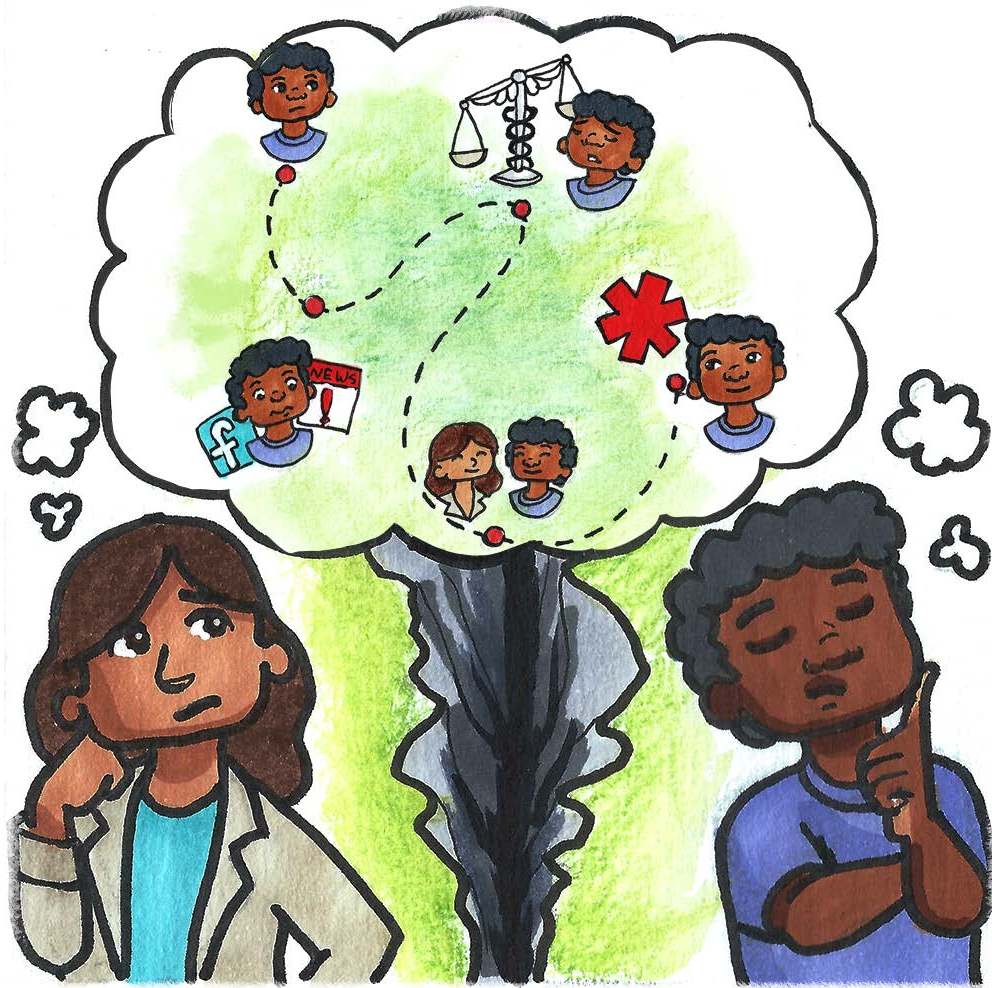




How to Build Trust in Science and Health



In this card deck, learn about the Health Trust Gap and how you can help to fix it through better communication. Continue to learn more!



