



# Overcoming Individualism\*

One of the biggest messaging challenges advocates can face is the deeply rooted Western value of **individualism**.

This is a predominant default frame that **attributes all personal outcomes to personal choices**, so collective solutions don't make sense. For our policy solutions gain traction, we need to reframe within that value.

“ If you know that individualism is a trap, you can think about the structure of your story... your story then becomes about how the environment is shaping the decisions people are making.   
 - Moira O'Neil, Frame[s] of Mind Episode 1

## Overcoming individualism in our messaging:

**Trigger & Steer.** Rather than waiting for your audience's value of individualism to kick in inconveniently, start your story by acknowledging the role of the individual and then explain how the environment shapes those decisions.

*Example: We all need to take responsibility for our health, and it is easier to make healthy choices when we have bike lanes/access to healthy food/don't have to choose between rent and healthy food.*

**The value of Human Potential can be used to redirect our audience toward more collective goals.\*** This value can also be applied to reinforce individualism, so frame carefully!

*Example: Fulfilling human potential requires programs that create living conditions that promote wellness: physical, social, mental and emotional. When we promote wellness, we enable people to fully realize their capacity to contribute to society. To realize our province's full potential, we need to ensure the wellness of all our citizens.\**

\* Bales, S.N., Volmert, A., & Simon, A. (2014). *Overcoming health individualism: A FrameWorks creative brief on framing social determinants in Alberta*. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.