



PREVENTION  
**STORYTELLING  
FOR IMPACT**

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“People will forget what you said people will forget what you did, but people **will never forget how you made them feel.**”

-Maya Angelou



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# Welcome

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**Introduce yourself:**

**Name**

**Organization/Coalition**

**Outcome and include one “win” sentence**

# Finish the Sentence..

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**“Storytelling in prevention  
feels...”**

**“Storytelling in prevention feels...”**

# Poll #1

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## How comfortable do you feel telling stories about your prevention work?

- Very comfortable — I do this often
- Somewhat comfortable — but I overthink it
- Not very comfortable — I stick to data
- Not comfortable at all — this feels intimidating

# What is Storytelling?

## Styles / Structure

- Personal narrative and lived experience
- Event-based and reflective storytelling
- Prevention-centered story framing
- Meaning-making and insight development (small things)

## Approaches

- For prevention and early intervention
- That centers resilience, agency, and protective factors
- Grounded in cultural awareness and community context
- That transforms lived experience into insight and action

## Audiences

- Youth and young adults
- Community members
- Educators and facilitators
- Helping professionals & Prevention/public health audiences
- Funders

\* *Storytelling guided by ethics, consent, and intentional impact*

# Poll #2

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## When sharing outcomes and work, what do you usually lead with?

- Activities (what we did)
- Outputs (numbers, reach, attendance)
- Outcomes (changes, impact)
- A mix of all three
- It depends on the audience
- I'm not sure

# The Blueprint

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## Mission & Vision (The “Why”)

This is the theme of your story. The “Once upon a time, we dreamed of a community where...” Your mission explains why this work exists and your vision shows what success looks like. Stories that skip the “**why**” can feel transactional.

## Goals (The “Plot”)

These are the objectives. They define the direction of the story and what we are looking to achieve. Goals define what you’re trying to change. They guide what kind of story you tell. Without goals, stories can feel random, whereas goals create direction.

**Examples:** increase perception of harm, strengthen protective factors and reduce risk exposure.

# The Blueprint

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## Outputs (The “Action”)

These are the scenes and the events.

**Examples:** Trainings, campaigns, events, outreach, materials. Activities are not the story, but the set up.

## Outcomes & Metrics (The “Results”)

This is the proof.

**Examples:** Awareness increased, behavior shifted, relationships strengthened, and trust built.

# Poll #3

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## Which feels hardest to explain about prevention impact?

- That behavior change takes time
- That impact doesn't show up immediately
- That we prevent things from happening
- That our data doesn't tell the full story
- All of the above

# What's Missing?

Data needs interpretation. Outcomes explain why the activity mattered.

## Characters:

- Who experienced this?
- Who changed?
- Who benefited?

Stories require people – even when told ethically, anonymously, or at a community level.



# Measureable Outcomes



## Think Macro → Micro

- Start with the community: In what ways was a neighborhood or community positively impacted?
- Zoom into the population you serve: What changed for the people directly connected to your work?
- Look at relationships: Were trust, partnerships, or community connections strengthened?
- End with the individual: Are there stories that show growth, healing, or changed behavior?

**\*If you can trace the impact from community → people → person, that's a measurable win.**

# Pyramid of Measurable Impact

Macro → Micro



Measurable Win: *Impact from Community → People → Person.*

# Prevention Impact: Why It Looks Different

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Prevention impact is often long term; meaningful behavior change unfolds over years, not months. The strongest prevention evidence comes from 10–20+ years of trend data.

Right now we can look at population-level signals: shifts in norms, awareness, readiness, and access. Early signals help us understand whether prevention is working before harm appears.

Moving from **macro (population trends)** → **micro (individual experiences)** helps explain impact while outcomes are still emerging.

Prevention may be hard to measure in the moment, but progress still exists.

# Prevention Impact: Making the Invisible Visible

Data often focuses on root causes: systems, environments, and conditions that influence behavior. Keep a root-cause lens when telling stories, not just long term outcomes.

