

Outreach Ideas for Hard, Scary Issues

Strategy #1:

We can **help the public empower themselves** to work on serious issues, including hard or frightening issues such as the climate crisis, nuclear weapons, and the death penalty.

In order to really engage the public on these hard and frightening issues, we must **deliberately strategize how to address the public's fears and other psychological barriers that inhibit them from learning about and acting on** these issues.

Unfortunately, we typically neglect the public's fears and psychological barriers. Our outreach and organizing keeps focusing on the scary facts only without also paying any attention to people's real psychological needs. **In order to move the public on these serious, frightening issues, we must devote at least as much strategic attention to people's psychological needs so they will be able to hear and absorb the facts and decide to take action.**

→ Many politicians exploit people's fears in order to disempower people for their own political gain. I wrote a separate article that recognizes that manipulation and builds upon the strategy I mentioned in the three paragraphs above. **See this handout:**

**Expose Politicians' Exploitation of Fear and Anger.
Fear and Anger Often Disempower People.
Let's Strategize to Expose and Dismiss Fear, So We Can Make Progress.**

Strategy #2:

In 2004 I helped an ad hoc group convince voters to defeat a \$103 million bond issue that would have built a gigantic new jail. For that campaign, I devised "Strategies and Arguments for Different Constituencies." My strategies asked:

- How to reach each particular kind of audience?
- How to communicate our message so people can actually hear and receive it?
- How to attend to emotional factors in addition to presenting informational content?
- How to avoid pitfalls?

Strategy #3:

Whenever we present our point of view, we know that the people on the other side of the issue will raise arguments against us. We can neutralize those opposing arguments if we **address their opposing arguments up front** in our own presentation. (EXAMPLE: "Some people will argue that But actually,")

Strategy #4:

Beyond that, we should also shape some of our approach to address the general public's concerns – their underlying values that ground and motivate them – their vision for what they want instead of the status quo. (EXAMPLES:

- If we are urging peace, and we know the public is concerned about national security, we should explain how war will actually threaten our own security and how a peaceful foreign policy will make us more secure.
- If people care about their children and grandchildren, we can help them prevent climate disruption that would hurt the people they love.
- If we are urging care for the environment and we know people will worry that this might cost them their jobs, we should research and provide information to address this concern head-on, show how protecting the climate can create jobs, etc.)

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