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Staying on Message When Everything Changes all the Time

Professor Juliette Kayyem

There is no denying reality...

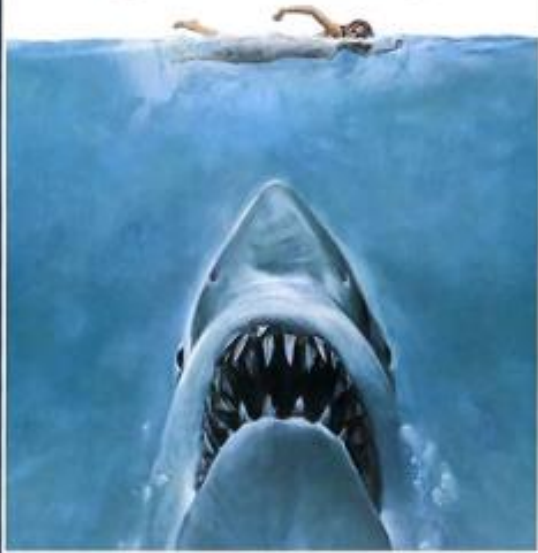
For most Americans, COVID-19 is **still a living nightmare**. We see no path forward, no national resolution, and no end.

The task before mayors is to **communicate with authority in the absence of certainty**, with **hope in a time of dread**, and with a **message of solidarity** in a time of acrimony.



The terrifying motion picture
from the terrifying No.1 best seller.

JAWS



ROY SCHEIDER ROBERT SHAW RICHARD DREYFUSS
JAWS

Co-starring LORRAINE GARY - MURRAY HAMILTON - A ZANUCK/BROWN PRODUCTION
by PETER BENCHLEY and CARL GOTTUEB - Based on the novel by PETER BENCHLEY - Music by JOHN
WILLIAMS - Directed by STEVEN SPIELBERG - Produced by RICHARD D. ZANUCK and DAVID BROWN - A UNIVERSAL PICTURES
PRESENTATION
PG PARENTAL STRONG CAUTION
SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 10
MAY BE TOO INTENSE FOR YOUNGER CHILD

THE STORY is just not that simple anymore

But, for all of us, it's bad (*and not guided easily by a public information office*)

Managing the situation with PUBLIC NARRATIVE:



What is the story of SELF?

What is the story of US?

What is the story of NOW?

The three essential components of crisis communications (again):

1

Conveying Information

Transparent
Trustworthy
Consistent
Coordinated

2

Showing Empathy

For everyone
affected

3

Establishing a Basis for Hope

Grounded
in reality



What have we learned about communicating in a crisis over the last four months?

Embrace the work. Set the battle rhythm.

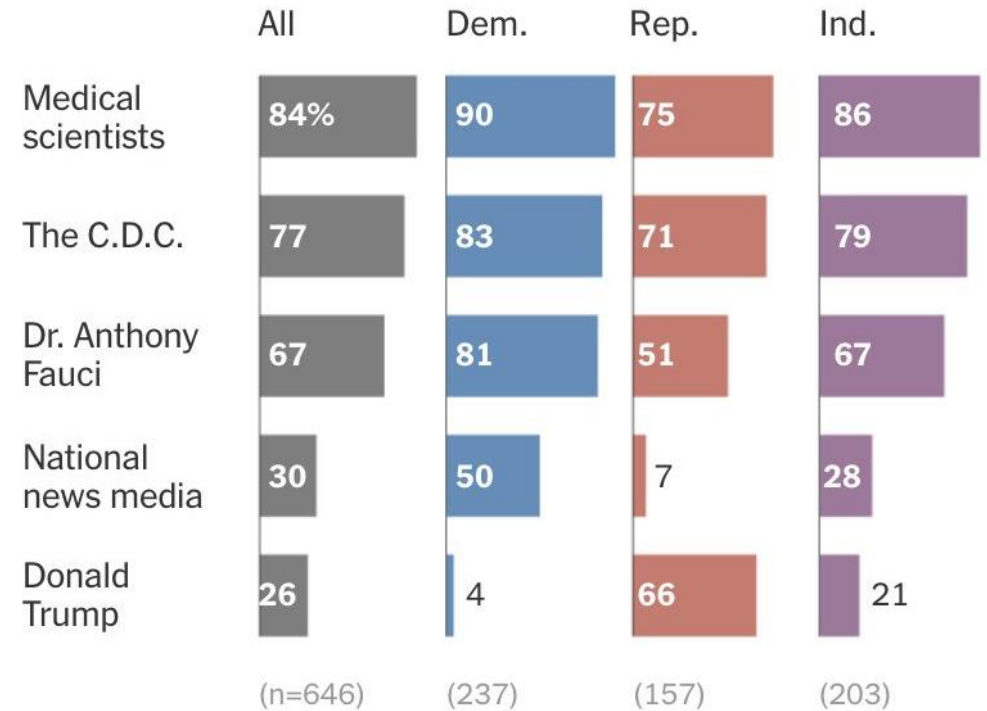
- ✓ **Embrace Data:**
Stick to facts and tailor them to your audience.
- ✓ **Embrace Empathy:**
Construct an empathetic bridge.
- ✓ **Embrace Reality:**
Build “herd immunity” to misinformation and the politicization of science.
- ✓ **Embrace the Public:**
Most people get it—and want to help. Enlist the public as partners.
- ✓ **Embrace the Future:**
Foster hope for a better future by sharing your vision and the steps you are taking to get there.

