

# OF HOW: THE CASE FOR EXPLANATION\*

An explanation of an issue invites people to **understand how something works**: it doesn't just say there is a cause and effect, it **shows how one leads to the other**. Explanation moves **beyond persuasion** and empowers people in their own advocacy on a topic.

## WHY IT MATTERS

When we leave out this step, people fall back on a **shallow thought process** that often leads to blaming more familiar causes like personal effort and individual choice, rather than going deeper to consider systemic injustices and adversities.

These shallower understandings then **shape a (misinformed) perception of appropriate responses**.



“Put simply, many advocacy narratives are missing an ingredient whose absence undermines understanding and derails public engagement. This often-elusive ingredient is explanation.

- FrameWorks Institute

## TECHNIQUES WE CAN USE

In narratives, we can effectively tuck an explanation in between the **“why”** of the orienting values and the **“what”** of our proposed solutions, as the **“how”** that links them.

**Explanatory chains** offer linear paths connecting A to B to C. **Explanatory examples** give concrete illustrations that are easy to remember. **Explanatory metaphors** are also memorable, using familiar experiences to help understand an unfamiliar one. All 3 can be used to explain root causes.



\* These insights and quotes are from FrameWorks Institute. (2019). Unleashing the Power of How: An Explanation Declaration. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.