Evidence-based Malaria SBCC: From Theory to Program Evaluation

Module 1 of 5:

Telling Stories About Behavior: Theory as Narrative

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Evidence-based Malaria SBCC: From Theory to Program Evaluation

CDC — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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President's Malaria Initiative

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Module 1 of 5: Telling Stories About Behavior: Theory as Narrative

Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants should . . .

- Understand the importance of having a program theory that describes how and why members of an intended audience will change in response to your program

- Describe key features of four theories commonly used to guide strategic planning, program design, and impact evaluation

- Be able to recognize applications of communication theories in examples of health messaging
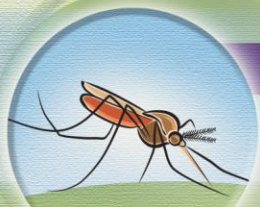
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Part 1:

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A THEORY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

One of the first known narratives about communication . . .
The Cave (from The Republic of Plato, Book Seven)

"Behold! Human beings living in a sort of underground den; they have been here since childhood, and have their legs and necks bound so as to prevent them from turning their heads. At a distance above and behind them the light of a fire is blazing, and between the fire and the people there is a low wall, like the screen which marionette players have before them, over which they show the puppets."

"I see," he said.

"And do you see," I said, "humans passing along the wall carrying things which appear over the wall: figures of men and animals, made of wood and stone and various materials; and some of the carriers, as you would expect, are talking and others are silent?"

"This is a strange image," he said, "and the bound ones are strange people."

"They are like us," I replied; "they see only their own shadows and those of the objects, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave."

"True," he said: "how could they see anything else if they were never allowed to move their heads?"

"And what about the things that are carried by? Would they see only shadows?"

"Yes," he said.

"And if they were able to talk with one another, would they not suppose that they were discussing what was actually before them?"
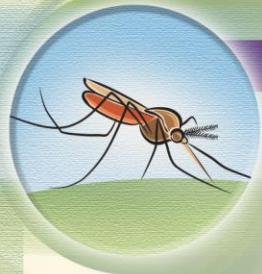
What is theory?

An explanation of a process or phenomenon based on systematic observation . . .

A narrative or story that describes a *sequence of connected events* and *characters*, bounded in *space and time*, containing implicit or explicit *suggestions about decisions, motives, barriers and facilitators* associated with an event.

Jerome Bruner quote

" . . . we organize our experience and our memories of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing . . ."

Jerome Bruner, 1991