LIFE IS WHY
MESSAGING GUIDE
In support of our strategic and business directions, a new brand platform was created to capture the momentum of our growing organization and communicate our mission to one day realize a world free of heart disease and stroke.

We developed this brand platform after careful consideration and research. It was created to strengthen our brand’s visibility and impact, while making a more emotional connection with the public, volunteers, employees and partners.

By making more of an emotional connection with our audiences and clearly and consistently articulating who we are and why our mission is so important, we will be able to achieve a greater share of the public’s heart and mind.

The following best practices and message guidelines were designed to align with AHA/ASA’s overall strategic goals.

**WHY**
Because of our science-based knowledge, we know and believe people can and should strive to have healthy hearts and brains, which are fundamental for life.

**WHAT**
Our extraordinary impact (the proof points that will be called out in the tailored messaging).

**HOW**
By engaging and enabling people and organizations to build a sustainable culture of health (strategic direction that will help us achieve our goals).
We’ve changed the way we communicate our brand.

Instead of telling people just “what” we do, we also emphasizing “why” we do what we do. By communicating the “why” we will be able to connect with audiences on a more emotional level.

Here is a breakdown of our “why” and the brand platform that evolved from it.

Our why:

We believe everyone deserves to live a healthier, longer life.

Brand Strength Differentiating Statement

For those who believe everyone deserves a healthier, longer life, The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association is the Health Science Organization that is leading the way to a culture of health because its leading edge research and nationally integrated community support programs are defeating the number one killer of Americans, Heart Disease and Stroke.

Our brand platform:

American Heart Association and American Stroke Association. Life is why.
**Life is Why** is the new brand platform of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association.

A celebration of life, *Life is Why* offers a simple yet powerful answer to the question of why we do what we do every day. Simply put, we want people to experience more of life’s precious moments. To do that, we all must be healthy in heart and mind. Emphatic and emotional, *Life Is Why* is the message platform that best communicates our commitment to making a healthier, longer life possible for everyone.

The AHA/ASA has developed branding communications best practices and a portfolio of messages to help you create effective communications based on the *Life is Why* platform — messages that will resonate with our consumers and strengthen our brand. In these guidelines, we show you how to increase our relevance with consumers by:

**SHOWING**
how the AHA/ASA is making a healthier, longer life possible for everyone.

**CONNECTING**
with the public emotionally. Our research shows consumers respond more positively when we keep messages personal and focused on the present or our future aspirations.

**BEING**
perceived as a caring, focused, dedicated organization—from our science to our advocacy to our consumer initiatives.

Including stroke and brain health

As part of our organization’s strategic direction, our marketing platform *Life is Why* should be used to help communicate the strong connection between stroke (and the importance of brain health) with overall health and well-being. Heart and brain health together are critical to live healthier, longer lives.
It is critical as we strengthen our brand, that everyone be responsible for communicating the brand platform consistently and effectively.

When crafting messaging, use these points as a guide:

**MAKE THE MESSAGE PERSONAL**
To create an emotional connection

**MAKE THE MESSAGE SPECIFIC**
To ensure the desired action or request is clear

**MAKE THE MESSAGE ACTIONABLE**
To solicit an action or request that is achievable

**MAKE THE MESSAGE INCLUDE A WHY, NOT JUST A WHAT**
To communicate the brand

For example, take this passage:

“We want you to experience more of life’s precious moments. To do that you must be healthy in heart and mind. Take steps to live healthier, look for the American Heart Association’s Heart-Check mark to select healthy food for you and your family.”

A personal, specific, actionable message that includes a “Why” has the most impact.
Connecting the AHA/ASA’s overall Mission, Initiatives and Impact, statements with our ‘Life is Why’ messaging builds the AHA brand.

Here are some examples:

**MISSION**

*Life is why* we are committed to building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

**INITIATIVE**

*Life is why* we developed Heart-Check Food Certification informing and guiding Americans as to what products are heart and brain healthy.”

**IMPACT STATEMENTS (EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT)**

*Life is why* we have funded more than $3.6 billion in heart disease and research.

You’ll notice that this sentence structure, begins each statement with “Life is why….” We encourage you to use this approach when appropriate to link back to the master brand and strengthen our connected messages across the organization. Also be careful about overusing the structure and making sure it works within the context of the communication, knowing the logo will appear in all of our communications be used at the end to complete the story. Remember, the goal is to communicate the idea of “Life is Why” most effectively. Sometimes that means using it to start a sentence. Other times you’ll want to use it elsewhere in the sentence. Still other times, it will be more effective to use language that clearly illustrates “Life is Why”, painting the picture of “Life is Why” through a complete brand experience.
TIERED MESSAGING
Below you will find our Brand Story and a portfolio of tiered brand positioning messages that we would like our audiences to closely associate with the AHA/ASA. We use these brand positioning messages as measures to evaluate how successful our communications are in articulating the AHA/ASA’s ‘Life is Why,’ and extraordinary impact.