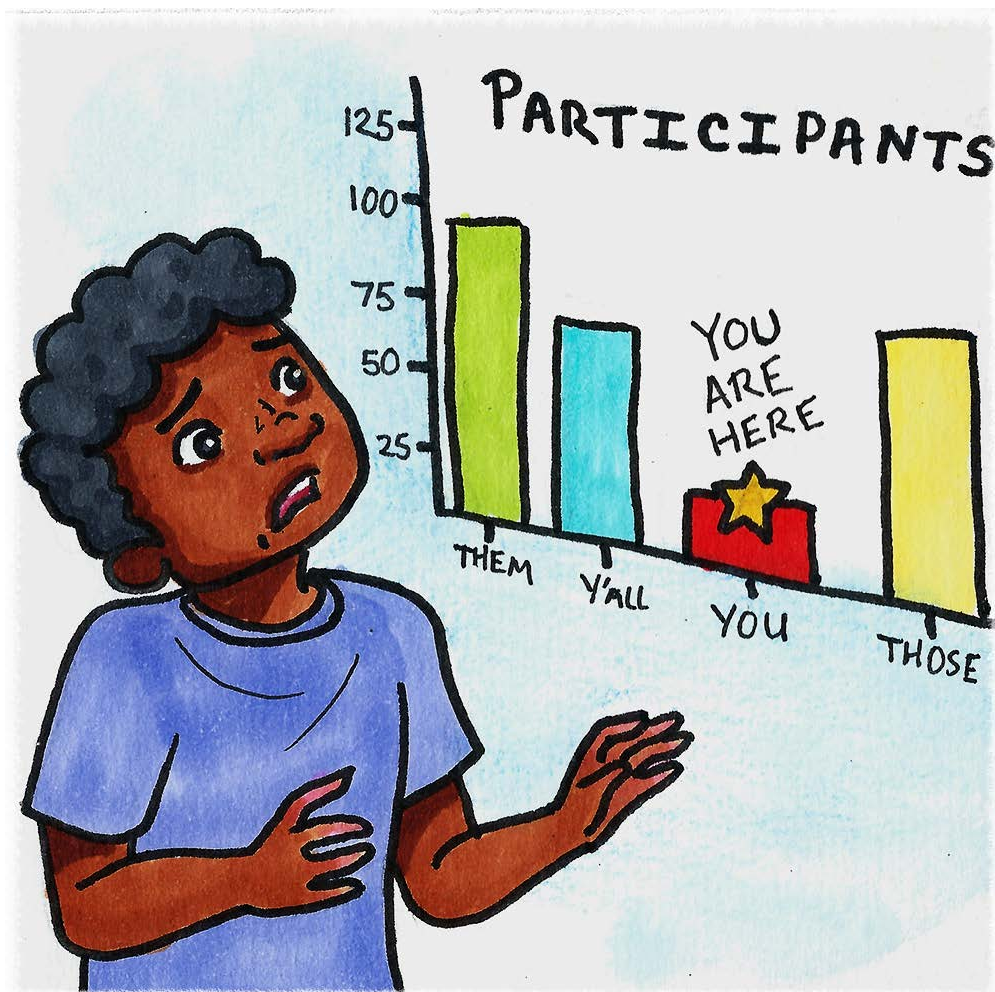
Put yourself in these shoes: You've just learned that scientists have created a new vaccine for COVID-19 that has just been authorized for emergency use by the FDA.



You want to believe that this is it - the beginning of the end of the pandemic. But you are also nervous about getting the vaccine. *Why?* Others ask you. *It's science!* But it's complicated for you.



Family members have been showing you concerning news reports about vaccine side effects.



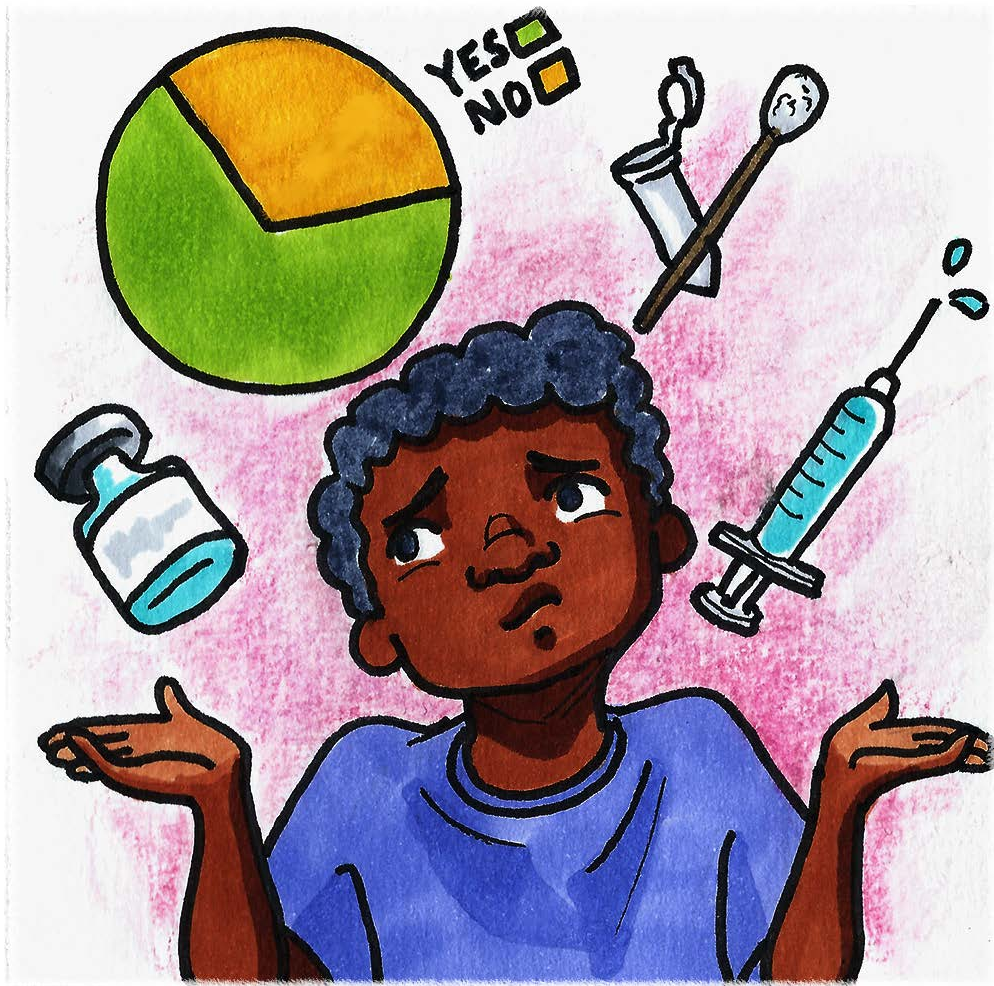
Not only that, but few people who look like you were included in the vaccine clinical trials. How do the scientists know people like you won't experience more rare side effects?



