, and make the connection between the health of our communities and the health of our democracy.

Transformative Narratives
for Civic Health

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Make sure to keep to the shared values and beliefs highlighted in this draft. It is a working document meant to support your own work to build collective action for civic health.

Reach out with any feedback to narrativesforhealth@chrr.wisc.edu

Learn more about Narratives for Health at: http://narrativesforhealth.org

Last updated 04/22/2025

Transformative Narrative
for Civic Health



By ensuring that everybody has access to voting and full civic participation, we affirm that all people are deserving of dignity, respect, and social inclusion.

In a thriving democracy, everyone's vote is equal and everyone has a say in how the community they live in is run. We must ensure everyone has what they need to vote by removing current barriers and opposing new barriers to voting, meeting people's basic needs, and providing accommodations and other help for those who need them to be able to engage in our democracy. We must learn from our history of disenfranchisement, repair our mistakes, and build uncompromisingly inclusive systems.



We advance civic health when we increase the opportunities people have to participate in their communities.

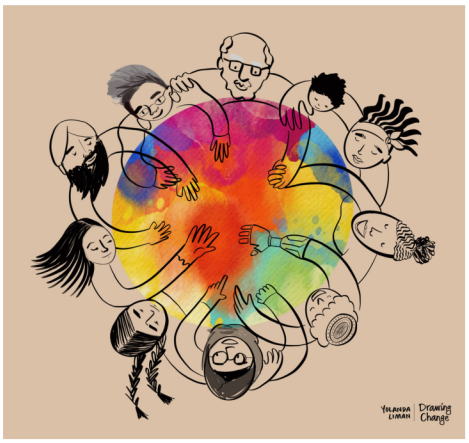
Civic health means that everyone has a voice to set priorities, make decisions, and share resources. Civic health starts with our local communities and is the cornerstone of our democracy, representing promise, opportunity, belonging, and shared responsibility. Civic health includes both civic infrastructure — spaces to meet, make our voices heard, engage in cultural activities, assure belonging, and solve problems together — and civic participation — the ways people engage in community life to improve conditions, whether through voting, advocacy, community organizing and unionization, sharpening our political analysis, or volunteering.



Our government can only reflect who we are and what we want when we all vote and participate civically.

Elections are an opportunity to come together and say who we want to be as a community and as a country. When we vote, elections can reflect our values and beliefs, and the policy choices we prioritize. Through civic participation, we can influence who and what is on the ballot and engage in the political process to advance an equity and justice agenda. In doing so, we can claim and improve our democracy and our government for the common good. Voting and civic participation are important and should be easy and routine parts of everyone's lives.

Transformative Narrative
for Civic Health



Through civic participation and voting, we improve our individual and collective health.

All of the issues that we vote on - housing, education, climate, jobs, healthcare - have an impact on our physical and mental health and the well-being of our communities. Civic, political, and social involvement builds social cohesion which in turn improves our individual health. Voting and civic participation also ensure the health of our society and our democracy. Civic participation, therefore, is a means to realize our right to health.



Civic participation helps us care for our family, our community, and one another.

It is a form of radical openness: to others, to different opinions, to our future, and to hope. We can support one another to participate in civic activities like voting in local, state, and national elections, attending town meetings, volunteering for local projects, joining community groups, and/or speaking out on important issues.



Voting and civic participation leads to our collective liberation, creating a world in which everyone can thrive.

Voting and civic participation are ways to lift up our voices and build political solidarity and power across race, class, and other identities. Through our individual agency and collective power, we can solve problems and shape the conditions that affect the health and well-being of our families and communities. This helps to make the structural changes we need to end inequities, while also celebrating and valuing our differences.

By voting and participating civically, we shape our future together.

Transformative Narratives
for Socially Connected Communities

The area where we are the greatest is the area in which we inspire, encourage, and connect with another human being.

Maya Angelou

Through shared, visionary narratives and organized collective action, we can make possible what some may deem impossible.

In early 2024, people from across the country representing a range of experiences, expertise, identities, and intersectionalities embarked on a process to build new transformative narratives to inform and inspire action to create more equitable and socially connected communities. The first step toward building justice and equity is for us to create a vision for it that will inform our intentional and organized actions to reject narratives of individualism, competition, scarcity, and fear that cause harm in our communities.

These narrative statements and subtext are intended to be used by those who strive for a just and socially connected world to ground and guide individual and collective work and actions. They can serve as starting points to develop messages and talking points tailored to unique purposes, audiences and community contexts. These narratives are not necessarily intended to be used "as is", word-for-word.

