

Finding Commonalities and Solutions with Decision Makers

Building relationships and having productive conversations to change policy

Voices for Healthy Kids Summit - September 2025



American
Heart
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Agenda

GUIDES

Advancing Prenatal-to-Three Policies: A Guide to Finding Commonalities and Solutions with Decision-Makers

Introduction

How To Use This Tool

Methodology

Shared Characteristics

The Archetypes

Customizing PN-3 Messages

Understanding Yourself

Hidden Feelings Exercise

Creating An
Ongoing Conversation

Additional Resources

Acknowledgements

Introduction: The Search for Common Ground

Initial Phase: Understanding Conservative Values



Well-being for babies, children and families is a broadly shared priority. [National research](#) shows that policy influencers across the ideological spectrum understand the importance of the prenatal-through-three (PN-3) period, especially around brain development.

Overview of guide and training:

- Messages and tips to advance conversations with decision-makers
- Techniques to find common ground
- Support to do the work in a nonpolarizing and psychologically safe way

Advancing Policies: A Guide to Finding Commonalities and Solutions with Decision-Makers

Overview of guide and the training:

- Messages and tips to advance conversations with decision-makers
- Techniques to find common ground
- Support to do the work in a nonpolarizing and psychologically safe way

The Archetypes

Church & Country



Economic Influenced



Legacy Republican



Populist-Aligned



Archetypes, not stereotypes

Archetype

Typical example of a person



Can share insights about people who hold similar views and values



Can increase understanding.

Stereotype

Widely held, fixed, oversimplified image of a person



Can reduce people to a simplistic idea.



Can shut down curiosity and openness.

Church & Country



Loyal to chosen leaders
Hold conservative Christian values
Take pride in position earned

- **Values:** Faith, authority, tradition, control, care
- **PN-3:** Mom + Dad = family, Mom stays home, education is solution
- **Trust:** Faith leaders, doctors, small business

Economic Influenced



Highly educated and financially secure
Prioritize economy and business
Dig into policy details
Favor limited government

- **Values:** Freedom, individual choice, control
- **PN-3:** Data Driven, ROI
- **Trust:** Free Market advocates, data, select mainstream media

Legacy Republican



Value debate

Interested in other points of view

Open to stepping out of party

Passionate about policy details

- **Values:** Diligence, care, service, leadership
- **PN-3:** Early intervention, limited government role
- **Trust:** Experts, data, mainstream media, professionals

Populist Aligned



Distrust of Institutions and experts
Led by constitutional ideals
Value individual efforts

- **Values:** Loyalty to America, Diligence, Freedom
- **PN-3:** No government role
- **Trust:** Their own research and individuals from their community, deep distrust of data, experts and media

SHARED BELIEFS

- Hold **freedom** as a core value
- Prioritize **individual responsibility**
- Feel **judged and villainized** by progressives
- May **reject arguments that start with structural racism**
- See K-12 as great equalizer
- Favor policies that **help every child** and show **ROI**

The Archetypes + Dials

Church & Country



Economic Influenced



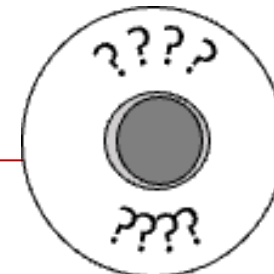
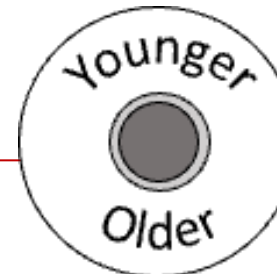
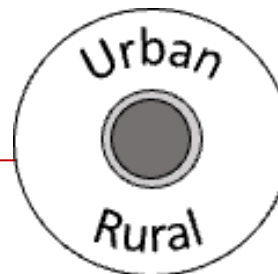
Legacy Republican



Populist-Aligned



Dials: Geography, Age, Other



Applying Nonpolarizing Communications



Core Needs, Values and Feelings

Core Needs

Belonging
Meaning
Safety
Hope
Authenticity
Integrity
Trust
Freedom
Challenge
Growth
Purpose
Caring
Acceptance
Understanding
Love
Warmth
Connection

Values

Appreciation	Moderation
Balance	Nature
Beauty	Nurturing
Boldness	Originality
Caring	Order
Contribution	Passion
Control	Partnership
Clarity	Power
Diligence	Peace
Directness	Playfulness
Efficiency	Quiet
Elegance	Respect
Expertise	Resiliency
Faith	Risk
Focus	Security
Freedom	Service
Intimacy	Sharing
Integrity'	Style
Joy	Sensuality
Knowledge	Success
Leadership	Spirituality
Loyalty	Solitude

