



Community Conversations

How We've Learned to Talk About Prevention

- + Stop fighting the fight you've won.
- + Don't rely on shocking imagery and dramatic statistics.
- + Avoid triggering cognitive mistakes.
- + Solutions must be spelled out early and often; talk about what works.
- + When talking about parenting, establish empathy, not judgment.
- + When talking about communities create a positive vision.
- + Be clear and consistent in your "calls for action."

Communicating About Prevention Differently

- + Create culture change at the community level.
- + Create behavior change in individuals.
- + **LOCAL** - because cultural values and beliefs vary from community to community. Trusted messengers are people you know.
- + **PARTICIPATORY** - because changes in personal beliefs are a result of personal experience.
- + **RECIPROCAL** - because the defining of a community's goals require a willing to share, trust and let go of individual expectations.

Understanding the DISCONNECT

CULTURAL CHANGE

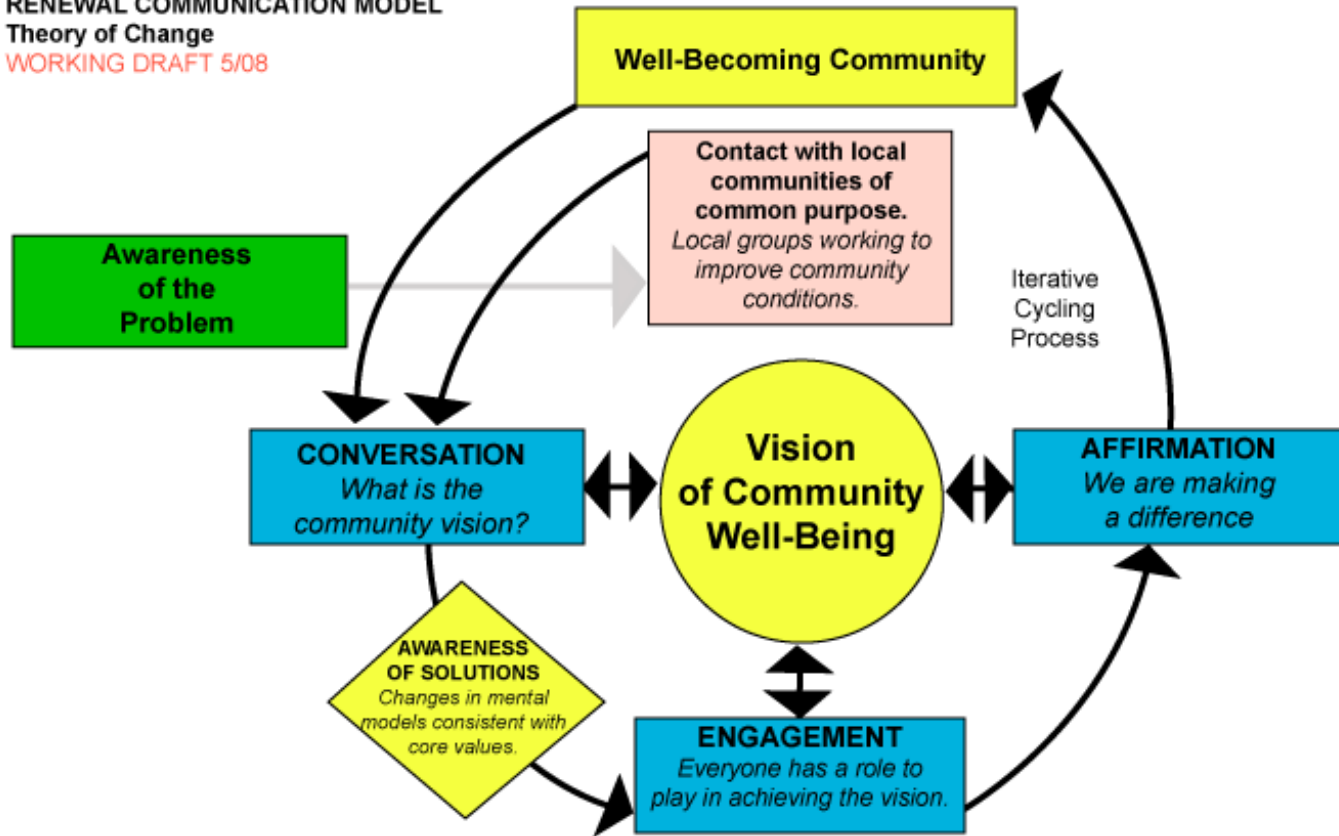
- **Grassroots infusion**
- **Community driven**
- **Positive vision**
- **Civic engagement**
- **Affirmation of success**

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION

- **Top-down dissemination**
- **Message driven**
- **Highlight problems**
- **Directed citizen action**
- **Maintenance of crisis**

Renewal Model of Communication

RENEWAL COMMUNICATION MODEL
Theory of Change
WORKING DRAFT 5/08



Conversation

“Conversation is the natural way
for humans to think together.”

