

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

And How to Help Family and Friends Who Believe Them

What are conspiracy theories?

- Explain that various events and situations are caused by powerful people manipulating things behind the scenes.
- Reject established and accepted narratives.



Why are conspiracy theories dangerous?

- Can sow division.
- Undermine trust in institutions.
- Demonize marginalized groups.
- Be used to justify violence.

Why do people get drawn into conspiracy theories?

- Need for knowledge, information and certainty and wanting explanations for when big events happen.
- Need to feel safe and secure in one's worldview and not powerless or out of control.
- Need to feel good about themselves and the groups they belong to, including a sense of superiority and uniqueness (i.e., being "in the know" while others are not).



How can you spot conspiracy theories?

- Use various strategies to assess the original source.
- Check multiple sources, including credible news outlets and experts.
- Evaluate photos and videos for credibility.
- Think carefully before you share and make sure you're not being manipulated.

What to do (and not do) to help others?

- Learn more about conspiracy theories, their claims and their origins.
- Don't try to convince people that they are wrong, lying or ignorant for believing them.
- Encourage critical thinking by asking open-ended questions.
- Try not to be dismissive, judgmental or belittling.
- Prioritize the person's health, safety and wellbeing and provide help if needed.
- Don't cut the person out of your life so you can be there for them.



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