A NEW APPROACH TO RISK COMMUNICATION
The Emotional Brain, Joseph LeDoux, Simon & Schuster, 1996
TRUST

MORE AFRAID
• Business and Industry
• Politicians
• Health officials who Don’t apologize

LESS AFRAID
• Consumer groups
• Neutral experts
• Health officials who Do apologize.
RISK v. BENEFIT

Vaccinations
Medical radiation
Prescription drugs
CONTROL

(More Afraid)
- Riding as a passenger in the front seat of a motor vehicle
- A process in which you can NOT participate

(Less Afraid)
- Driving a motor vehicle
- A process in which you CAN participate
CHOICE
(is the risk voluntary or imposed)

(More Afraid)
- Cancer from environmental causes
- A medical product with a hazard the company doesn’t report

(Less Afraid)
- Heart disease (from lifestyle choices)
- A medical product with a hazard the company DOES report
NATURAL V. HUMAN-MADE

(More Afraid)

• Pharmaceuticals
• Power lines, cell phones, nuclear power

(Less Afraid)

• Herbal remedies
• Solar radiation
PAIN AND SUFFERING

(More Afraid)
- Anything associated with cancer (radiation, pesticides)
- Plane Crash

(Less Afraid)
- Heart disease (# 1 cause of death in U.S.)
- Flu
UNCERTAINTY

(More Afraid)

- New technologies
- Terrorism
- Radiation, chemicals, complex technologies
- Conflicting scientific studies

(Less Afraid)

- Artificial sweeteners, microwave ovens, electrical & magnetic fields, silicone breast implants
ME or THEM

- Terrorism to Americans in “The HoMEIland” after September 11, 2001
- Radiation from power lines when such a line is installed near your home
- Do I have the recalled food?
FAMILIARITY

(More Afraid)

- NEW TECHNOLOGIES
- AVIAN FLU, SWINE LU, WEST NILE VIRUS

(Less Afraid)

- ESTABLISHED TECHNOLOGIES
  (MICROWAVE OVENS, AIRBAGS)
- REGULAR FLU
AWARENESS

(More Afraid)

- Avian flu
- Stents, defibrillators, when news breaks of problems

(Less Afraid)

- “Regular” flu
- Stents, defibrillators, after news of problems fades
Risk Communication
A New Approach

Actions, words, and other interactions that incorporate and respect the perceptions of the information recipients, intended to help people make more informed decisions about threats to their health and safety.
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