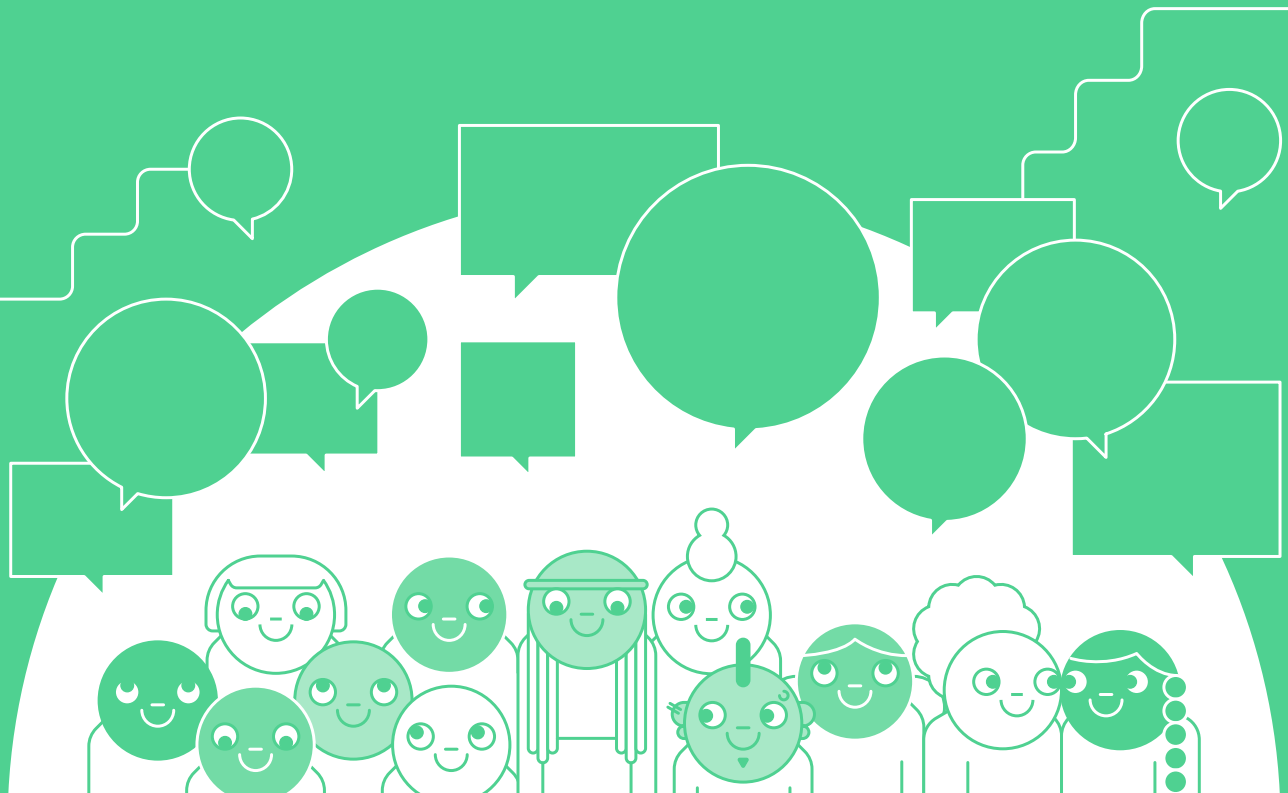
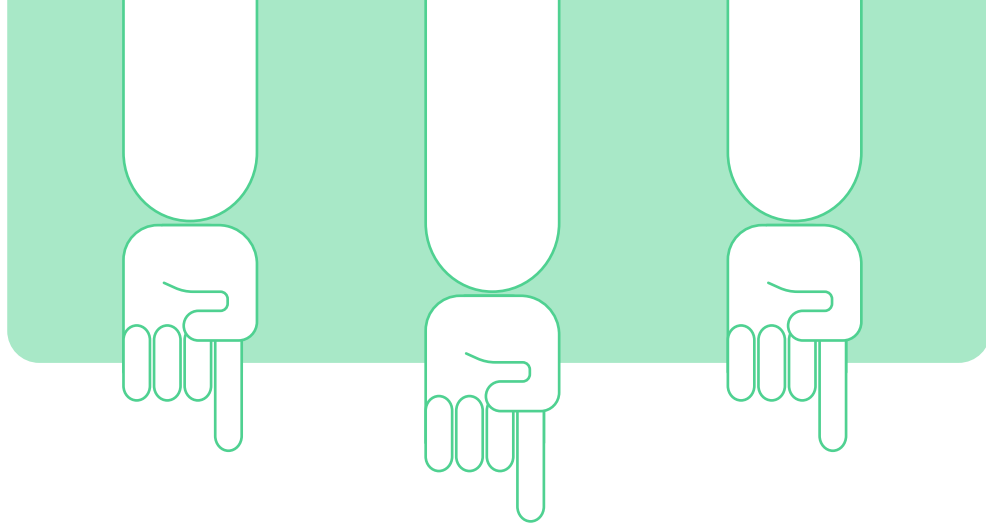


# As Many Stories as Families:

A Guide to Redefining  
Narratives in Latin America





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# Hi!

We are excited to know that you have the Familias: Ahora narrative work guide in your hands. Over these years of experience, we have gathered valuable tools on how to tell alternative and hopeful stories about 21st-century families, which we now want to share with you to strengthen our voices and causes.

With this guide, you will...



Acquire basic tools to understand what narrative work is and its importance.



Understand how you can use it to empower your causes.



Access a content bank to inspire you with references to the narrative work of Familias: Ahora.

Let's embark on this learning journey and boldly create new stories to support the well-being of families.

Sincerely,

**Familias: Ahora team.**

## Introduction

# What is narrative work and what does it have to do with your cause?

You wake up and scroll through your phone, coming across a TikTok video of a woman preparing a meal for her working husband, while her son leaps around dressed as a superhero and her daughter sit quietly playing with a doll.

While you're taking a bath, the radio plays: "The love of a father and mother never tires of giving."

In the family group chat, an aunt shares a prayer for the traditional family; while on television, a soap opera concludes with the marriage of a man and a woman, suggesting they will be happy forever.

We are surrounded by stories that we encounter in different places, over and over again. These stories intertwine and together shape our understanding of the world. This interconnected web of stories is what we call "a narrative."

Narratives are an essential part of who we are as human beings. Through them, we shape reality and create what we understand as "common sense." **Narrative work** consists, then, of imagining and creating new stories that challenge traditional ideas (or dominant narratives), thus paving the way toward more diverse, egalitarian, caring and responsible futures.

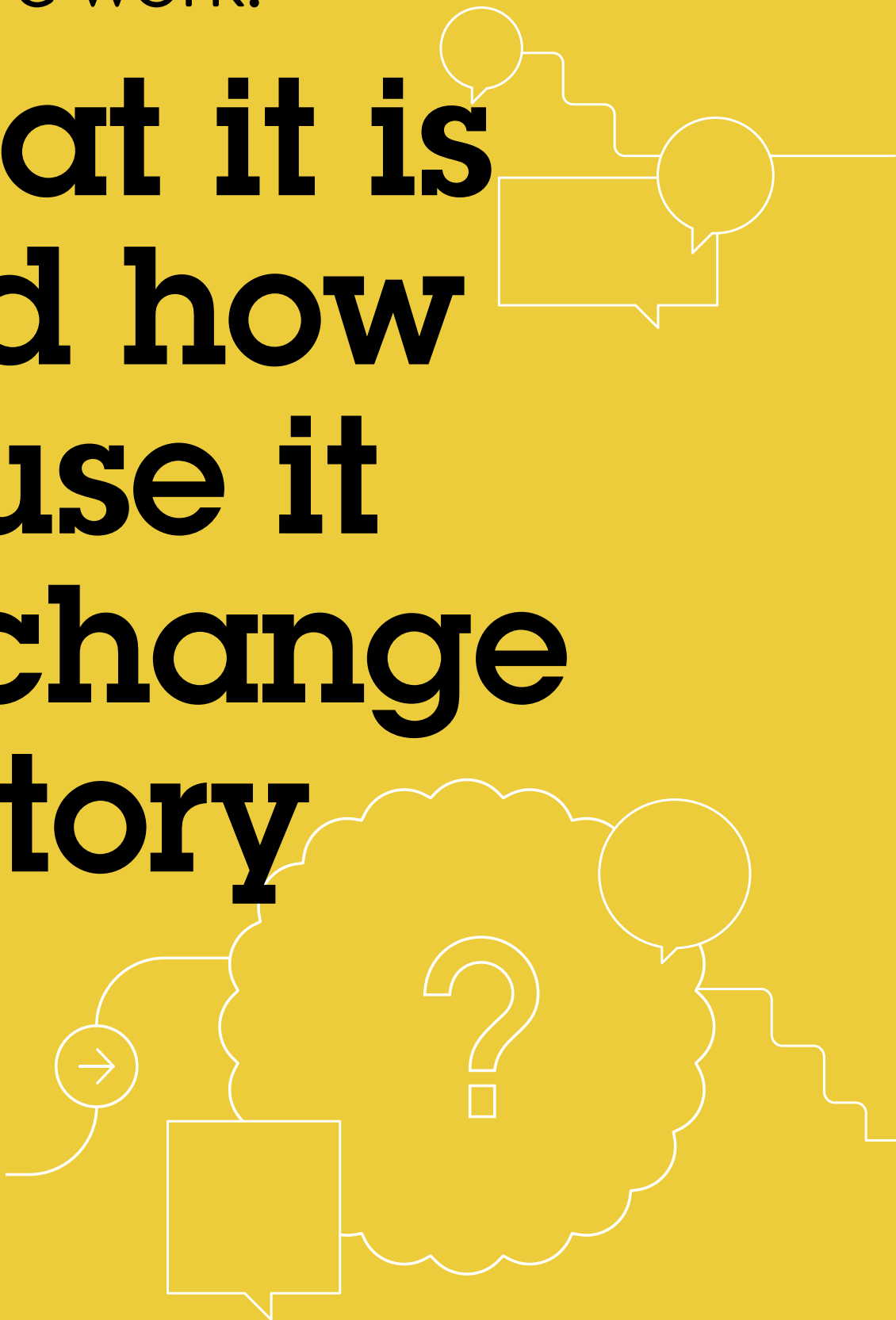
By learning and using narrative work intentionally, we can transform perceptions, promote the values that bring our causes together, and build more dignified societies.