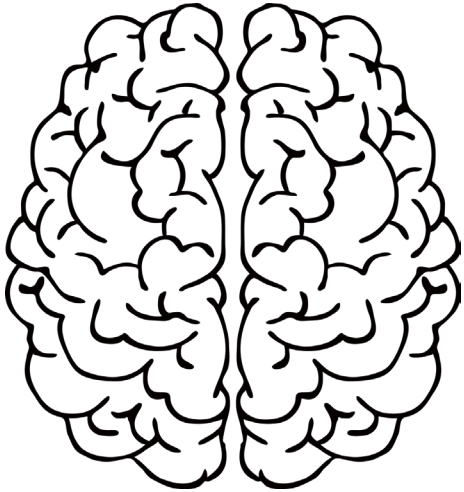
Feelings when our needs are getting met

Alert
Confident
Content
Energetic
Excited
Friendly
Happy
Healthy
Interested
Peaceful
Relaxed
Thankful

Feelings when our needs are not getting met:

Afraid
Annoyed
Angry
Confused
Disconnected
Disgusted
Disturbed
Embarrassed
Pained
Sad
Tense
Vulnerable
Yearning

Three levels of awareness



Thinking (brain)



Feeling (heart)



Intuition (gut)

Hidden Feelings Exercise

1. Understanding Yourself; Learn to recognize the needs, values and feelings we experience in conversations and how that impacts how we react.
2. Understanding Others: Practice listening to seek understanding so we can better understand those we talk to.
3. Putting it All Together: Learn to apply that idea to statements from decision-makers so our responses build trust and encourage connection.

Understanding Yourself: Breakout #1

Step One: Read the quote to yourself

Step Two: Notice how you feel when you imagine someone saying this to you.

Step 3: Discuss as a group the feelings that came up and how it felt to analyze the quote in this way.



Understanding Other: Breakout #2

- ❖ How might the person saying this quote feel?
- ❖ Read the quote out loud.
- ❖ Discuss as a table what you think the person speaking might be feeling and needing, and what they value.

Breakout #3 Putting it all Together: Translate a statement from a decision-maker

- Now imagine you are in conversation with the lawmaker and they said this quote to you
- What archetype do you think this person fits most into? How should that impact your response?
- As a group write your reply to the quote and see if it opens the conversation up in a different way.








Example: Putting it all Together

Quote: *“Life is not fair. Life is hard. I’m bound by my faith in my obligations to my fellow man, but I don’t want the government dictating a redistribution of resources. That’s the basis of Marxism. That does not work.”* — State representative, male, 48, urban/suburban

Archetypes: Church and Country

Needs, Values, Feelings: freedom, safety, faith, hard work, fear, service

Possible translation: “Right. You respect that people go through hard times, and you’re a man of faith — and you believe that offering support is the right thing to do. But not by taking away anyone else’s freedom.”

Core Message	General Supporting Points	Archetype Nuances and Tips	Why This Can Work
“Every child deserves an opportunity to get a strong start in life. When we empower parents to create a strong start for their babies and toddlers, it provides a foundation for their future.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ During the first three years of life, the brains and bodies of infants and toddlers make huge gains in development.▶ The brain is like a sponge. Babies’ brains develop fastest from birth to age 3, and their early experiences — both positive and negative — build the foundation for brain and body architecture that will support their ability to learn, their behavior and their overall health.▶ You may have heard that a child who is not reading at grade level by third grade is likely to have fewer opportunities and positive outcomes later in life. That’s true, and it’s important to support K-12 education. But we often forget about babies and toddlers in that equation.▶ Children whose families live in poverty often lack resources for decent housing, food, clothing and books, and they often do not have access to high-quality child care and early education, or health care. Many arrive at kindergarten without the language or social skills they need for learning.	<div>CHURCH & COUNTRY Strongly support two-parent (mom and dad) households, where mom stays home in the early years.</div> <div>TIP Acknowledge that a strong start may include parents staying home if they choose to and the environment supports their ability to do so.</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ There is a strong shared understanding of the importance of PN-3, especially regarding brain development, social-emotional health and physical health. Be sure to cite both positive and negative impacts and outcomes.▶ There is a sense among conservative decision-makers that life isn’t fair and won’t be for everyone, and it’s not society’s job to ensure equal outcomes. However, there is strong support for access to opportunity.▶ Conservatives believe the mom (and dad) are the most important caretakers for a young child and need to see that the new mom is assuming personal responsibility. This messaging is powerful and audiences that are inclined to support PN-3 are “easy to lose” when culturally conservative messages are amplified. Talk about empowering parents first, rather than inserting government or society into the equation, lean into the values of parental control and personal responsibility.▶ Early intervention to prevent poor outcomes later is a strong theme. The fact that a child who is not reading on level by third grade is likely to lack good opportunities and outcomes later in life has strong credibility with conservative audiences. Explicitly linking that to PN-3 is vital.
		<div>LEGACY REPUBLICAN Most likely to believe society has a role to play.</div>	
		<div>POPULIST-ALIGNED Believe society doesn’t have a responsibility to make things fair for everyone.</div> <div>TIP Focus on creating opportunity and empowering parents.</div>	

Please go deeper into this work with us

- Online guide
 - <https://voicesforhealthykids.org/message-research-projects>
- Full training: short video modules + 90-minute workshop
 - <https://voicesforhealthykids.org/campaign-resources/trainings>
- Communities of practice and technical assistance
 - <https://voicesforhealthykids.org/internal/technical-assistance-portal>

THANK YOU !



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