The Colorado Health Foundation™

Writing with Purpose: How Ethical Persuasion Can Shift Public Discourse for a Healthier Colorado

Words matter. The way we tell stories and frame issues influences how people understand problems, what solutions feel possible and whose voices are trusted. Writing in an ethically persuasive way isn't just about winning an argument. It's about building shared understanding, inspiring collective action and ultimately shaping a healthier future for all Coloradans.

Why Ethical Persuasion Matters

Persuasion is powerful. It can rally people toward justice or it can reinforce fear and division. Writing ethically means grounding persuasion in truth, dignity and fairness. It respects audiences enough to offer not only compelling words, but also evidence and values they can connect with. When we communicate this way, we invite people into a bigger story—one that acknowledges challenges but also highlights solutions rooted in compassion and community well-being.

A Practical Framework: Monroe's Motivated Sequence

One of the clearest tools for persuasive writing is Monroe's Motivated Sequence, a five-step method often used in speeches and op-eds:

1. **Attention** – Hook readers with a vivid story, fact or question.
2. **Need** – Explain the problem and why it matters.
3. **Satisfaction** – Present a solution that feels practical and just.

4. **Visualization** – Help people imagine the better future (or the costs of inaction).
5. **Action** – End with a concrete step the audience can take.

This framework is effective because it combines both reason and emotion. It recognizes that people need to feel the urgency of an issue, believe a solution is possible and know what role they can play.

Shaping Public Discourse for Health

Take, for example, how we talk about immigration raids. Samples of using the motivated sequence around this issue can be found here. A story that begins with fear at the doorstep can move readers into recognizing the broader harm to families and communities. By presenting solutions grounded in dignity and due process, and by painting a vision of a society where all families feel safe, we not only challenge harmful narratives but also promote healthier communities.

The same approach can be applied to many issues that impact health. When we write with ethical persuasion, we shift the conversation from blame and scarcity to belonging and possibility. That shift matters, because discourse influence policies, and policies shape the conditions that determine health.

Health and Well-Being Are at Stake

Public discourse is not abstract. It translates into laws, systems and resources that affect daily life. When discourse is rooted in fear, misinformation or exclusion, it can create barriers to health and well-being. When discourse is rooted in dignity, shared humanity and opportunity, it opens pathways to stronger, healthier communities.

Writing with purpose helps build healthier pathways. Every speech, op-ed and campaign has the potential to reinforce a vision where health is in reach for all Coloradans.

Check out Examples

TYPE

Blog

POST DATE

Oct 7, 2025

BY

David Proper