**It's time to tell other stories about families in Latin America!**

**Let's begin!**

Let's talk about  
narrative work:

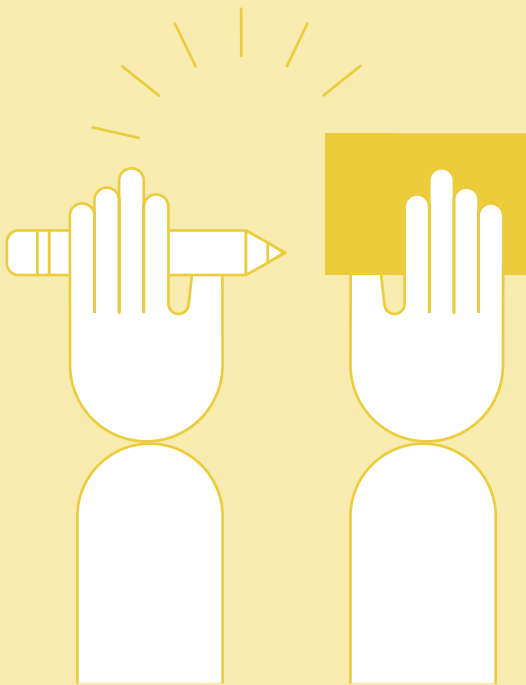
# what it is and how to use it to change History





We'll try to keep this simple. As we've already stated, **narratives are an invisible form of power that shapes the way we see the world. They're like lenses we wear to see, feel, and create reality.**

Narratives that uphold the traditional family structure and roles as the sole valid model need to be transformed. We should embrace and celebrate diverse family compositions, prioritizing the care, growth, and well-being of every individual within the family.



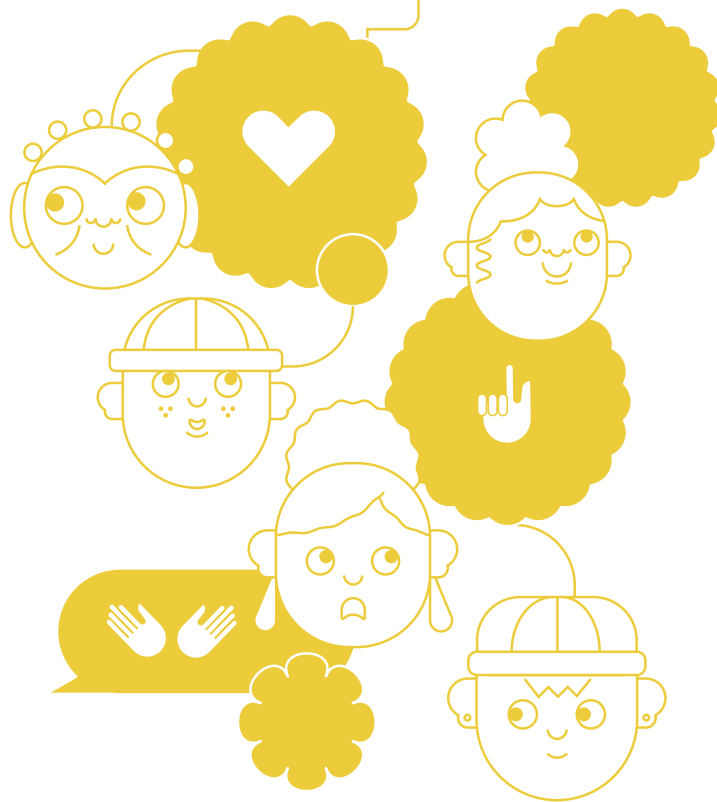
# How do we achieve this change?

Through narrative work—imagining, creating, disseminating, and intentionally positioning new stories and messages to expand what people in our societies perceive as possible and desirable.

In recent years, in Latin America, the discourse about families has been used to promote ideas that don't always prioritize the well-being of their members.

One example is the “traditional model” of family, where mothers care, fathers work, and children obey. This model ignores other ways of building families and fosters rejection toward anything that doesn't fit the mold.

The narrative work of our platform aims to change this trend by **telling stories that give voice to other characters and experiences. Instead of focusing on what a family's structure should be**, we intend to spark a conversation about desirable relationships within any family and the rights people



need to ensure their own well-being and that of their loved ones.

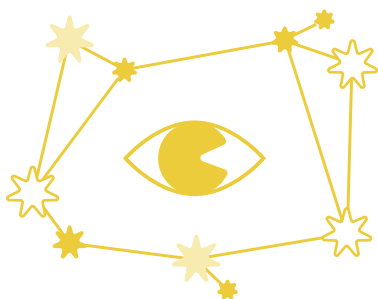
Just as you strengthen your muscles when practicing a sport, it's possible to train your narrative muscle. By doing so, you'll learn to use narratives strategically to challenge what seems established and, in this case, promote a healthier and more diverse understanding of family bonds.



Start by learning some of the essential elements of narrative writing.

# Narrative Dictionary

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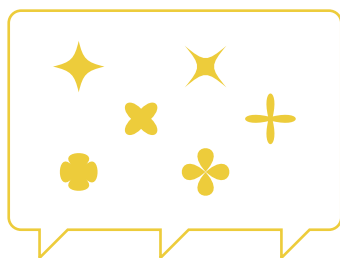
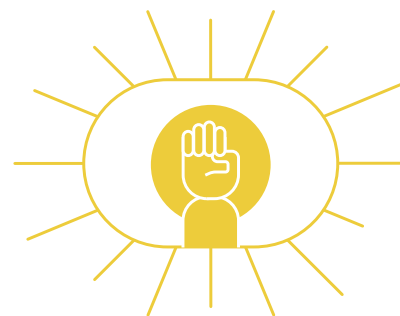


## Narratives:

A set of interconnected stories bound by common values that, when told repeatedly over time and through various media, construct a worldview—essentially shaping what we come to understand as common sense.

## Narrative Power:

The collective ability to intentionally create, disseminate, and position stories to influence how society makes meaning, illustrating the world we want to build.



## Alternative Narratives:

Stories that offer new visions, characters, and approaches, challenging dominant narratives by using hopeful messages that depict other possible worlds.

## Hegemonic Narratives:

Stories that have historically imposed a worldview and its values, which most people in a society perceive as common sense. These have been reinforced over time through media, cultural products like films or music, popular sayings, and more.

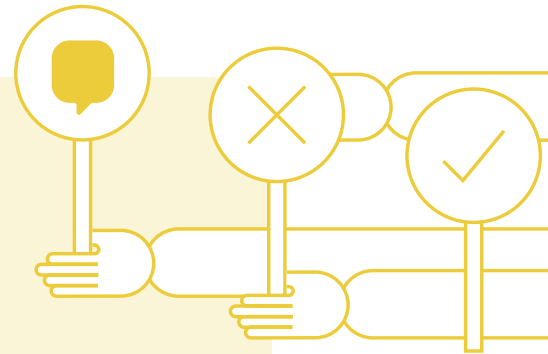


## Counter-Narratives:

A set of alternative narratives that serve to challenge a hegemonic narrative.



