

Our Narrative Change Work

Narratives are powerful. The stories we believe shape our policies, our institutions, our thinking, our ways of living, and our sense of what's possible.

Psychologist Barry Schwartz maintains that narratives—which he refers to as "idea technology"—may be "the most profoundly important technology" available. Narrative has the power to shape us as human beings and the world we go out to create. In the next three years, the Better Life Lab seeks to paint a new vision of what's possible for work, care, gender, and families in the U.S.

Elevating the Value of Care

Harmful Narratives:

1. Care is gendered, and women are "naturally" better at it.
2. Care and caregiving responsibilities are a burden.
3. Care is a private responsibility.
4. Care is a labor of love that doesn't require skill.

New, Accurate Narratives:

1. Care is an instinctive, necessary, and shared responsibility.
2. Care is joyful and makes life worth living. It is not a burden when it is supported through public policy, workplace practice, and cultural norms.
3. Care is a public good that benefits everyone if we invest in an equitable, high-quality universal care infrastructure with paid family leave, paid sick days, universal child, disability and elder care - benefits everyone.
4. Providing quality care is a skill, deserving of recognition, fair pay and support

Advancing Intersectional Gender Equity

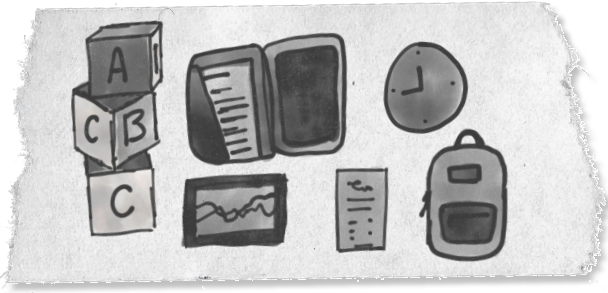
Harmful Narratives:

1. Gendered gaps in pay, promotion, wealth, opportunity, and occupational segregation are the result of skill level, individual choices, or a lack of ambition.
2. Reproductive health and bodily autonomy decisions are matters of public concern.
3. Gender means men and women. Trans and non-binary people are small subgroups that don't deserve too much mainstream attention or ideology-based groups who pose a threat to our culture. Focusing on trans issues is just stoking a culture war.

New, Accurate Narratives:

1. Public policies, workplace practices, and cultural norms that favor men as workers and women as caregivers have led to gendered gaps. Closing them requires changing policy, practice, and culture—not "fixing" women.
2. Women's control over their reproductive health and the rights over their bodily autonomy are fundamental to personal liberty in a free society.
3. People of all genders deserve respect and equal protection under the law. Binary perspectives on gender identity, expression, and roles undercut the recognition of one's humanity and inhibit freedom for all.





Centering Work-Family Justice and Wellbeing

Harmful Narratives:

1. The “ideal worker” has no care responsibilities and works all the time.
2. Traditional breadwinner/homemaker family structures represent true “family values.”
3. The market knows best and delivers efficiency and wellbeing.
4. Poverty is the result of poor individual choices and bad behavior. People just need to work harder.

New, Accurate Narratives:

1. Paid work that centers equity and human wellbeing is effective, productive, profitable, and more sustainable over the long term. Flexible work, schedule control, shorter work hours, time for care and leisure, and worker voice are hallmarks of good work.
2. There is no one “right” way to organize and support a network of love, care, and family, including for families of one.
3. Relying on market solutions since the late 1970s has reversed 20th century progress toward income equality and exacerbated income and wealth inequality. This has resulted in shorter, unhealthier, and unhappier lives alongside sky-high rates of child poverty—particularly among historically marginalized populations. Public policy and investment, stakeholder-driven corporate leadership, and workers all play crucial roles in developing a social contract that promotes human health and wellbeing.
4. Poverty is a policy decision that creates enormous human suffering. Working harder in unstable low-wage jobs isn’t the answer. Creating better jobs and human-centered policies would not only alleviate poverty but eliminate it entirely.

The Better Life Lab seeks to shift paradigms, paint a vision of what’s possible, and inspire action through changing cultural narratives and educating decision-makers.

Better Work
Better Care
Better Life