



IT'S SCARY OUT THERE – HOW TO USE SOCIAL SCIENCE IN COMMUNICATION TO DECREASE FEAR AND BUILD TRUST

April 8, 2020 | 12 – 1:00 p.m.
Power Lunch Webinar





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It's Scary Out There

How to Use Social Science in Communication to
Decrease Fear and Build Trust

Melissa Elliott, Director of Strategic Communication Services

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April 8, 2020



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

**AIRLINE STAFF
DIAGNOSED**

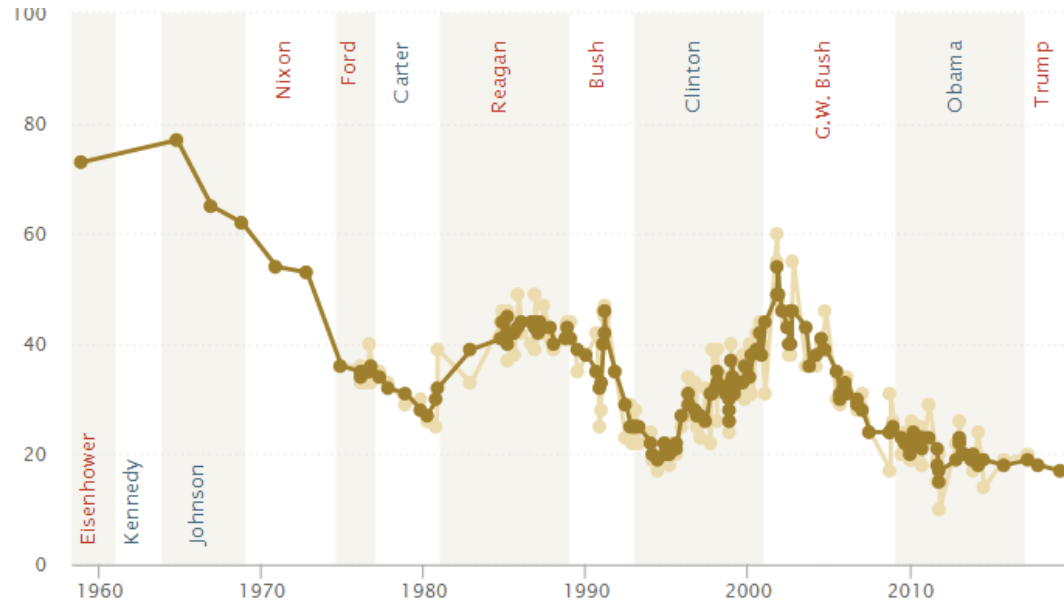
MARKET PLUNGE

DISNEYLAND CLOSES

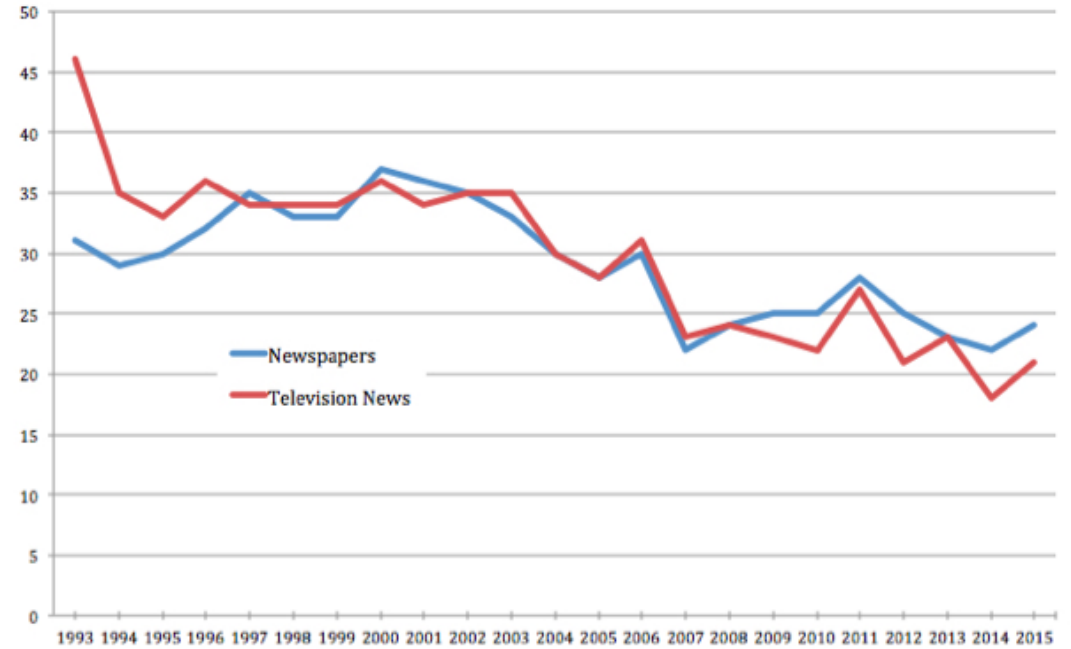




Trust in Leaders 1960-2020



Trust in Media 1993-2015







Trust Happens When...

