



# Welcome!

We will get started in just a moment

# Best Practices for Communicating Public Health Risks to Refugee, Immigrant and Migrant Communities

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May 9, 2023

# >> Housekeeping

- We will email you:
  - The recording
  - Slides
  - Links to all resources
- Please use the Q&A or chat feature to ask questions



## >> About NRC-RIM

The National Resource Center for  
Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants

# » History

- Funded by CDC, housed at University of Minnesota
- Established in Oct. 2020 as part of COVID-19 response
- Work with organizations serving RIM communities that are disproportionately impacted by health inequities



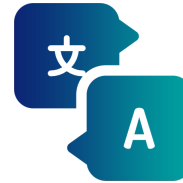
## »» Goals

- **Strengthen partnerships** between health departments + communities
- **Support health departments + CBOs** that work with refugees, immigrants, + migrants
- **Reduce health disparities** + increase health equity

## >> What We Do



Promising Practices  
+ Toolkits



Health Education  
+ Communications



Online Training



Technical Assistance



Pilot Projects



Dissemination

## >> Core Partners





# Risk

## » Communication In RIM Communities

# >> Resources That Support Risk Communication



Toolkit for Written  
Translation



Guide: Producing  
PSAs



Guide: Working with  
Traditional Media



Guide: Working with  
Social Media



Partnering with Social  
Media Influencers



Storytelling  
Strategies



Phone Trees and  
Hotlines



Culturally Specific Health  
Information Broadcasts



# Best Practices for Communicating Public Health Risks to Refugee, Immigrant and Migrant Communities

Michael Schommer, MDH Communications Director

Doug Schultz, MDH Public Information Officer

Mukhtar Ibrahim, Founder of Sahan Journal

# Panelists



**Mukhtar Ibrahim**  
Sahan Journal



**Doug Schultz**  
Minnesota Dept.  
of Health



**Michael Schommer**  
Minnesota Dept. of  
Health

# Learning Objectives

- 1. Attendees can identify 3 key principles of risk communication.**
- 2. Gain understanding on risk perception and how that can vary across diverse refugee, immigrant, and migrant (RIM) communities.**
- 3. Learn how to apply key messaging strategies to better tailor messages to immigrant communities.**
- 4. Identify 2-3 best practices for messengers communicating with RIM communities**

# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

“We live in a world at constant risk of public health emergencies. In our increasingly interconnected world, public health emergencies can affect anyone, anywhere”

-Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of  
WHO



# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Key Messages for Today

1. High-stress situations change the rules of communication
2. People under stress are less likely to trust and remember information
3. Effective risk communication requires that we properly account for audience context



*Picture from MDH COVID Vaccination Event*

# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Background for Risk Communication: Information Processing

“The primary goal should be thinking about your wider audience as an opportunity to teach them and elevate, to increase science data literacy. It is a huge opportunity to invite more people behind what has been historically closed doors in labs, universities, and research institutions. That should be the motivation of increasing people's understanding”

-Jessica Malaty Rivera, The Covid Tracking Project



# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Background for Risk Communication: Information Processing

- The process we use to take in information and make sense of our world is complex and largely instinctual – we are wired to process information this way
- Most people do not recognize this, and even those who do often don't recognize the role of emotion in the moment
- Key is to recognize and accommodate the complementary and competing roles of cognition and emotion

# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Background for Risk Communication: Dual Processing Model