Values and Beliefs to Create Socially Connected Communities

Inclusion ✳ Belonging ✳ Bridging ✳ Resilience ✳ Well-being
Unity ✳ Harmony ✳ Interdependence ✳ Interconnectedness ✳ Collective impact
Honoring differences ✳ Anti-othering ✳ Reducing stigma ✳ Loneliness is a human experience
Community-level solutions ✳ Sharing resources ✳ Valuing social capital ✳ Countering scarcity
Representation in leadership ✳ Accountability for power imbalances

Transformative Narratives
for Socially Connected Communities

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Last updated 04/22/2025





Transformative Narratives
for Socially connected Communities



We embrace the range and variations of feelings and experiences that make us whole and thriving beings.

Joy, sadness, hope, fear, connected, lonely – the spectrum of situations and feelings are part of the human experience in every stage of life. We reject labels that negatively stigmatize certain conditions and groups of people and conditions, and actively incorporate inclusive language and practices. The public and community organizations, and the people in communities build bridges of acceptance and work together to navigate challenges and celebrate successes, thereby building solidarity and resilience.



Diversity and belonging must co-exist for our communities to thrive.

We view differences in race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, physical and mental status, disability and ability, socio-economic status, political views, and their intersectionalities and intersecting identities as an asset that leads to better collective solutions and outcomes. We believe our unique identities can create bridges toward achieving a collective sense of belonging in our communities through respect and compassion. We actively seek to learn about and from our differences with a spirit of genuine curiosity and inclusion.



Shared responsibility and interconnectedness are required to achieve optimal health and well-being for each of us and all of us.

Optimal well-being encompasses social, physical and mental health, and other factors. Social connection and interconnectedness enable people to thrive. We rely on each other, and public and community organizations to ensure that people receive the care and supports they need for well-being. We advocate for policies and practices that create environments, conditions, and cultures of belonging and unity in our communities. We help one another, believing that everyone matters.

Transformative Narratives
for Socially Connected Communities



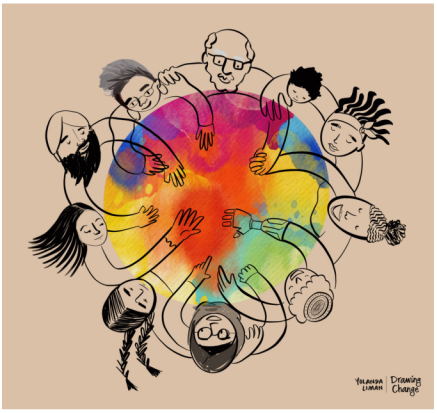
Social connectedness, loneliness and isolation must be addressed through community-level solutions.

Policies and systems in communities intentionally remove barriers and ensure that the environments are welcoming spaces where people can be themselves and experience belonging. Feelings of disconnectedness and marginalization are not an individual weakness. They are the outcomes of ingrained practices and environments that create barriers for social connections. Thriving, socially connected communities have places for people to interact in a variety of ways. Communities offer a range of supports for social connections that reflect the needs and interests of its people.



We advocate for public and community policies and practices that prioritize social connectedness and well-being for all.

We recognize the collective power in communities that reside in the people, government, and organizations. We call for public and community systems to prioritize the well-being of people over profit, and the collective good over the interests of a select few. We strive toward systems that cultivate safety, connection, creativity, a sense of purpose, and joy. These systems highlight the value and impact of human and social capital, civic engagement and participation, resource sharing, and mutual aid.



We strive to advance people impacted and harmed by loneliness and disconnection, and share power in our communities.

Togther, we can shift power and change leadership that has fostered a lack of connection and belonging. The decision-makers in public and community organizations should reflect the people who are most impacted by the current and historical harms of policies, systems, and practices that reflect systems of oppression ('-isms), stigmas, and stereotypes. They have the valuable lived experiences that can best chart the course to achieve meaningful change and sustainable solutions. The entire community benefits through balancing power and leveraging strengths and resources from a variety of backgrounds. We can build a future where everyone's voice matters, and the success of one or some enhances well-being for all.

Narratives for Health
change what's possible

We are bending the future, together, into something we have never experienced. A world where everyone experiences abundance, access, pleasure, human rights, dignity, freedom, transformative justice, peace. We long for this, we believe it is possible.

adrienne maree brown