Many people you know are also hesitant about getting the vaccine. And you don't know any scientists personally to ask about how the vaccine was tested and how it works.



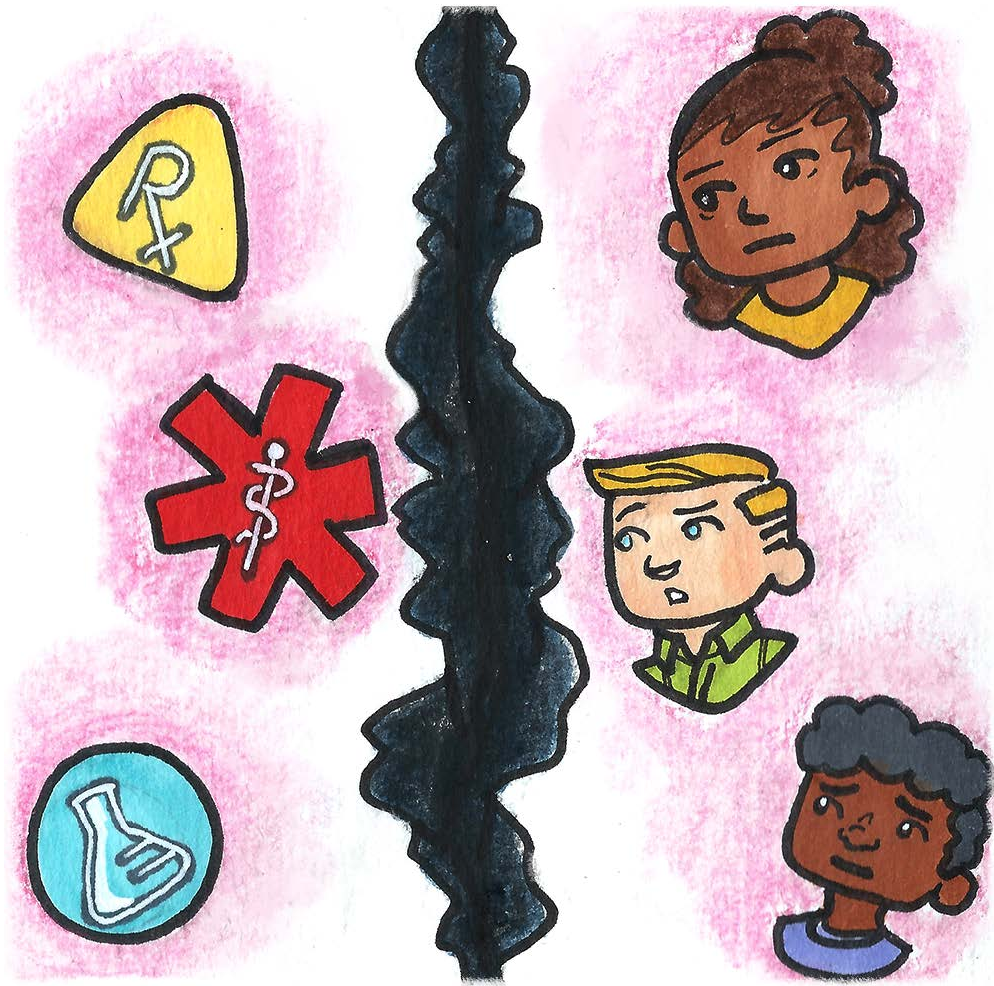
People in your community have reason to be hesitant, too. Many have parents and grandparents who were traumatized by negligent and unethical medical experiments in the past.



