

Why Words Matter: Message, Public Engagement and Connecting the Dots

2016 Strengthening Families Training
Institute – Connect the Dots

March 2016

Why Doesn't More of the Public Take Responsibility for Social Change?

- Cognitive failure
- Communications failure
- What their responsibility could be



Communication
failure

Enter => New Test
ESC => Back

Communications and Framing



- People default to the “pictures in their heads”
- A different perspective

History

TO SOME, THIS IS A PLACE TO COOK
MACARONI AND CHEESE.

TO OTHERS, IT'S A PLACE TO MAKE
A KID **SORRY FOR**
WHAT HE DID.

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
doesn't just mean reporting it. Instead, you can
help stop it before it ever starts. With everything from simply
helping a parent with errands or babysitting to
supporting parenting programs in your community. Find out
more ways you can help at www.preventchildabuse.org
or by calling 1-800-children.

A CHILD IS HELPLESS. YOU ARE NOT.

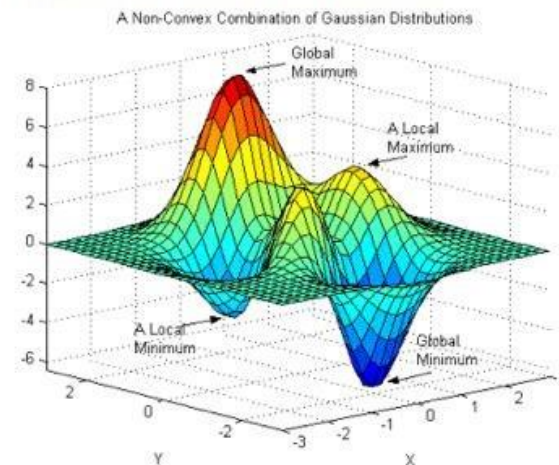
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**Prevent Child Abuse
America**

Research Timeline

- **Developing Community Connections: Qualitative Research Regarding Framing Policies (2003)**
A report of findings from focus groups designed to test the impact of four frames about child abuse and neglect: Child Abuse, Parenting, Child Development, and Community.
- **Two Cognitive Obstacles to Preventing Child Abuse: The 'Other Mind' Mistake and the 'Family Bubble' (2003)**
A report on a series of cognitive interviews that identifies two common mistakes in thinking that the public makes about child abuse prevention, and recommendations on how to overcome them.
- **How the News Frames Child Maltreatment: Unintended Consequences (2003)**
A report summarizing some of the major patterns in news coverage of child maltreatment – the key narratives, frames and causal stories that are conveyed to the public on the issue.
- **Discipline and Development: A Meta-Analysis of Public Perceptions of Parents, Parenting, Child Development and Child Abuse (2003)**
A report reviewing PCA America's research on child abuse, as well as existing, publicly available opinion research regarding parenting, child development, child abuse and discipline, and the political landscape for child abuse prevention policies.
- **Breaking the Resistance: Creating a Movement for Prevention (2008)**
A report by Dig Communications looking at research results and analysis on Pinwheels for Prevention, Prevent Child Abuse America's signature campaign.
- **Framing Child Abuse and Neglect: Effects of Early Childhood Development Experimental Research (2009)**
A report summarizing results from the latest iteration of Frameworks experimental research focusing specifically on outcomes related to policies and programs associated with prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect as well as additional policies associated with improving children's healthy development, family assets, education and mental health.

A Non-Convex Combination of Gaussian Distributions

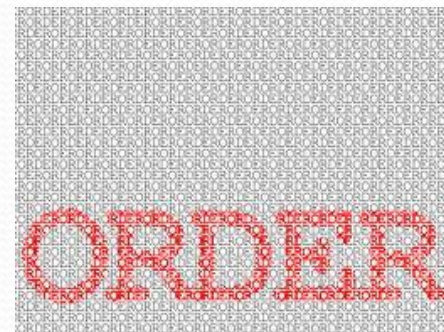
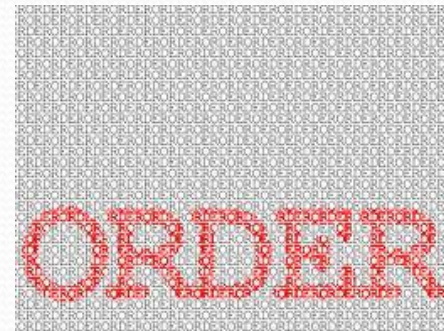
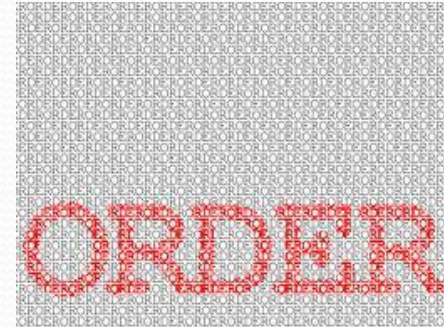


