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The #1 Face Ma

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Think the pandemic isn't a big deal? That the government is using it to gain power and control? CDC Director Rochelle Walensky has a message for you, she tells us in The EIC Interview

Nicholas Carlson 19 hours ago



Protesters in Pontiac, Michigan, on July 24 with placards against mandatory vaccines. [Matthew Hatcher/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images](#)

Some Americans think the pandemic isn't a big deal.

They view mask rules and vaccines as ways the government is trying to control their lives.

The CDC director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, wants those Americans to have more chats with more people.

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I live in New York City, where we heard sirens every day for weeks and 30,000 people died from COVID-19 in a couple of months. The pandemic was in our face.

But I have a younger cousin in Texas. For her things look and feel different. She's not seeing a lot of people die. She didn't hear

all those sirens. To her, it can feel like this thing isn't as serious as the media makes out.

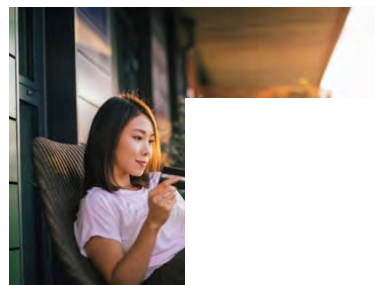
Because of that, it can feel like the government is trying to scare people into taking something they don't really know all that much about. It seems like it's the government grabbing power and control of their lives.

What do you say to people like her?

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For me personally, this has been an interesting challenge because I came to this job from taking care of patients. And when I went into an individual patient's room, nobody ever questioned whether I was there for their good or not. I was specifically there for their good. I only had their best interests at heart. So it's interesting to sort of have to pivot now to have this perception that I'm now the government and now the government is in control or wants to control something.

But what I might say to your cousin is: "Talk to me about your

concerns. Do you know anybody who's gotten COVID? Have you talked to anybody who's gotten COVID? Have you talked to anybody who's lost a loved one due to COVID and what that was like? Have you talked to anybody who's been in a [hospital](#) during COVID times? Have you talked to anybody who has [long COVID](#)? Have you talked to people who have gotten the vaccine and how they made the choice to get a vaccine and what kind of information they needed in order to feel like it was safe or to understand [the side effects](#)?"

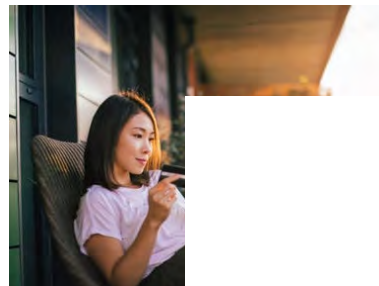
And then to recognize this is not "we" and "they" — this is us together — and to say like: "So let's today have a conversation about the side effects. Let's tomorrow have a conversation about the volume of people who've gotten it and the safety. The next day, let's have a conversation and talk to somebody who's gotten it."

And if you say like, "No, I don't want it today," we don't give up.

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We say: "All right, what is the information that you need today to help you sleep on it? And then what's the information you need tomorrow

to help you sleep on it?"

And the other thing is, I might not be the best person to speak to your cousin, right? I'm from Massachusetts, and I took care of patients, but maybe they would want to hear it from their local pharmacist who they've been going to to get their prescriptions filled for years, right?

So they may not trust me. That's fair — they don't know me. They don't know my motivations, but they do know other people, their physician locally or a friend of a family who's a physician, somebody who delivered them, their mother's OB, whatever it is, right? So who is that trusted person in their life who could help send that message?

The coronavirus pandemic

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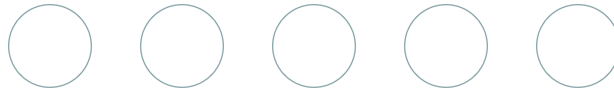
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