A New Way to Inspire People to Get a COVID Vaccine

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Here we go again: respiratory virus season. For the first time this year, though, we have vaccines against our big three threats: flu, RSV and COVID. But vaccines in vials do not equal vaccinations in arms. Only 17 percent of Americans got last fall’s COVID vaccine. What do we do in a time of extreme fatigue, loss of trust, disinformation, politicization and lack of public health funds for education and outreach?

There is a solution. All of us—friends, family, neighbors, schools, pharmacies, doctor offices, health departments—need to be laser-focused on reaching a group called “passive positives.” These people have gotten COVID shots in the past and generally approve of vaccination. But they are unlikely to expend energy to find out where they can get another shot and are likely ambivalent about receiving one. They may feel good about the protection it confers but not so good about the prospect of side effects (yet again). Many of them are actively trying not to think about viruses this fall.

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