

# Having Conversations About the Vaccine Mandate



Updated 02-02-2022

When speaking with your colleagues about the COVID-19 vaccines, the goal is to create an open and safe space. While vaccination and a booster are now mandatory, we are still committed to ensuring that our colleagues feel listened to, validated, and cared for as members of the Mount Sinai community.

Trust is the foundation for meaningful conversations. Listening and empathy will help keep you grounded in that trust, no matter where the conversations heads.

We encourage you to practice some of these conversational approaches with a trusted colleague or friend. We want you to feel confident engaging in discussions that feel natural and comfortable for you.

## Active listening helps your colleagues feel heard and valued.

The What	The How
<b>Don't judge</b> ...remember to listen and validate how your colleague is feeling	Your colleague says: "I'm upset about this mandate and I don't want to get vaccinated."  You say: "I'm sorry this feels stressful, and I'm here to support you however I can."
<b>Show that you're listening</b> ...through both verbal and non-verbal signs	Don't interrupt, but say things like, "Mmmm", "Yes", and "OK"  Make eye contact, lean in, and smile
<b>Ask questions</b> ...reflect back what you're hearing, and seek clarification	"What I'm hearing you say is..... Do I have that right?" "Can you tell me more about that?" "It sounds like [xyz] is the most important thing to you...is that right?"

## Demonstrating empathy creates a safe space to explore their thoughts and feelings.

The What	The How
<b>Ask open-ended questions</b> These are questions that don't ask for a "yes/no" response	"How are you feeling about the vaccine?" "What worries you most?" "What questions do you have about the vaccines?"
<b>Affirm strengths</b> Focus on values, positive motivations, and good intentions	It sounds like you're really concerned about protecting your health." "I can tell you've really given this a lot of thought."
<b>Acknowledge and validate concerns</b>	"I understand why you're worried about that..." "That's something I struggled with too..."
<b>Check in, summarize, and reiterate your availability and support</b>	"How are you feeling now that we've talked?" "I'm so glad we were able to talk about some of your concerns, like..." "I'm available if you want to keep talking."

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## Addressing Medical Mistrust When It Comes to Misconceptions

Updated 02-02-2022

Certain communities in the United States—especially communities of color—have just cause for mistrusting health care institutions. It’s important to be aware of this, and to be sensitive to the histories and experiences that may cause someone to have concerns about the vaccines.

Dispelling myths and misconceptions requires the same approach as having an empathetic conversation—it requires listening and trust.

### The Do’s and Don’ts of Responding to Myths and Misconceptions

<b>DO</b> listen to and respect someone’s beliefs, even if you disagree with their justification	<b>DON’T</b> simply tell someone they’re wrong or misinformed
<b>DO</b> ask permission to share what you know	<b>DON’T</b> automatically assume someone is interested in hearing the explanation you’d like to provide
<b>DO</b> explain things using accessible language and check in about what they would like to know	<b>DON’T</b> overwhelm with statistics, medical jargon, or in-depth explanations unless they are requested
<b>DO</b> acknowledge the seriousness and impact of past abuses against communities of color and the historical violation of trust	<b>DON’T</b> diminish past events as “events of the past” and ask people to disconnect from these histories
<b>DO</b> acknowledge current health disparities and the role that racism plays in perpetuating them	<b>DON’T</b> explain away health disparities as being related to other factors or causes

### Following Up Based on the Conversational Outcome

If your colleague decides that they <b>DO</b> want the vaccine	If your colleague is still <b>UNSURE</b> about their decision or is <b>UNWILLING</b> to get vaccinated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affirm their decision to protect their health and the health of their loved ones</li> <li>Ask if they would like your assistance in signing up to get vaccinated</li> <li>Ask if you can support them in any other way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank them for taking the time to share their thoughts with you</li> <li>Reiterate that you are speaking from a place of having their best interest at heart and want them to remain healthy and protected from serious illness and death</li> <li>Reiterate the requirement that all employees be vaccinated and receive a booster by Monday, February 21, if they were eligible as of Friday, January 21, or by 30 days after they become eligible, whichever is later. And they must register in EHS, even if they got their shot at Mount Sinai.</li> <li>Reiterate that without an exemption they will face the possibility of termination if they do not get a vaccination and booster.</li> </ul>