### System 1: Heuristic Thought

Fast

Automatic

Effortless

Associative

Categories

### System 2: Systematic Thought

Slow

Learned/controlled

Effortful

Rule-based

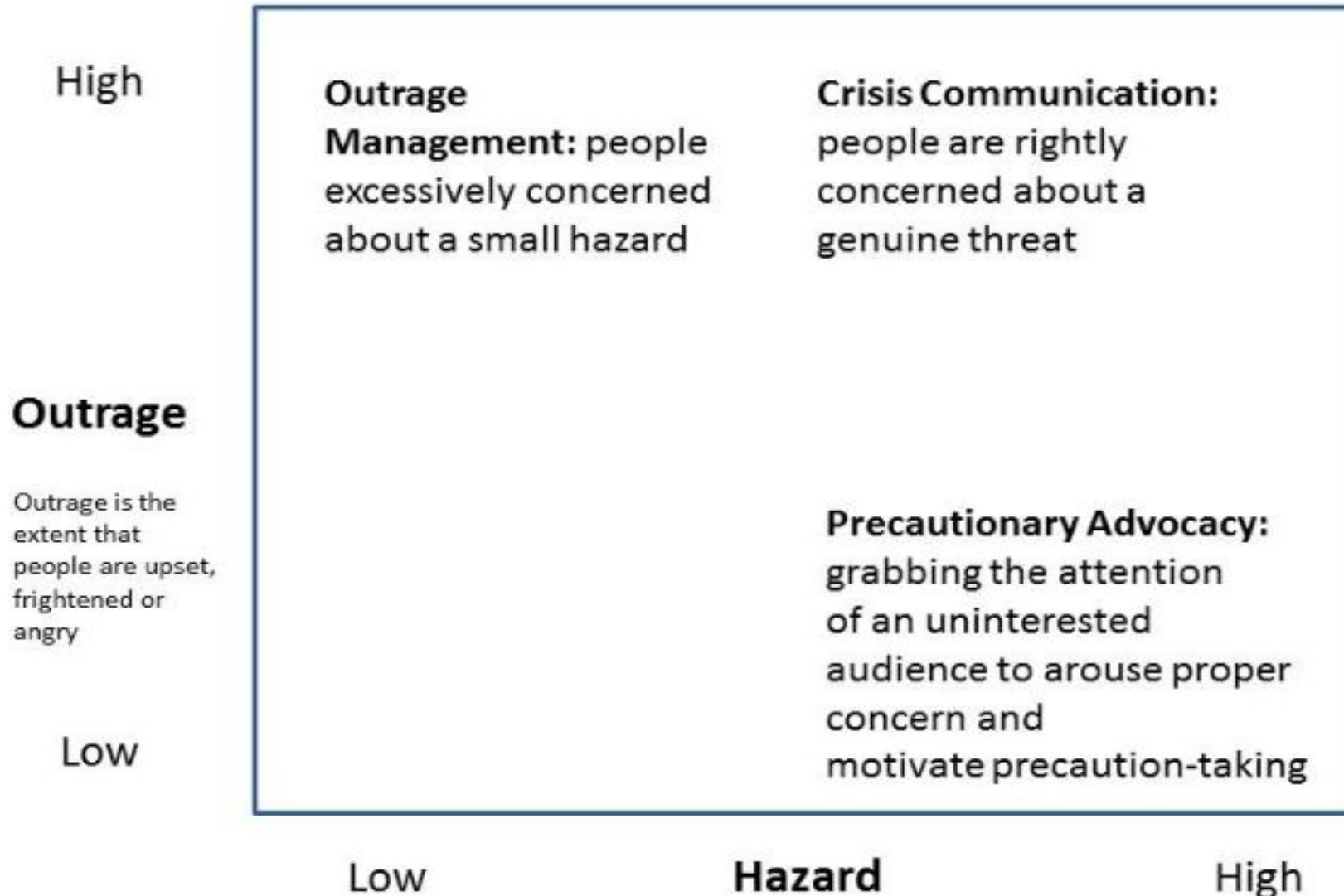
Exceptions

# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Background for Risk Communication: Outrage Factors

- Natural origin vs. human origin (Natural disasters vs. ethnic violence)
- Familiar vs. unfamiliar or exotic (Influenza vs. Mpox)
- Personally controlled vs. controlled by others (Sun exposure vs. Corruption)
- Fairly distributed vs. unfairly distributed (citywide air pollution vs. pollution from a factory in a low-income neighborhood)
- Dread factor (sharks vs. hypothermia)