- Promises are filled
- Expectations are met
- Values are being lived

Ask Yourself

What would
reasonable people
appropriately
expect a *responsible*
organization to do
in this situation?



Now is no time to be silent



In turbulent
times,
people
crave
reassurance

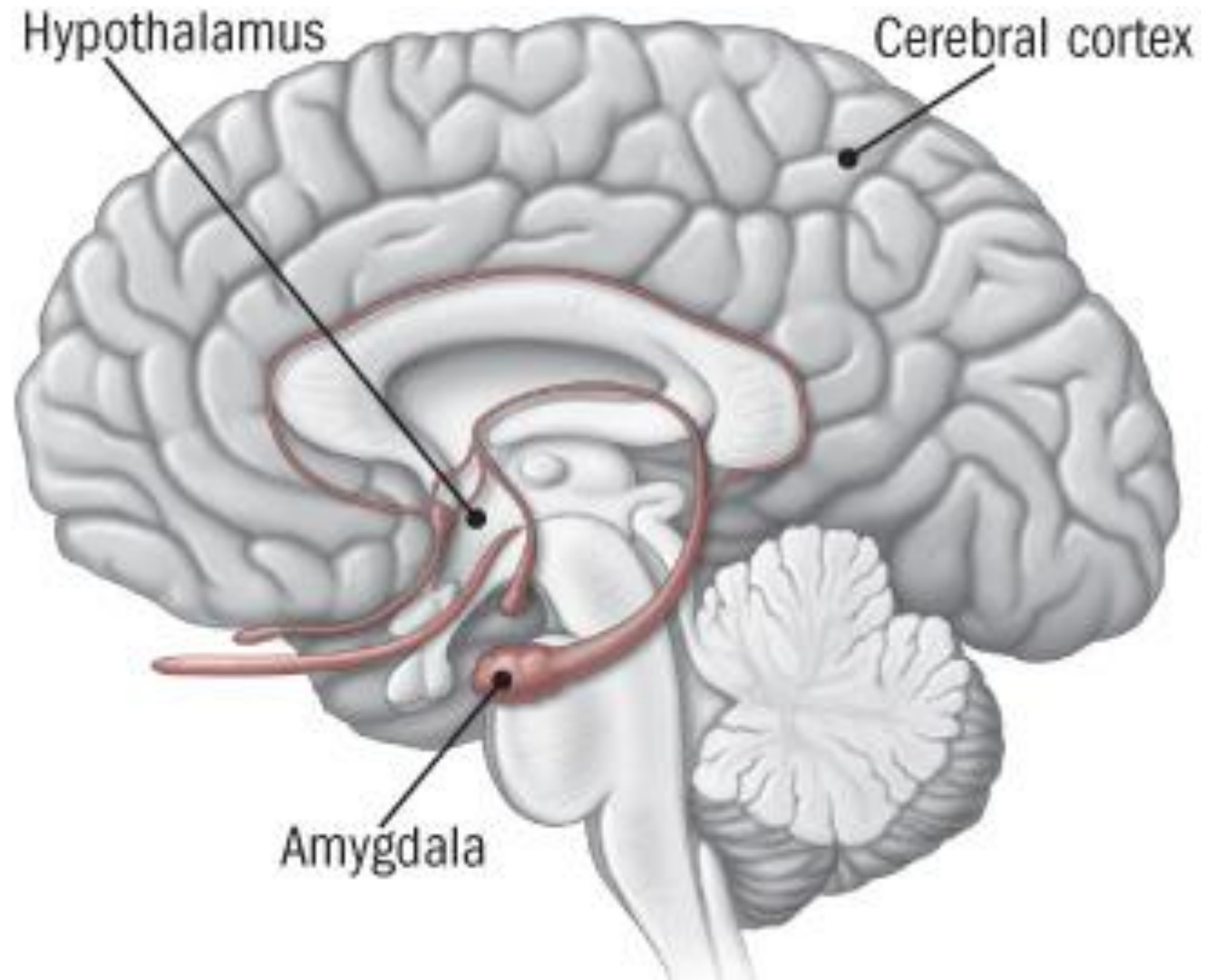


Heightened Emotions Block Discourse



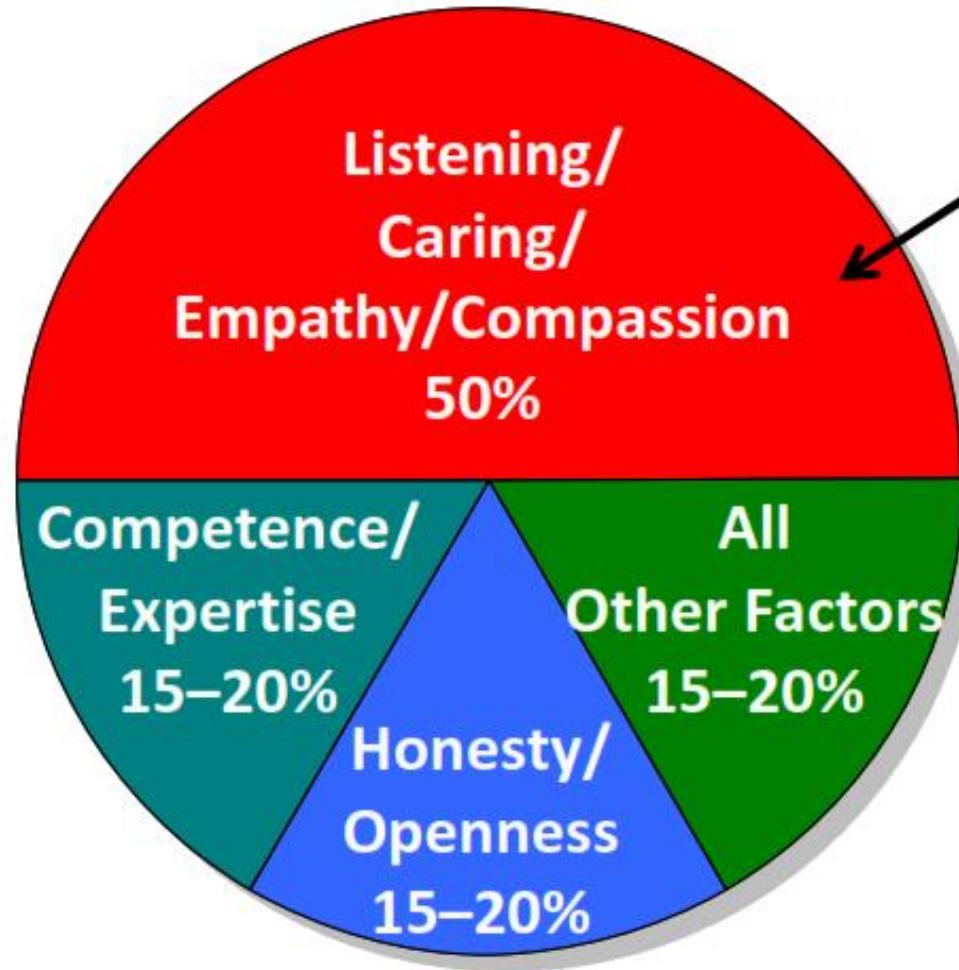
Discovered that
when fear is
present, people
process
information
differently.

We need to move our audiences from this heightened emotional, fear-based state, back to one of reason



Trust Determination Theory:

When people are concerned, stressed, upset... They want to **know that you care** before they care what you know



