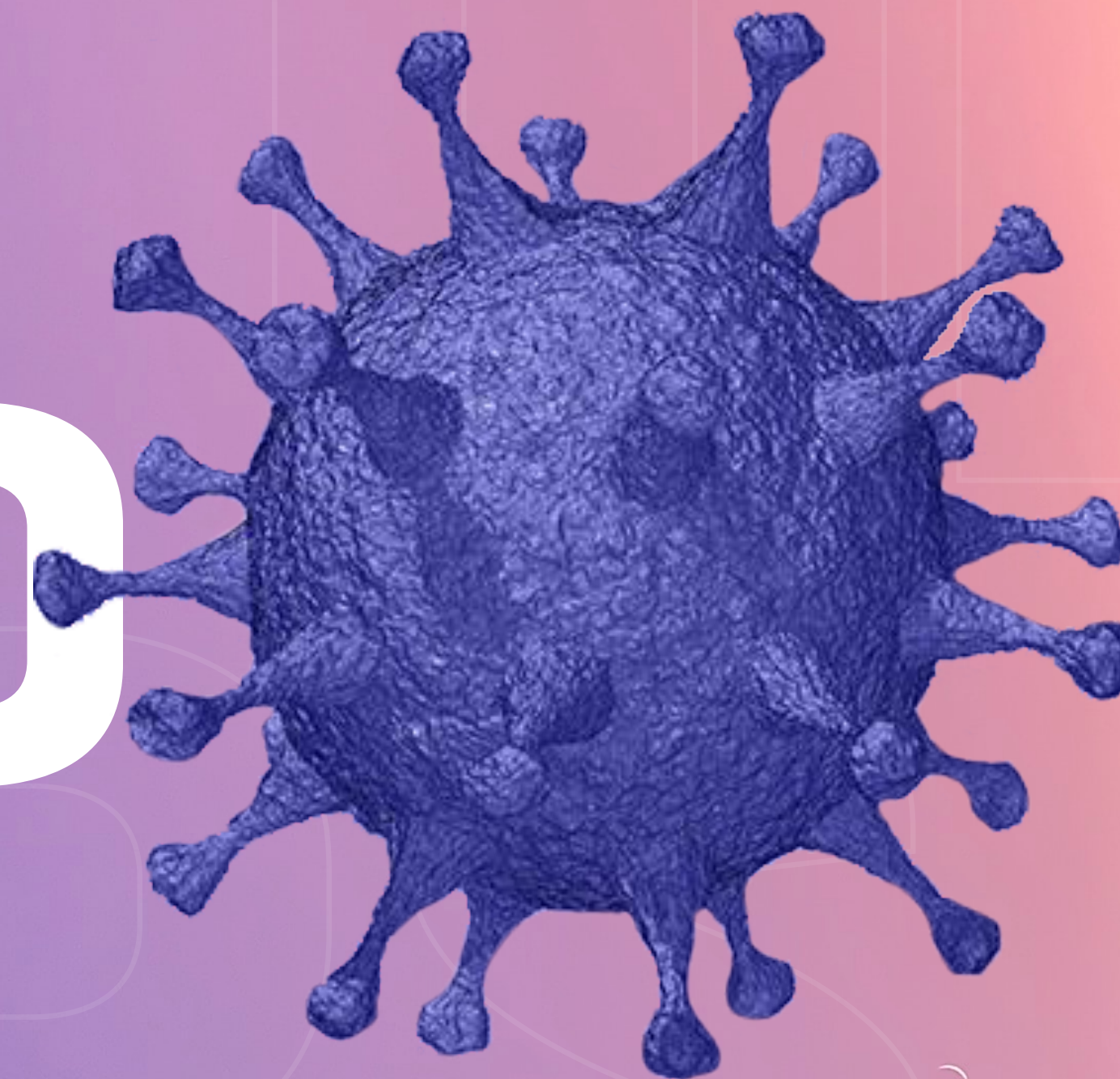


# 30 TIPS TO MESSAGE COVID-19



pathoslabs



# PURPOSE

In our virtual world, influencers are some of our most effective messengers, inspiring trust among large, varied audiences. To help influencers channel this power to fight COVID-19, we researched and tested the best messaging tactics for encouraging compliance with public health guidelines.