What We Are Up Against: Public Opinion

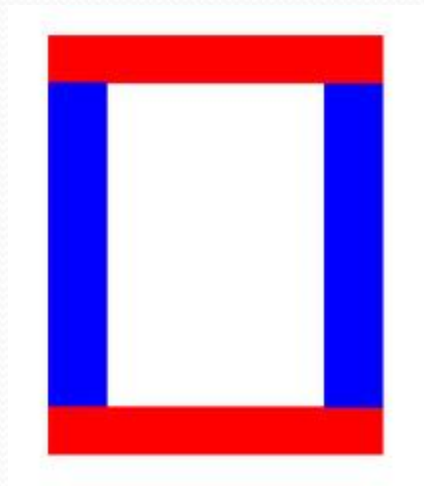
- Believe child abuse and neglect is a **serious problem** and seem to be well-aware of the types and prevalence
- Understand the root causes and **long-term effects** of child abuse and neglect
- Picture the **worst case scenario** or most extreme cases (which is far from the true picture) and discussing less severe types of CAN tends to confuse them
- Want to avoid judging parents (or being judged themselves) for unintentional harm to a child, but have **little sympathy for intentionally abusive or neglectful parents**
- Believe it's **harder to be a parent today** than in years past and that parents are doing a poor job at raising their children
- Believe parenting is an **important responsibility for which most are not prepared** and yet it is not a sign of strength to ask for help
- **Feel powerless to do anything** about it, individually or systemically, except reporting to the authorities (because they think of CAN as intentional and extreme and/or “family bubble” issue)
- **Reluctant to report** because of perception (and reinforced media stories) that the **government and CPS are incapable of responding effectively**

Order Matters

- Level One - big ideas
- Level Two - issue types
- Level Three - specific policies/solutions



Elements of Frame



Core story elements:

- Values
- Issues
- Metaphors and models
- Solutions

Framing and CAN – What We Know

- We know there are three CAN related frames the public diverts to when they hear about CAN:
 - Horrible criminal atrocity
 - Failure of CPS
 - Prevalence of sexual predators in our midst
- We know we need to avoid the use of CAN statistics and negative graphic imagery



Framing and CAN – What We Also Know



- We tend to start at level three
- The public struggles with the “family bubble”
- There are four potential reframes
 - Family strengthening
 - Prevention
 - Early child development
 - Community

What People Think



- Family bubble
- Safety is the main concern
- Lack of parental discipline
- Parent education, not policy

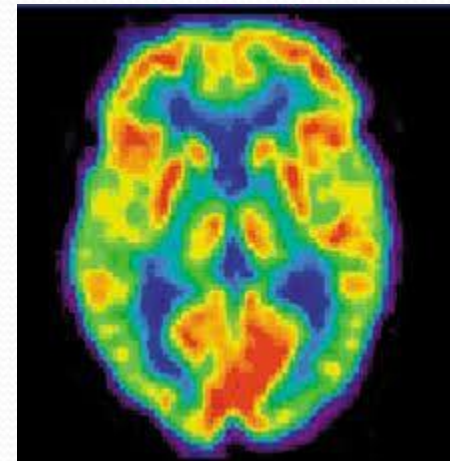
Tested Values

- Prosperity
- Ingenuity
- Stewardship/Reciprocity
- Responsible Manager



Reframing and the Core Story of Child Development

1. Child development is a foundation for community development and economic development (*Prosperity*).
2. The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process (*Brain Architecture*).
3. Brains are built from the bottom up (*Skill Begets Skill*).
4. Interaction of genes and experience shapes the developing brain and relationships are the active ingredient (*Serve and Return*).