Typically assessed in first 9-30 seconds

Mental Noise Theory:

When people are concerned, stressed, upset... They have **difficulty hearing, understanding and remembering information**; they focus on what they hear first.



Negative Dominance Theory:

When people are concerned, stressed, upset... They often focus more on the **negative** than on the **positive**



Risk Perception Theory:

When people are concerned, stressed, upset... The gaps between **risk perceptions and reality** often become **wider**



Risk Communications Core Principles and Theories



EMOTIONS



REASON



EMOTIONS

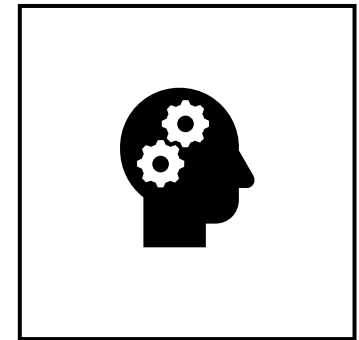
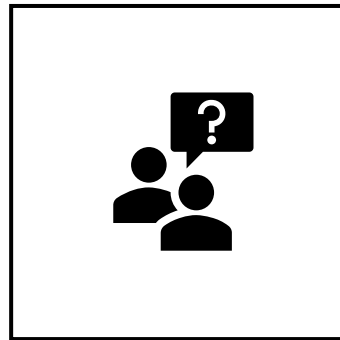
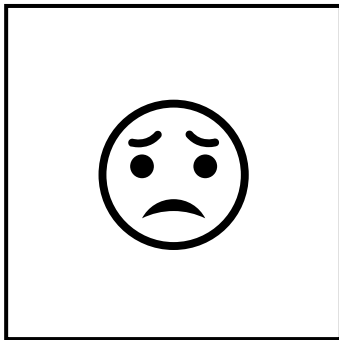


