

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 "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 2004

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..."
16. "The heart of the matter is..."

BRIDGING TEMPLATES (cont.)

17. "What matters most in this situation is..."
18. "And as I said before,..."
19. "And if we take a closer look, we would see..."
20. "Let me just add to this that..."
21. "I think it would be more correct to say..."
22. "Let me point out again that..."
23. "Let me emphasize again..."
24. "In this context, it is essential that I note..."
25. "Another thing to remember is..."
26. "Before we leave the subject, let me add that..."
27. "And that reminds me..."
28. "And the one thing that is important to remember is..."
29. "What I've said comes down to this..."
30. "Here's the real issue..."
31. "While...is important, it is also important to remember..."
32. It's true that...but it is also true that..."
33. "What is key here is..."

GUARANTEE TEMPLATE

Use when asked to guarantee an event or outcome

Steps

- Indicate that the question is about the future
- Indicate that the Past/Present 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..."

3X PROBING TEMPLATE

Use when confronted with a criticism, objective, or allegation, or challenge

Steps

- Ask at least three non-judgmental questions before replying
- Bridge to three positive, constructive, or solution oriented messages

Example: "Can you tell me more? Can you help me to better understand what you said?"

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"; or "My ability to answer is limited;" or "I don't know" (less preferred)
- Say why you can't answer
- Give 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 use more neutral language
- Indicate that 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 have done the following to address "x"...

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: (1) "You can do" "x" (2) or "y" but I recommend (3) "z"

27/9/3 TEMPLATE

Use when responding to any high stress or emotionally charged question

Recommendation: Be brief and concise in your responses: 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

1N=3P (1 NEGATIVE EQUALS 3 POSITIVES) TEMPLATE

Use when breaking bad news or stating a negative

Recommendation: Balance the negative message with a least three positive, constructive, or solution oriented messages