

Covid-19: PSAs

“BE A PROTECTOR” CREATOR RESOURCE GUIDE 5.0

WHAT IT IS

If you are considering including COVID-19 messaging in your content, this guide is inspired by the successful “Designated Driver” storylines popularized by NBC in the late 80s. Building on ongoing research conducted by the University of Michigan’s School of Public Health, here’s how you can help create and encourage conscious content that models “Be a Protector” behavior, to slow the spread of COVID-19 for those most at risk – and open people up to getting the vaccine.

WHO’S AT RISK

Approximately 40% of the US population has one or more risk factors for serious illness from COVID-19:

- **Severe risk:** Older adults and people of any age with kidney disease, obesity, diabetes, heart conditions, COPD, those who are immunocompromised and pregnant women.
- **Increased risk:** People with asthma, hypertension, HIV, dementia, liver disease, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary issues, as well as smokers.

HOW TO DO IT

Build a PSA around the idea to “Be a Protector” for family members or loved ones. Elevate and celebrate a role that many consumers already play, in one way or another, in order to embed it in culture as a way to exert control over the virus.

MESSAGING PILLARS

1. Find and stay up-to-date on the latest accurate information about COVID

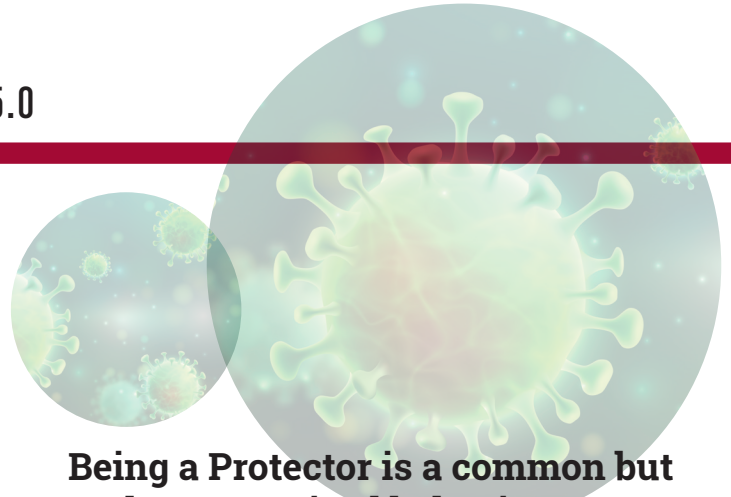
- Focus and follow high quality information sources (WHO, CDC)
- Be wary of “information” from social media
- Expect that recommendations may change in response to new learning

2. Control what you can (and recognize what you can't)

- Recognize that you cannot control what other people will do
- Control what you can—your own environment (when/why you go out, who can/can't come into your home, and rules for those who do)
- Model safe, protective behaviors for people around you (particularly children)

3. Be willing to make the hard choices

- Decide what you might have to give up in order to feel safe



Being a Protector is a common but under-recognized behavior many have already quietly adopted. Elevating and celebrating the Protector role validates existing positive behavior that is aspirational for many (especially conservative men concerned about appearing “weak”), serves a vetted public health function, and can appeal to all views on the political spectrum.

- Understand that temporary sacrifices may ensure longer-term health

4. Sweat the details

- Most people can't just stay at home all the time, so minimize risks (shopping at less busy stores or at less busy times of day)
- Understand highest risk situations (indoors, poor ventilation, superspreader events)
- Spot ways to be safer in other aspects (crossing the street to walk the dog when another person approaches)

5. Roll with resistance to minimize conflict even if there is disagreement

- Be willing to have the difficult conversations without escalating emotion
- Be clear in your own position and motives, but be willing to walk away
- Respect others while also expecting they respect you

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CREATIVE THOUGHT STARTERS: Foreground or background the behavior in narratives.

- **SOCIAL MEDIA, STORIES/REELS, TIKTOK:** Socialize the Protector notion and behavior through social media in creative ways. Tap into existing social media conversations & trending topics, create shareable infographics in varying aesthetics, customize a hashtag on Twitter, create a challenge on TikTok, or use other community-building features to encourage modeling positive behavior.
- **SCRIPTED:** Storylines can be generated in which characters take on the Protector role. These can be played for external drama (e.g. character must make a choice between commitment to remaining a Protector or attending key narrative experience, possibly a super-spreading event), character building (e.g. grandson and grandmother get to know each other better as a result of his becoming her Protector), conflict (e.g. at-risk character must convince a skeptic to serve as Protector), or in other ways.
- **UNSCRIPTED:** Consider “man-on-the-street” interviews asking people who in their family/bubble is the most at risk; quiz people on what qualifies as “at risk”; ask them who they are most concerned about protecting.

RESEARCH SHOWS THE BENEFITS OF “BE A PROTECTOR” MESSAGING

Based upon our national survey of caregivers (1,100 respondents), two focus group (10 participants), and one 1-1 interview, the following direct and indirect benefits from “Be a Protector” messaging include:

- **Modeling Best Practices Makes It Easier to Adopt Solutions:** All respondents in our focus group and 1-1 discussed the challenge of having to “figure out for themselves” what to do as a Protector. Nearly all said they

valued the opportunity to share and hear about strategies for dealing with potential risk.

- **Empower Through Visibility:** Nearly all respondents reported feeling isolated. They felt “on their own” trying to implement protective practices for their loved one(s), and would be comforted and validated knowing others were also taking on the Protector role—and elevating the role as valued in society today.
 - **Strength in Numbers:** Most Protectors reported that it is easy to become fatigued and feel self-doubt without external reinforcement, especially regarding the importance of continuing protective practices. Messaging acknowledging Protector fatigue (and/or showing consequences of lapses in Protector practice) would help to encourage the sustainability of adherence as the pandemic over the long haul that scientists anticipate.
 - **Reducing Conflict:** All Protector’s reported varying degrees of conflict with others (more distant social or family relations, general public) as they engaged in their practices (e.g. mask wearing, maintaining distance, limiting household visits). However, nearly all of them reported that once explaining their role as a Protector (and the story of the person they were trying to protect) this would quickly defuse the situation and make it clear that there was really “nothing to argue about.”
- Raising awareness of Protectors and the protection of loved ones as the motivation for specific behaviors could have the indirect benefit of increasing general acceptance and reducing conflict over these practices.*

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