## Stories need a clear so what? factor

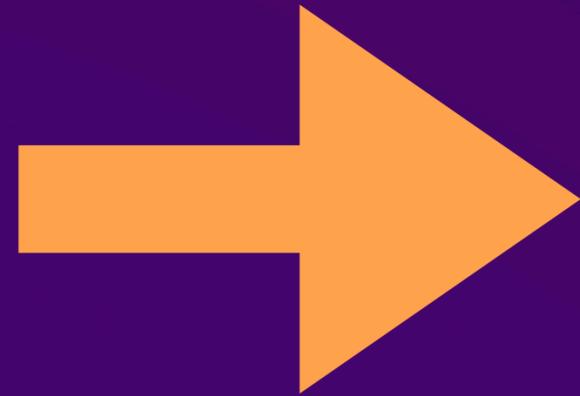
Strategic staging helps bridge the gap:

- Start with what people can see or feel
- Connect it back to root cause
- Land on why it matters for individuals and the community

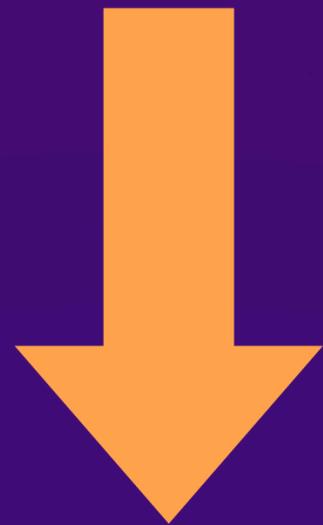
Staging turns upstream work into stories people can understand.



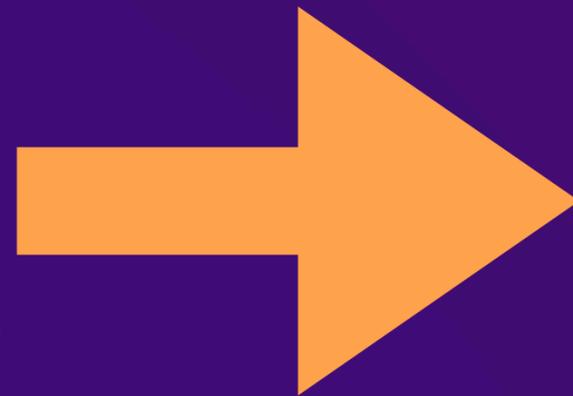
**DATA**



**POINT**



**STORY**



**PROCESS**

# Poll #4

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**Which of these tools do you already have access to?**

- Reports and data collected
- Events or trainings
- Community conversations
- Participant feedback
- Informal moments or quotes
- All of the above

# What Tools Do You Need to Tell Stories?

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You already have:

- Reports and data collected (grant reports, evaluations, dashboards)
- Activities delivered (trainings, events, campaigns, outreach)
- Documentation (meeting notes, logs, emails)
- Feedback you hear (formal or informal)
- Conversations you have with community members, staff, anyone involved



# What Tools Do You Need to Tell Stories?

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If it's in your work plan or reporting, it's probably a story—you just haven't framed it yet.

The biggest mistake we make is treating "Data" and "Stories" as two different files. In reality, every line item in your report is the outline to a story.

Your metrics provide the skeleton, and your experiences provide the flesh.

If a funder requires you to track it, it's because that metric represents a change in a human life or a community's health.

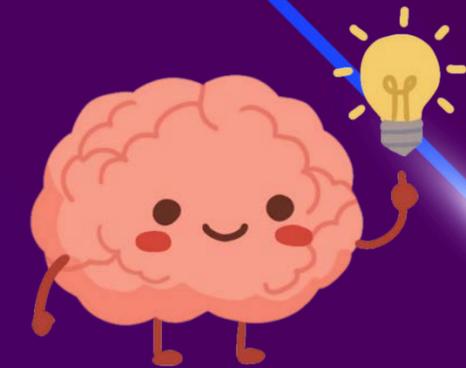
# What Tools Do You Need to Tell Stories?