Counter-narratives do not focus on explicitly disproving or attacking the dominant narrative but instead present themselves as alternative narratives.

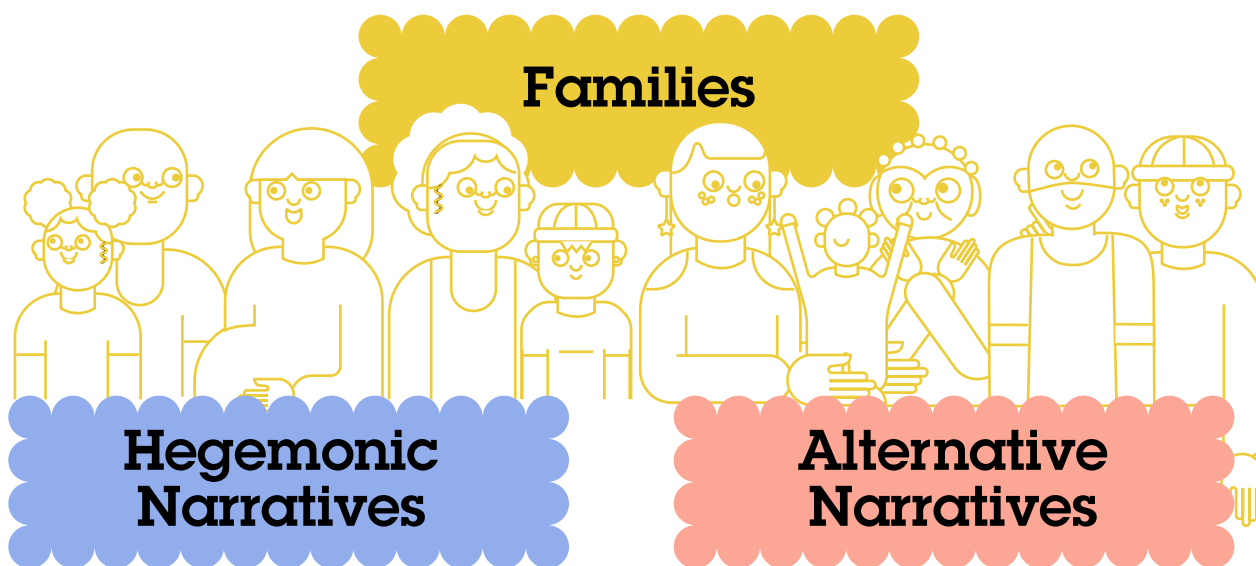


# How do we put narrative work into practice?



Below, you'll find some hegemonic narratives about families and the alternative narratives that present a different vision.

**We invite you to grab a pen and a piece of paper to write down all the alternative narratives that come to mind:**



Families are composed of a mother, a father, and their biological children living together in one household.

Men are the sole providers, and women are the primary caregivers, responsible for the household and children.

“Good families” strictly adhere to certain traditional and religious values, and any deviation is seen as immoral.

Families can have different structures: single-parent families, extended families, blended families, families with same-sex parents, and they don't necessarily live under the same roof.

Caregiving roles within families are flexible and shared, allowing any family member to take on different responsibilities based on their abilities and mutual agreements.

Families can be diverse in their values and beliefs, where all ways of living and loving should be respected and valued, as long as care and well-being remain at the core.

# Frames and Frameworks: What Are They and How Can We Use Them for the Common Good?

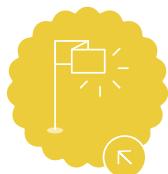


*In this section, we'll explore framing theory through the lens of narrative work. If you're unfamiliar with this type of framing, don't worry: we'll explain it to you through María's story.*

**María and Juan are a young couple who decided not to have children.** Often, many careless people ask them why they made their decision.



They understood that depending on who asks them, they choose the best answer:



If it's someone who shares their values and worldview, they explain that they have independently decided on their life plan.



If it's someone sensitive to the climate crisis, they argue with them about the relationship between environmental uncertainty and their decision.



If it's a family member who cares about your happiness, explain that this is the decision that has brought the most peace and fulfillment to your lives.



If it's someone interested in economics, they're shown how the low wages young people earn make it nearly impossible to start a family.

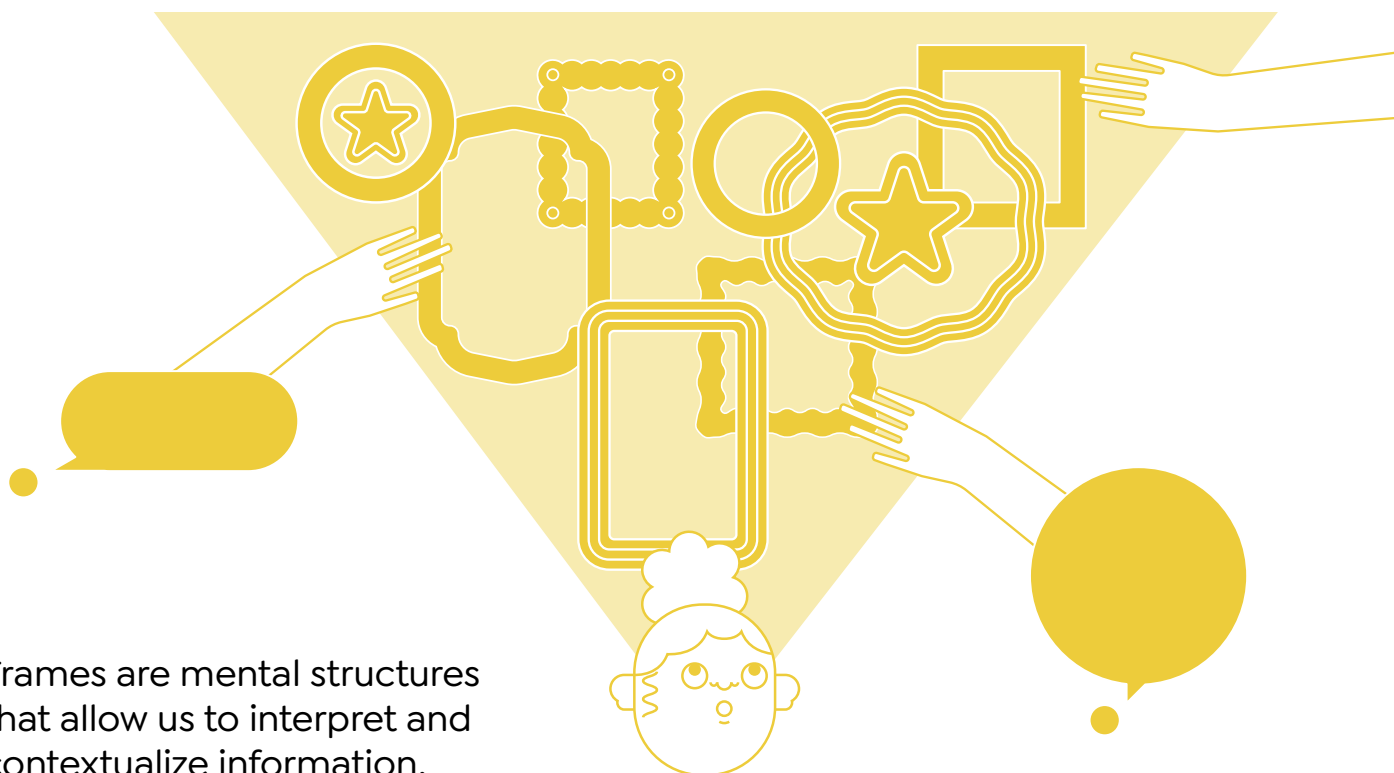
Yes, we know that María and Juan don't need to justify themselves, but this example illustrates how framing works by highlighting specific aspects of information to influence people's perceptions.



Each frame becomes a container that determines which stories and messages fit within it.

Now, let's get theoretical:

# Framing Theory: Creating Common Sense



Frames are mental structures that allow us to interpret and contextualize information. They help us understand the world and guide our perceptions and actions.

According to cognitive linguist George Lakoff, common sense is shaped through repeated exposure to certain frames. This happens because our brain generates ideas through neural connections every time we think about a topic. The more we activate these mental connections around a specific topic, the more likely it becomes ingrained as “common sense.”

As previously discussed, narrative work aims to challenge what we accept as “common sense” by introducing new stories, characters, and viewpoints. This is **why it's crucial to collectively position alternative narratives**. By doing so, we can reach the scale needed to disrupt the prevailing common sense, reinforce the ideas we want to embed in people's minds, and ultimately transform how they perceive the world.