You've never been asked how you feel about these vaccines, or been invited to ask questions. You've not seen the data for yourself to know if the vaccines work. It all feels out of your control...



You haven't read or watched anything about the vaccine that represents you and your concerns. Or that answers *why* you should get vaccinated in a way you can understand.



We've just covered many of the very real factors underlying the **health trust gap** between researchers and research participants, and scientists and the public.



Science and healthcare have **trustworthiness** issues. The issue is exacerbated among marginalized groups. But misinformation has also fostered mistrust more generally.



Trust is critical in determining who we listen to and whether or not we take their advice. Trust affects how we process information and how we act on it.

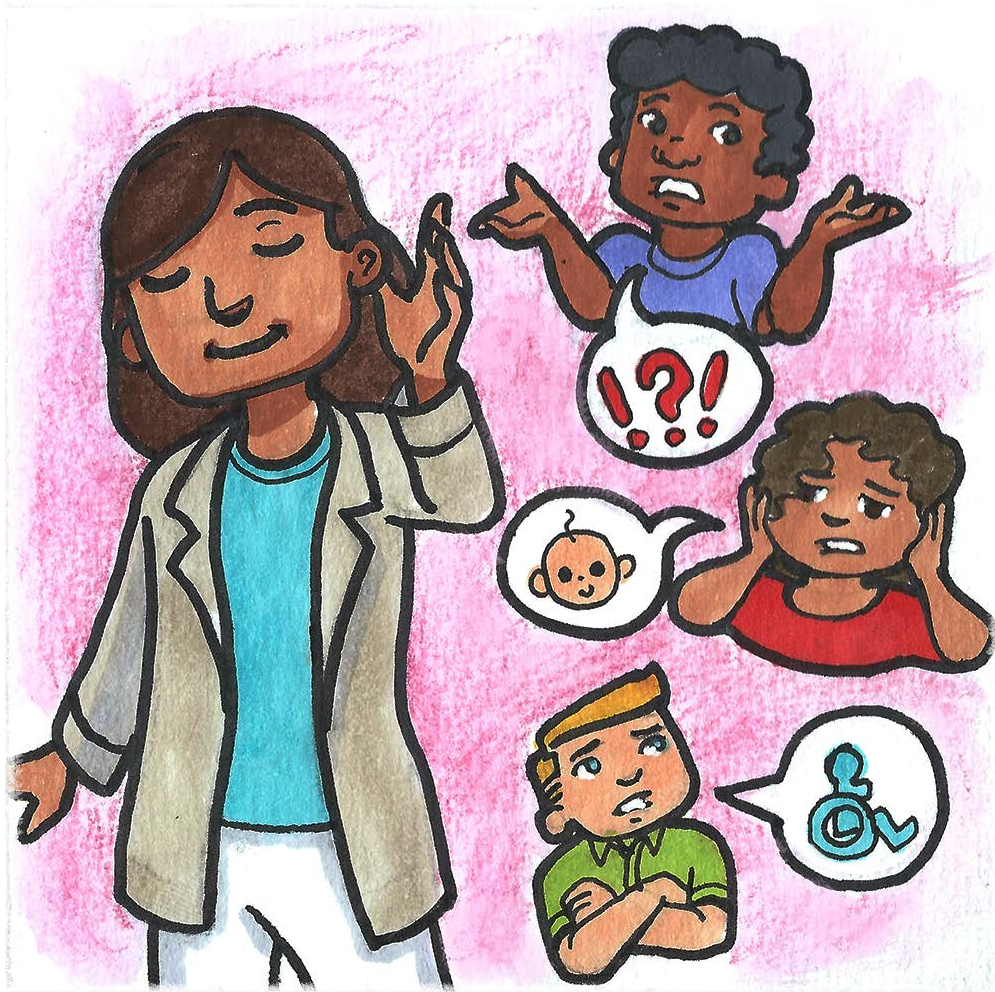


If we don't trust scientists and researchers, or we don't think they understand us and our problems, we may end up rejecting their breakthroughs, findings and advice that could impact our health.



