Cognitive Policy Works:
Presentation on talking with people about single payer
For Wellstone Club and Single Payer Now, March 27, 2010

This is a strategy for discussing single payer health care with people who start out disagreeing with you. The idea is to open their minds to what you are saying, not to confront them in a way that hardens their opposition.

Understand how people use "frames"
- People think about things with the help of "frames"– mental structures made up of "understandings, values, ideas, and facts" into which they integrate new information and ideas. "Frames trump facts."
- A "health insurance" frame gets people thinking about money and scarcity, seeing health care as an economic transaction. A "health care" frame brings in people's feelings about taking care of sick people, the doctor-patient relationship. So it's good to use ideas that evoke the person's health care frame.

Understand the emotional basis of people's opinions
- People respond more strongly to fear of loss than to cost-benefit analysis
- Injustice triggers disgust; empathy triggers sense of fairness
- People make moral judgments based on emotion, then use reasons to defend it, so just logically refuting their arguments doesn't work.

Basic concepts of strategic communication
You need to stake out the moral high ground through being truthful about your own core values. Start there and build communication using common ground and common sense.

For strategic communication:
- Define what outcomes you want from the conversation
- Articulate your moral vision/stake out a moral high ground—when people are sick they should receive care
- Talk about the big picture (not factoids), be empathetic and hopeful
- Probe and analyze where the person is coming from – what's motivating them and how they understand the situation. Then speak to their concerns
- Develop trust by finding areas of agreement/commonality and talking about where *you're* coming from – be authentic, transparent

The VIP framework for problem solving:
- Start with your *values* (moral vision)
- Frame the *issue* (set the context)
- Articulate your *position* and support it (here's where the facts and arguments come in).

Applying these ideas to discussion about single-payer

Start with <u>values</u>/moral basis
- Empathy and responsibility
- Human dignity
- Shared prosperity and risk – everyone's health affects the whole community

Frame the <u>issue</u>
- Everybody gets sick and needs care
- The problem is people not getting the care they need.
- We're all in this together

(Don't just talk. Ask the person about their ideas: What's the problem? How do you think things should be changed? What can you agree on?)

Articulate your <u>position</u>
- Only effective government can solve this problem
- We need a responsible and humane system for providing health care
- Support the single payer position with arguments and facts
    - Health insurance abuses
    - Cost effectiveness
    - More and better care

Discussion of tough issues/brainstorming responses
- Distrust of government
    - Ask about why they feel that way
    - Ask if there's anything they think government does well – suggest some
    - Talk about "effective" government to counter negative "big" government
    - Underlying fears: *I'll show up and not get the help I need. Distant bureaucracy will make decisions for me and choose my doctor.* You can validate those fears, talk about current health insurance companies, how single payer would help.
- We can't afford it
    - Ask what they're paying now – compare to single payer
    - Articulate priority on caring for people who are sick
    - Talk about economic costs of current system
- We have the best health care system in the world – single payer would ruin it.
    - Ask what they mean by "best health care system"
    - Single payer would allow people to access this care
    - Single payer could make system better, for example, more primary care and prevention
    - With single payer you keep getting health care if you are laid off, change jobs, get sick.

Much more at <u>www.cognitivepolicyworks.com</u>, <u>www.singlepayernow.org</u>, www.wellstoneclub.org