Conversations in Vaccine Confidence

Section 1: Empathy for Cultural & Moral Values

Be emotionally supportive & understanding – acknowledge that it can be scary & stressful to be a decision maker on health for oneself and others.

Understand that people are coming from a diverse background, & face barriers in terms of language, access, age, & health literacy.

Emphasize liberty & encourage choice – for example, that becoming vaccinated is a choice they're making to protect themselves and each other.

Emphasize social benefit – for example, reinforce that the decision to accept a vaccine is protective for their loved ones.

Find a consistency between their philosophical beliefs & corrective information – for example, that it's possible to reduce harm to others by vaccinating.

Appeal to core values & overarching goals that bind us together – for example, vaccination can help us return to a state of normalcy.

Do not directly question COVID skeptic individuals' motivation & values – they may find this insulting & become defensive & less receptive.

Section 2: Language to Avoid

Accusatory, insulting, and shaming language puts the people you are trying to connect with on the defensive, making them less likely to want to understand you & more inclined to blame others.[20]

Divisive Language – imposing an othering "Us vs. Them" mentality only serves to further discordance & does nothing to foster a change of mind.[21]

Identity language – to separate the individual from their potentially harmful rhetoric, use language that describes the person's attitudes instead of identifying them with a noun that fuses their attitudes with their identity (i.e., anti-vaxxer, anti-masker).

Validating language – don't use language to describe vaccine hesitant attitudes as a "movement" as this evokes a more established and unified front.

Section 3: Manner of Speech

Speak confidently – do not waver, as your uncertainty may be evidence enough to someone who is already hesitant to vaccinate.

Speak kindly – people are more likely to be receptive to someone they feel does not have ulterior motives.

Keep the message simple – too many statistics can be confusing, overwhelming, & not be cognitively pleasing.

Use linguistic models that are not demeaning or declarative – (see section 2: Language to Avoid).

Reflective listening - summarize & reflect what the individual has said.

Section 4: Sharing Information

Point out tactics & techniques used to obfuscate or distort information (e.g., removing context).

Do not repeat COVID-skeptical arguments themselves, simply provide the correct information.

Emphasize scientific consensus.

Narrative approach – personalized stories have a greater impact than numbers.

Repetition of credible alternate information is effective in creating understanding.[22]

Asking open-ended questions allows for open discussion and understanding of the individual's values & concerns.

Elicit-Provide-Elicit - ask permission to fill in knowledge gaps & then share & verify that the individual has understood the new information.[23]

Objective: The toolkit proposes language tips & steps to go about sharing reliable information to increase vaccine confidence.

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