## Framing vs. Manipulation

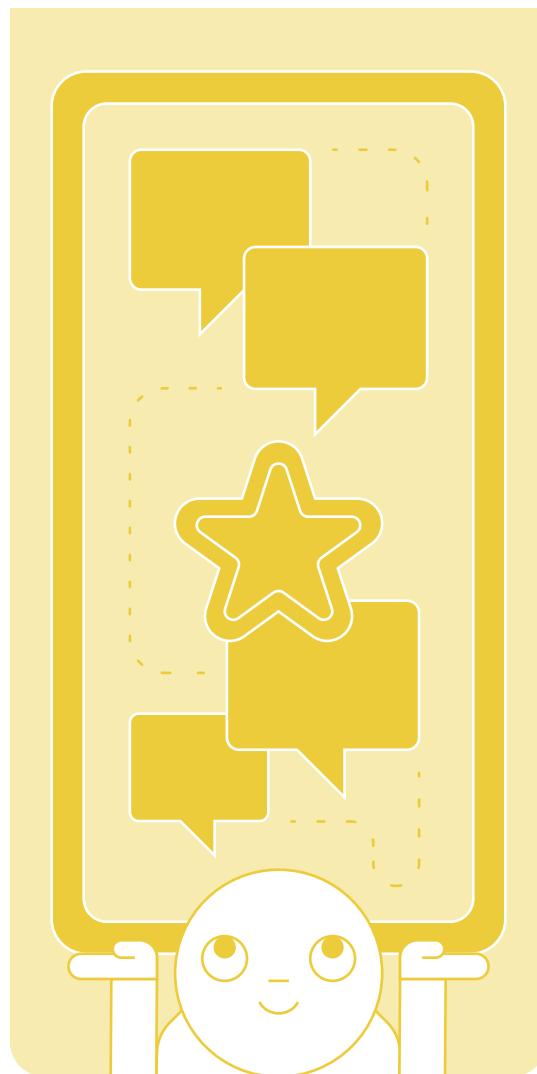
There is a difference between framing and manipulation. Framing is when you choose how to convey an idea, focusing on people's needs and aiming to make it clear and easy to understand. In contrast, manipulation seeks to deceive in order to gain power.

The difference can be seen in these two questions:

**“How can I make this idea easier to understand and connect with my audience?”**

vs.

**“How can I disguise my ideas so that my audience agrees with me?”**



In conclusion:

**Framing is a powerful tool that allows us to communicate both ethically and effectively.** By designing frames that evoke values like empathy, justice, and care, we can influence the perceptions and behaviors of our audience, promoting a fairer world for all.

# Let's understand framing theory:



Let's revisit the exercise on family narratives: Traditional Narrative vs. Alternative Narratives. Here are the steps to apply framing theory:

---

**1.**

## Identify the Hegemonic Narratives:



Men are the providers and women are the caregivers. Daughters wear pink and play with dolls, sons wear blue and play with cars.



Men who care for their children are seen as exceptions or heroes, while women who work full-time are viewed as bad mothers.



A single-parent family is an incomplete family.

**2.**

## Define the Alternative Narratives:



There are many ways to build a family, take on different roles, and have diverse interests, regardless of whether someone is a man or a woman.



Equal participation of men in childcare is valuable for fathers, essential for children, and fair for women.



What matters in families is not their structure, but that relationships are healthy, rooted in love, and prioritize the well-being of each member.

# 3.

## Creating frames for Alternative Narratives:



The frame we choose must be ethical, promoting values such as equality, respect, and mutual care:

"As a father, I want to teach my children that, **regardless of whether we are male or female**, we must all cooperate and participate in taking care of our home."

— Juan, 39 years old

familiasahora.org

### Gender Equity:

Caregiving responsibilities should be shared. Caring is beautiful, and men have

"Family are those who accepts you, treats you with love and respect, and values who you are. That's why, in the future, I'd like to share my life with someone who offers me that, as well as a relationship rooted in love and care."

— Sergio, 28 years old

familiasahora.org

Sergio is a fictitious name to protect his identity. This piece was created in collaboration with the Association of graduates of the probation system (ASCEP).

### Family diversity:

Families are shaped over time.

### 5 Truths About Single-Parent Families

- 1 - Single-parent homes are those where there is no spouse or partner present, but there are children.
- 2 - Single parenthood is not always the result of death or separation. Sometimes, it is also a choice, as in the case of adoption or in vitro fertilization.
- 3 - According to studies such as those led by psychologist Susan Golombok at Cambridge University, this type of family structure does not have a differential impact on the overall well-being of children.
- 4 - Being the head of a single-parent family does not mean raising children alone. It is important to have a support network of family and friends and to connect with others in similar situations to foster a sense of community in parenting.
- 5 - And most importantly: there is no ideal, normal, or correct model of family. A single-parent family is a complete family.

Adapted from "Single-Parent Homes Are Complete" by Andrea Hartung. Published in La Terceira

### Family Well-Being:

What matters in families is that relationships are healthy, built on love, care, and respect for all their members.

## 4.

## Telling Heart Touching Stories that Inspire Hope:

Since the Stone Age, humans have used stories to understand the world, their place in it, and how to live. As Yuval Noah Harari points out, civilizations grew thanks to stories that united people and conveyed shared values. Stories simplify complex ideas by turning them into relatable human experiences.

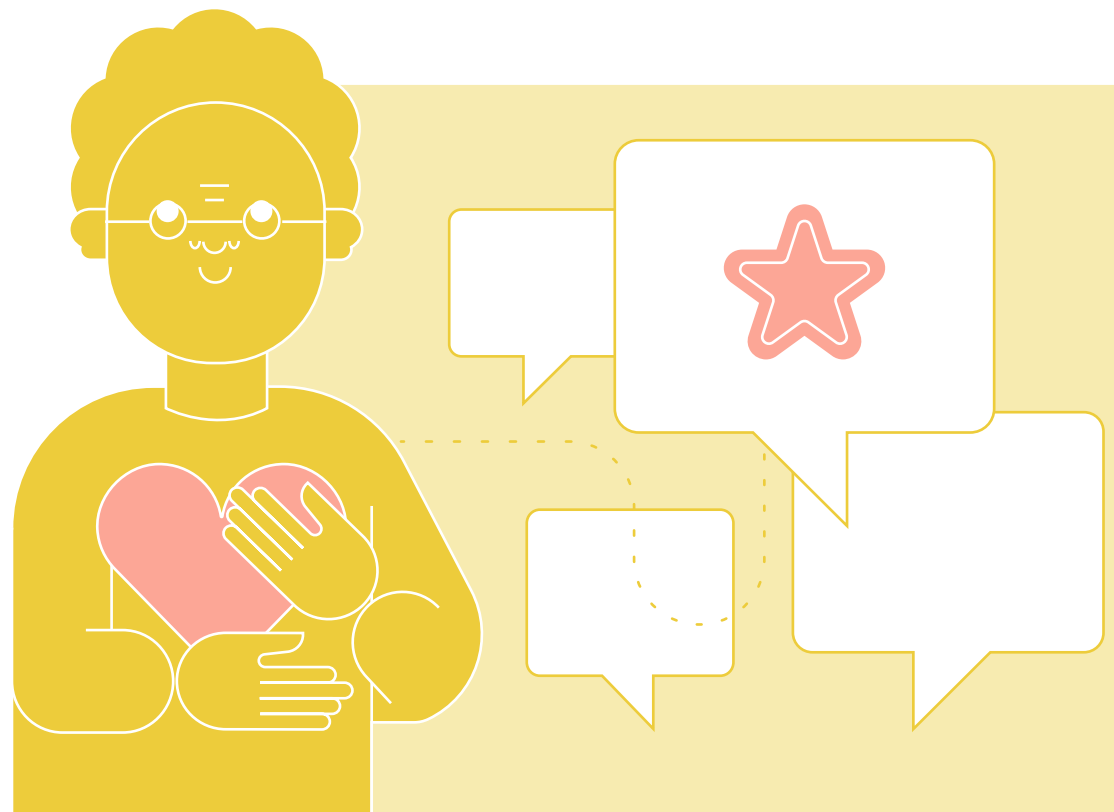
**Identify and share emotional and hopeful stories** that can fit within each frame:



Stories of men and women who have built happy and thriving families where household responsibilities are shared, relationships are healthy, and bonds are nurtured through trust and mutual respect.



Stories of single-parent families or LGBTQIA+ families that show how the key to family well-being lies not in its structure, but in love, communication, and mutual support.



## 5.

## Spread and Position the Narrative:

Post stories and messages in your media outlets, tailoring each frame to the appropriate audience. For example:



### Social Media:

Share stories, videos, and testimonials about diverse and equitable families.



