

Risk Communication Templates*

Use these templates to create effective messages in high concern, high stress situations

CCO TEMPLATE

Use when asked a question with high-emotion

Steps:

- Compassion
- Conviction
- Optimism

Example: (1) "I am very sorry to hear about...."; (2) I believe that...; (3) In the future, I believe that

"WHAT IF" TEMPLATE

Use when asked a low probability "what if, what might happen" question

Steps:

- Repeat the question (without negatives)
- Bridge to "what is"
- State what you know factually

Example: (1) "You've asked me what might happen if...."; (2) I believe there is value to talk about what is, what we know now; (3) And what we know is...."

*Source: Dr. Vincent T. Covello, Center for Risk Communication, Copyright 2007

BRIDGING TEMPLATES

Use when you want to return to your key points or redirect the communication

1. "And what's most important to know is..."
2. "However, what is more important to look at is..."
3. "However, the real issue here is..."
4. "And what this all means is..."
5. "And what's most important to remember is ..."
6. "With this in mind, if we look at the bigger picture..."
7. "With this in mind, if we take a look back..."
8. "If we take a broader perspective, ..."
9. "If we look at the big picture..."
10. "Let me put all this in perspective by saying..."
11. "What all this information tells me is..."
12. "Before we continue, let me take a step back and repeat that..."
13. "Before we continue, let me emphasize that..."
14. "This is an important point because..."
15. "What this all boils down to is..."

1N=3P TEMPLATE

(ONE NEGATIVE EQUALS THREE POSITIVES) /BAD NEWS TEMPLATE

Use when breaking bad news or stating a negative

Recommendation: Balance one bad news or negative message with a least three or more positive, constructive, or solution oriented messages

AGL-4 TEMPLATE (AVERAGE GRADE LEVEL MINUS FOUR TEMPLATE)

Use when responding to any high stress or emotionally charged question

Recommendation: Provide information at four or more grade levels below the average grade level of the audience.

GUARANTEE TEMPLATE

Use when asked to guarantee an event or outcome

Steps

- Indicate that the question is about the future
- Indicate that the past and the present help predict the future
- Bridge to known facts, processes or actions

Example: (1) "You've asked me for a guarantee, to promise something about the future; (2) The best way I know to talk about the future is to talk about what we know from the past and the present; (3) And what we know is..." OR
"What I can guarantee [assure; promise; tell you] is..."

YES/NO TEMPLATE

Use when asked a yes/no question that cannot be answered yes or no

Steps

- Indicate you have been asked a yes/no question
- Indicate it would be difficult to answer the question yes or no
- Indicate why it would be difficult to answer the question yes or no
- Respond to the underlying concern

IDK (I DON'T KNOW) TEMPLATE

Use when you don't know, can't answer, or aren't best source

Steps

- Repeat the question (without negatives)
- Say "I wish I could answer that"; or "My ability to answer is limited by ...;" or "I don't know"
- Say why you can't answer
- Provide a follow up with a deadline
- Bridge to what you can say

Example: (1) "You've asked me about...; (2) I wish I could answer...; (3) We're still looking into it; (4) I expect to be able to tell you more by ...; (5) What I can tell you is..."

FALSE ALLEGATION TEMPLATE

Use when responding to a hostile question, false allegation, or criticism

Steps

- Repeat/paraphrase the question without repeating the negative; repeat instead the opposite; the underlying value or concern, or use more neutral language
- Indicate the issue is important
- Indicate what you have done, are doing, or will do to address the issue

Example: (1) "You've raised a serious question about "x"; (2) "x" is important to me; (3) We are doing the following to address"x."

27/9/3 TEMPLATE

Use when responding to any high stress or emotionally charged question

Recommendation: Be brief and concise in your first response: no more than 27 words, 9 seconds, and 3 messages

PRIMACY/RECENCY TEMPLATE

Use when responding to any high stress or emotionally charged question

Recommendation: Provide the most important items or points first and last

RULE OF 3 TEMPLATE

Use when responding to any high stress or emotionally charged question

Recommendation: Provide no more than three messages, ideas, or points at a time

Example: My three main points are: (1) ...; (2)....; and (3)....