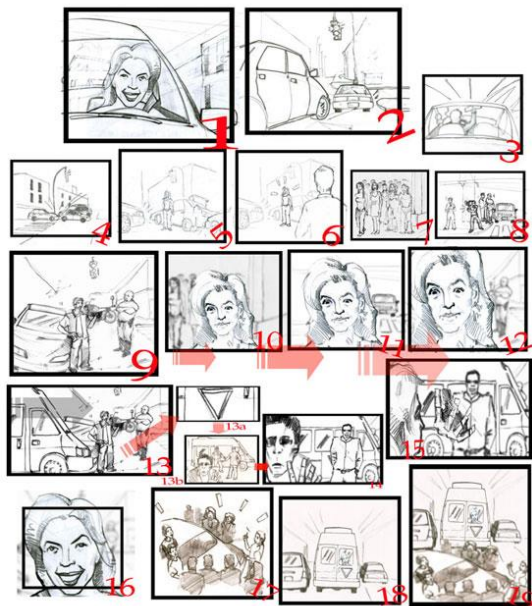


Reframing and the Core Story of Child Development

- 5. Cognitive, emotional and social capacities are inextricably intertwined (*Can't Do One Without The Other*).
- 6. Toxic stress damages the developing brain (*Toxic Stress*).
- 7. Brain plasticity and the ability to change behavior decrease over time (*Pay Now or Pay Later*).



Core Story



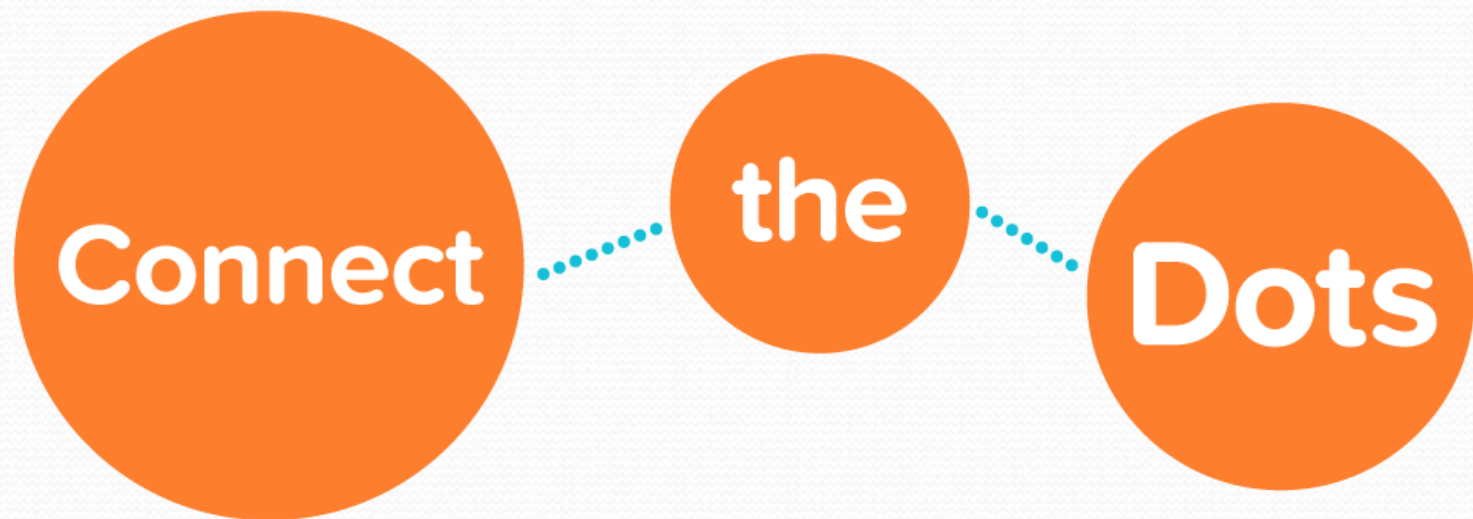
<u>Narrative Devices</u>	<u>Frame Elements</u>
• Orientation	Prosperity, Ingenuity
• Main Plot	Brain Architecture, Serve and Return, Can't Do One Without Other
• Complicating Action	Toxic Stress
• Evaluation	Pay Now, Pay Later, Return on Investment
• Resolution	Polices Go Here