REASON

Empathize

Ask Questions

Attempt to
Discuss Facts



Much of communication is nonverbal—especially when feelings are involved

Body language is 55%

Tone of voice is 38%

Actual words is 7%

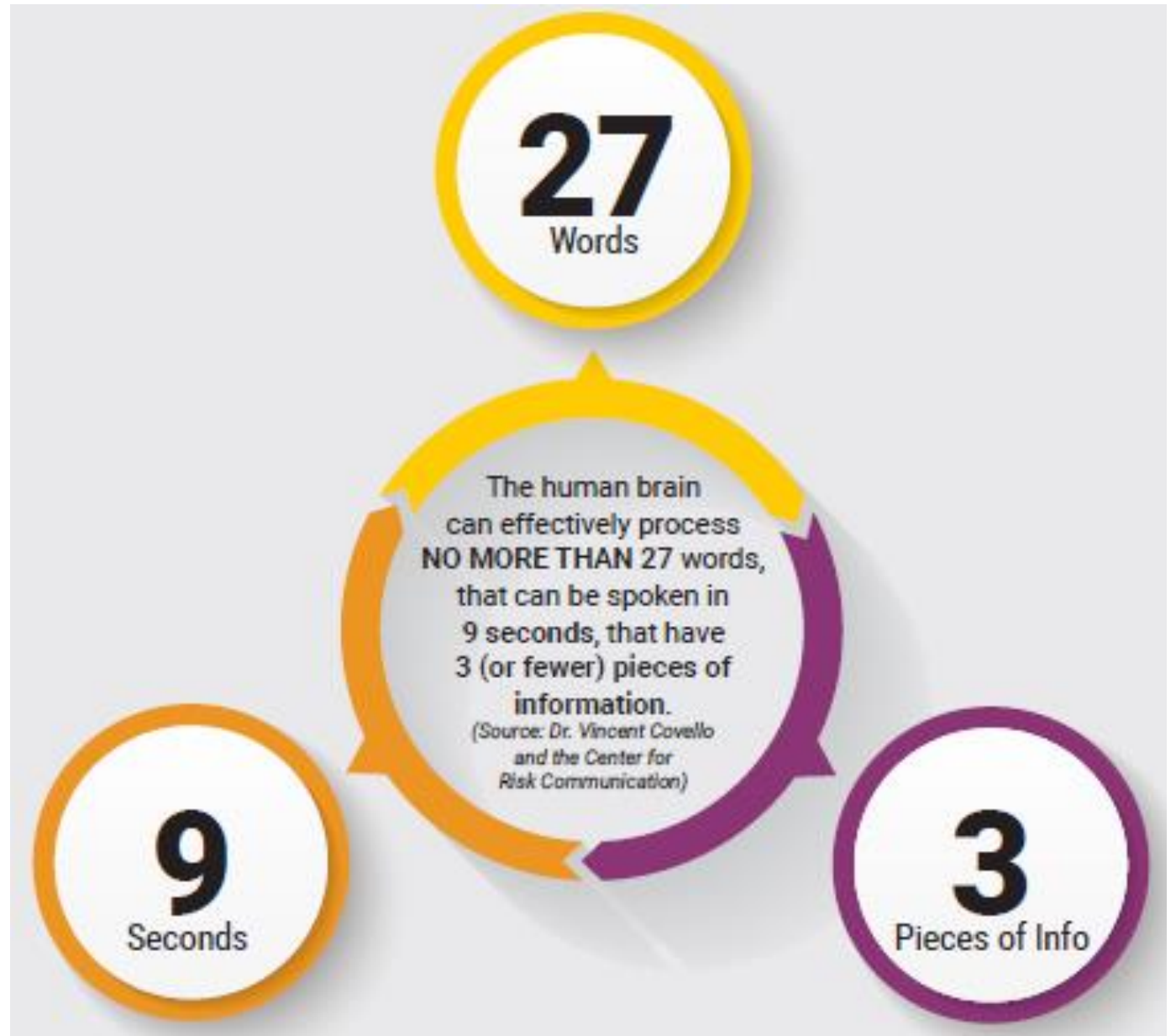




Responding in times of great uncertainty

- Provide information at four or more grade levels below the average for the audience
- Balance bad news/negative with at least three constructive messages
- Be brief and concise in your first response