Margaret J. Wheatley



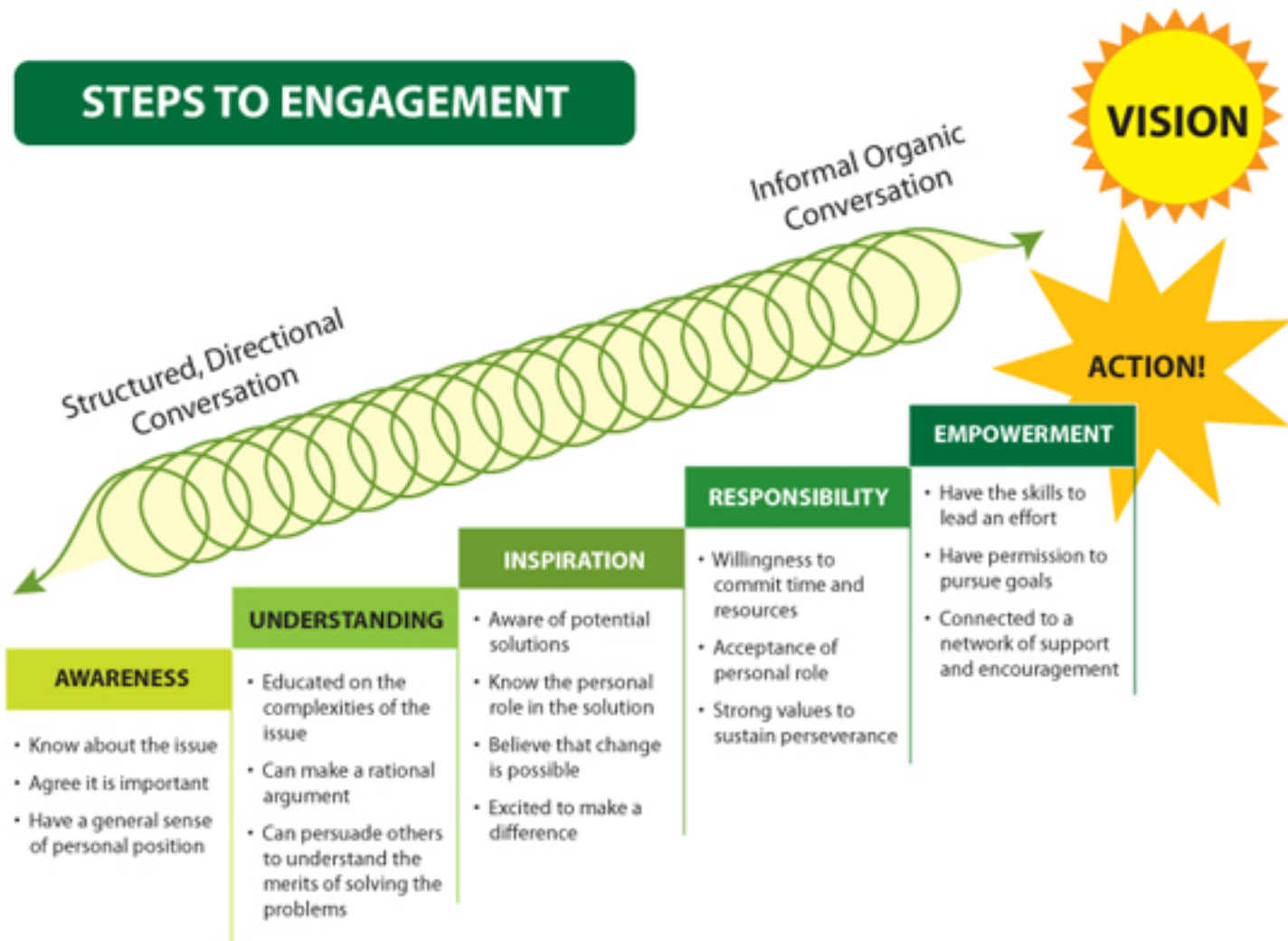
Conversation + Positive Vision

- + Conversations about the results we WANT TO SEE in our families, in our communities include Positive Visioning.
- + These conversations are NOT about:
 - + What is wrong.
 - + Who is at fault
 - + Why it won't work

Conversation + Positive Vision = ENGAGEMENT

- + More than a single conversation will be required.
- + Some conversations may require facilitation to stay positive.
- + Conversations accelerate individual and group learning and development.
- + Conversations strengthen team and community working relationships.

STEPS TO ENGAGEMENT



Getting Started

- + Know where your community stands in their collective understanding of your issue.
- + Know where your community stands in their collective understanding of a positive vision for the future.
- + Plan critical conversations in a variety of venues.
- + Conversations with those who are already at the level of empowerment will produce quick results.
- + Keep talking! Conversations at every level will lead to change.