<b>If your report says... (The Metric)</b>	<b>Your story should say... (The Narrative)</b>
Output: "Distributed 500 locking RX boxes."	Story: "500 families just closed the easiest door to prescription drug misuse in their own homes."
Outcome: "Passed a Social Host Ordinance."	Story: "Our town sent a clear signal: the 'cool parent' who provides alcohol is now a held-accountable neighbor."
Metric: "Recruited 3 new sector representatives."	Story: "The circle of protection grew. We now have the voices of business, faith, and law enforcement at the same table."

# The Pivot from Outcomes to Storytelling

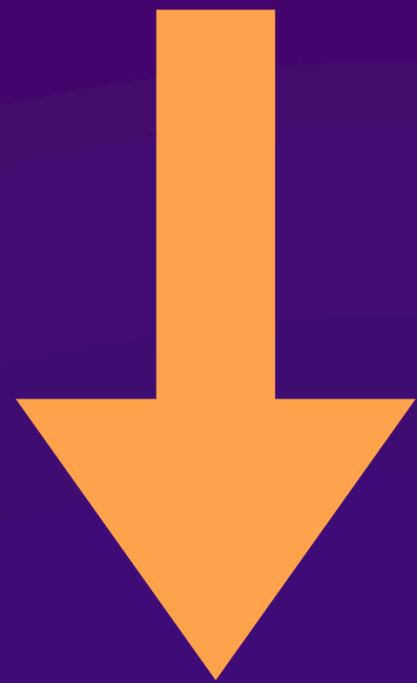
<b>Stage</b>	<b>The Data Point</b>	<b>The Story Translation</b>
<b>Activity</b>	"We ran a social media campaign."	"We started a conversation..."
<b>Output</b>	"Reached 5,000 local residents."	"...that reached 5,000 of our neighbors."
<b>Outcome</b>	"200 parents clicked 'Download' on our talk-kit."	"Now, 200 more dinner tables are having conversations tonight because parents have the tools to talk to their kids."

**ANALYTICAL**



**TO**

**EMOTIONAL**



**REMEMBER YOUR  
MISSION!**

# Capture What Happens, Going Beyond Activities

Most organizations stop their storytelling at the output.  
They say: “We held a health fair and 300 people attended.”

To get to the outcome, you have to answer the question:  
**What is different for those 300 people now that they’ve left?**

Strong stories go beyond activities by:

- Getting feedback from participants, partners, and coalition members
- Capturing candid moments: questions asked, reflections shared, shifts you observe
- Having conversations that surface individuals experiences and meaning



# Example: “Mr. Charlie”

In 2022, an individual in a recovery program who attended a workforce development program, “Mr. Charlie” engaged in a simple physical wellness workshop as part of a workforce initiative, learning about his blood pressure reading and what this means for his life – short term/long term, basic small space fitness activities, and healthy smoothie preparation. Alongside other supports, these tools became a protective factor.

He continued what he learned in the program and strengthened himself during recovery. He has maintained sobriety for three years. This outcome was never formally documented and only surfaced through a trusted relationship with his case manager.



# What Are the Missed Opportunities in This Example?

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- The impact was real, but it was treated as invisible
- No system existed to capture individual stories of change
- The outcome relied on one trusted staff relationship instead of an organizational process
- The connection between the wellness initiative (intent) and long-term recovery (impact) was never documented
- As a result, a meaningful prevention win was lost to memory rather than used for learning, funding, or replication

Key Takeaway: This wasn't a failure of the program. It was a missed opportunity to recognize, name, and share impact that was already happening.

