

Why Is Misinformation So Appealing? | Psychology Today

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No matter how you look at it, misinformation and conspiracy theories are spreading at alarming rates. This has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare an “infodemic.” And indeed, a recent survey of US residents found that 23 percent believed that the virus was created intentionally (only 6 percent subscribed to the belief that it was created accidentally in a laboratory). With misinformation already on the rise and views about coronavirus becoming increasingly politicized, throwing a national election into the mix will likely only exacerbate things, accelerating politicization of false claims about the illness and making it more tempting to believe whatever best aligns with our increasingly passionate political views.

While most of us probably have not seriously engaged with conspiracy theories such as the one about Bill Gates, many, many people are falling victim to false information about the transmission and treatment of the illness that turn out to be extremely dangerous—like believing that silver can cure the illness or that dark skin protects people from becoming infected.

So why is misinformation so appealing during times of crisis? Well, there are at least a few relatively simple explanations.

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