A CONVERSATION TOOL

*West Virginia's Most
Critical Question:*

**How Do We Keep Our
Children Free From Abuse
and Neglect?**



West Virginia's Most Critical Question:

How Do We Keep Our Children
**Free From Abuse
and Neglect?**

A Guide for Community Discussion and Action



Prepared by:

 **Prevent Child Abuse
West Virginia**

Goals of the Project

- + To help communities develop a clear vision for community well-being.
- + To help communities understand the issue of child abuse and neglect.
- + To identify actions likely to make a positive difference.
- + To plan steps our communities can take together to help West Virginia have a successful future.
- + To give Partners in Prevention a useful tool to get communities engaged around their work.

How it Works

- + A community leader plans and publicizes the community discussion.
- + The discussion begins with a welcome.
- + A DVD sets the context for the discussion and provides important background information for productive discussion.
- + Each participant is given a discussion guide for reference.
- + Positive solutions to three approaches are discussed.
- + The community brainstorms doable actions and commits to follow-through on winnable activities.

Planning and Publicity

- + Hold the Conversation in a place that is attractive, comfortable, neutral and conducive to thinking together.
- + Decide the best time to hold the conversation. (You will need at least 2 hours.)
- + Happy participants are fed participants.
- + Promote the conversation with the general public.
- + Reach out to marginalized groups.

Planning and Publicity

- + Use flyers, websites, newspapers, church bulletins...
- + Link to schools, libraries, post offices, hair salons/barber shops, grocery stores, ball fields, existing organizations, businesses and neighborhood associations.
- + Publicize early and often.
- + Make special invitations to groups.
- + An ideal conversation will have 15-25 people.

Hosting the Conversation

- + Check all facets of a conversation environment for neutrality.
- + Use a skilled facilitator who will stay neutral, respect ALL opinions, keep the conversation focused on prevention and on positive community vision.
- + Collect the names and contact information of participants for future volunteer recruitment.
- + Assign someone with the task of recording the stories and comments shared in the conversation.

Community Discussion Exercise

- + Your table is your community.
- + We will rotate facilitator roles.
- + One person should be the recorder and reporter.
- + Challenge each other – this is a practice and learning time.

WELCOME – 5 minutes

- + Give each participant a discussion guide as they arrive.
- + Welcome participants, introduce yourself, thank the host organization.
- + Remind participants to keep the conversation focused on prevention.

"Child abuse and neglect is often a difficult issue to discuss. We value and love our community's children. We want them to be safe. Today we are here to discuss how to PREVENT child abuse and neglect. What can we do, as a community, to ensure that abuse and neglect NEVER HAPPEN in the first place?"

VIDEO – 10 minutes

- + Make sure you have prepared and tested the DVD equipment and sound before the meeting.
- + Watch the DVD together.
- + The clip is 8 minutes long.

General Discussion – 15 minutes

pages 4-7

- + Are you surprised to learn that West Virginia has the 6th highest confirmed rate of cases of abuse and neglect? Why or why not?
- + What are the financial consequences of abuse and neglect?
- + What are the human costs of abuse and neglect?
- + Is this issue the business of the community or the business of the family?
- + How do you define child abuse and neglect PREVENTION.
- + There are probably a lot of good things already happening for families in our community. What can you think of?

Approach 1:– 20 minutes

pages 8-9

- + Do you think society puts too much pressure on parents to be “perfect”?
- + Do today’s parents have particular challenges that their parents didn’t face?
- + What do people need to be effective parents?
- + Are there any reasons that parents in our community might be afraid to ask for help? What can we do about that?

Approach 2 – 20 minutes

pages 10-11

- + What programs and systems are doing a good job for families in our community?
- + Why is it that some children and families “slip through the cracks”?
- + What are some of the challenges we face when trying to find resources to invest in prevention? How do we overcome them?
- + How can we make sure that families and children in our community know about programs in our community that can help?

Approach 3 – 20 minutes

pages 12-13

- + Whose job is it to protect children in our community?
- + Who benefits when our community's children are protected?
- + We invest in road and sewers to strengthen the economy of our communities. Could investing in families and children pay off? How?
- + How can we help citizens be comfortable with their role of "neighbor" to families?
- + Who are some of the best volunteers for kids in our community? How do we see the impact of their work?

Recap – 15 minutes

page 14

- + What were the main ideas that came out of this discussion?
- + What can you personally do to help protect and nurture children and strengthen the families in our community?
- + What can our community do about the issue?
- + What policies – local, state or national – should be changed to build stronger children, families and communities?
- + How else can we use what we have learned today?

Closing – 5 minutes

- + Thank everyone for their time.
- + Encourage each person to make a commitment to an individual action that will make a difference.
- + Promote any volunteerism opportunities that may interest people.

After the Discussion

- + Thank-yous.
- + Send feedback.
- + Get feedback.
- + Follow up with people who have volunteered.
- + Help make connections between enthusiastic people.
- + Start planning the next conversation.

Why Host a Discussion?

- + Help your community think and talk differently about prevention.
- + “Till the soil” for your community prevention efforts.
- + Improve the overall social capital in your community.
- + Promote the progressive role of your organization in the future of the community.
- + A single conversation can change the fate of a child.

Tools

- + Printed copies of discussion guide.
- + Tools.
- + Powerpoint online.
- + PDF of discussion guide online.

