



Now is the time to talk to your coworkers, friends, and families about getting vaccinated.

Many of us have people in our lives who are not yet vaccinated. We are concerned about their health, the safety of those they work with, and their ability to remain employed due to the Governor's vaccine mandate. These conversations are more important than ever with the emergence of the Delta variant, the stress on our healthcare system, and the risk of dismissal from employment on October 18th.

Now is when we need to have thoughtful conversations with our friends, families, and co-workers in order to help them understand the importance of getting vaccinated. The 1-4 assessment scale we use in organizing can be a helpful tool to guide your conversation. There are the "4s" who, no matter what we say, will not get vaccinated, and a conversation is unlikely to change that. Yet many unvaccinated people are on the fence – they are "3s". They may be influenced by you as a union leader, whom they look to for guidance in tough situations. The decision to get vaccinated is one of those. The following is guidance from UNICEF:

Do connect with their values.

Even if you are feeling frustrated, it is important to be empathetic. "Make them feel heard," advises Omer. Attempt to connect with their underlying sentiment. For example, if they are tired of being kept from doing the things they want to do because of COVID-19, connect with them on the fact that places they enjoy will begin to open up again if we are all vaccinated against the disease. He suggests talking about COVID-19 and how devastating it has been. If you only speak about vaccines "it's not a full picture, and has somewhat lower chances of succeeding," he explains. When the discussion comes back to COVID-19, it places the focus on the trade-offs we have all had to make such as physically distancing ourselves from loved ones and missing out on normal daily activities.

Do help them feel empowered.

Right now, many people are scared. The pandemic has completely transformed our lives. Omer suggests giving your loved one an empowering message: You can do something about this disease. Remind them that they can help change their own trajectory and their loved ones' trajectories in this pandemic by getting vaccinated. "[They] can do something about it. These vaccines work."

Don't focus on the myths.

"Be careful about countering a misperception too directly," says Omer. The discussion shouldn't be all or mostly about addressing a specific myth because there will always be more myths that follow. Calling attention to a myth can also backfire by making the myth more memorable than the facts. But sometimes, you cannot get out of addressing misinformation. If you find yourself in that position, Omer suggests the following approach: fact, warning, fallacy, fact. Here's how it works:

Start with the fact. COVID-19 vaccines are extremely safe and effective.

Warn before the myth is coming. Say, “there is misinformation about_____.”

Mention the fallacy (myth) that you are addressing.

End with the fact. Show why the myth is not true.

The most important thing is to “replace the misinformation with the correct information,” explains Omer.

Do assume they are going to get vaccinated.

Simply say to your friend or family member, “Let’s go get vaccinated!” This method is called presumptive communication. “The announcement approach or presumptive approach has been shown to be successful in the clinic and is likely to work in personal communication,” says Omer. You’re not taking away someone’s autonomy, all you are doing is establishing a verbal default.

Don’t get discouraged.

Convincing someone who is opposed to vaccines is a long process. “It’s extremely tough,” says Omer. Remember that for those who are strongly opposed to vaccines in general, their opinions will not likely be changed in one conversation. The important thing? “Maintain a connection with them.”

From UNICEF: *How to talk to your friends and family about COVID-19 vaccines: Tips for handling tough conversations with your loved ones.* <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-about-covid-19-vaccines>

Other conversation resource: *How to talk about COVID-19 vaccines with friends and family.* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/talk-about-vaccines.html>