# Storytelling Strategies That Could've Been Used

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- Tell the story as belonging, not success.
- Frame Mr. Charlie's journey as what happens when a community offers tools instead of judgment and a place where wellness is possible, not mandated.
- Name the dignity in small moments
- Focus on the quiet acts: checking his blood pressure, choosing movement, making a smoothie...these are everyday decisions that rebuilt trust with his body and himself.
- Center community care, not individual leadership heroics

# Storytelling Strategies That Could've Been Used

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- Emphasize that Mr. Charlie didn't do this alone and the environment, staff relationships, and shared learning made space for change.
- Honor time as part of impact – 3 years of sobriety isn't a moment. It's time held by community, consistency, and access to simple tools.
- Let the story invite reflection, not applause.
- Ask funders and community: How many "Mr. Charlies" exist whose stories we never captured?

# Prevention Story Formula

1. Introduce the individual, group, or data
2. Prioritize process: Activity (ies), quotes, experiences, changes, behavior changes etc.
3. Clear beginning, middle, and end
4. Human element, emotion, benefit, care, and movement
5. Reflection, meaning, and significance
6. Ethics

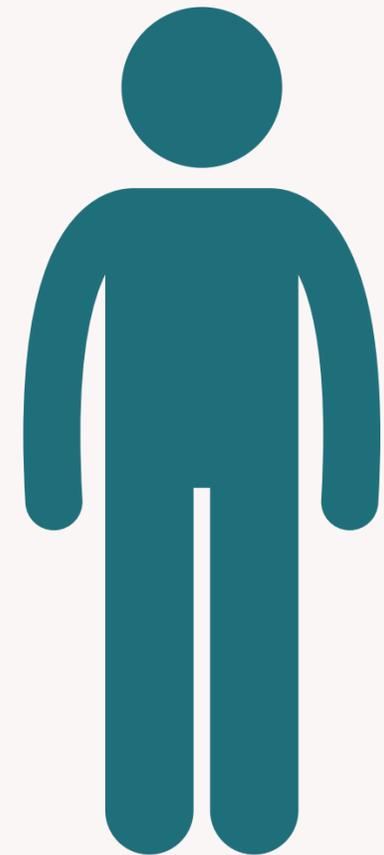


# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

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## Make it Simple, Human and Impactful

1. “Report to Ripple”
2. Identify the goal it supports.
3. Connect to vision and mission.
4. Craft a short narrative showing impact.



# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

## Data Outcome

The “boring  
output”



## Story

The “human  
signal” and the  
leading indicator



## Ripple Impact

### The Big Impact Ripple

How does this tie into  
your mission and intent?

Why does that small  
moment matter for your  
long-term goal?

# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

## Data Outcome

12 coalition  
meetings

## Story

At the third meeting,  
the chief of police  
stopped sitting by  
the door and moved  
to the center of the  
table.

## Ripple Impact

The signal of  
increased sector buy-  
in is the foundation  
for the policy  
changes we need in  
2026.

# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

## Data Outcome

1,000 social  
media  
impressions



## Story

A parent  
commented:  
“I never thought  
about it that way’  
on our post about  
brain development.”



## Ripple Impact

This is a leading  
indicator of **a shift in  
parental norms,**  
which is the first step  
toward reducing  
access to substances  
at home.

# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

## Data Outcome

Insert your data point or outcome



## Story

What is one thing you heard or saw during that activity?



## Ripple Impact

How does this tie into your mission and intent?

Why does that small moment matter for your long-term goal?



# Story Structure for Prevention Impact – Work to Words

## PLAIN LANGUAGE

1. Start with the person – Who is this story about, and what was their day-to-day reality?
2. Name the exposure – What prevention tools, conversations, or supports were introduced?
3. Show the shift – What changed in awareness, behavior, or mindset?
4. Highlight the protective factor – What stuck and supported health over time?
5. Land on the outcome – What is different now for the person and the community?

### Ultra-Short Version

The 6-Question story Checklist

- Who was this for?
- What was happening before?
- What did they encounter?
- What changed?
- What protective factor grew?