Toolkit

(preventchildabuse.org/resource/talking-child-abuse-neglect-prevention/)

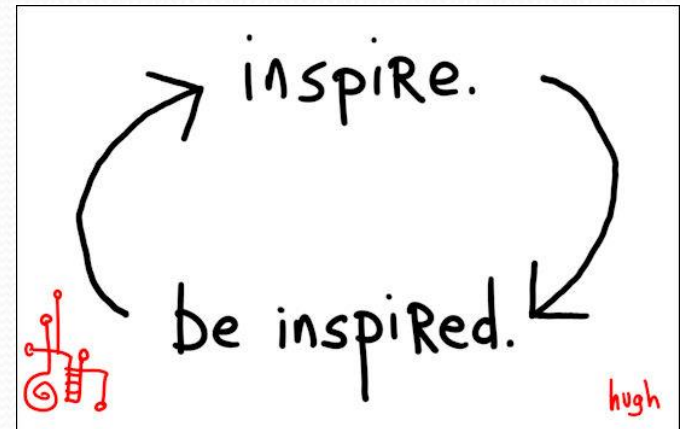
- **Elements of the core story**
- **Talking points**
- **FAQs**
- **Sample editorial**
- **Sample Letters to the Editor**
- **Case studies**





Why get involved?

- **You already play a role** in making your family and your community strong
- **Share your dot** – what you do to make your community a great place for children and families
- **Get inspired** by other people's dots!
- **Connect** with other individuals, organizations and businesses that share your commitment to children and families



What does it mean to call this “building a movement”?

