



2024 Key Ideas and Tools for Understanding and Practicing Asset Based Framing

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Disclaimer

These slides were created based on the "2024 Convening: Leadership Shaping the Narrative" presentation delivered by Trabian Shorters on September 16, 2024.

Some of the content includes direct quotes, while other parts represent paraphrased or summarized key points from the presentation.

Trabian Shorters Key Take Aways

The process of pushing something from your intuitive mind to your cognitive mind is called learning.


You have zero control over what you receive. But you have control over what you feed yourself.

Start with the best, then the rest.

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Narratives tell us
which facts to credit
and which to ignore.

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The data says we
are data driven and
we are not. Humans
are narrative driven.

All humans are
prone to disregard
facts that don't fit
the narrative.

A Comparison of Deficit vs. Asset Framing

DEFICIT FRAMING

1. Reduces empathy
2. Increases anxiety
3. Restricts cognitive function
4. Triggers avoid, control, kill
5. Meant to be temporary
6. Anger, depression, toxicity
7. Enables toxic polarization
8. 'Bad faith actors' love it
9. Is how we 'de-humanize'
10. Common in philanthropy

ASSET-FRAMING

1. Increases empathy
2. Reduces anxiety
3. Frees cognitive function
4. Prevents **avoid, control, kill**
5. **Meant to be regular**
6. Hope, optimism, nourishing
7. Enables affinity
8. Builders love it
9. Is how we 'humanize'
10. Is key to our Next Narrative



When a narrative is based on a deficit, it is stigmatizing and attaches to individuals...

- Stigmatizing is defining someone by their “problem.”
- Stigma sabotages because intuition associates stigma with a perceived threat, which lowers empathy and increases anxiety.
- Your brain instinctively tries to kill a threat.



We are driven by
narratives.

Start with the best, then
the rest.

-Trabian Shorters



What you think matters...

but the way you are taught to think and the way you naturally think are two different things.

HOW *EVERYONE* THINKS

95%

INTUITIVE MIND:

Forms Mental Narratives

- Primary system
- Always on, autonomic
- Forms Habits, Intuition
- Enables language
- 1000x faster than thought

5%

CONSCIOUS MIND:

Considers Facts

- “A backup system”
- Slow and effortful
- Used only as needed
- Generally confirms intuitions
- “All human beings disregard facts that don’t fit our narratives.”



Intuitive vs. Conscious

- People are narrative driven rather than data driven.
- Intuition is not choice; it's the recognition of patterns.
- All humans disregard facts that don't fit our narratives.
- Narratives tell us which facts to credit and which to ignore.
- We have zero control over recall, only control over input (give your mind fuller narratives by learning aspirations of people and defining them by this).

Words follow thoughts, and actions follow thoughts—so shift the narrative....

- You can only control what you input. Give your mind a fuller narrative.
- We give our brains full narratives when we include aspirations and contributions.
- People who have agency are not defined by their biggest challenges.

Shorters' Take on Asset Framing

- Tell whole stories
- State the best before the rest
- Give your brain a whole map that starts with aspirations and contributions
- Individuals are less likely to be stereotyped as the sole source of the problem
- Asset framing can change minds and shift policies

Have your mental narrative ready **BEFORE** you're in a triggering situation. Answer:

1. What do you Love about your group(s)?
2. To what do they *yearn, earn, learn, provide, lead, seed, seek, strive, drive, or aspire*?
3. What (systematically) threatens them or their aspirations?
4. What does your shop do to help fulfill **their** aspirations and maximize **their** contributions?



An example from the Convening of reframing a media narrative from deficit to asset-based...

Public Education is facing an epic crisis: How politics and the pandemic put schools in the line of fire. (Washington Post: January 30, 2022)

“Test scores are down, and violence is up. Parents are screaming at school boards, and children are crying on the couches of social workers. Anger is rising, and Patience is falling. Public education is facing a crisis unlike anything in decades, and it reaches into almost everything educators do, from teaching math to counseling anxious children to managing the building.”

Reframed:

In the wake of the pandemic, parents and community are leaning in. We all want to see well-educated students and well-resourced schools. By leveraging the expertise of educators, parents, and school leaders, we can create public schools to support the needs and assets of the whole child.

Your turn
to build
that
muscle!

Using these materials,
work to reframe your
organizational
messages to be asset-
based.

Reframing Our Stories: Building the Muscle Worksheet

Filters

Aspirations

- Are the contributions and aspirations of the people described **asset-based or deficit-based describing only challenges?**
- Is the story primed with assets that describe the population?
 - Does the story describe the aspirations and contributions of the group?
 - Does the story debunk myths or reinforce stereotypes?
 - Does the story state the deficit?

Systemic Solutions

- Does the story ask **individuals or systems** to change, modify, or shift or otherwise take action?
- Is there a systemic or institution solution policy, program, or practice?
 - Who will benefit from the action: people, institutions, or systems?
 - Is the solution based in abundance or scarcity?

The Bigger “We”/Shared Values

- Does the story encourage **shared value, collaboration, and expanded networks or** describe **scarcity and competition?**
- Does the story show a benefit to everyone? The bigger “We.”
 - Does the story encourage cooperation, collaboration, and solidarity?
 - Does the story expand social networks, revitalize communities?
 - Does the story incite fear, polarization, scarcity, and competition?

Language

- Does the story use **language that can be shared with those intended to benefit?**
- Does the story “other” a specific population?
 - Is the language used in the story language that you would use in talking to those you intend to benefit?

Guiding Questions for Reframing a Story

- Does the reframe describe contributions and aspirations of the people?
- Does the story suggest **systems need to change?**
- How does the story encourage **shared value, collaboration, and expanded networks and reduce scarcity, competition and polarization?**
- Does the story **use language that can be shared with those intended to benefit?**

Reframing Our Stories: Building the Muscle Worksheet

Your Story

Think about the story you tell most often in your work, even if it lacks some levers. Write two to three sentences demonstrating using these ideas and themes in your work.

Asset Based/ Aspirations and Contributions	Systemic Solutions	The Bigger “We”/Shared Values	Language	Reframed
Are the contributions and aspirations of the people described asset-based or deficit-based describing only by challenges?	Does the story suggest individuals need to change or systems need to change?	Does the story encourage shared value, collaboration, and expanded networks or scarcity and competition and polarization?	Does the story “other” or does it use language that can be shared with those intended to benefit?	How would you reframe the story?



Appendix



Generational Differences

Boomers

- Adults for more than 50 years
- Born in an analog world
- Guided the country for five decades
- Largest generation in the world
- Raised with crisis narratives
- Declared war on poverty and drugs
- Motivated by crisis
- Used hierarchical ways
- Have institutional authority and not aging out of institutional authority
- Equity is a concept that has ownership at its essence

Millennial and Gen Z

- Born in a digital world
- Raised in networks
- Raised on empowerment marketing, negative doesn't work on them, "You're awesome, this will make you awesomer"
- No need for a single leader
- Understanding protocol matters
- The generation doesn't value hierarchy, they do functional organizing

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○ • You can't invite me
to my table.



Contact:

Dr. Sherri Killins Stewart, skstewart@lmipossible.com

Brian Dixon, brian@wcstonefnd.org

For More Information