Follow the 27-9-3 Rule



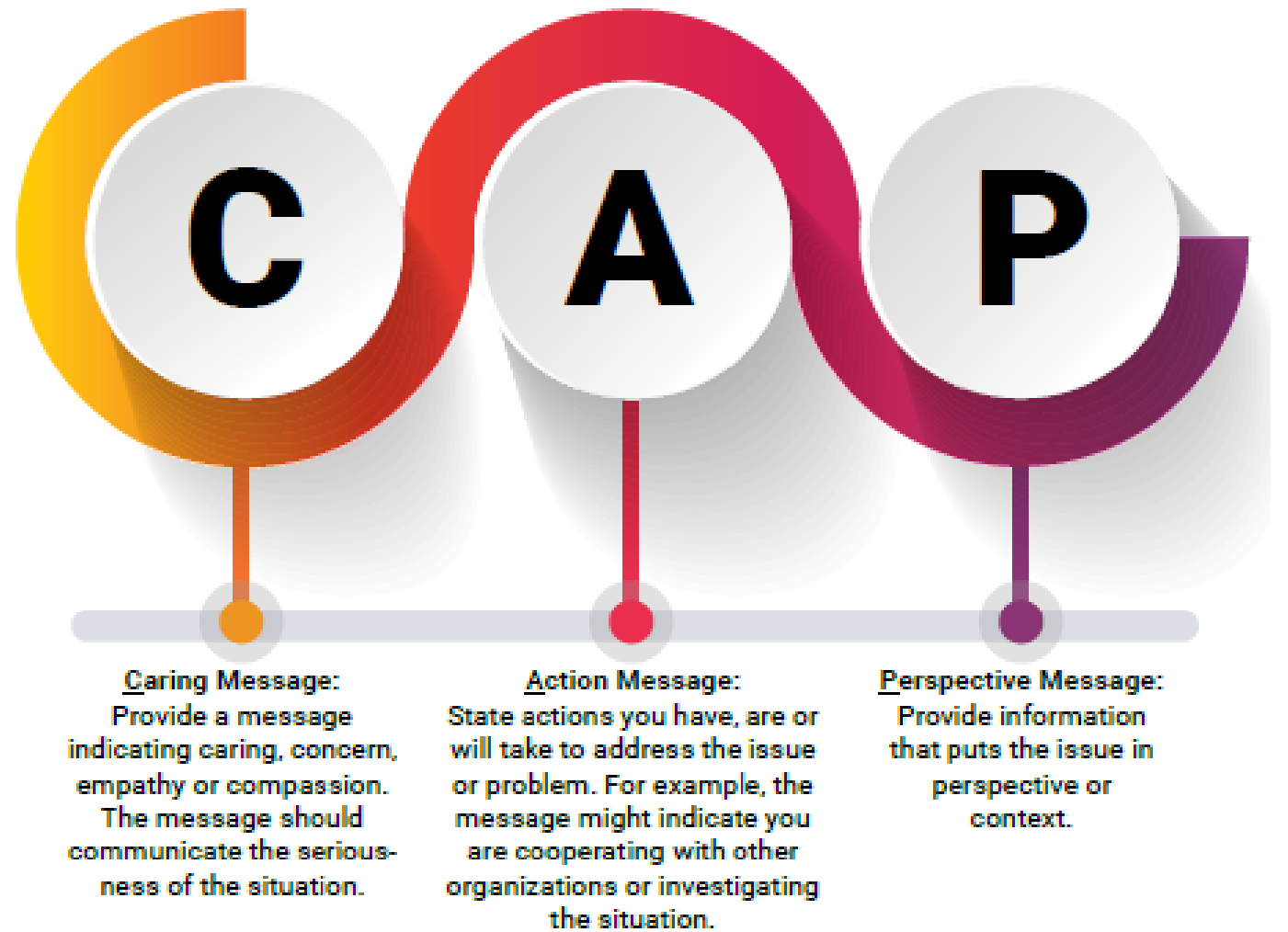
Templates can
help to respond
quickly



To give people a greater sense of control:

1. Share what is most important for the audience to know
2. Tell the audience what you are doing to address the concern
3. Share what people can do to address the concern

The CAP Template Demonstrates Caring Concern



CARING

- I understand your concern about COVID-19.
- I, too, am concerned, as a parent, a sister and a child of aging parents.

ACTIONS

- Your tap water is not something you need to worry about.
- It is safe to drink and use as always.
- Our treatment and disinfection process kills viruses, including the coronavirus.

PERSPECTIVE

- The United States has some of the highest standards for tap water in the world and we consistently meet those standards

Your mental health is critically important to us

- Take breaks from COVID-19 news.
- Practice self-care, with meditation, getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating healthy
- Connect with friends and family safely, using online tools or staying six feet apart.

