

Water Fluoridation

The Right Language, the Right Frame

Pre-Conference Session
National Oral Health Conference
Saturday, April 26, 2014

Matt Jacob

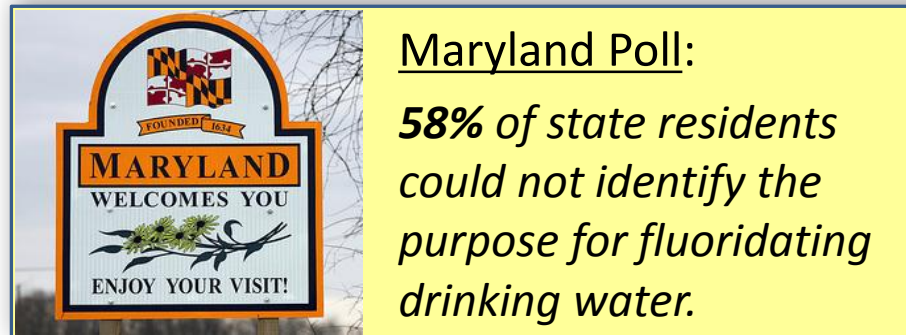
Director of Communications & Outreach
Children's Dental Health Project



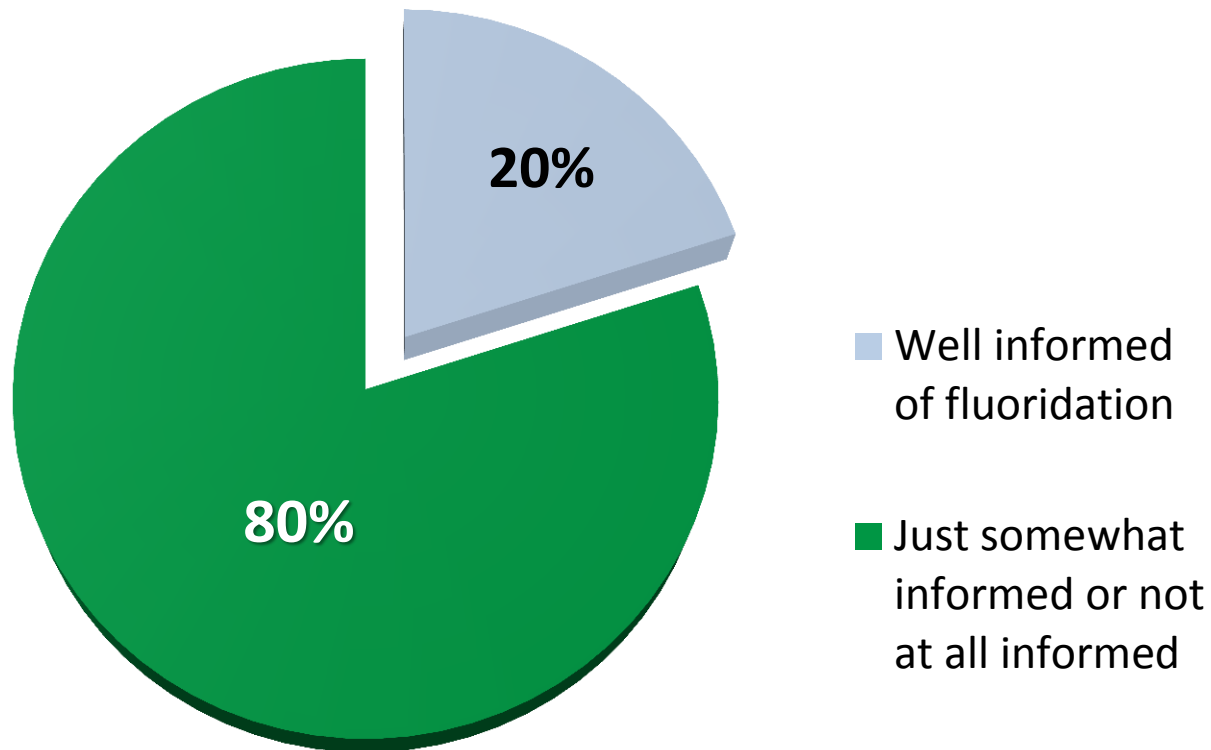
How well do
you know your
audience?

