



EFFECTIVE FRAMING AND REFRAMING

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE FRAMING & REFRAMING?

Effective framing involves thinking and talking about situations in a way that empowers us and others to make positive change. Effective framing makes it easier for people to work together to get to a better place.

Effective reframing involves helping ourselves and others shift to a more empowering way of thinking and talking about situations.

Effective framing and reframing are **NOT**:
 “Just putting on rose-tinted glasses,” pretending issues aren’t real, or ignoring or negating our or other people’s feelings and concerns.

What is a frame and why does it matter?

A frame is a lens through which we see, understand, and talk about the world. Whether we realize it or not, we are always applying frames to our thoughts and situations. These frames inform the narratives we hold and define what we see as possible (or not possible). The way we frame our experience and situations can either encourage or inhibit effective problem-solving, collaboration, and conflict resolution.

PROBLETUNITY: TWO WAYS OF SEEING THE SAME SITUATION

In every challenge, there is an opportunity. Hence, we like to think of and frame problems as “probletnities.”

To illustrate the power of effective framing and reframing, think about these two different ways of framing the same situation. How do they feel? Which seems more likely to inspire productive action?

- Frame 1: “This is an insurmountable problem!”
- Frame 2: “This is a real challenge. What opportunities does this challenge present for us?”

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE FRAMING AND REFRAMING

Here are four key principles that will help you frame and reframe situations in effective, empowering ways:

PRINCIPLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Focus on the probletnities, not on the people: <u>Don't</u>: make things personal (i.e., about yourself or others).</p> <p><u>Do</u>: focus on the challenge and/or opportunity that brings you into interaction with each other.</p>	<p>✗ <i>Focus on the people</i>: “I can’t work with that guy. He’s a jerk.”</p> <p>✓ <i>Focus on the probletnities</i>: “It seems like this relationship has been challenging for both of us. How might we better work together?”</p>
<p>Focus on interests, not positions: <u>Don't</u>: focus on specific solutions or strategies, or how someone proposes to address a problem or situation (i.e., positions).</p> <p><u>Do</u>: focus on underlying needs and concerns (i.e., interests), which may be substantive, procedural, and/or emotional.</p>	<p>✗ <i>Focus on positions</i>: “The town needs to build more affordable apartments.”</p> <p>✓ <i>Focus on interests</i>: “This community is really special to me, and I’d like to find a way to make it so that people who work here can also afford to live here.”</p>

<p>Focus on assets, not deficits: <u>Don't:</u> define situations or people by their problems or limitations.</p> <p><u>Do:</u> define them by their assets, opportunities, and aspirations.</p>	<p>✗ <i>Focus on deficits:</i> "Those outspoken community members are a pain."</p> <p>✓ <i>Focus on assets:</i> "There are a lot of thoughtful people in this community who care about this issue. How can we tap into their ideas and energy?"</p>
<p>Be responsive, not reactive: <u>Don't:</u> be driven by your emotions or see yourself as being "acted upon."</p> <p><u>Do:</u> understand, communicate, and validate how you and others are feeling, but focus on your and other people's agency to respond to the situation.</p>	<p>✗ <i>Reactive framing:</i> "All of these people moving in are destroying this place! This is a crisis!"</p> <p>✓ <i>Responsive framing:</i> "I am really concerned about the rapid growth happening in our county. Let's figure out how to manage this growth in a way that protects what makes this region special."</p>

PRO TIP

To effectively frame and reframe:

1. Carefully listen to yourself and/or others to understand and identify the:
 - Proletunity that brings you into interaction;
 - Underlying interests and emotions at play;
 - Assets, which include aspirations, opportunities, and resources; and
 - The opportunity for positive change.
2. State or restate the point in a responsive way that focuses on the proletunity, interests, assets, and emotions at play.

PRACTICE

Practice applying these concepts by envisioning: 1) how you might frame these statements more productively if you were the speaker; and 2) how you might help someone else effectively reframe these statements if they said these things to you:

1. I know the national park is overcrowded, but a reservation system for getting into it is a terrible idea. That would devastate the local economy and visitors would hate it. I won't support that idea.
2. It's clear that we have a regional water quality problem, but there's no way the different cities are going to work together on a regional wastewater treatment plant. We talked about that years ago, and it was super contentious and went nowhere. It's a waste of time to discuss it.
3. Housing in this town has become way too expensive! We need to make it easier to subdivide property so we can build more housing!
4. A grizzly bear attacked a guide in front of the ranch last summer. What if it had attacked one of our guests?! We need to start hunting the grizzlies, so they regain their fear of humans.

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