

ANIMAL TRAPS!

These categories are not mutually exclusive, a single message could be several of these categories.

A GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION PITFALLS

REFUTATION TRAP

Parrots — Don't just repeat back what they say

When Nixon famously said "I am not a crook" it made everyone immediately think "he's a crook". Instead, he should have said "I am an honest man". When we repeat an opponent's unhelpful position, even to refute it, we are still reinforcing it.

In Practice:

Don't say "poverty is not natural"

Do say "poverty is created"



CONTAMINATED LANGUAGE TRAP

Sharks — Negative associations (like Jaws created for sharks!)

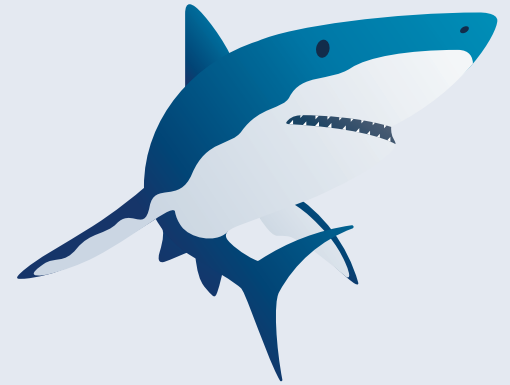
Language that brings to mind unhelpful beliefs. Does the word or message evoke associations that are negative and unhelpful to us? Is there another word or a way of rephrasing our communications that evokes more helpful associations?

In Practice:

Avoid words like "migrant" or "asylum seeker". Although they have some positive associations, they also have many negative ones due to unhelpful media coverage.

Don't say "refugees" or "migrants"

Do say "people seeking refuge" and actively bring people into the frame



SANITISING/OBSCURING TRAP

Chameleons — Hiding something in plain sight

This is euphemistic language that makes an issue sound less bad or damaging than it is. You want our message to reveal what is hidden and make the impacts clear.

In Practice:

Don't say "austerity"

Do say "damaging cuts to public services" because that is what it really is

Don't say "collateral damage"

Do say "the death of innocent civilians" because that's what it is



ROSE TINTED TRAP

Robins — Positive associations that might not help your cause

Words and phrases that already have very strong positive associations in people's heads. Attempting to use this language to describe something as negative just doesn't work because the positive associations are too strong - this could include words like "charity" and "aid".

In Practice:

Don't say "Although 'aid' and 'charity' are necessary, they are not adequate on their own to address the root causes of poverty"

Do Say "Current approaches to poverty do not focus enough on how it is created"