Brand Story. Life is Why.

We want people to experience more of life’s precious moments. To do that, we must be healthy — in heart and mind. It’s why we’ve made better heart and brain health our mission. And together, we’ve made an extraordinary impact. But we are just beginning. Until there’s a world free of heart disease and stroke, we’ll work together to make a healthier, longer life possible for everyone. Why do we do what we do? Because we are the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association. And life is why.

Life is Why Tiered Messages.

Using the brand story as a point of reference and inspiration, here are tiered messages directed toward external audiences supported by the Life is Why brand sample language. These samples are broken down by audience, including:

| CONSUMERS | ADVOCATES | DONORS |
| CAREGIVERS | HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS | CORPORATE PARTNERS |
Below are some examples of how you can work “Life Is Why” into your messaging. The below examples are based on the supposition that your specific communications would call for effective use of “Life Is Why” at the start of each sentence. But even in cases where it you would not incorporate the words “Life Is Why,” notice how each message is reworked to be more personal, speaking directly to the audience as appropriate.

CONSUMER MESSAGE

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association drive cardiovascular and stroke research — to enable Americans to establish heart-health, habits and to prevent diseases.

MORE PERSONAL MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we are one of the leading funders of cardiovascular research so you and your family can enjoy healthier, longer lives.

CONSUMER MESSAGE

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association is your trusted resource for the latest information related to heart health, including nutrition, prevention and managing risk factors.

MORE PERSONAL MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we provide nutritional and weight management information based on proven science — so you can avoid unhealthy fads and yo-yo diets.

CONSUMER MESSAGE

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association fund research, provide education, and create treatment guidelines that make it easier for you to be proactive about staying active and healthy.

MORE PERSONAL MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we show you simple ways to reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke, keeping you and your family healthy.
Below are some examples of how you can work “Life Is Why” into your messaging. The below examples are based on the supposition that your specific communications would call for effective use of “Life Is Why” at the start of each sentence. But even in cases where it you would not incorporate the words “Life Is Why,” notice how each message is reworked to be more personal, speaking directly to the audience as appropriate.

MESSAGE FOR CAREGIVERS

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association produces resources for patients and their caregivers throughout the healing and recovery process.

TAILORED MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we encourage you to take care of yourself as you take care of your loved one.

MESSAGE FOR ADVOCATES

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association’s volunteers and staff advocate for improvements to cardiovascular disease prevention, care and research at the local, state and national levels.

TAILORED MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we advocate for more government funding for lifesaving scientific research.

MESSAGE FOR ADVOCATES

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association’s volunteers and staff advocate for improvements in cardiovascular disease prevention, care and research at the local, state and national levels.

TAILORED MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we urge lawmakers to require CPR in high school, sending a million new lifesavers into our communities every year.
The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association save lives by providing treatment guidelines for healthcare providers based on the latest science.

**MESSAGE FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS**

**TAILORED MESSAGE:**

*Life is why* we provide hospitals guidelines that help every patient get the best treatment.

**MESSAGE FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS**

We are always at the forefront of cardiovascular research. American Heart Association and American Stroke Association–funded breakthroughs include the first artificial heart valve, techniques and standards for CPR, implantable pacemakers, treatment for infant respiratory distress syndrome, cholesterol inhibitors, microsurgery and drug-coated stents.

**TAILORED MESSAGE:**

*Life is why* we fund scientific breakthroughs that save and improve lives.
Below are some examples of how you can work “Life Is Why” into your messaging. The below examples are based on the supposition that your specific communications would call for effective use of “Life Is Why” at the start of each sentence. But even in cases where it you would not incorporate the words “Life Is Why,” notice how each message is reworked to be more personal, speaking directly to the audience as appropriate.

CORPORATE PARTNERS

Your organization will benefit from being aligned with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, one of the most recognized and respected nonprofit brands in the United States.

TAILORED MESSAGE:

*Life is why* Macy’s has been a national partner and sponsor of Go Red For Women, raising more than $21 million.

DONORS

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association is one of the leading funders of cardiovascular research because we want to keep you and your loved ones heart-healthy.

TAILORED MESSAGE:

*Life is why* we need your help finding the next scientific breakthroughs in cardiovascular disease and stroke.
PERSONALIZING
LIFE IS WHY
A sustaining, successful brand is built from the inside out. As volunteers and employees, you are the brand. You make the brand meaningful by your commitment, achievements and passion.

This is a perfect opportunity for you to personalize the brand. When the brand is personalized and shared, it makes a stronger emotional connection.