Know your audience

- **36%** of Americans have only a “basic” or “below basic” level of health literacy.
- Many people don't realize tooth decay is a disease.



Public knowledge of community water fluoridation



(Source: Survey commissioned by the Pew Charitable Trusts survey, conducted in October 2010 by SalterMitchell LLC of 1,000 U.S. adults)

1. Use the Right Language

Use “kitchen table” language

Clinical language is appropriate for your peers or professional conferences. But for others, it can be unclear or confusing.



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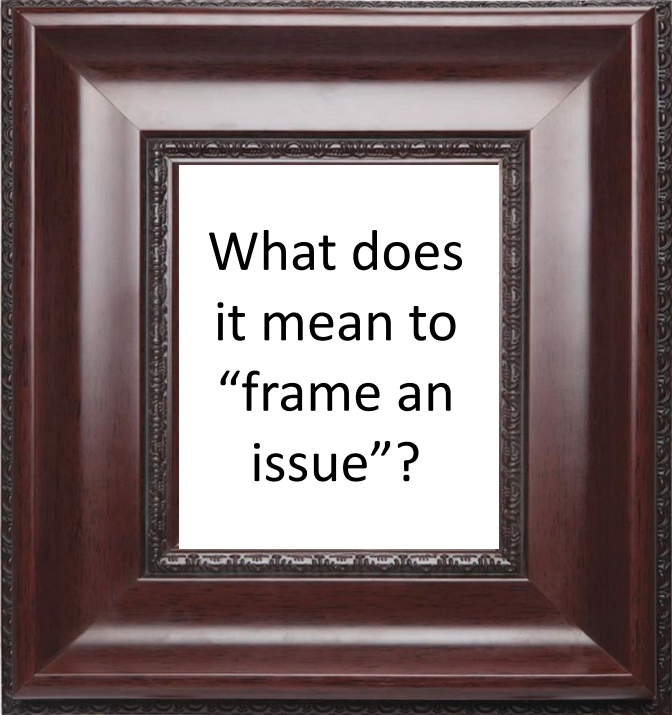
Words used in a 2013 pro-fluoridation letter to the editor:

- dental caries
- ubiquitous
- disproportionately
- interceptive
- infrastructure
- counterintuitive
- immensely
- scrutiny

2. Establish the Right Frame



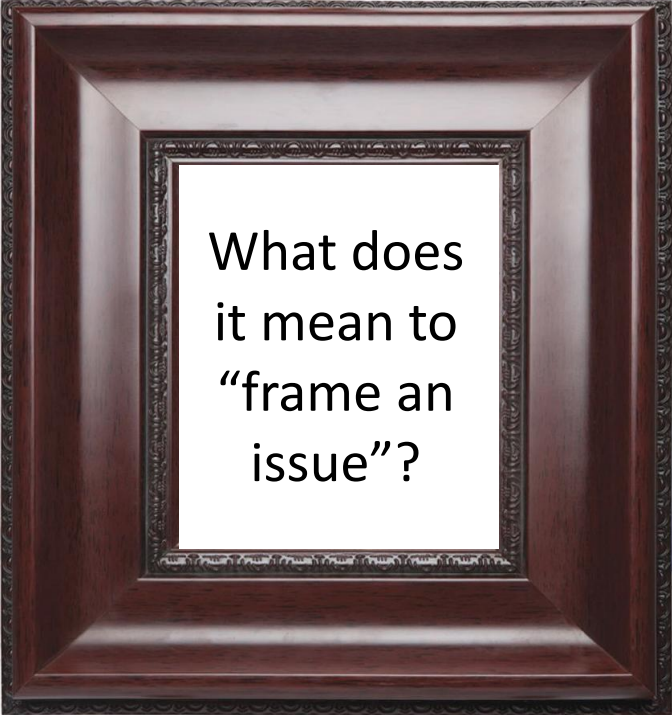
Use the right frame



What does
it mean to
“frame an
issue”?