# What's Your Midas Touch?

- What truly “glittered,” so to speak?
- What did you do that felt distinctly yours?
- Where did people lean in, stay present, or open up?
- What moments felt small but had impact?
- How did your approach make **learning** feel human and accessible?
- What about the way you showed up made the work stick?
- What does the data reflect about your impact in numbers and how can that be shown physically?



# Intent vs. Impact

## What You Set Out to Do vs. What Opportunities Opened Up

**Intent:** the prevention goal you started with

- A program, initiative, training, or conversation you planned to deliver

**Impact:** what the work created (sparked), how it landed and the outcomes

- New awareness or understanding
- Space for learning or honest dialogue
- Opportunities to practice healthier behaviors
- Shifts in mindset, confidence, or readiness for change

**Impact isn't just the activity – it's what people walk away with!**

**Ask:** What became possible because this work existed?

# What is your Org's Midas Touch?



# Incorporating Prevention Ethics into Storytelling

When telling prevention stories, consider these core prevention ethics:

- **Do No Harm:** ensure stories do not retraumatize, stigmatize, or expose individuals or communities
- **Consent and Autonomy:** Stories are shared with permission, choice, and the ability to opt out or revise
- **Dignity and Respect:** Avoid “deficit” or crisis-only narratives; center strength, growth, and humanity
- **Equity and Fairness:** Provide context so stories don't reinforce stereotypes or blame individuals for systemic issues
- **Accuracy and Integrity:** Stories should reflect reality, not exaggeration or performance for funding.

# Four Ways to Tell the Same Story

1. **Social media: Facebook and Instagram** – Photo, thanking partners, a short story from that day, a conversation or quote
2. **Newsletter or Blog** – Educational, reinforce vision/mission, little longer
3. **Press Release** – include quotes, focus on community and individuals and intent
4. **Video** – longer (can be around 5min) or short (1 min or less), recommended to add video to everything



## Single Data Point:

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Following ABC Coalition's youth vaping prevention community forum, 68% of participating parents reported increased confidence in having conversations with their teen about vaping risks.

# Short Sentence Formula

## One-Sentence Formula

When **[who]** encountered **[prevention exposure]**, it led to **[shift]**, strengthening **[protective factor]** and result in **[impact]**.

**Example:** When parents encountered a safe space to ask questions at the community forum, it increased confidence and strengthened communication skills with her teens – a key protective factor for youth to stay substance free.

# Short Sentence Formula

## One-Sentence Formula

### Examples:

- **When parents encountered ABC Coalition’s vaping prevention forum, it led to increased confidence, strengthening communication and resulting in more prevention conversations at home.**
- When parents encountered ABC Coalition’s youth vaping prevention community forum, it led to increased confidence in talking with their teens about vaping risks, strengthening parent-child communication and resulting in more open, informed conversations at home.
- When parents encountered a safe, community-based youth vaping prevention forum, it led to greater confidence having conversations with their teens, strengthening family communication and resulting in healthier, more informed discussions about vaping risks.
- When parents encountered ABC Coalition’s youth vaping prevention education, it led to increased confidence discussing vaping risks, strengthening parental communication as a protective factor and resulting in improved readiness to address substance use at home.

***Ripple Effect:* This increased confidence is an early ripple effect of prevention — when parents feel equipped to talk openly, it creates conditions that support healthier decision-making and reduce risk over time.**

# Facebook

## Why this works:

- **Create a moment & feeling**
- Captures the moment and the immediate takeaway
- Feels like one night, one room
- One stat, short sentences, to the point
- Emotion-first
- Matches how people experience events