But as wide as the health trust gap has become, there are some simple ways that we can all help to build bridges.

Continue for some practical tips!



Listen, and then start a dialogue. Whether you're talking to a friend or sharing information about science online, start by listening to people's questions and concerns.



We aren't talking about listening to have a good comeback. We're talking about listening with the intent of encouraging people to express themselves and to start a **conversation**.



Communicate with empathy. Empathy involves being patient enough to listen to your audience and their concerns without judgement, no matter how “unscientific.”



Take time to get to know *who* you are talking to.
Speak with them to learn from them.
Understand and acknowledge their past traumas
before you propose solutions or action.



Be transparent about the process, nuance and caveats of science. Science is easily misunderstood if taken out of context. Science also never has perfect answers. Don't pretend it does.



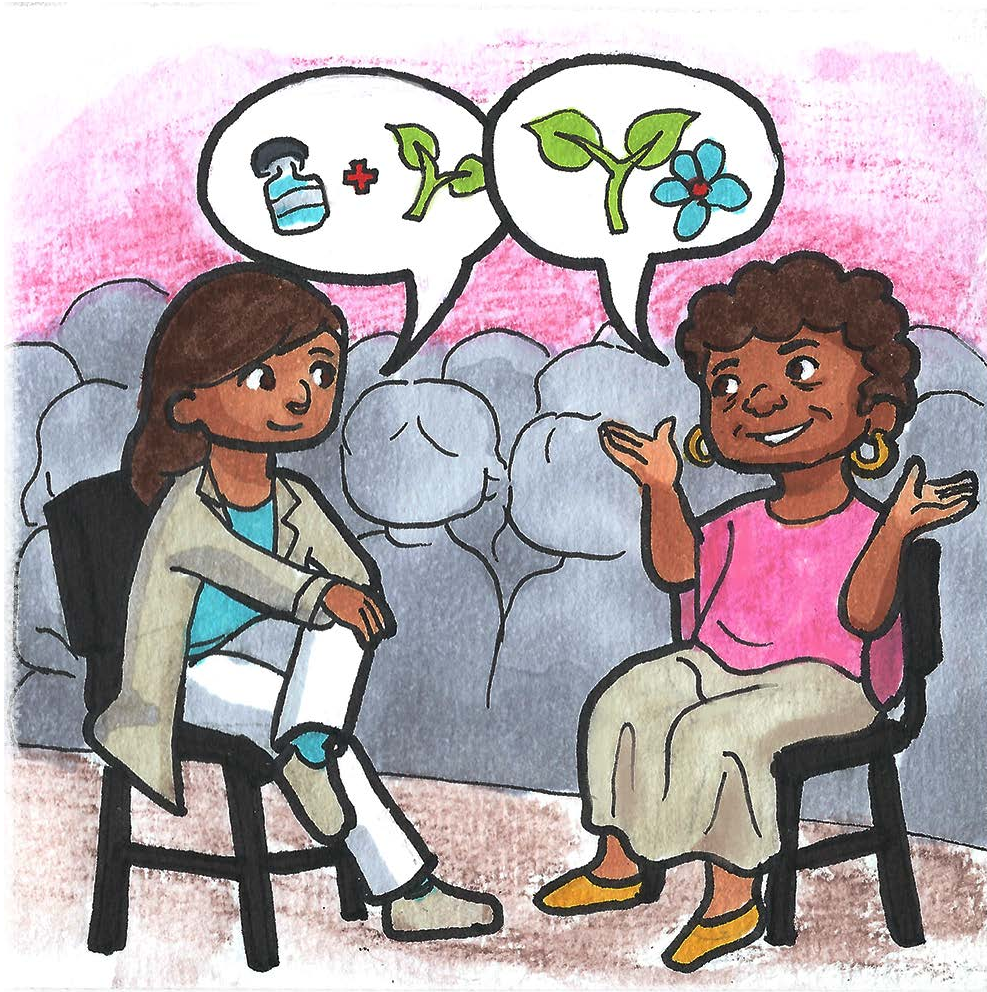
If talking about COVID-19 vaccine side effects, for example, provide relatable context and reference points for people to understand exactly how common these effects are.