How do you personalize the Life is Why brand?
It’s simple. Ask yourself this: What are those moments, people or experiences you live for? What or who brings you moments of joy, wonder and happiness? Why do you do what you do for the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association? In other words, what is your personal “Why” in life?

Once you discover your why, we encourage you to share it at every opportunity to inspire others.

_________________________ is why.

NOTE: We encourage you to not over use “Blank” is why and to make sure it is used in a purposeful and impactful way, connecting to the emotion of why we do something. Example, we should not use Science is Why. It is through Science that we deliver on Life Saving Discoveries which connects back to Life is Why. So the Why should be Life Saving Discoveries is Why and Science is How.
NEW
Heart and Stroke Health Messages
Heart and Brain Definition - Consumer Message
BRAIN HEALTH

Primary Messages
The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association defines brain health as: Your BRAIN functioning at its best, free from vascular disease and health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol or atrial fibrillation that can impact normal blood flow and oxygen to the brain, causing potentially long lasting and irreversible damage.

- Damage to the brain may cause trouble with functions such as, understanding, speaking, walking, eating and short and long term memory, among others.
- Keeping a brain healthy with normal blood flow and oxygen can help reduce your risk for stroke, a leading cause of death and No. one preventable cause of disability.
- 80 percent of strokes can be prevented.
- You can improve your chances of keeping a sharp brain and being independent as you age, by living a healthy lifestyle. What’s good for your heart, is also good for your brain.
- Preventing or controlling high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, eating healthfully, sleeping well, being physically and socially active, controlling weight and not smoking are healthy behaviors with both heart and brain health benefits.
- Stroke and early mental decline in mid-life have been linked to unhealthy lifestyles.

Call to Action
- Life is why the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association offers resources to help you adopt and maintain healthy behaviors to keep your brain sharp and healthy. Learn more at StrokeAssociation.org.
BRAIN HEALTH
Secondary Messages
• Maintain a healthy body to feel better and have a sharp mind and healthy brain while reducing your risk for heart disease and stroke. Here’s how:
  1. Eat a balanced, portion controlled diet emphasizing a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, low-fat or non-fat dairy products, fish, legumes and sources of protein low in saturated fat
  2. Be physically active at least 30 minutes per day, most days of the week;
  3. Get enough sleep. For adults 7-8 hours per day, more for teenagers and children.
  4. Be socially active. Observational studies have shown that people with poor social support or networks are at higher risk for stroke and heart disease.
  5. Don’t smoke – if you smoke, stop.
  6. Schedule regular visits with your doctor and talk to your doctor about your risks and ways to reduce them.
HEART HEALTH

Primary Messages

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association defines brain health as: Your HEART functioning at its best, free from cardiovascular disease and health problems such as high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes and high cholesterol, all factors that can increase your risk for a heart attack or heart failure.

• Keeping a healthy heart can greatly reduce your risk of a heart attack or even heart failure, a leading cause of death among Americans.
• 80 percent of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke are preventable through healthy behaviors.
• By simply being physically active, eating healthfully, not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight, you may enjoy a healthier, longer life with your loved ones.
• Regardless of age, you will feel better and increase your chance of extending and improving your quality of life by living a healthy lifestyle. What’s good for your heart, is also good for your brain.
• Preventing or controlling high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, eating healthfully, sleeping well, being physically and socially active, controlling weight and not smoking are healthy behaviors with both heart and brain health benefits.

Call to Action

• Life is why the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association offers resources to help you adopt and maintain healthy behaviors so you can enjoy more of life’s precious moments with your loved ones. Learn more at heart.org.
HEART HEALTH

Secondary Messages

• Maintain a healthy body to feel better and have a sharp mind and healthy brain while reducing your risk for heart disease and stroke. Here’s how:
  1. Eat a balanced, portion controlled diet emphasizing a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, low-fat or non-fat dairy products, fish, legumes and sources of protein low in saturated fat.
  2. Be physically active at least 30 minutes per day, most days of the week;
  3. Get enough sleep. For adults 7-8 hours per day, more for teenagers and children.
  4. Be socially active. Observational studies have shown that people with poor social support or networks are at higher risk for stroke and heart disease.
  5. Don’t smoke – if you smoke, stop.
  6. Schedule regular visits with your doctor and talk to your doctor about your risks and ways to reduce them.
COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST
Before finalizing your communication, check to see:

☐ Is the overall message consistent with AHA/ASA’s *Life Is Why* brand positioning statement?

☐ Are your messages relevant to consumers’ lives today?

☐ Are your messages personal, specific and actionable?

☐ Are you calling out our proof points – results in health impact?

☐ Does your communication have foundational messages that link back to the AHA/ASA?

☐ Are you including stroke and brain health?

☐ Do your messages reinforce the image of the AHA/ASA being a caring, progressive, evolving organization?

☐ Have you defined your “Why” so you can be a living example of the brand?