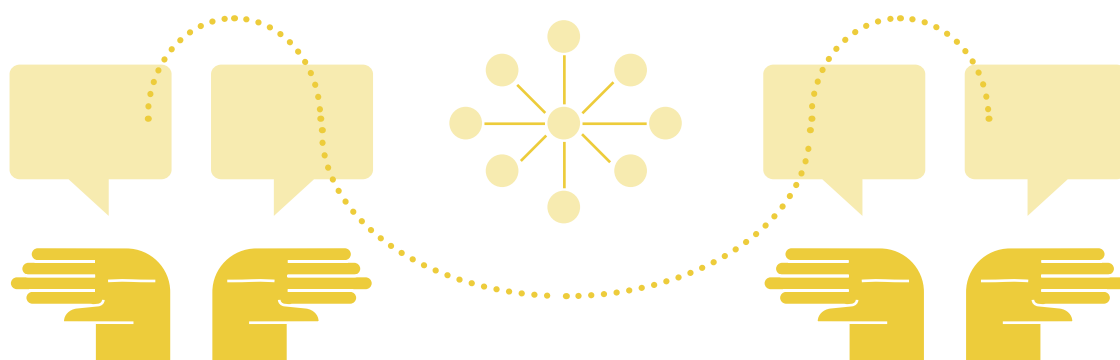
### Media Outlets:

Collaborate with journalists on reports that challenge traditional narratives and promote family diversity, or include advertising campaigns aimed at the audience you want to reach.



### Community and Events:

Organize workshops and talks that use real-life stories to encourage reflection on the various ways of being a family and the role of men in childcare.



With this example, we can see that within each frame, hegemonic norms are challenged while also inspiring other individuals, families, and communities to embrace diversity, well-being, care, and mutual respect.

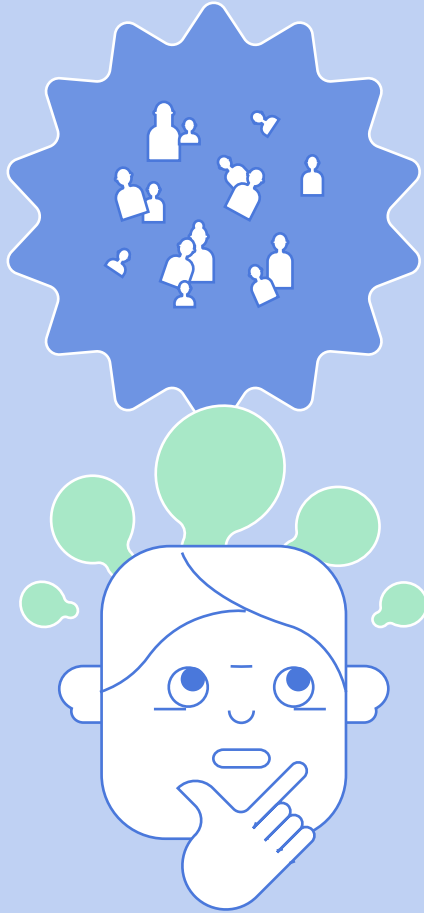


Based on  
evidence:

# Communicate strategically using audience studies



When we say “family”...



**What do you think of?**

**What image comes to mind?**

**Is it the table set with people enjoying themselves?**

**Is it childhood memories somewhat nostalgic?**

**Are they the friends who have supported you throughout your life?**

---

There are as many images and stories of families as there are people. Understanding what resonates with your audience is key to narrative work.

Narrative work also draws on the principles of strategic communications, which is why **audience research is important. It helps us gain deeper insights into those we aim to attract and motivate to join our causes.** By understanding their interests, needs, and behaviors, we can choose more effective and deep messages, messengers, and channels. This not only strengthens our narrative but also enables us to build stronger, longer-lasting relationships with our audiences.



Discover the definitions of what is and what are the types of audiences.

# Narrative Dictionary

## What Are Audiences?

Audiences are the groups of people we convey our messages and campaigns to. Understanding who they are allows us to communicate more effectively and ensures that our stories resonate with them.



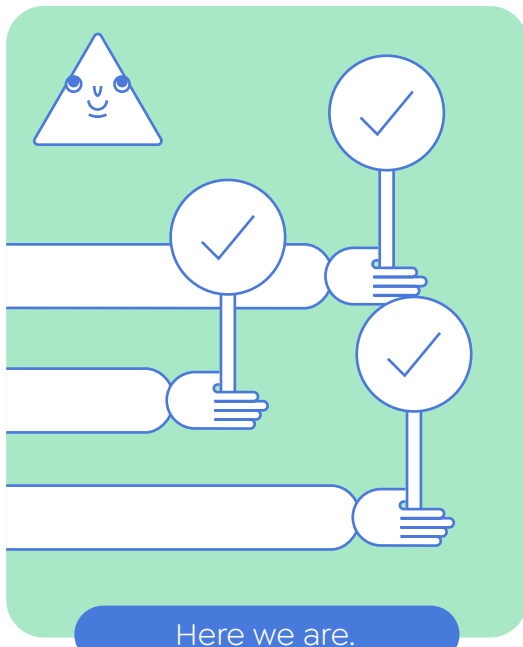
## Audience Clusters

In social justice movements, we always encounter three types of audiences that we must keep in mind to be effective and achieve our goals:



Together with Sensata, we conducted studies to understand the beliefs and attitudes of Latin American audiences regarding various social causes.

[Learn more here](#)



Here we are.

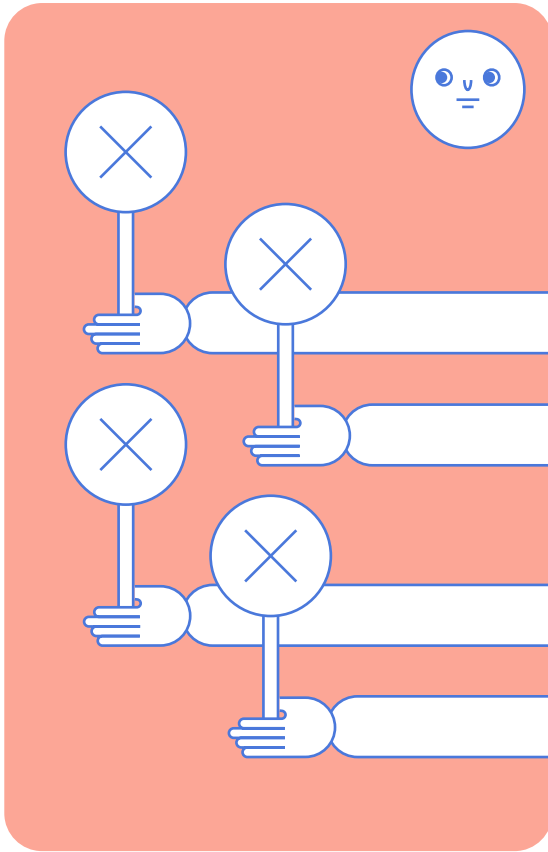
## Supporters:

We endorse the causes of social justice movements and support messages advocating for human rights. We are rebels with causes—rebels because, when making decisions, we don't rely on God, our parents' opinions, or tradition, but rather on the causes we believe in.



### Our recommendation:

Activate their commitment by inviting them to take concrete actions.



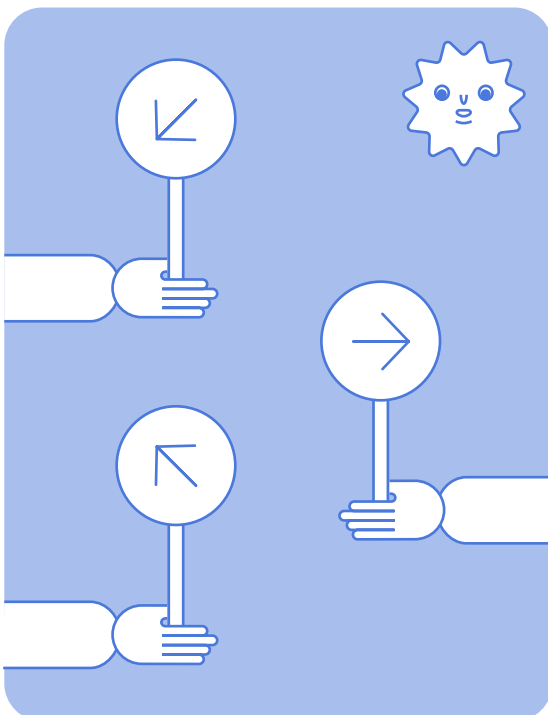
## Antagonists:

They have a defined opinion and no interest in changing their stance. They are against certain positions in the agendas for democracy and human rights and disapprove of our messages. They believe there is a natural order established by God that also applies to family relationships, and they reject our activism because they feel we threaten that order.