Admit failure. Scientists expect failure. It is a part of the scientific process and hypothesis testing. Yet many of us, scientists included, hesitate to admit failures publicly.



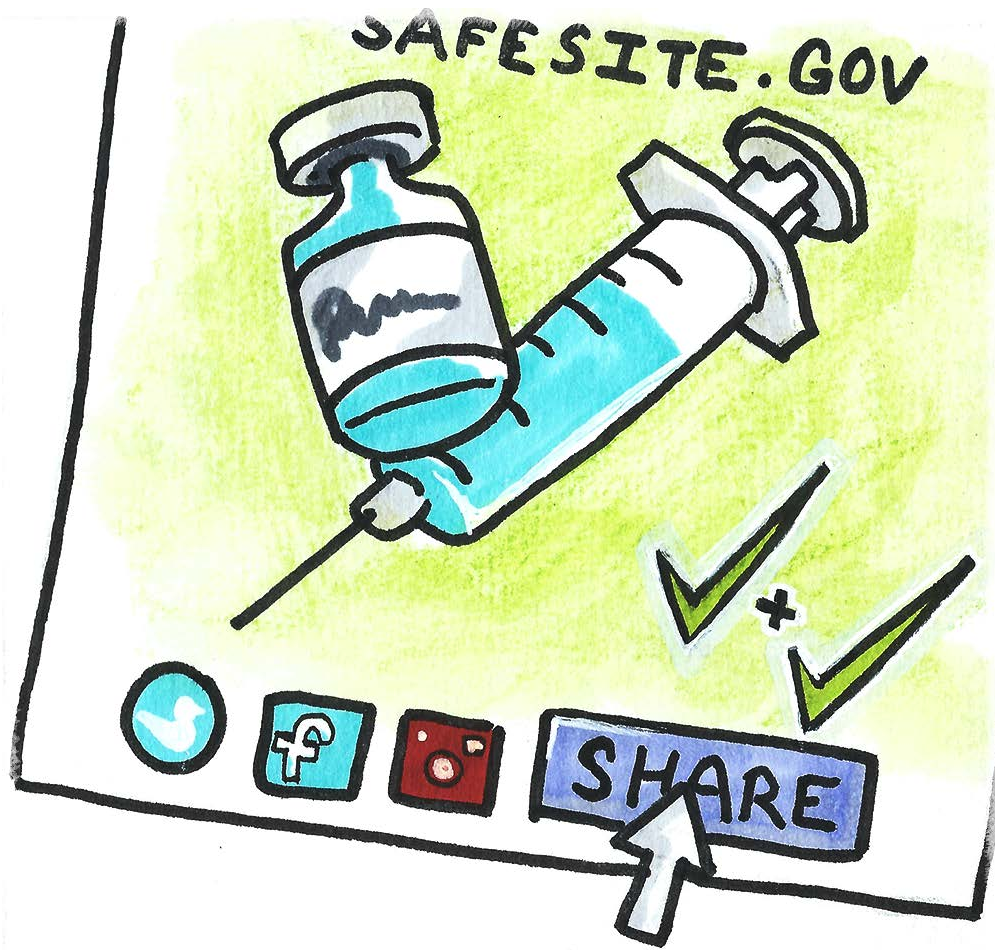
However, research has shown that scientists who admit mistakes may be deemed more trustworthy! Admitting failure can also open new doors for creativity and collaboration.



Focus on building relationships. We listen to and follow the advice of people we already have good relationships with. Consult community members and leaders early and often.



Say “I don’t know” more. Admitting “I don’t know” leads one to search for more information and consult others. It leads to a **growth mindset**. It starts by example.