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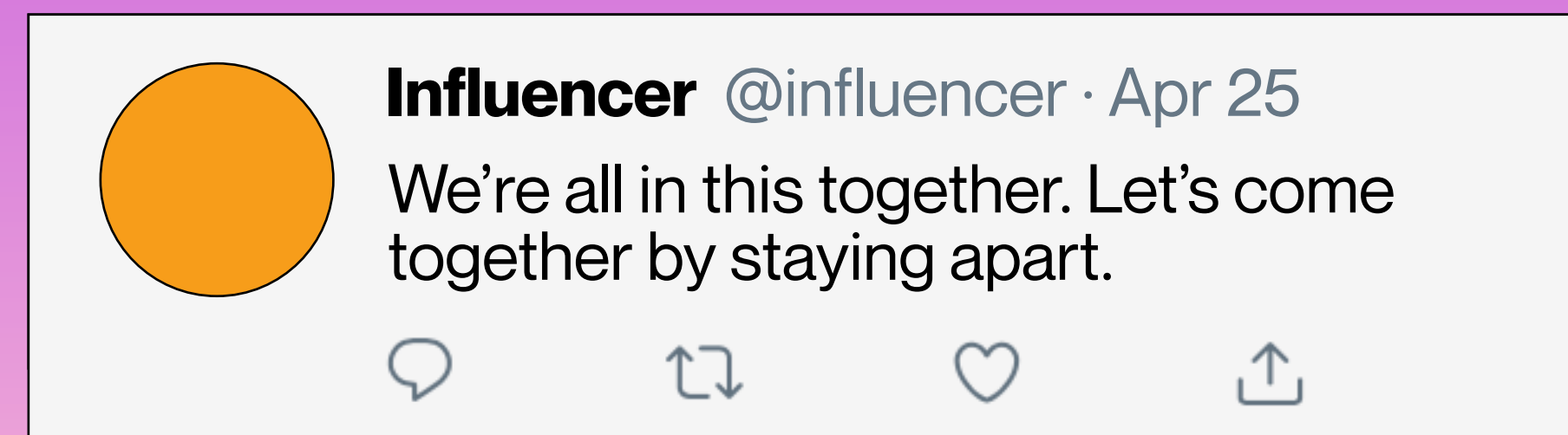
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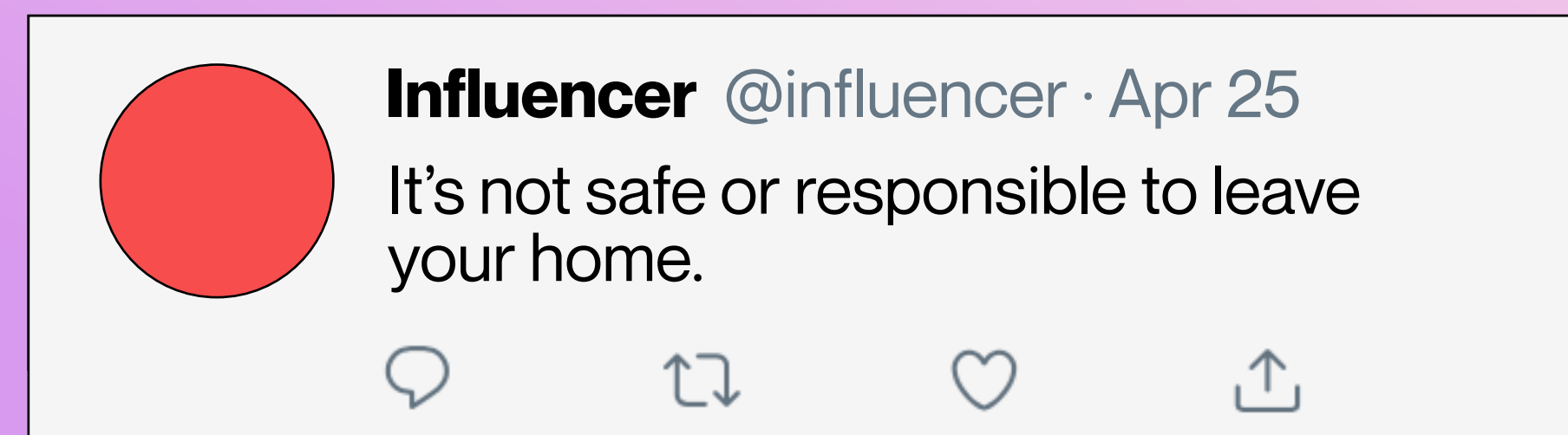
# TIP #1

