

# How to reach extremists and brain washed people

/u/CheerUpHumanity wrote a manual on [how to reach extremists and brain washed people](#):

There is a new threat of massive disinformation and extremization to our societies. It is our responsibility to deal with it. We need to learn new skills, to be able to communicate with our misled neighbors in a productive way. Disinformation can affect our friends and our families, and we need to have the right answers. Keep in mind that they are victims of crafty manipulation tactics.

1. Never argue. Don't try to convince them with reason, logic, or facts. It just doesn't work, wears everybody out, and can put a strain on your relationship.
2. Don't appear smug, lecturing, or from a high horse. This makes them understandably more defensive and weakens your point.
3. Be patient and understanding. Getting them out of this is a process. If you rush, you will over-push and eventually be seen as a threat.
4. Don't make every encounter about those topics in question. Having less controversial conversations about different things will help to slowly get back to a fruitful communication.
5. If you get attacked, simply ignore it. Pass it with ease.

There are different ways to actually approach them. These ways don't go against their beliefs, but rather challenge them from within their concepts, add new information, or appeal to their emotions. If we stay calm, factual, and effortless we have the necessary credibility to guide them.

You can teach them new [knowledge](#). When I told my "conspiracy friend" about the [lung anomalies](#) in 50% of the asymptomatic cases of the Diamond Princess, he got concerned and took the coronavirus more seriously. A [video](#) from an ICU may also work. Just don't end up in a discussion. Add information without getting butthurt if they initially reject it. It's a process and it may continue to work in them even if the conversation is over. Honesty, patience, and kindness in combination with repetition are key.

You can help them to question their general way of life by strongly affirming them in their choices.

"I'm so glad you're really finding yourself. All this interest in politics seems to be making you happy."

This will make them reflect on their situation and saw doubts that will grow over time. Patience and emotional support are important here.

You can ask challenging questions pointing at flaws within their logic in an honestly curious way. Don't try to show them how "stupid" they are. This would only be seen as an attack and make them defensive. Stay harmless, ask as if you're just trying to figure it out as well. Just ask every once in a while since constant questioning can build up unnecessary pressure.

You can help them to improve their cognitive abilities by teaching how to refute [propaganda](#), an understanding for [science](#), critical thinking skills or media competence.

You can challenge them with an exaggeration within their concepts.

"The earth is flat."

"No, it's a cube."

This gives them the opportunity to find flaws and fallacies in their concepts by themselves. It's a thin line because you have to avoid being seen as trying to make fun of them.

In short, don't go against their beliefs. Instead, add new information or help them question their concepts. We all have to work on our skills and find the best ways to help our friends and family members without turning extreme ourselves. The good news is that we have science, reason, and decency on our side.