When vaccine misinfo goes mainstream: Suggested talking points

- **Inform your community about how vaccine opponents tend to spread misinformation.**
  - [Research shows](#) that when people are aware of the motives and tactics of bad actors, they are more likely to identify misinformation and be wary of it.
  - Vaccine opponents often spread misinformation by cherry-picking data, taking experts' quotes out of context, and making claims that elicit an emotional response.
  - Encourage community members to check the reputation of the author or source and whether there is robust evidence to back the claim before believing and/or resharing something that seems shocking.
  - Remind community members to pay extra attention when encountering emotionally charged or divisive topics.

- **Address people's concerns around vaccines with empathy and patience.**
  - Many people have low levels of trust in the government, health care system, and pharmaceutical industry for good reason. Poor public health communication around COVID-19 vaccines has also caused confusion and anxiety among the public.
  - Some people have legitimate concerns around the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, and it's important to address these questions with empathy and patience.
  - Deliver facts and data in an easy-to-understand way; correct misinformation with care rather than condescension; and build a trusted relationship with your community members.

- **Beware that vaccine opponents may be seeking attention for personal gain.**
  - While many people spread vaccine misinformation unintentionally, the biggest anti-vaccine personalities can make a career out of promoting false claims and conspiracy theories.
  - For example, some high-profile vaccine opponents may be motivated to share controversial or false claims on the internet to gain followers, generate interest in their websites, or sell books or other products.
  - When thinking about who or what to trust, you can look to nonpartisan fact-checking sources like [FactCheck.org](#) and [PolitiFact](#).
  - If you are looking into claims on your own, be sure to follow evidence-based science, including peer-reviewed research and experts in the field who have no conflicts of interest.

When vaccine misinfo goes mainstream: Frequently asked questions

1. **Should I engage in a discussion with someone who is spreading vaccine misinformation?**

Begin by determining whether someone is entering into a discussion in good faith. It's important to evaluate whether the person you would be engaging with is open to changing their mind. It's also often not a good idea to engage in a discussion on social media or in an environment where clear communication is difficult. If it seems like they're not likely to listen to data and science, and you're only communicating online, chances are it's not worth the time and effort to engage in a debate. Instead, focus on addressing the people who have questions and genuinely want answers.

2. **How can I address my community's concerns around vaccine safety and efficacy?**

It's extremely important to address your community members' concerns around vaccines with empathy and patience. Understand that people may have low levels of trust in the government, health care system, and pharmaceutical industry for good reason. Additionally, poor public health communication around COVID-19 vaccines has also caused confusion and anxiety among the public. When addressing people's concerns, try to deliver facts and data in an accessible way. When correcting misinformation, communicate with care rather than condescension. Outside of talking about COVID-19 vaccines, work on building a trusted relationship with your community members.

3. **How can I help my community members become better at identifying misinformation?**

Research has shown that when people are aware of the motives and tactics of disinformation spreaders, they are more likely to identify false claims and be wary of them. Make sure your community members are aware of vaccine opponents who cherry-pick data, take experts' quotes out of context, and make claims that elicit a strong emotional response. It's also important to encourage community members to check the reputation of the author or source and whether there is robust evidence to back the claim before believing or resharing something that seems shocking. When it comes to encountering emotionally charged or divisive topics, remind community members to pay extra attention.