Remind people that we're in this together - Use words like “we” and “us” rather than “you.” This framing will create solidarity, communion, and a stronger connection to your audience.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF

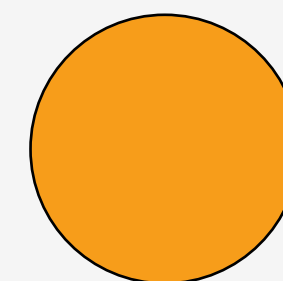


# TIP #2

## Use cause and effect -

Rather than just stating the desired action, make it clear why the desired action is warranted.

## TRY THIS

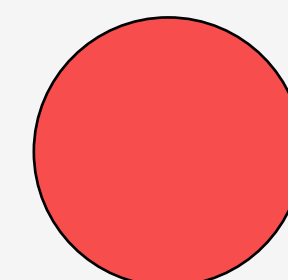


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

When we wash our hands, soap destroys the virus, but it's only effective when we do it for 20 seconds.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Wash your hands for 20 seconds.

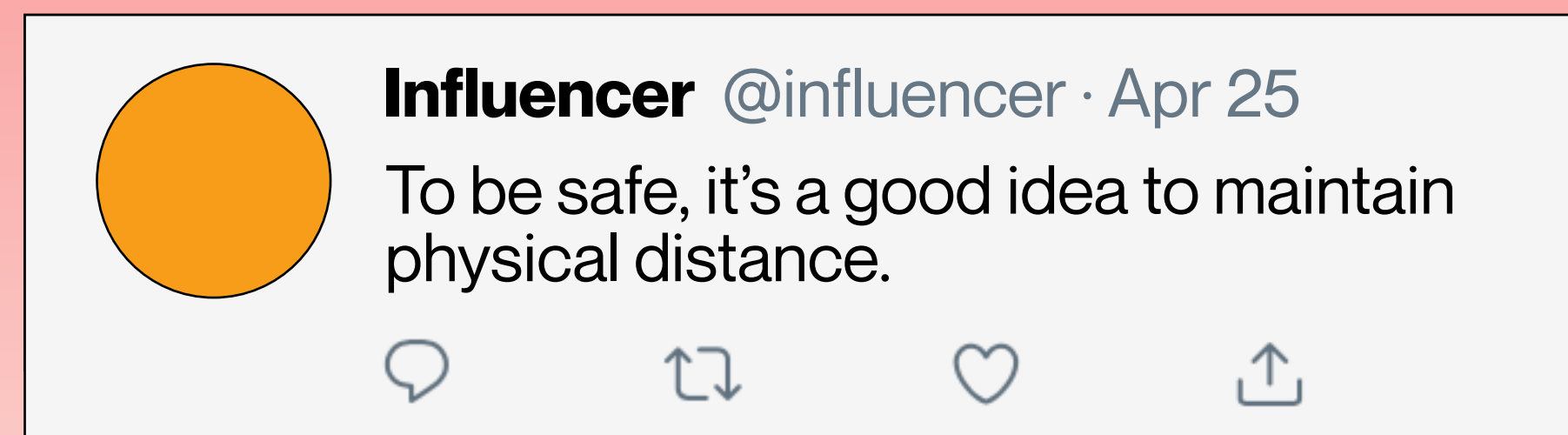




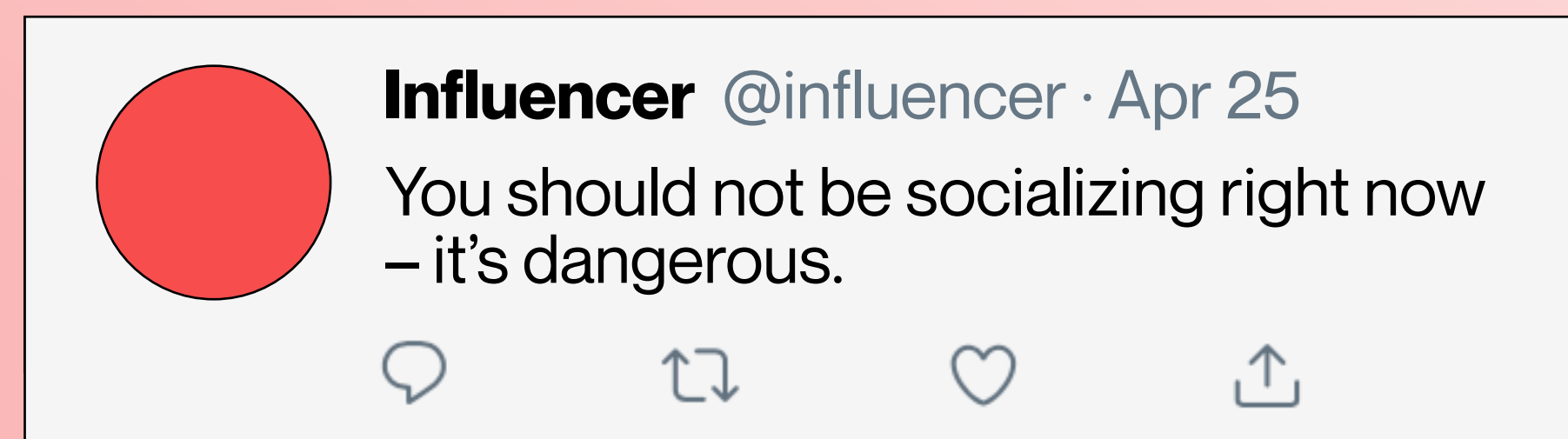
# TIP #3

**Phrase in the positive** - State recommendations in the positive (“do”), rather than the negative (“don’t”). People don’t like their liberties taken away, and therefore react negatively when being told what they cannot do.

## TRY THIS



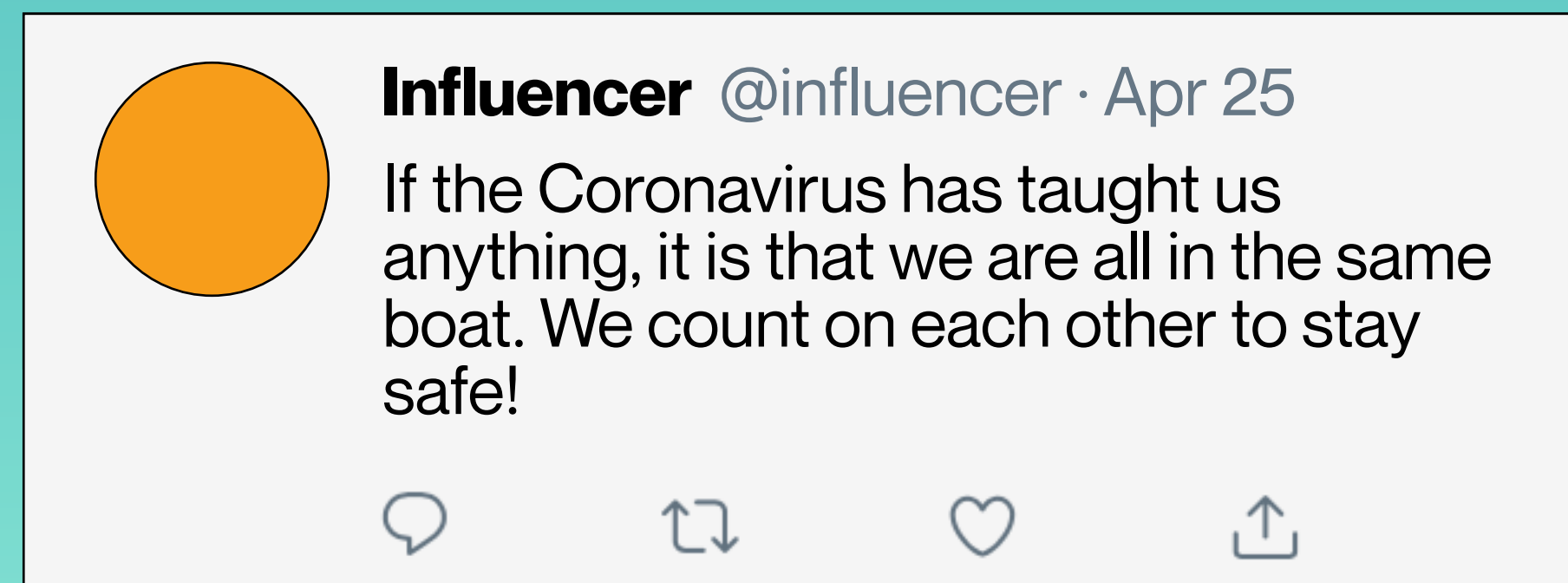
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #4