### Our recommendation:

Avoid increasing their visibility by responding to their attacks on social media, or reinforcing their frames by using their arguments in your replies.



## Flexibles:

They don't have a consistent commitment to either supporting or opposing our activism, either because they haven't been interested in participating or because some ideas align with them while others may make them uneasy at the same time. They are open to supporting our causes but are not radicals. For them, God, tradition, and their parents hold significant importance.



### Our recommendation:

Attract them through messages that connect with the values and beliefs that matter to them.





# We suggest you include flexible audiences in your communication strategy.











## Why?

### These are the opportunities:

In Familias: Ahora, we collaborated with Sensata UX (2020) to find specialized data that will help us better understand the flexible audience in Latin America.

-  To achieve the necessary impact to challenge common sense and shift the dominant narrative, it's essential to inspire our core supporters to reach out and connect with flexible audiences.
-  Millions of people in the “flexible” category have the potential to become allies of our organizations and activism. In all Latin American countries, this group represents around 40% of the population.
-  To make progress in democratic contexts, we must create majorities that support our agendas.
-  The best way to diminish the influence of antagonists is to create alternative narratives that challenge their dominance over the conversation about families.

## What Are The Characteristics of Flexible Audiences?

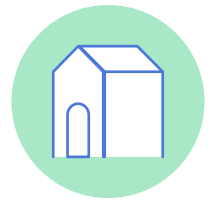
-  They are between 25 and 35 years old.
-  Their highest level of education is high school or a technical degree.
-  They live in heterosexual relationships with their minor children or children from previous relationships.
-  They work long hours. Most are Catholic but do not regularly attend religious activities.
-  They also do not frequently engage in political or civic activities.
-  They get their information through WhatsApp.
-  Facebook is their preferred social network.
-  They tend to feel uncomfortable when they don't follow the rules.



Audience studies allow us not only to gather demographic data but also to gain insights into the values and behaviors of our target audiences. Thus, our studies revealed that while the flexible audience is open to updating the concept of family, it's very important to validate their nostalgia for the traditional family in which they grew up.



# Grandma



# Grandparents' House

# Childhood



# Memories

# food



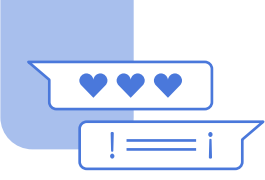
# Stories

At Familias: Ahora, we use emotions to make our statement and share content that connects with this audience.

We invite you to watch the video and identify how nostalgia is expressed.




[Watch video here](#)



In the focus groups we've conducted, we understood that many flexible individuals don't want to repeat the mistakes their parents or caregivers made while raising them, so they are willing to approach their role differently—for example, by discussing sexuality in an open and informed way.

We also know that, although they idealize certain memories, many recall their childhood as a difficult period. In many cases, the grandfather figure became a symbol of violence within families. This shows us that “the past wasn't always better,” and we must use nostalgia carefully to avoid ignoring the reality many families experienced.

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**If you work for social justice and want to connect with the flexible audience in Latin America on issues related to families and their well-being, the best approach will be to create alternative narratives that appeal to nostalgia:**



Connect with childhood memories.



Use narrative elements like the dining table or gathering around meals.



Think about the items most people in your community had during their childhood, such as toys or photo albums, and incorporate them into your stories.



**Activism for reproductive rights** has used slogans like “Keep your rosaries off our ovaries” or “My body is mine, and I decide”, for instance. We know these messages align well with rebellious and sympathetic audiences but may not connect with flexible audiences. That’s why, when discussing abortion, Familias: Ahora shares the story of Angélica, a 98-year-old great-grandmother, who tells her granddaughters:

"I gave birth to 15 children, and I love them all, but for my granddaughters, great-granddaughters and great-great-granddaughters, **I wish that motherhood be a choice made out of love, not an obligation.**"

— **Angélica, 98 years old**



Sharing these kinds of stories enhances traditional activism and supports the same goal in a tone that better aligns with flexible audiences, helping us step out of our echo bubble and attract new supporters.



## Transform Narratives with Your Communications

What brings us together:

# Building a common ground based in hope





Imagine you work for a social organization that aims to promote respect for the migrant family's rights.

### **You have two paths:**

**1.**

Create a campaign that highlights the worst violations of their rights with statistics and stories of families in dramatic situations.

**2.**

Create a campaign that illustrates that when states guarantee rights, migrant families can thrive, build a home, and integrate into their new country of residence.



Let's do an exercise:

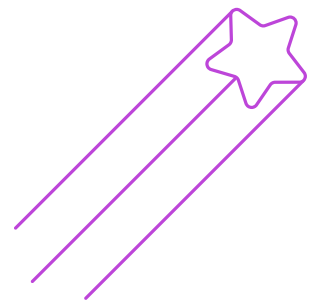
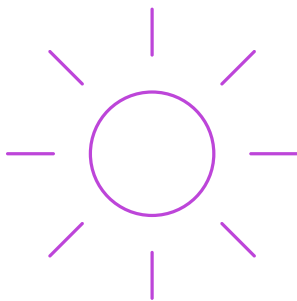
# Let's put hope-based communication into practice:



Hope-based communication is an approach supported by psychology and neuroscience. Its goal is to counter apocalyptic fatigue—that feeling of discouragement and helplessness we experience in the face of constant denunciations—to keep the commitment to social change alive.

For years, social justice movements have relied on the act of calling out as a tool to mobilize society around the issues that concern us. Of course, it's important to speak up and expose the injustices we see around us.

**However, if we focus solely on calling out, our audiences may feel overwhelmed by the bad news and injustices that seem endless.** This leads to a sense of helplessness, emotional block, and paralysis, causing them to lose interest in social change because it makes them believe there's no way to overcome crises.



This not only impacts our ability to connect with our audiences but also takes a toll on the mental health of those of us committed to activism.

## How?

According to studies, our brains respond differently to fear and hope.

