



Continuing Education Module

How to Connect With Parents by Using Updated Lamaze Messages

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ABSTRACT

Lamaze International partnered with Edelman, an international public relations firm, to re-brand the organization through its messaging to elevate its relevance among key stakeholders. Sound primary and secondary research revealed new ways to communicate the Lamaze message to women, their families, and their care providers. Various tips and tools are presented in this article to enable childbirth educators, care providers, and birth advocates to communicate these new messages more effectively to parents.

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Today's families and expectant parents acquire information quite differently than they did 10 years ago. As the average person's life has become more fast-paced and active, the public has become conditioned to respond to succinct messages. For childbirth educators, it is imperative to adapt communication styles, because what worked in 1999 may not work in 2009.


Recognizing the need to update our core messaging to be relevant to today's families, Lamaze International partnered with Edelman, an international public relations firm, to conduct systematic research over the course of 9 months. The results revealed parents and consumers were not receptive to some of the language used by childbirth educators, such as the term "normal birth." In response, Lamaze International refined the organization's messages while keeping the overall concepts intact.

Consistently implementing and communicating these messages is key for demonstrating Lamaze's advantages and benefits to today's families. What follows are tips for childbirth educators and others to use when explaining and discussing Lamaze's approach.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The re-branding exercise's goal was to position Lamaze as a contemporary approach to pregnancy and childbirth that allows women to have the safe and healthy birth experience they want for themselves and their babies.

By creating a critical need to learn about Lamaze and its research-based approach, Lamaze will be seen as the essential resource to women, their families, and their care providers. Additionally, Lamaze will establish itself as the foundation of a community that helps women overcome fear and uncertainty

 Lamaze International has created a continuing education homestudy based on this article. Please visit the Lamaze Web site (www.lamaze.org) for detailed instructions regarding completion and submission of this homestudy module for Lamaze contact hours.

sometimes associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and early parenting.

Key Audience Research

Edelman's research included in-depth interviews with expectant and recent mothers who had or had not taken a Lamaze class, recent mothers who had or had not experienced a natural birth, obstetricians and obstetric nurses, educators who were or were not affiliated with a hospital, and directors of maternity services. The organization conducted online surveys with women aged 16–44 years old and with Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educators to assess how well each audience grasped the Lamaze approach to birth.

FINDINGS

Although today's women are aware of Lamaze, they believe it is still primarily focused on breathing and calming techniques. On the upside, more than 40% of women who attended a childbirth class took Lamaze. However, the research showed that a gap often exists between the childbirth experience that women want and the care they actually receive. Many reported wanting to experience the Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices (formerly known as the "Six Care Practices"), but their birth experiences oftentimes did not include those elements. However, women who took a Lamaze class were consistently more likely to experience the healthy birth practices than those who took a non-Lamaze class or no class at all.

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a brief description of an idea or product that can be communicated, ideally, in the length of an elevator ride. Becoming familiar with Lamaze's elevator speech, as presented below, ensures that the main message is consistently communicated with maximum impact:

Lamaze is so much more than the breathing techniques we are known for. Lamaze promotes a natural, healthy and safe approach to pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting practices. Knowing that pregnancy and childbirth can be demanding on a woman's body and mind, Lamaze serves as a resource for information about what to expect and what choices are available during the childbearing years. This helps to simplify and clarify the childbirth process and alleviate fears. Most importantly, it helps women feel more informed and

prepared so they can achieve safe and healthy pregnancies and births.

