

The Science of Reasoning With Unreasonable People

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A few years ago, I made the mistake of having an argument with the most stubborn person I know. R., whose initial I'm using to protect his privacy, is a longtime friend, and when his family came to visit, he mentioned that his children had never been vaccinated — and never would be.

I'm no proponent of blindly giving every vaccination to every newborn, but I was concerned for his children's safety, so I started debunking some common vaccine myths. After days of debate, I was exhausted and exasperated. Determined to preserve our friendship, I vowed never to talk with him about vaccines again.

Then came 2020. Fear of the vaccine may be the greatest barrier to stopping Covid-19. It stretches far beyond the so-called anti-vaxxer community: About half of Americans harbor [questions](#) about the safety of the Covid-19 vaccines; 39 percent say they [definitely or probably](#) won't get one.

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