Use the right frame

*Using words or images that
shape how people process and
understand an issue.*



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**“Perhaps the only way
we can assimilate new
information is by fitting it
into the framework of
something we already
understand.”**

William Raspberry, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist
The Washington Post

The fear frame

“Fluoride chemicals are being poured into our water and exposing us to danger.”



The fear frame

“Fluoride **chemicals** are being poured into our water and exposing us to **danger.**”





The fear frame

“Fluoride chemicals are being poured into our water and exposing us to danger.”

One possible reply

“The fluoride chemicals that are used in fluoridation are thoroughly tested for purity and safety. The public has nothing to worry about.”



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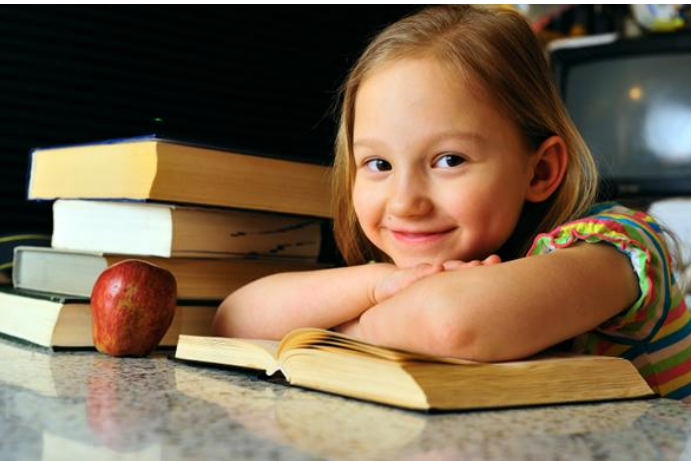


The fear frame

“Fluoride chemicals are being poured into our water and exposing us to danger.”

The fact frame

“Fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in our water supply. We’re simply adding a small, additional amount of fluoride to protect teeth from decay.”

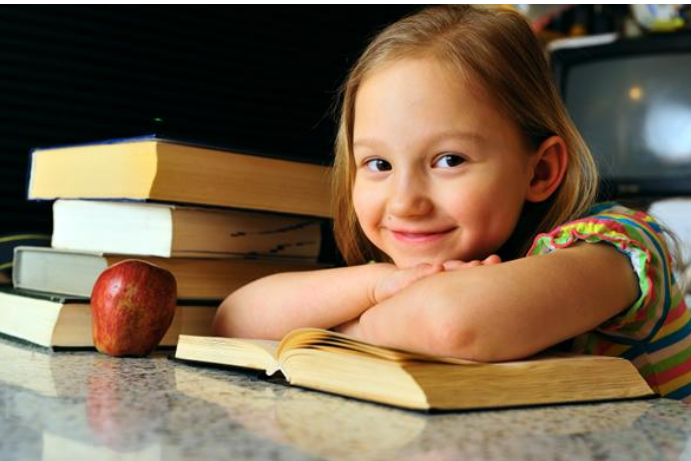


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The fear frame

*How do we get trapped
in their frame?*

AUBURN-REPORTER.com

LIFESTYLE

Keeping children's teeth healthy begins early | Dr. Rich



by DR. STUART RICH, Auburn Reporter Columnist
Mar 20, 2014 at 7:00PM

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported an increase, the first in 40 years, in the number of preschoolers with cavities, in a study completed five years ago.

The study goes on to report that dentists are seeing more preschoolers at all income levels with 6-to-10 cavities, or more. Sometimes the level of decay is so severe that general anesthesia or sedation by a pediatric specialist is necessary, because young children are often unable to sit through hours-long procedures while they are awake.

Such extensive and expensive treatment is largely preventable.

Dental cavities are the No. 1 chronic disease in children, so it would be wise to seek out prevention information early from your own dentist or the child's pediatrician. Don't wait until your child comes to you with a toothache to take them to the dentist for the first time.