# Risk = Hazard + Outrage



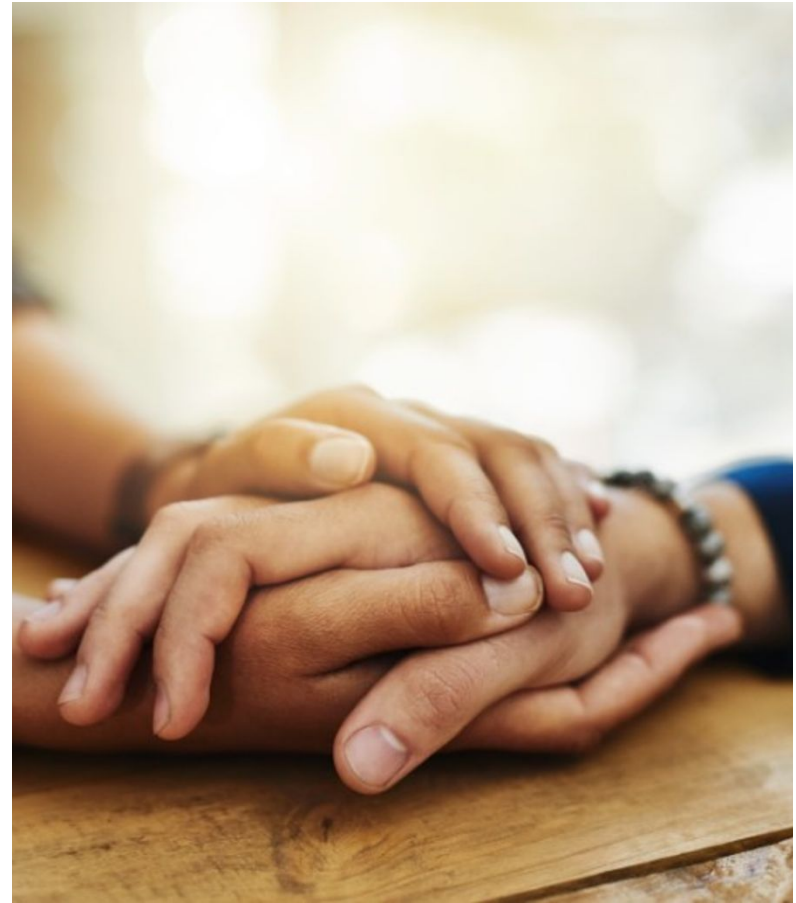
# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Examples of Hazard vs. Outrage quadrants:

- **Precautionary Advocacy:** Seasonal Influenza, obesity, radon
- **Outrage Management:** Ebola (not) in the U.S., release of low-level radiation from a nuclear power plant
- **Crisis Communications:** Early-peak COVID-19, flash flooding from severe weather event
- **Low H, low O:** Late-night pharmaceutical/herbal infomercials

# Trauma Informed Language

- Be careful about descriptions of abuse and violence
- Avoid violent language
- Avoid objectifying language
- Avoid judgmental language
- Be thoughtful about command statements