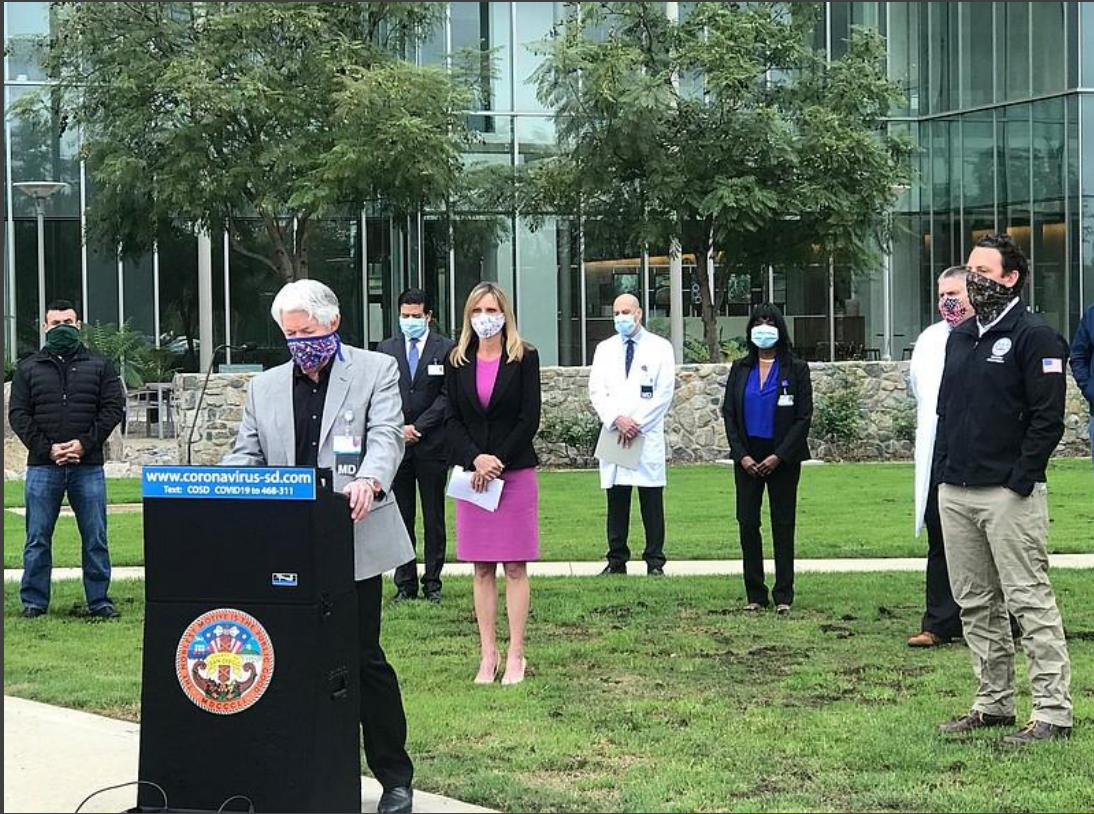
If you must go somewhere, please keep yourself and others healthy

- Wash hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Stay six feet away from others.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you touch frequently
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue to sneeze or cough

Here are some resources to help you and your family

- Contact our healthcare provider at INSERT HOW for access to licensed, online physicians.
- Access our free Employee Assistance Program if you need help with...
- We've posted many resources at the employee intranet site to help you work from home effectively.

