



Key factors for engaging people in public life:

People Need:	What People Often Experience:	What You Can Do About this Gap:
Connection	Fragmented issues or concerns. For instance, education as a separate issue from family life.	Make connections between concerns, rather than isolate one concern from another.
Personal Context	Appeals made to people's narrow self-interest.	Draw on people's life experiences and imagination to establish ties to public concerns.
Coherence	Issues depicted as masses of fragmented facts.	Provide the "whys" and "hows," the history, and all sides of the debate behind a public concern.
Room for Ambivalence	Public debate cast in extremes and polarized.	Explore people's ambivalence: Highlight questions people are sorting through, test different ideas and make connections.
Emotion	"Rational" discourse that is stripped of emotion.	Use emotion as a vital part of news coverage, not in a gratuitous way but to help people understand public discourse.
Authenticity	Expert-driven facts and figures used to establish authenticity.	Offer insights from people that "ring true," and reflect a sense of reality.
Sense of Possibility	Public concerns riddled with inaction, stagnation, lack of hope. Emphasis on giving "bad news."	Show what progress is possible on a public concern and how people can play a meaningful role in bringing about such success.

Catalysts	Experts seen as the “credible sources” for information and for engaging citizens.	Look beyond experts and office-holders as sources. Consider the people whom individuals look to in their daily lives: neighbors, family members and friends.
Mediating Institutions	Appeals that treat people as if they are passive information consumers isolated in their homes.	Cover a variety of places where people come together to discuss, learn about and act on concerns: schools, churches, neighborhood councils.

Adapted from *Meaningful Chaos: How People Form Relationships with Public Concerns*. Prepared by The Harwood Group for the Kettering Foundation, 1993.