*Can include a quote from a parent*

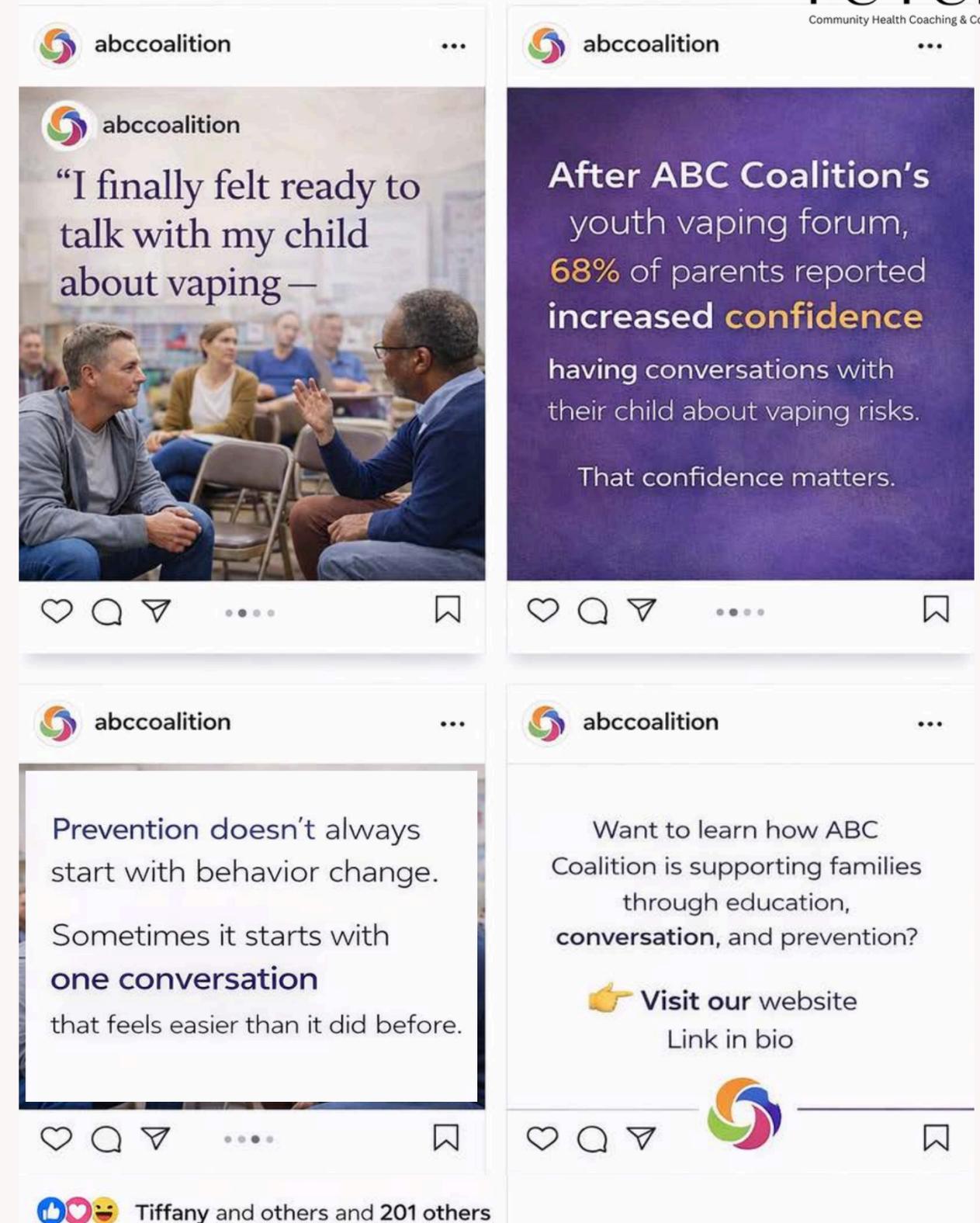


# Instagram

**Insert a call to action:** "To learn more, visit.."  
**Create a carousel of slides** instead of caption  
(Slide 1 = quote, Slide 2 = stat)

