Framing and cultural mindsets from Nat Kendell-Taylor and Annette Michaux (FrameWorks Institute), NAPCAN Webinar 8/9/23

Cultural mindsets – how we think, feel and act, how we see the world. Some can be productive and others unproductive when we present ideas. Research has found there are three cultural mindsets which are prevalent in Australia: Individualism, Fatalism and Otherism.

Individualism – all about how hard individuals try; uses words like grit, resilience; puts responsibility on people themselves and off society and public policy solutions. Sees it as private troubles and problems and therefore not a public problem to solve. The hero story is a good example of this. To counter this we need to activate "*what surrounds us, shapes us*". Tell stories that include the systems, environments, relationships and supports - make them a character in the story. Explain deeper causes and how to address them. Highlight efforts that have changed the context and improved outcomes.

Australian research shows we get behind "*the need for all children to be healthy*" and understand that there are systems around them which are critical to this. Example is "*we need to give parents what they need so children can get what they need.*"

Litmus test: can someone walk away from your communication thinking that individuals are the cause of the problems and sole source of solutions?

Fatalism – activates "yet another issue" – problems are too deep and hard to fix, so receiver of message edits them out and rejects the message we are trying to convey. This drains energy to mobilise and support solutions. We fall into this trap by using words like "crisis" and listing lots of problems and most dramatic or violent examples without any indication that positive is possible. We can have gravity about the extent of the problem, but it is critical to present solutions. We need to get away from 'dim and grim' and use the history of problems that have been solved. Balance urgency with efficacy. Make sure solutions and a vision of hope are in the story, preferably early on. This can then activate pragmatism, problem solving and innovation.

"*Give all children the opportunity to develop and thrive.*" Australian research shows there is a strong understanding of the impact on children of setbacks both *now and in their future*.

Otherism – most destructive. "Those people over there." Invokes the world as a zero-sum game. Not helpful to use labels such as "vulnerable, at risk," better to lean into our collectivism, use "we" and "our" pronouns to cue collectivism and invoke our common goals, shared responsibility and the collective benefits. Examples include "W*hat we all need, but only some of us get it." "Not all needs are being met." "Lack of support for some disrupts development and undermines health and wellbeing.*"

Note also when working with people who have direct experience, we need to ensure they have agency (most people want to tell us more than the problem they're experiencing). They need to be given the chance to share their dreams, hopes and skills.

See The Skillman Foundation | The Power of Asset Framing: A Conversation with Trabian Shorters | The Skillman Foundation and Implementing Targeted Universalism | Othering & Belonging Institute (berkeley.edu)