Lamaze education and practices are based on the best, most current medical evidence available. They can help reduce the overuse of unnecessary interventions and improve overall outcomes for mothers and babies. Working closely with their families, health care providers, and Lamaze educators, millions of pregnant women have achieved their desired childbirth outcomes using Lamaze practices. Check out www.lamaze.org for more information. (Lamaze International, 2009, p. 6)

Core Messages

In classes and discussions, it is important to describe Lamaze in a way that is easy for audiences to understand—this includes parents, peers, expectant families, and birth advocates. Lamaze's benefits and solid reputation can be described in the following ways:

- *Simplify Birth* – Everyone knows that childbirth can be demanding on a woman's body and mind, but Lamaze can help simplify the process with a natural approach that alleviates a woman's fears and helps her manage pain—all with the goal of a safe and healthy birth.
- *Use a Proven Approach* – Lamaze practices are based on the best medical evidence available and are designed to promote a safe and healthy pregnancy and birth.
- *Improve Childbirth Understanding* – The best start for mothers and babies is a safe and healthy pregnancy and birth. Lamaze can help women achieve this—and help them feel confident about giving birth—by serving as a resource during their decision making, offering information about what to expect and the best options available during the childbirth process.
- *Work as a Team* – Women, families, providers, and Lamaze educators each have an important role in the process of pregnancy, childbirth, and early parenting, and make up a community that works together to help women and babies achieve safe and healthy outcomes.

UPDATED MESSAGING

The research uncovered several terms that were confusing to consumers. As part of the overarching goal to make Lamaze's messages more concrete, it became clear that certain language needed to be re-considered. As a result, Lamaze has started phasing

out the use of “philosophy” and using the term “approach to” instead. For example, the “Lamaze Philosophy of Parenting” is now the “Lamaze Approach to Parenting.”

“Normal birth” was another term that consumers had difficulty comprehending. Instead, the terms “natural birth” or “safe, healthy birth” are being used.

Furthermore, the name “Six Care Practices” did not intuitively convey one of our most important messages to women—that the Lamaze approach is rooted in producing healthy outcomes. Now the “Six Care Practices” are being referred to as “Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices,” and the wording for each has been updated:

- Let labor begin on its own.
- Walk, move around, and change positions throughout labor.
- Bring a loved one, friend, or doula for continuous support.
- Avoid interventions that are not medically necessary.
- Avoid giving birth on the back, and follow the body’s urges to push.
- Keep mother and baby together—It’s best for mother, baby, and breastfeeding.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO CONSUMERS

Students want to know how Lamaze can benefit them more than other methods of childbirth. Educators have the power to demonstrate how Lamaze’s evidence-based approach has a proven track record of producing positive birth outcomes. Yet, showing people that this evidence is relevant to their own lives can be a struggle. Use concrete terms to show how the evidence means each family has an opportunity to enjoy positive birth outcomes. As a general rule, remember to not get overly focused on statistics and research—clinical speak can become overwhelming and confusing.

Everyone loves a good story. Educators should share stories of positive outcomes and how others have used Lamaze for a safe, healthy birth. These stories can help paint tangible examples that women and their families can aspire to achieve.

Center messages on the following three points:

1. Lamaze provides reliable information about how to have the healthiest, safest birth possible.
2. Lamaze will help you become an informed partner in decision making around care.
3. Lamaze offers approaches to manage pain and make childbirth less complicated.

TOOLS TO GET STARTED


A host of tools for delivering the Lamaze messages is available in the Members Only section of Lamaze International’s Web site (www.lamaze.org). For example, the *Lamaze International Brand Communications Guide* is a comprehensive resource for speaking with a variety of audiences, including care providers. The *Delivering the Lamaze Message Webinar* offers more detailed information about the research conducted as well as tips for speaking with providers.

By using these tools and becoming more familiar with Lamaze’s messages, you will make a sizable contribution to spreading the message that a safe, healthy birth experience is an achievable goal for parents everywhere!

REFERENCE

Lamaze International. (2009, June). *Lamaze International brand communications guide*. Retrieved July 16, 2009, from <http://www.lamaze.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=4wR4NTSRbRc%3d&tabid=739&mid=1532>

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 The Lamaze communications team is ready to help you be a good ambassador for Lamaze. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the team at marketing@lamaze.org or 800-368-4404.