There are a number of reasons more preschoolers are beginning to suffer from such extensive dental decay. Constant snacking, drinking juice or other sweet drinks at bedtime, municipal tap water that is not fluoridated (including Auburn) and not obtaining a prescription for supplemental fluoride drops if your tap water isn't fluoridated are all reasons why the decay rate is increasing in children.

According to most pediatric experts, a child's first visit to the dentist should happen by their first birthday. They may have only a few teeth, but it is important that they be assessed for their overall cavity risk. That is also a great appointment for the parent to get any clarification needed or clear up any misunderstandings about preventing decay in the future.

Some suggestions

Here are a few tips to keep your toddler cavity-free:

In general, you should brush the teeth of children 2 or younger with a tiny bit of fluoride toothpaste twice a day. At 2, start to use a pea-sized amount. Fluoride is safe, like most other medications, when used in appropriate amounts. Do not leave toothpaste out where kids have access to it unattended. Young children have found and eaten a whole tube of toothpaste and had to be taken to the

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But what if we are asked this direct question?

The fear frame

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The fact frame

“No, that is false. The fluoride that is used for fluoridation comes from phosphate rock. Instead of wasting this valuable mineral, it’s removed from the rock so it can be added to water and strengthen the enamel of our teeth.”

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Don't Get Trapped in the Fear Frame

Another Example

The individual choice argument

The fear frame

“It’s an individual’s choice. Nothing should be added to drinking water without a person’s consent — don’t you agree?”

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“It’s an individual’s choice. Nothing should be added to drinking water without a person’s consent — don’t you agree?”

A possible reply

“It should *not* be an individual choice because that would deprive the whole community of a proven form of prevention.”

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*Put a stop to
the fear frame*

The individual choice argument

The fear frame

“It’s an individual’s choice. Nothing should be added to drinking water without a person’s consent — don’t you agree?”

The fact frame

“Our water supply belongs to the *community*, so it’s a community choice. And nearly 70 years of experience and research prove that fluoridation is a smart choice for reducing tooth decay.”

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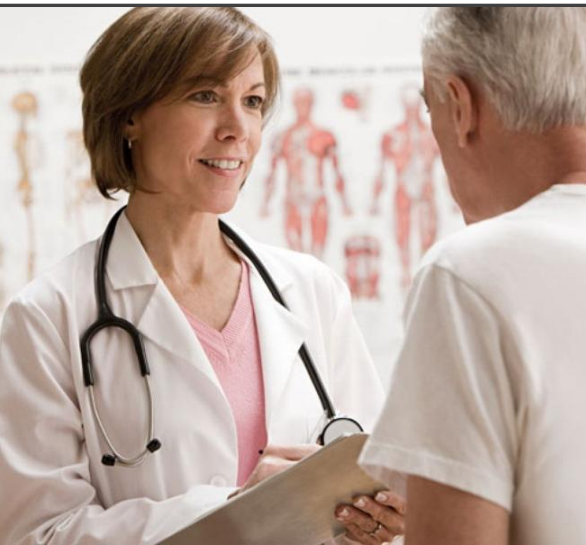
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3. Put a Face on Your Message

Put a face on your message

- What prompted you to enter your career field? Briefly share this story.
- How long has your family lived in this town or this region of the state?
- Have you taken part in any “missions of mercy” or other volunteer health activities?
- Are you a parent? Of how many kids?



The same point expressed in very different ways:

“You’ve heard a lot of wild and claims made about the safety of water fluoridation. Well, I’m here to tell you those claims are simply not true.

“Many decades of scientific research have demonstrated repeatedly that water fluoridation is safe and effective at reducing tooth decay. Taking it out of our drinking water would be a big mistake that this council would eventually regret.”

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“Parents have a lot of things to worry about. I know this first-hand because I am a parent. But I am pleased to tell you that many decades of research have demonstrated that water fluoridation isn’t one of them.

“In fact, fluoridated water has helped significantly reduce the worry and shame that can come from having decayed or missing teeth. I wouldn’t want my children drinking water that wasn’t fluoridated.”

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Questions or Comments?

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