# Communicating in High-Stress Situations

## Our focus today:

- Preparing the message
- Preparing the messenger





# Task #1

## Preparing the Message

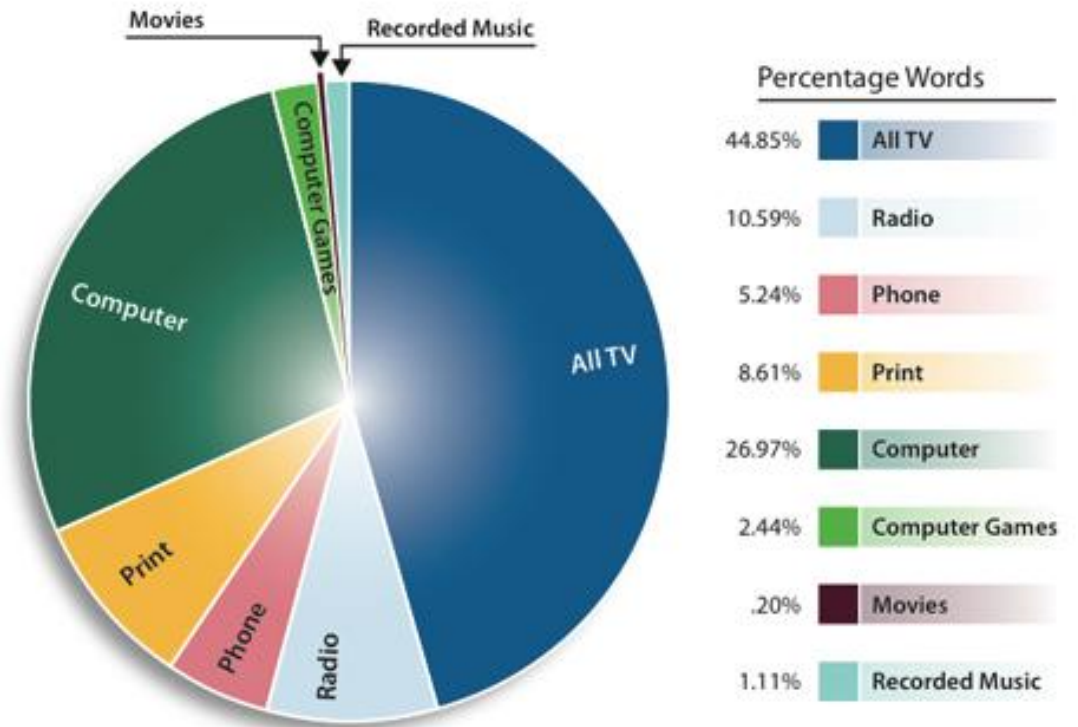
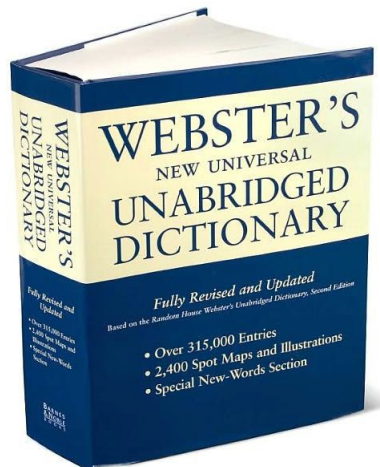
## Four key points for preparing the message

- Keep it brief
- Empathy comes first
- Establish **trust** through credibility and transparency
- Plain language is a must

# Respecting your busy audience

## Keep it brief

- Average American takes in 100k words per day (34 GB of info)
- Equivalent to half of the Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (approx. 1,200 pages)



Source: HMI Report/UC San Diego

# Preparing the Message

## Keep it brief

- One solution: “The Bite, Snack, Meal approach”



## Keep it brief

- One solution: “The Bite, Snack, Meal approach”
  - **Bite:** Who, what, where, when ... and why should I care?
  - **Snack:** Bite plus key context
  - **Meal:** The full story

## Keep it brief

- Bite, Snack, Meal Approach: The Message Map

What should I do to protect myself from seasonal flu?

# Preparing the Message

## Keep it brief

- Bite, Snack, Meal Approach: The Message Map

What should I do to protect myself from seasonal flu?

Key Message 1:  
Wash your hands

Key Message 2:  
Stay home if sick

Key Message 3:  
Get flu vaccine

# Preparing the Message

## Keep it brief

- Bite, Snack, Meal Approach: The Message Map

What should I do to protect myself from seasonal flu?

Key Message 1:  
Wash your hands

1. Use warm, soapy water
2. After coughing or sneezing
3. Sanitizer OK in a pinch

Key Message 2:  
Stay home if sick

1. Most contagious during early days of symptoms
2. Faster recovery with rest

Key Message 3:  
Get flu vaccine

1. Best to do it in fall
2. It's not too late
3. Safe and effective

## **Be a decent human being**

“Empathy is choosing to see ourselves in another way despite our differences. it's recognizing that the same humanity-the same desire for meaning, fulfilment and security-exists in each of us, even if it's expressed uniquely.”

-Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General

## Be a decent human being

- Empathy statement first
  - Acknowledge audience suffering, fear, loss, concern
- Then share relevant fact/figures
- Avoid defensive/promotional statements about yourself or your organization
- **Use the words we, our, or together to build a connection with your audience and a sense of unity.**

- Building trust with RIM communities takes time
  - Be present regularly, not just during emergencies
- Listen to the community and understand their needs
- Invest time in cultivating authentic relationships and connections
- Educate yourself on the history, traditions, and customs of these communities (even understanding the basics could go a long way)

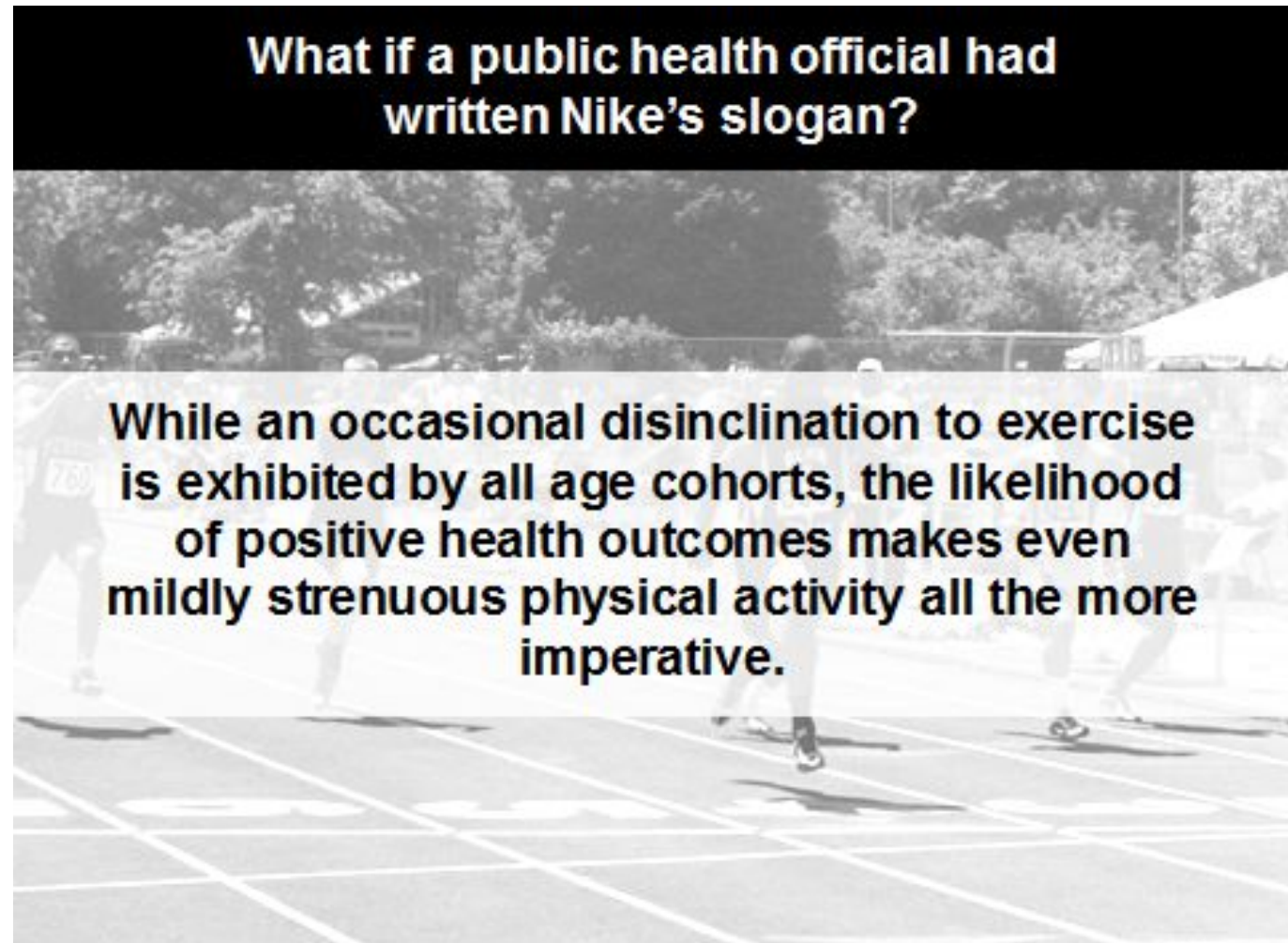
# Preparing the Message

## **Establish trust through credibility and transparency**

- Build and develop relationships over time
  - Maintain accessibility
- Tell them what you know
- Tell them what you don't know
- Tell them what you're going to do
  - To learn more, fix the problem, help them, etc.
- Give them something to do (to help themselves or others)
  - Recognizing barriers some may face
  - Co-creating the solution