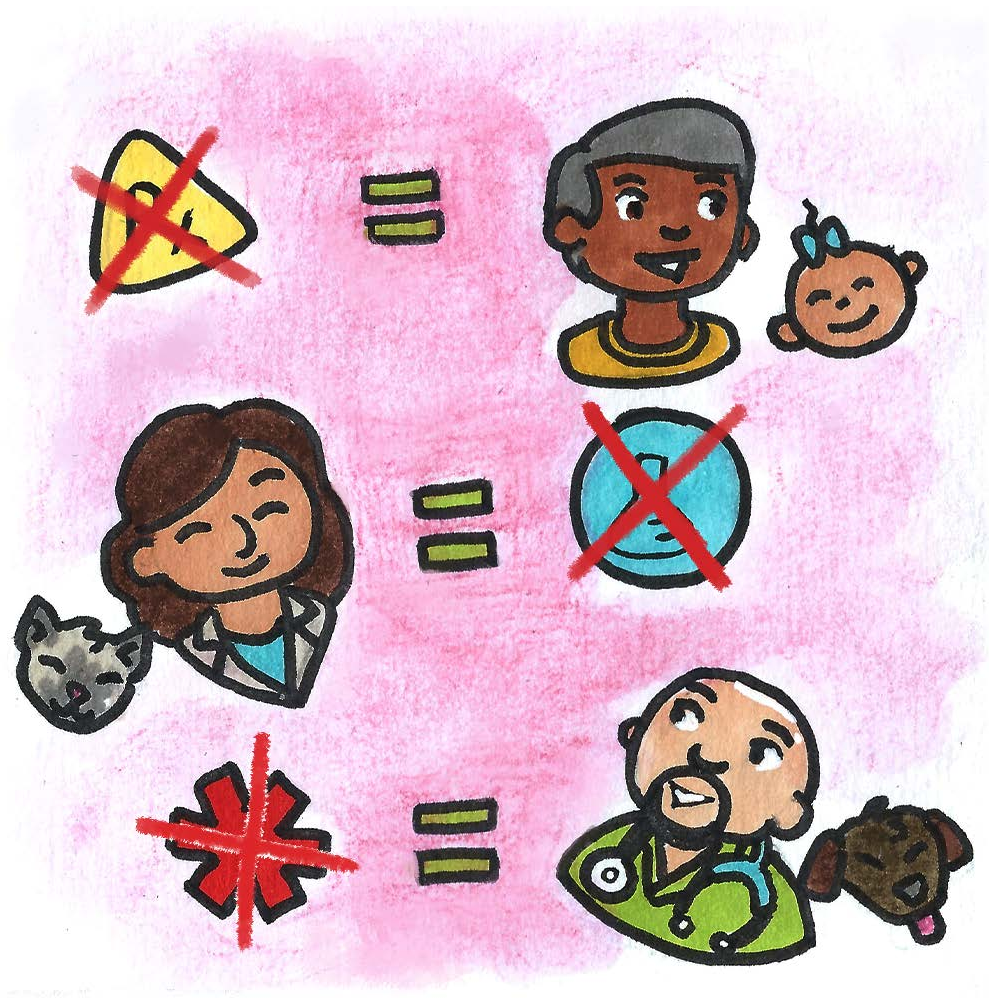
Double-check. Anyone can help the trust gap by *not* amplifying misinformation. Try to consume information from multiple sources and double-check your facts before sharing.



Tell stories. While each of us processes “facts” in different ways, stories can bring us together in a powerful shared experience.



“If you can tell a gripping enough story, people pause their judgements and go on the ride with you. They aren’t thinking about the conclusion. They’re letting you take them there.” - *Kristen Bell*



Tell human stories about scientists, about people impacted by science, and about citizens participating *in* science. Humanizing science can make it more trustworthy.



But no single story resonates with everyone. Your storytelling should recognize diversity in culture, emotions and concerns, and acknowledge barriers to inclusion.



Lean on storytellers and artists. There are professionals who excel at getting people to come along for the ride, at uniting people in a shared experience!



More Tips

- Simply telling people what to do rarely works. Explain *why*.
- Practice **human-centered design** when working on anything from possible healthcare solutions to education materials. Find a guide [here](#).
- Try [journey mapping](#). Put yourself in the shoes of your audience (or user, or clinical trial participant) by documenting their personal journey.



Credits

Thanks to Ed Simcox (LifeOmic), Dr. Natalia Peart (Catalyst Innovation Group), Jessica Malaty Rivera M.S. (The COVID Tracking Project) and Kristen Bell (Actress & Business owner, Hello Bello) for contributing knowledge to this course!

Learn more about building trust in science and health with storytelling and art at [Lifeology.io](https://lifeology.io).



Sources

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Learn more about the Panel

<https://lifeology.io/health-trust-gap/>

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This course communicates with humor and visual metaphors how common “common” vs. “rare” side effects really are.

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Building and Maintaining Trust in Science (RTI)

<https://www.rti.org/impact/building-and-maintaining-trust-science>