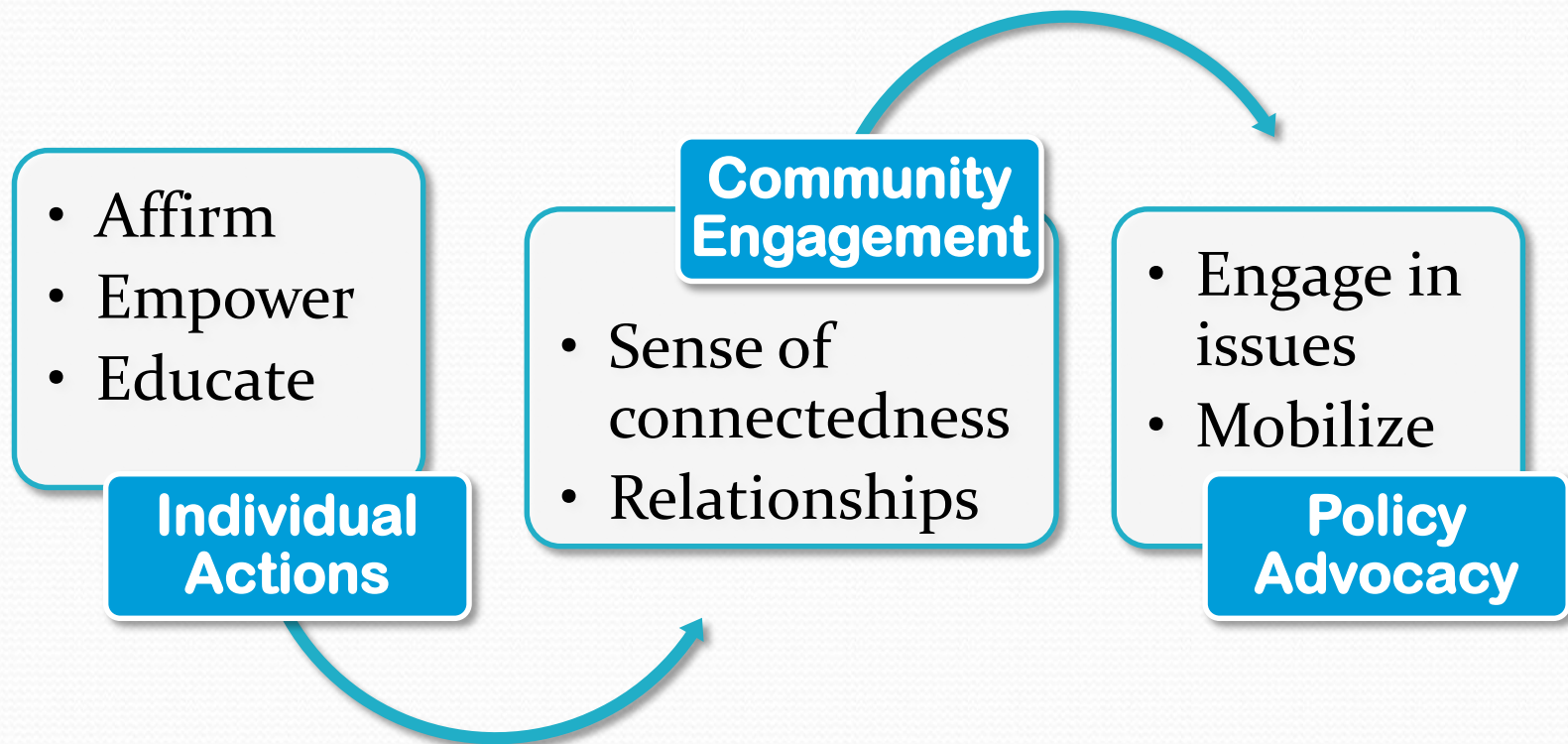


Building a movement is more than marches and protests and enacting laws; it is about developing leaders, building trust and mobilizing action toward a common purpose.

Building a social movement includes a variety of actions by individuals, groups, organizations and others mobilizing to achieve a particular social change.

Actions may include specific campaigns and tactics as part of the broader movement, but a social movement has a broader social impact.

How do you build a movement?



What's
your
dot?



Examples: Individual dots



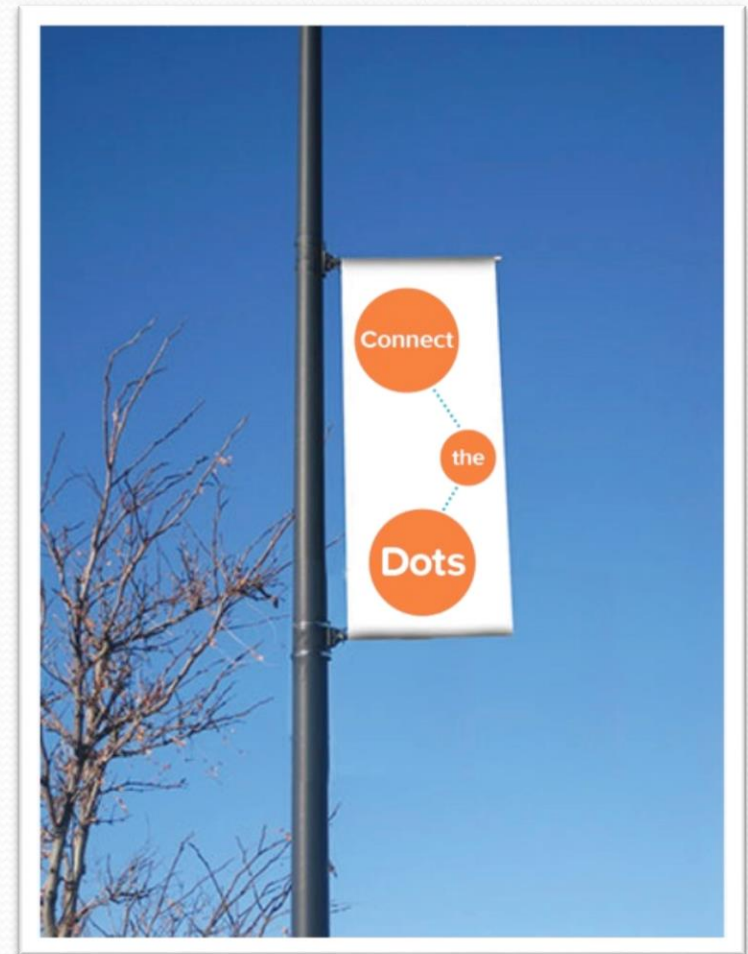
“I volunteer as a tutor at my neighborhood center”

“I serve on my local school board”

“I watch my neighbor’s toddler and preschooler when she has a doctor’s appointment or just needs some time to herself”

“I get together with other home child care providers once a month. We help each other with ways to provide the best care we can to the kids and how to take care of ourselves too!”