# Preparing the Message

## Use Plain Language



## Use Plain Language

- Key points first, then context
- Plain language leads to more accurate translations
  - Making sure concepts and terms are translated correctly (multiple reviewers)
- Careful with acronyms and jargon
- Keep sentences, paragraphs short
- Tailor message to audience level of education/awareness
  - EXAMPLE: Talking about vaping with doctors vs. high school students
  - Wall Street Journal/New York Times vs. USA Today

## Use Community Media

- Partner with trusted sources in RIM communities
  - Internet-based media channels, social media, radio, faith organizations, nonprofits
- Customize your messaging to your target community
- Mainstream media can help
- Focus on quality

## Use Community Media

- Sahan Journal's COVID vaccine videos
  - Trusted figures, quality content, in-house production
- Measles story
  - Data-driven...
  - but nuanced

### COVID-19 VACCINE PROJECT

#### **Everything kids and parents need to know about getting the COVID-19 vaccine: a video in Hmong, Spanish, Somali, Oromo, and English.**

This week, kids ages 5–11 become eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. Does your child have questions about why to get a shot and what to expect? We made a video for kids, featuring doctors and nurses who work with children. Please check it out—in Hmong, Spanish, Oromo, Somali, and English.

### HEALTH

#### **Somali families and Minnesota health officials confront low vaccination rates—and a cluster of measles cases**

The Minnesota Department of Health believes 14 unvaccinated children were infected while traveling, likely to Somalia, Kenya, and Denmark. They infected eight other children in Minnesota.

## The Problem with Translation

- To translate or not to translate?
- Will it resonate?
- Who will translate, who will review?
- What to do if there isn't an equivalent word? (example: booster)
- How can you go beyond translation?

# Preparing the Message

- Understand the different ways that different communities consume and disseminate information
  - News and information travels very fast in RIM communities
  - Social media amplifies unverified or misinformation
- Who are the “influencers” or the most-trusted AND credible figures?
  - Recognize that no single entity represents these communities entirely.



# Task #2

## Preparing the Messenger

# Preparing the Messenger

## Best Practices for Messengers:

### 1. Non-verbal communication

## Non-Verbal Keys

- Eyes
- Hands
- Posture



*Two members of the MN Malaria Community Advisory Board*

# Preparing the Messenger

## Non-Verbal Communication

- 75/25 rule
- Negative dominance
- Cultural contexts



# Cultural Considerations

- Be aware of cultural nuances in non-verbal communication
- Understand the importance of personal space
- Observe proper greetings
  - Example: gender differences
- Be aware of cultural norms and religious practices

## Best Practices for Messengers:

1. *Non-verbal communication*
2. **Bridging: Artfully transitioning from one topic to another**
  - “What I can tell you is....”
  - “Another important point is...”
  - “What we know now is...”
  - “The most important thing to know right now is...”

## Best Practices for Messengers:

1. *Non-verbal communication*
2. *Bridging: Artfully transitioning from one topic to another*
3. **Mastering “tough questions” strategies**

# Preparing the Messenger

## “Tough Question” Strategies:

- IDK scenario
- Guarantee scenario

## IDK (I Don't Know) Scenario

- Say you don't know, can't answer, wish you could answer
- Give reasons why you don't know or can't answer
- Indicate you'll follow up
- Bridge to what you can say



**“I have just a few questions for you...”**

# Preparing the Messenger

## Tips for communicating with audiences under stress

1. Understand and make space for emotion
2. Remember the empathy statement
3. Eliminate barriers to comprehension
4. Repeat and reinforce basic messages
5. Let people choose the bite, snack or meal
6. Coordinate messages with partners in advance
7. Give people something to do