Applying Behavioral Science to Informing the Public

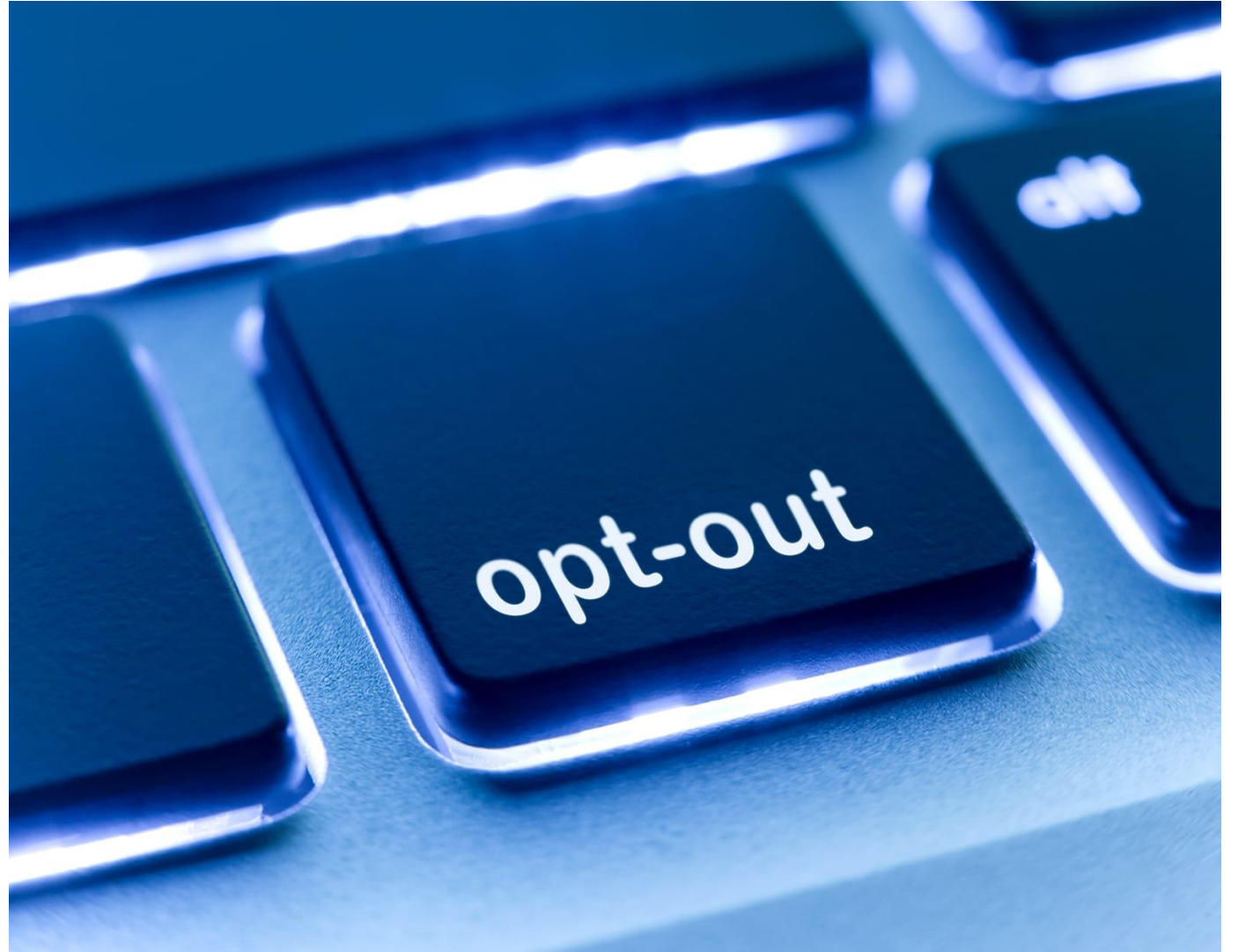


Nudge Theory

Providing subtle interventions that guide our individual choices

Default Effect

Pre-set courses of action that take effect if nothing is specified.