## Why this works:

- Captures the moment and the immediate takeaway
- Feels like one night, one room
- One stat, short sentences, to the point
- Emotion-first
- Matches how people experience events



# Blog/Newsletter

**Story structure: setting → action → meaning**

**Use quotes, photos and videos:** One parent expressed, “I finally felt like I knew what to say and how to say it.”

## Why this works:

- Talk about the why behind the outcome
- Walks readers through the story
- Makes the data meaningful
- Connects activity → outcome → long-term impact



**One Night. One Conversation.  
Real Prevention Impact.**



When ABC Coalition hosted a community forum on youth vaping, the goal wasn't to overwhelm families with data — it was to create space for honest, practical conversations.

Parents heard from prevention professionals, youth voices, and local partners about vaping trends, health risks, and how to talk with teens without judgment or fear.

After the event, 68% of participating parents reported feeling more confident having conversations with their child about vaping risks.

One parent expressed, “I finally felt like I knew what to say and how to say it.”

That confidence matters. Research shows that when parents feel equipped to talk openly with their children, young people are more likely to delay or avoid substance use altogether. This is what prevention often looks like: not an immediate change in behavior, but a **shift in** readiness, confidence, and connection, the building blocks of long-term impact.

# Press Release

Ties individual experience → population impact → vision

## MAXIMIZE USE OF ADJECTIVES

Data, quotes, and mission coexist in a press release

Models ethical storytelling: no sensationalism, no overclaiming

### Why this works:

- Demonstrate accountability and community value
- Uses mission language as justification and the vision becomes the why
- Positions the coalition as a steward of community health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## ABC Coalition Advances Mission Through Community-Based Youth Vaping Prevention Efforts

[ABC, ABC]— ABC Coalition, whose mission is to mobilize community partners, families, and youth to prevent substance use and promote mental health, recently hosted a community forum focused on youth vaping prevention.

The event brought together **CONCERNED** parents, **PASSIONATE** educators, and prevention professionals to share practical tools, local insights, and strategies for supporting healthy decision-making among young people.

Following the forum, **68%** of participating parents reported increased confidence in having conversations with their child about the risks of vaping, demonstrating the immediate impact of community-based prevention education.

“I’ve always wanted to talk to my child about vaping, but I didn’t know how to start without it turning into an argument.” said one parent who attended the forum. “This event gave me the language and confidence I needed to have a real conversation at home.”

“Our vision is a healthy ABC community where youth are supported and empowered to make positive choices,” said [Name, Title]. “When parents feel informed and supported, it strengthens families and creates environments where prevention can take root.”

ABC Coalition remains committed to prevention strategies that mobilize community partners, address root causes, and support families in building healthier futures for youth.

For more information, contact:

[Name]

[Organization]

# Prevention in the Park Video



[https://youtu.be/vZrc2FW\\_GYg](https://youtu.be/vZrc2FW_GYg)

# Notes about Using Video

- Video shows the impact and the why at the same time.
- People are more likely to stop and pay attention to video.
- Video lets people tell their story in their own words.
- Seeing real people makes the data feel real.
- Video is how all generations connect and learn.
- Seeing familiar faces makes the message more trustworthy.
- Video turns numbers into real, relatable experiences.



# Poll #5

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## After today, what feels most doable?

- Noticing impact moments more intentionally
- Translating data into human/emotion centered stories
- Capturing stories and observations
- Using one success story across multiple platforms
- Talking about prevention impact with more confidence
- All of the above

# What We Covered Today

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## What is “Prevention Storytelling”?

- How stories help translate prevention work, data, and outcomes into meaning

## How prevention impact works

- Why prevention looks different, unfolds over time, and is often invisible without stories

## How to move from data to story

- Turning reports, activities, and outcomes into narratives with people and ripple effects

## How to capture impact ethically

- Centering dignity, consent, equity, and accuracy in prevention storytelling

## How to apply stories across platforms

- Using the same story for social media, newsletters, press, and video





# Thank you!

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