

COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations 101: How to Talk So People Will Listen

Despite the prevalence of public health information about COVID-19 vaccine, most people are getting their information and beliefs from personal connections, like their parents or partners or coworkers. Here are some best-practices for having meaningful, positive conversations with people about the COVID-19 vaccine.

- 1 Seek to understand, not to compel.** Conversations are opportunities to build understanding. While it might be important to you to try to change a person's beliefs or actions, the most successful conversations about vaccines are ones in which both people share an interest in understanding the other. Swap out targeting questions, which can feel accusatory, with open ended prompts. For example, instead of "Why do you believe that?" try "Tell me more about your feelings about that."
- 2 Help identify a "change point."** Ask, "Can you imagine a scenario in which you did want to get the vaccine? What would have to happen for you to feel differently?" This will help you understand what the person needs in order to feel safe or ready, and will help you identify if there are resources or information you could provide that would be relevant.
- 3 Prioritize solidarity, not exclusion.** People are more motivated to change their health behaviors if the potential for belonging is more visible and prevalent than the potential for being excluded. Instead of, "You won't be able to travel without the vaccine," try, "I would love to be able to travel with you to places that might require the vaccine."
- 4 Model the positives.** Highlight the way your life has improved or changed since getting the vaccine, for example, "It's been a huge relief to be able to visit my Grandmother without being scared of either of us getting sick."
- 5 Have a conclusion in mind.** Be tuned in to when the conversation is ready to end, and have a strategy for keeping communication open. Having resources ready is a great natural closer; for example, try, "Thanks for sharing your thoughts with me. Here is a website I like to use to get information, if you want to check it out on your own. Let me know if you want to talk more."

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE VACCINE AT:

Greater Lowell Health Alliance: greaterlowellhealthalliance.org/covid-19

Lowell Community Health Center: lhealth.org/patients/covid-19-updates

CDC: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

MA DPH: mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information# covid-19-vaccine-



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