

Transformative Narratives for Socially Connected Communities

The area where we are the greatest is the area in which we inspire, encourage, and connect with another human being.

Maya Angelou

Through shared, visionary narratives and organized collective action, we can make possible what some may deem impossible.

In early 2024, people from across the country representing a range of experiences, expertise, identities, and intersectionalities embarked on a process to build new transformative narratives to inform and inspire action to create more equitable and socially connected communities. The first step toward building justice and equity is for us to create a vision for it that will inform our intentional and organized actions to reject narratives of individualism, competition, scarcity, and fear that cause harm in our communities.

These narrative statements and subtext are intended to be used by those who strive for a just and socially connected world to ground and guide individual and collective work and actions. They can serve as starting points to develop messages and talking points tailored to unique purposes, audiences and community contexts. These narratives are not necessarily intended to be used “as is”, word-for-word.

Values and Beliefs to Create Socially Connected Communities

Inclusion * Belonging * Bridging * Resilience * Well-being
Unity * Harmony * Interdependence * Interconnectedness * Collective impact
Honoring differences * Anti-othering * Reducing stigma * Loneliness is a human experience
Community-level solutions * Sharing resources * Valuing social capital * Countering scarcity
Representation in leadership * Accountability for power imbalances

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This is a living document that will evolve in continued conversations and with your feedback. This draft is not to be used “as is” but translated into language and messages that reflect and resonate with your audience(s). Do not feel like you have to use them verbatim—we want you to make them work for you and the context(s) you are working in!

Make sure to keep to the shared values and beliefs highlighted in this draft. It is a working document meant to support your own work to build collective action on civic health.

Reach out with any feedback to narrativesforhealth@chrr.wisc.edu or hello@healthyplacesbydesign.org

Learn more about Narratives for Health at: <http://narrativesforhealth.org>

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Transformative Narratives for Socially connected Communities

We embrace the range and variations of feelings and experiences that make us whole and thriving beings.

Joy, sadness, hope, fear, connected, lonely – the spectrum of situations and feelings are part of the human experience in every stage of life. We reject labels that negatively stigmatize certain conditions and groups of people and conditions, and actively incorporate inclusive language and practices. The public and community organizations, and the people in communities build bridges of acceptance and work together to navigate challenges and celebrate successes, thereby building solidarity and resilience.



Diversity and belonging must co-exist for our communities to thrive.

We view differences in race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, physical and mental status, disability and ability, socio-economic status, political views, and their intersectionalities and intersecting identities as an asset that leads to better collective solutions and outcomes. We believe our unique identities can create bridges toward achieving a collective sense of belonging in our communities through respect and compassion. We actively seek to learn about and from our differences with a spirit of genuine curiosity and inclusion.



Shared responsibility and interconnectedness are required to achieve optimal health and well-being for each of us and all of us.

Optimal well-being encompasses social, physical and mental health, and other factors. Social connection and interconnectedness enable people to thrive. We rely on each other, and public and community organizations to ensure that people receive the care and supports they need for well-being. We advocate for policies and practices that create environments, conditions, and cultures of belonging and unity in our communities. We help one another, believing that everyone matters.



Transformative Narratives for Socially Connected Communities

Social connectedness, loneliness and isolation must be addressed through community-level solutions.

Policies and systems in communities intentionally remove barriers and ensure that the environments are welcoming spaces where people can be themselves and experience belonging. Feelings of disconnectedness and marginalization are not an individual weakness. They are the outcomes of ingrained practices and environments that create barriers for social connections. Thriving, socially connected communities have places for people to interact in a variety of ways. Communities offer a range of supports for social connections that reflect the needs and interests of its people.

We advocate for public and community policies and practices that prioritize social connectedness and well-being for all.

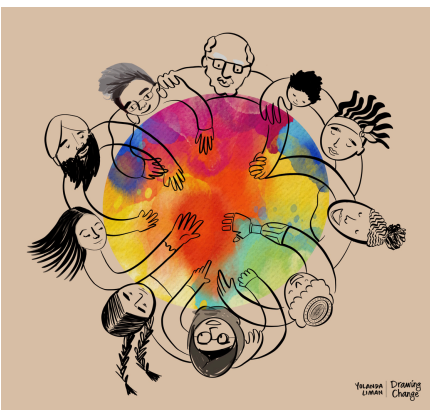
We recognize the collective power in communities that reside in the people, government, and organizations. We call for public and community systems to prioritize the well-being of people over profit, and the collective good over the interests of a select few. We strive toward systems that cultivate safety, connection, creativity, a sense of purpose, and joy. These systems highlight the value and impact of human and social capital, civic engagement and participation, resource sharing, and mutual aid.

We strive to advance people impacted and harmed by loneliness and disconnection, and share power in our communities.

Together, we can shift power and change leadership that has fostered a lack of connection and belonging. The decision-makers in public and community organizations should reflect the people who are most impacted by the current and historical harms of policies, systems, and practices that reflect systems of oppression ('-isms'), stigmas, and stereotypes. They have the valuable lived experiences that can best chart the course to achieve meaningful change and sustainable solutions. The entire community benefits through balancing power and leveraging strengths and resources from a variety of backgrounds. We can build a future where everyone's voice matters, and the success of one or some enhances well-being for all.



Yasmin Liman Drawing Change



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