Connecting the
dots at a
community level



Examples: Community dots

Family night at the laundromat – free laundry with pizza, child care and parenting information provided

Strengthening Families churches and other faith communities

Our Children, Our Future Campaign to End Child Poverty in WV

The Children's Movement of Florida

Essentials for Childhood – Colorado

Chartwell's – Connect Your Dot day

Training adults on how to prevent child sexual abuse – partnering with YMCAs and other organizations

...and what's happening in your neighborhood, community, state?



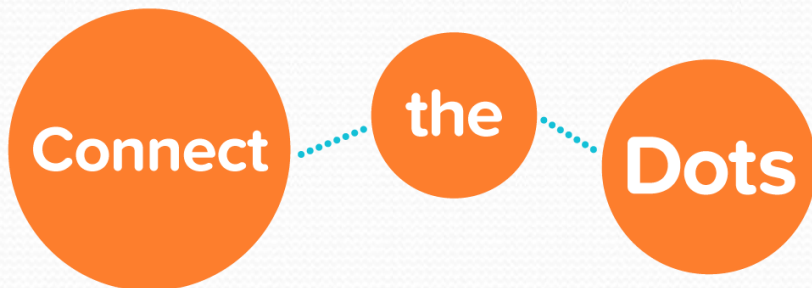
Help us Connect the Dots

Encourage others to join the movement by signing up at <http://www.whatsyourdot.org>

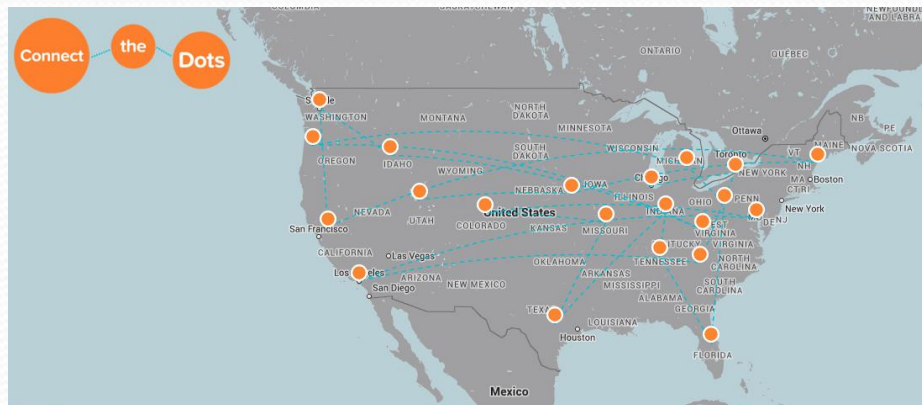
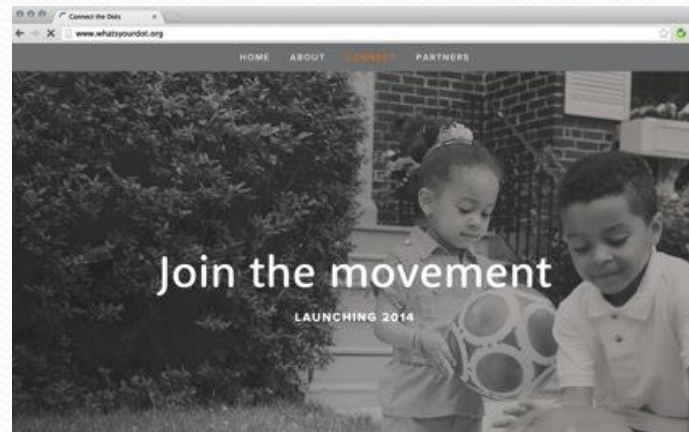
Spread the word with **#whatsyourdot**

Talk to (at least) one other person about **Connect the Dots**

Let us know what resources and tools would be most useful to you and your community



whatyourdot.org



Contact Information

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Thank You.