### Hope

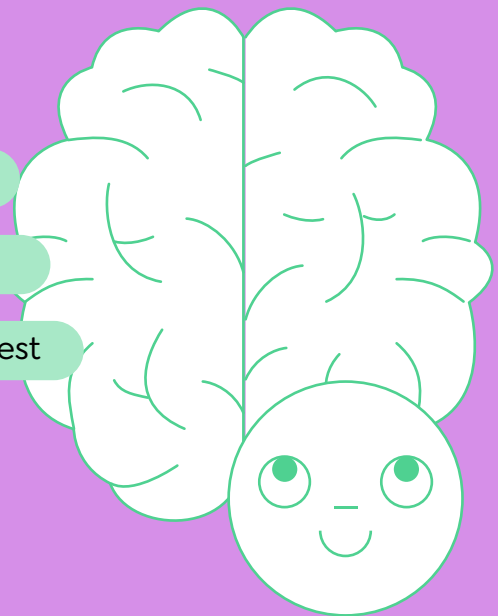
Search for solutions

Trust

Willingness to act

Inspiration

Common interest



### Fear

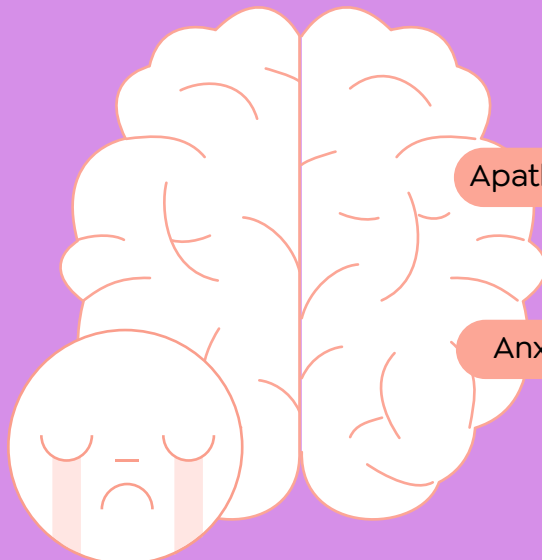
Apathy

Paralysis in action

Lack of interest in change

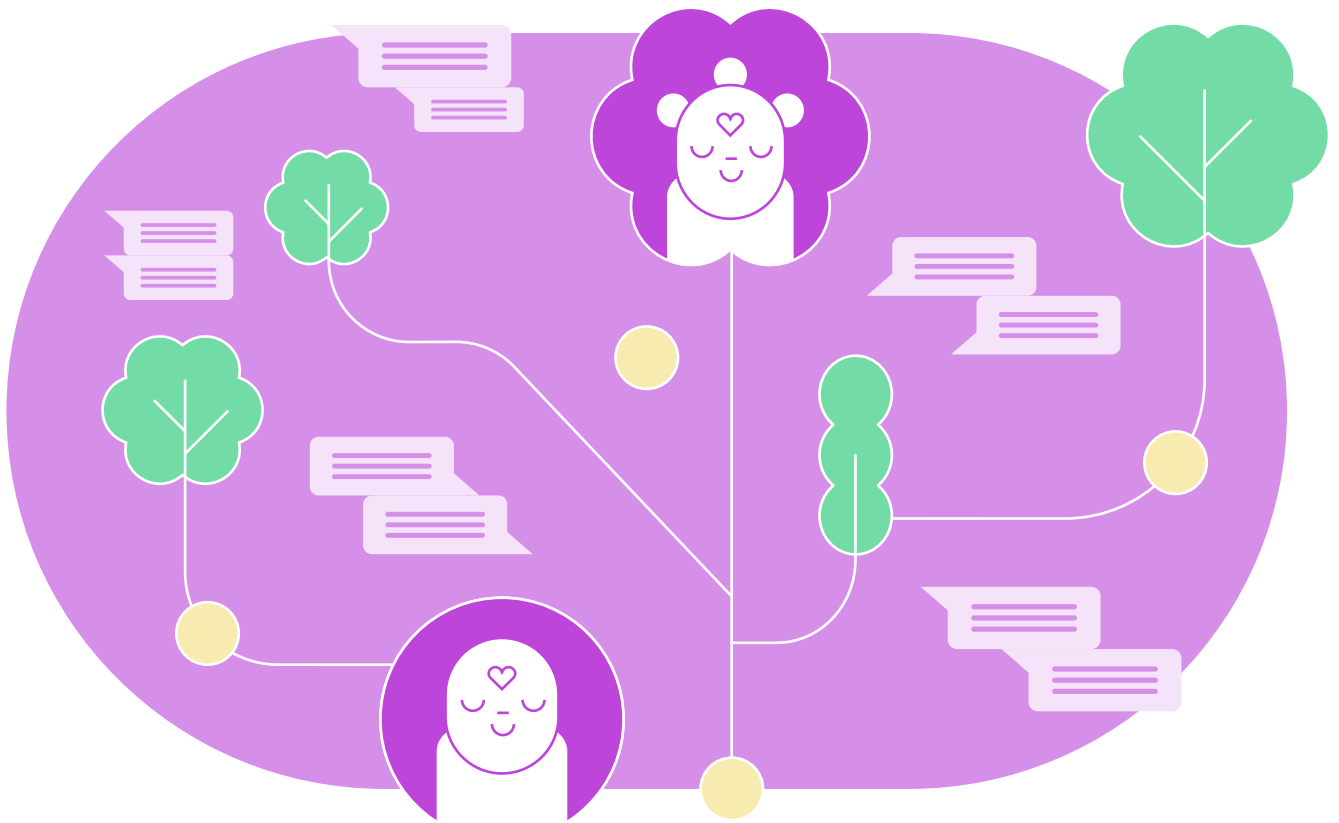
Anxiety

Individualism



**We are the hope!**

# How to Communicate from A Place of Hope without Slipping into Toxic Positivity?



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Hope is not simply about sharing positive messages or ignoring problems. It's a call to **rely on communication to envision the world we aspire to create and inspire people to join us in building it.** This begins by acknowledging the realities we want to change but goes beyond condemnation. It allows us to envision the future we desire and use it as a compass, inspiring people to harness their power, both individually and collectively, to move in that direction.

**We believe in the power of hope-based communication to inspire citizens and safeguard our mental health.** This approach empowers us to inspire millions of people, giving them confidence that it's possible to build a society where families embrace diversity, foster genuine, caring relationships, and have the tools to advocate for the rights and resources from the state that ensure the well-being of every member.

At *Familias: Ahora*, we tell real stories to depict the kind of family relationships we aspire to see globally. Although family rejection of LGBTQ+ members is regrettably widespread in Latin America, **we find it more impactful to highlight stories of families who embrace and celebrate their loved ones regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.**

For example:

"My daughter likes women. When I found out, I told her, '**Daughter, I love you, I respect you, and I'm going to be by your side.**' Then we hugged and cried."



— Adolfo,  
61 years old

familiasahora.org  
This piece was created in collaboration with the organization Sentido.

familias:  
ahora

"Having children who are transitioning into their gender identity is a constant learning process. Breaking down stereotypes and understanding that imposed roles don't define us has been a privileged and beautiful experience for our family."



— Rafael,  
48 years old

familiasahora.org  
This piece was created in collaboration with GAAT Fundation.

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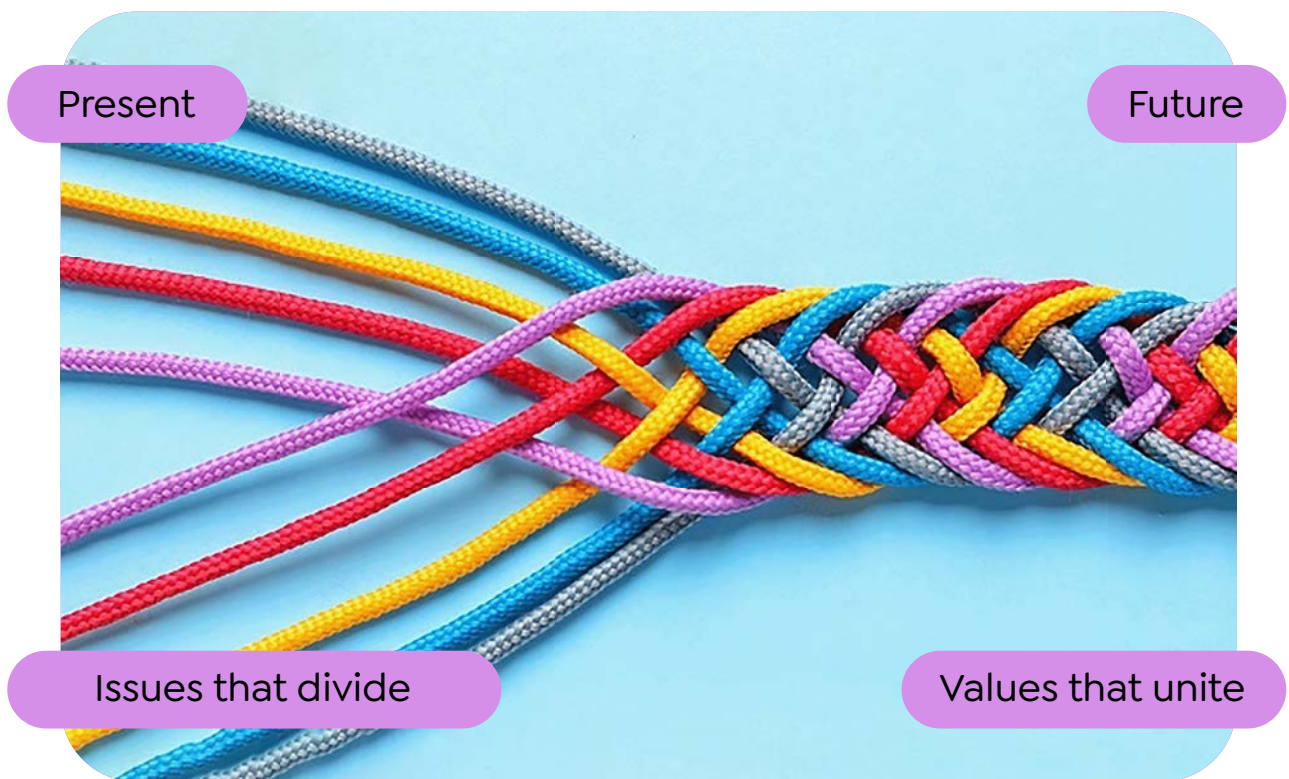


These heartwarming stories forge an emotional bond with the audiences we want to engage, enable us to relate to their characters, and show that a different reality is possible.

## Knitting Values on A Shared Ground

Does anyone in your family knit? Think about how those threads of various colors intertwine to create patterns that turn into something valuable. On their own, each thread doesn't hold much worth, but when woven together, they create something special.

Something similar happens with social justice movements. Each one operates with its own agendas and issues that shape its strategies and actions to achieve the world we dream of. However, these agendas can sometimes isolate us and distance us from other movements that ultimately share the same goal: building a world with dignity, care, and justice.






rights, disability rights, as well as housing, health, education, and environmental justice, among others. While the challenges we address may differ, we all hold a strikingly similar vision of what a fair and just world would look like, no matter which movement we are part of.

