

Activity 2 – Role Play Handout for the Believer

Definitions

- Believer—Someone who accepts the “standard” scientific explanation about a particular issue and is ready to implement a commonly-accepted solution based on it.
- Skeptic – Someone who does not accept the “standard” scientific explanation for a particular issue and/or is opposed to taking actions based on it.

Goal

You and your partner will try to figure out where your views diverge.

Process

1. The Believer uses questions and Active Listening to figure out what the Skeptic hopes to achieve through the conversation:
 - What motivates them?
 - Why is it worth their time to talk to you?
 - What problem are they trying to solve?
 - What do they hope to gain from the conversation?
 - What are their fears and concerns?
2. The Believer shares their fears, concerns, and problem with the Skeptic who can, if they choose, ask follow-up questions to fully understand.
3. The Believer summarizes what they have discovered.
4. Work together to identify *where* your views diverge. (see the Map)
5. Work together to identify *why* the views diverge. What do they believe has gotten in the way of the science being inaccurate or applied improperly.
6. Work together to agree on a next course of action.
 - Agree to disagree
 - Collaboratively seek out information that disconfirms either person’s views
 - Brainstorm modifications to the proposed solution/laws/regulations that would lead to a resolution both of you can get behind.

Believer

You live in a community where there is a mandate in place saying you must wear a mask in any public space, whether it is indoors or outdoors, whether you are vaccinated or not. A conversation you are in shifts from talking about the weather to talking about wearing masks and mask mandates

You: Think wearing masks is the right thing to do. You support the mandates and while you don't like wearing masks, you are happy to do so for the greater good of society.

They: Are opposed to wearing masks and often don't wear one, despite the mandate that is in place.

Skeptic

You live in a community where there is a mandate in place saying you must wear a mask in any public space, whether it is indoors or outdoors, whether you are vaccinated or not. A conversation you are in shifts from talking about the weather to talking about wearing masks and mask mandates

They: Think wearing masks is the right thing to do. You support the mandates and while you don't like wearing masks, you are happy to do so for the greater good of society.

You: Are opposed to wearing masks and often don't wear one, despite the mandate that is in place.

You believe COVID is real, but not as big a deal as everyone makes out.

You know a few people who say they've had COVID. They all survived and most say it was "like the worst flu they ever had." No one you know was hospitalized for COVID or died from it.

You've heard that COVID isn't going anywhere—that it will probably be with us for the rest of our lives—and that we will eventually develop herd immunity.

What you want more than anything is for things to go back to normal, and you believe not wearing masks is the fastest way to get there.

You are a strong believer in state's rights and are offended by the federal mandates requiring federal employees to wear masks. You consider those to be power-grabs and worry they set dangerous precedents. You want to fight this type of federal overreaching.

In past conversations about this topic, you have:

- Referenced an article stating "The health benefits of wearing masks are so modest that European countries don't require young children to wear them in schools."
- Argued that mandates are also indiscriminate and unfair to people suffering from asthma and to deaf people who must read lips.
- Told others about an image that riled you up showing a gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art at which none of the attendees wore masks but all the staff were wearing them... you feel it is common for people at the top to dictate how others should behave but don't follow their own dictates. You think this is complete hypocrisy.

You are willing to have this conversation because you know you have some very good points and hope to silence your friend's criticism by sharing them. You want your friend to respect you and worry that because you aren't wearing a mask they will judge you as either a fanatic or as self-centered.

You don't want to change their mind but you do want them to let you make your own decisions without being judged.

If asked what the problem is, you might say there are several:

- Society's judgmental attitudes
- The Federal government's desire to take power away from local and state agencies
- Poorly designed legislation – not flexible enough to fit outlier situations

Navigating Conversations About Science

Fears and Concerns:

- You are much more afraid of federal overreach and losing individual freedoms than you are of dying of COVID.