Studies say that Americans still trust the experts...

There is a lack of consensus between the current administration and public health experts over the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

At the same time, **“public health messages about the virus have been shifting.** Advice that masks weren’t necessary changed to **advice to wear masks”** (New York Times 6.27.20)

Share of voters who trust each source for accurate information about the coronavirus



Based on a New York Times/Siena College poll of 1,337 registered voters from June 17 to June 22. Questions shown were asked of half of respondents. Those who did not identify with a major party are not shown.



Thinking about the next few months, what concerns do you have about the communications challenges ahead?

Acknowledging Challenges:

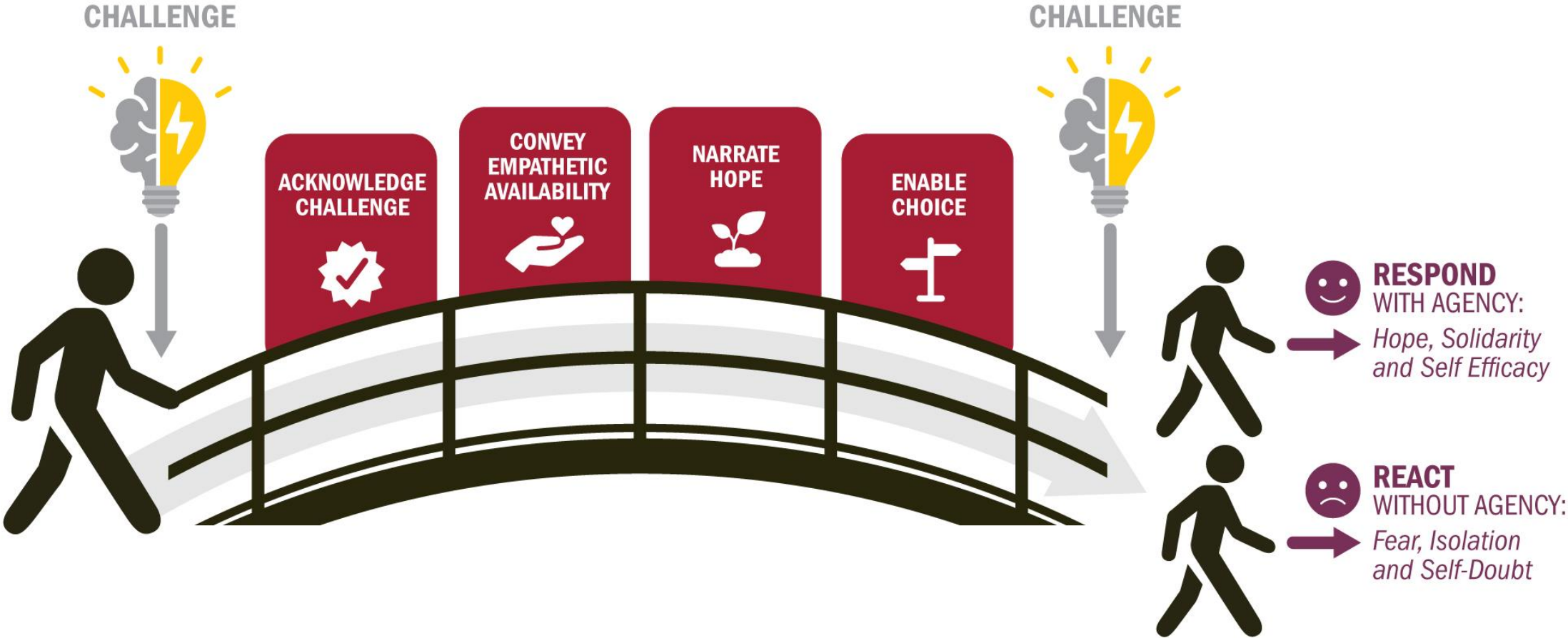
✓ **Communicating Hope**
despite depressing circumstances
with widespread social unrest.

✓ **Promoting Reconciliation**
despite polarization, angst,
and anger.

✓ **Building Solidarity**
despite individualist norms that
discount the needs and health of
others—especially the most vulnerable

✓ **Educating Citizens**
despite torrents of disinformation,
shared rapidly and widely (wittingly
or not) on social media

The Empathetic Bridge





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