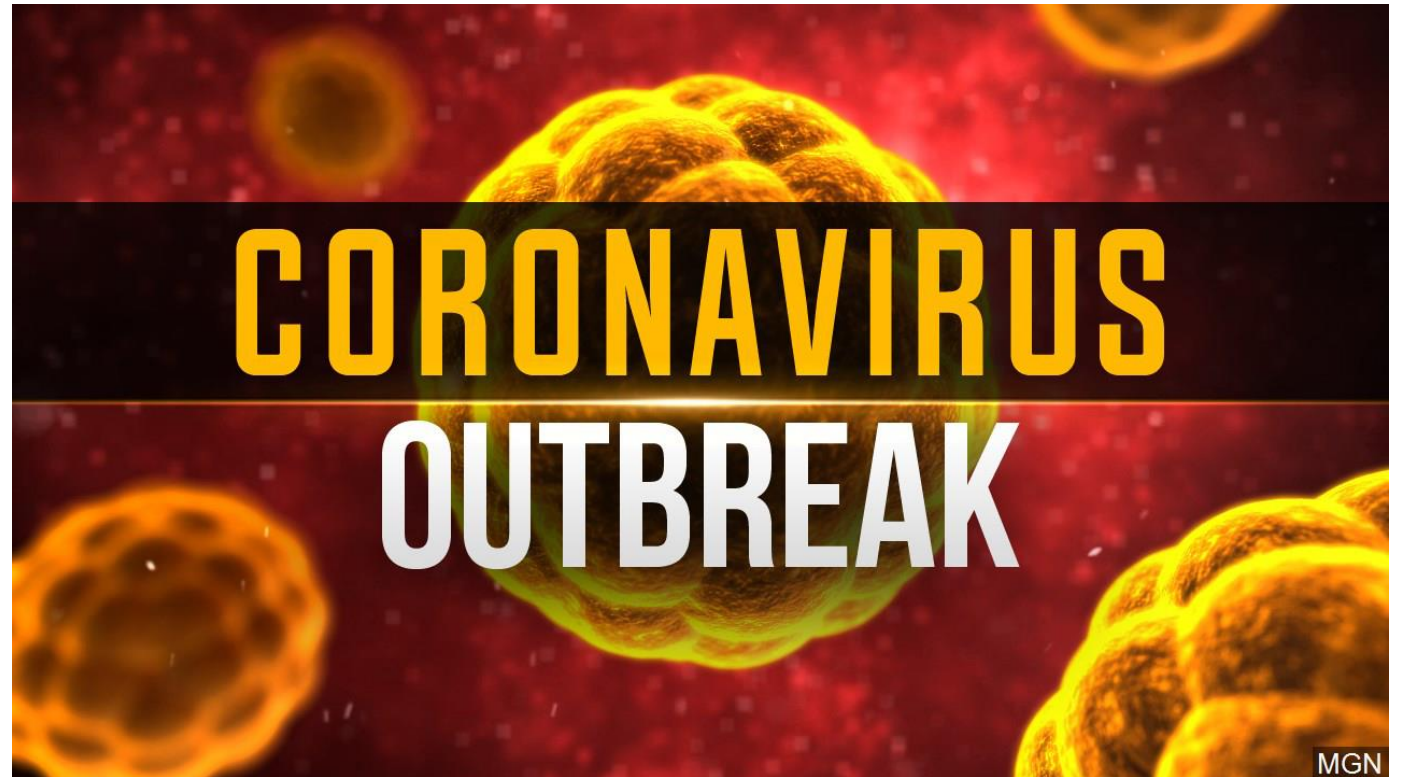


Social Norms

Individual behavior is influenced by perceptions of other people's behavior...

Cognitive Bias

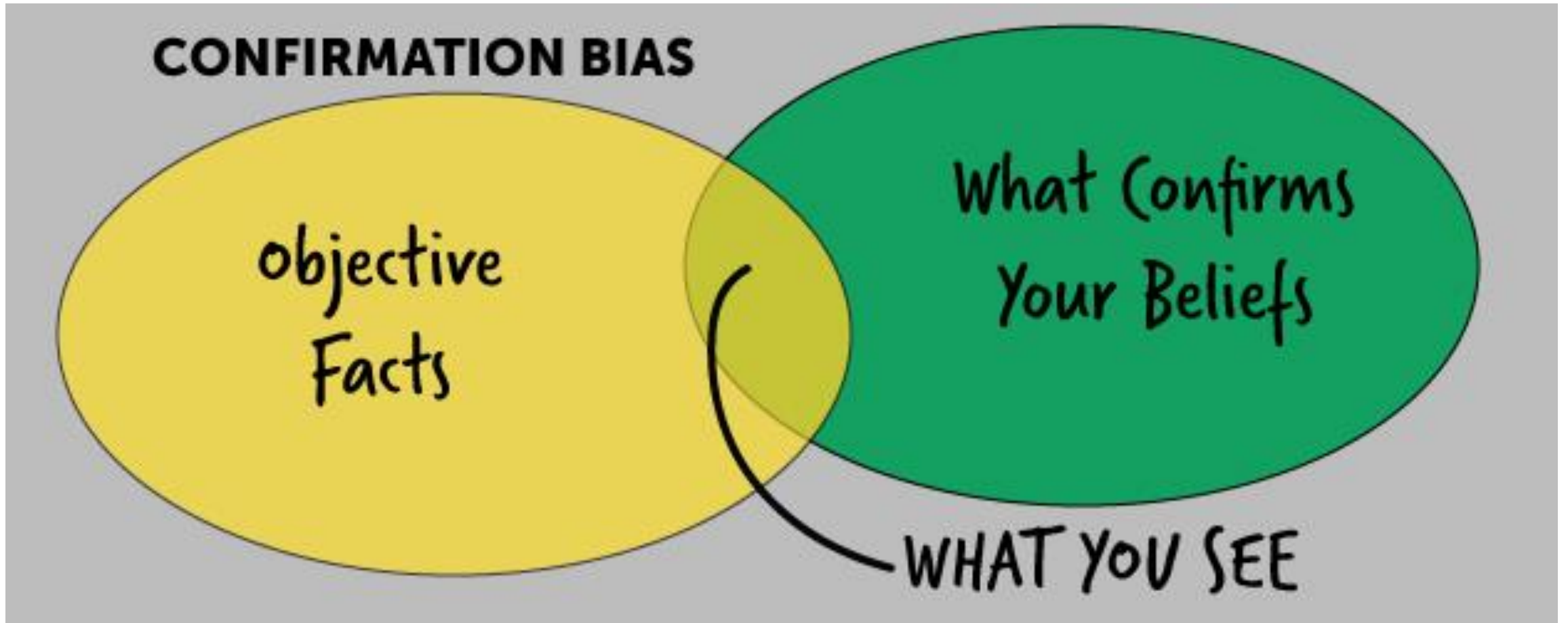
People make bad decisions,
especially when
they are stressed



Loss Aversion

Losses loom larger than gains...





We can do this!

- What you do is as important as what you say
- Start with empathy
- Remember that being first is important
- Follow Covello's 27-9-3 Rule
- Use social norms and nudge theory
- Make it easy for people
- Be wary of biases



Thank you!



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QUESTIONS?



ADVANCING PUBLIC SECTOR COMMUNICATORS



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