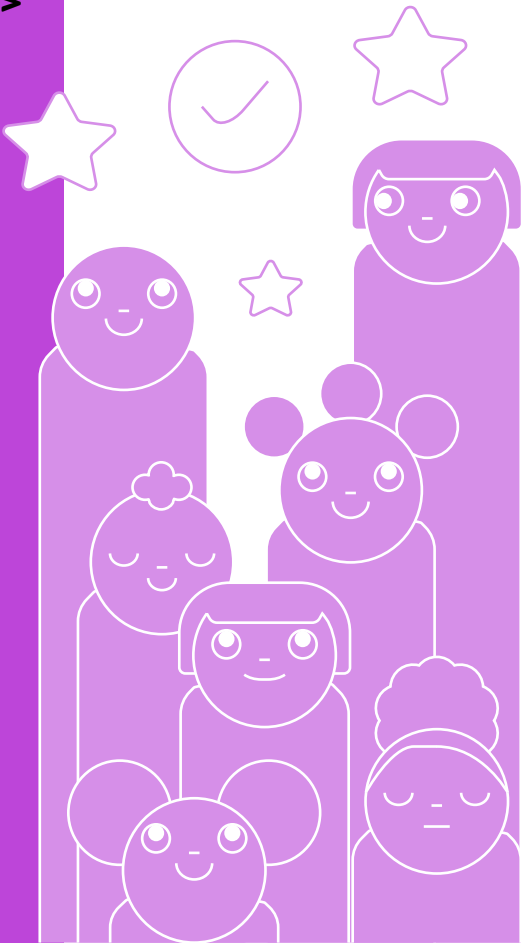
**Narrative work recognizes that by telling stories about the values we share, it becomes easier to advance our agendas.** By highlighting values like solidarity, for instance, we can change how people think about issues such as homelessness, poverty, migration, the environment, disability, or health.

That's why, at *Familias: Ahora*, we leverage this approach to collectively promote the values we hold dear and our understanding of families.



## By Focusing on Our Shared Values, We Can:

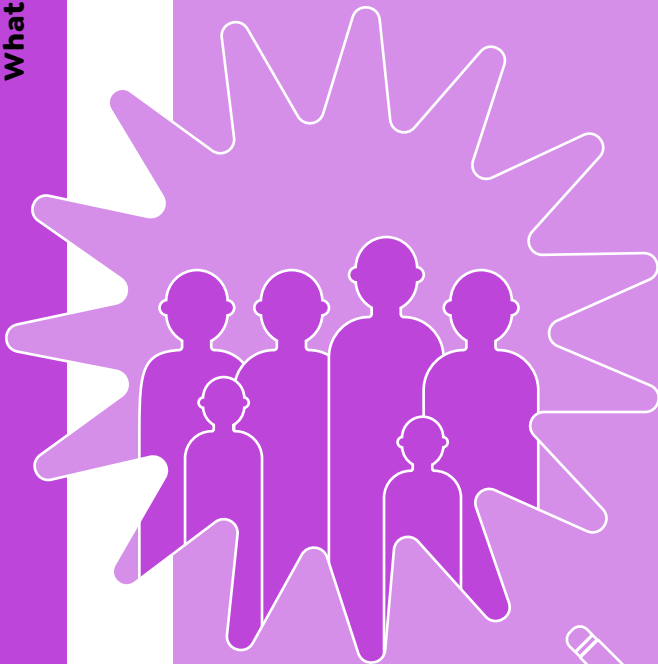
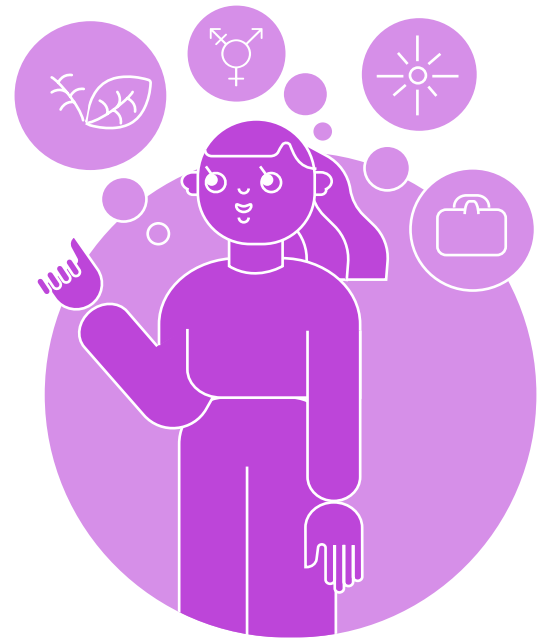
-  **Amplify and strengthen our voices to expand our reach and solidify the values that support our alternative vision of families.** This approach will make it easier to drive forward the goals of diverse social movements.
-  **Collaborate with, learn from and develop with other movements** innovative solutions to address the challenges families face in the 21st century.
-  **Accept that in people's lives, issues overlap in intricate ways, and it's essential to recognize these intersections** and the unique experiences each person carries with them.



## An Example of Building A Common Ground: Chile's Constitutional Convention



An example of the power of unity through shared values was Chile's constitutional process between 2021 and 2023. During this period, different movements with seemingly distinct agendas—such as gender equality, environmental protection, migration, and human rights—came together by framing families as a unifying concept. This approach allowed them to align their aspirations and effectively engage with a variety of audiences.



Our alternative narrative about families is rooted in the values we wanted to see reflected in that constitution. Thanks to this shared vision, we were able to collaboratively create a decalogue of key points and work together to ensure they were included in the Chilean constitution.



[See the complete decalogue here](#)



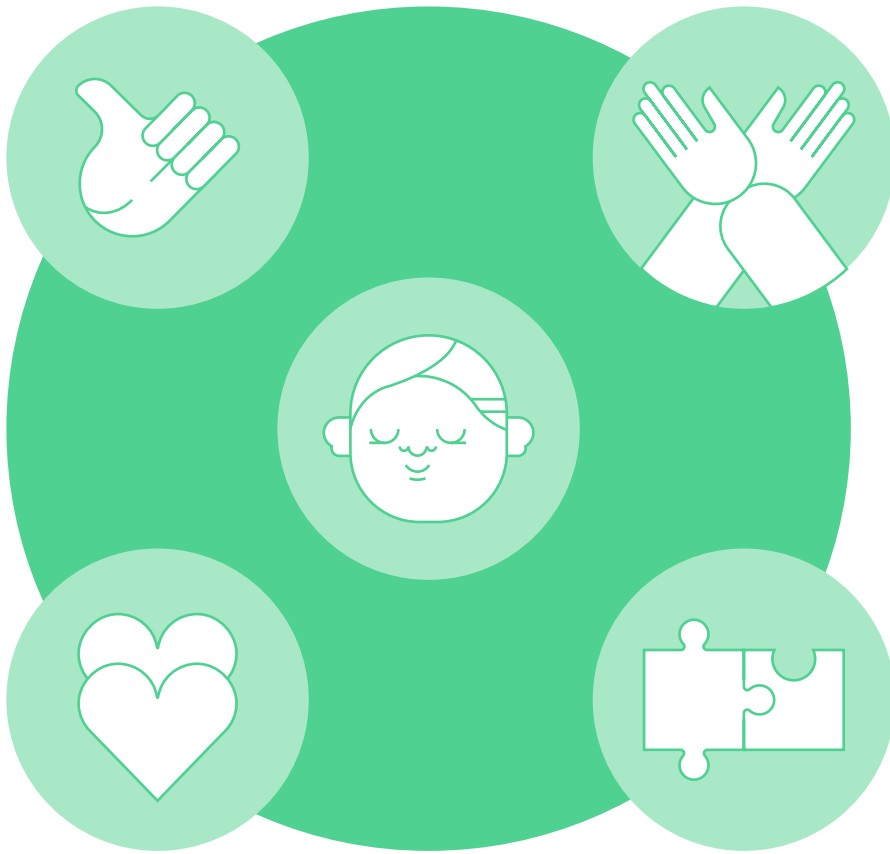
Although the results of the plebiscite were not what we hoped for, the process demonstrated the power of common ground to bring movements together and unite forces capable of driving large-scale social change.

This is a key lesson in our pursuit of a world where all families are founded on love, care, respect, and responsibility.



**Let's build common ground for all families in Latin America and the world!**

# Thank You for Coming this Far!



This is just a glimpse into the universe of discussions we can have about narrative work, which continues to evolve with every practice.

We hope this kit serves as a guide to take the first steps in crafting diverse, memorable, hopeful, and inspiring stories about families and their well-being.

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- Click [here](#) to discover some examples of social media pieces we've created that put into practice what you've learned about narrative work. Get inspired and use these resources to replicate them on your channels.
- Find more resources [here](#) to imagine, create, and train your narrative muscle.
- Continue learning about narrative work at <https://www.inspiratorio.org/en/learn>

Join our **Community of Practice on WhatsApp.**

Scan the QR code:



**Do you have questions or suggestions?  
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We are a project created with  by Puentes.