Avoid flaunting your privilege - If you don't, your posts will feel condescending and ignorant, and people will feel less connected to you. Instead, highlight the interconnectedness of COVID-19.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF

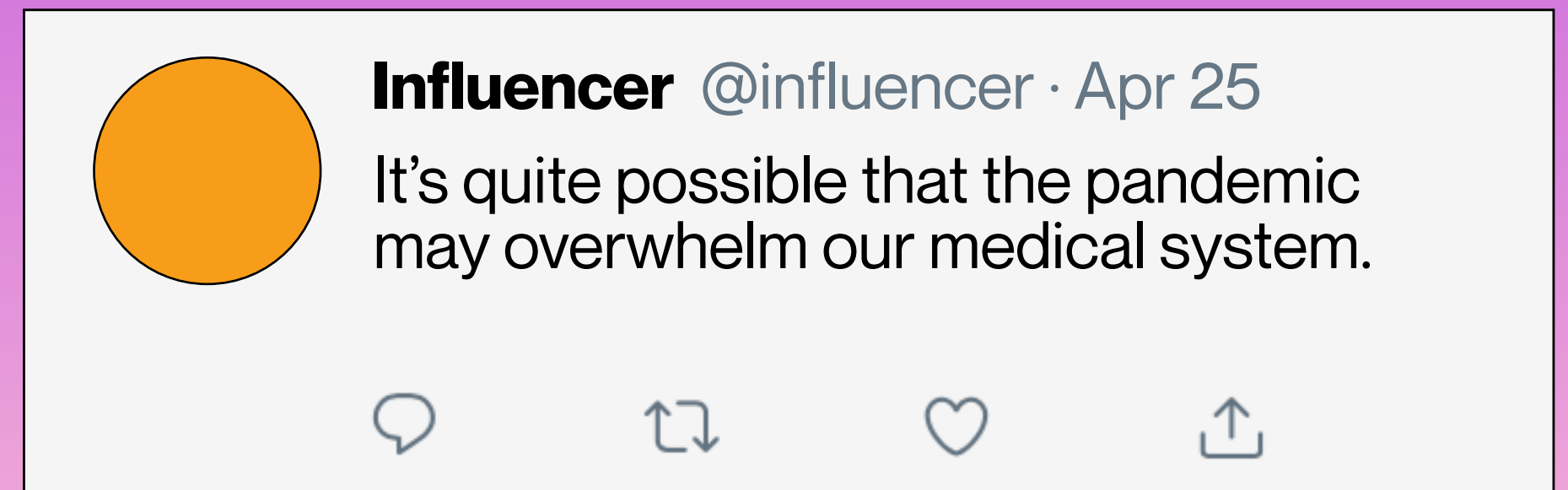




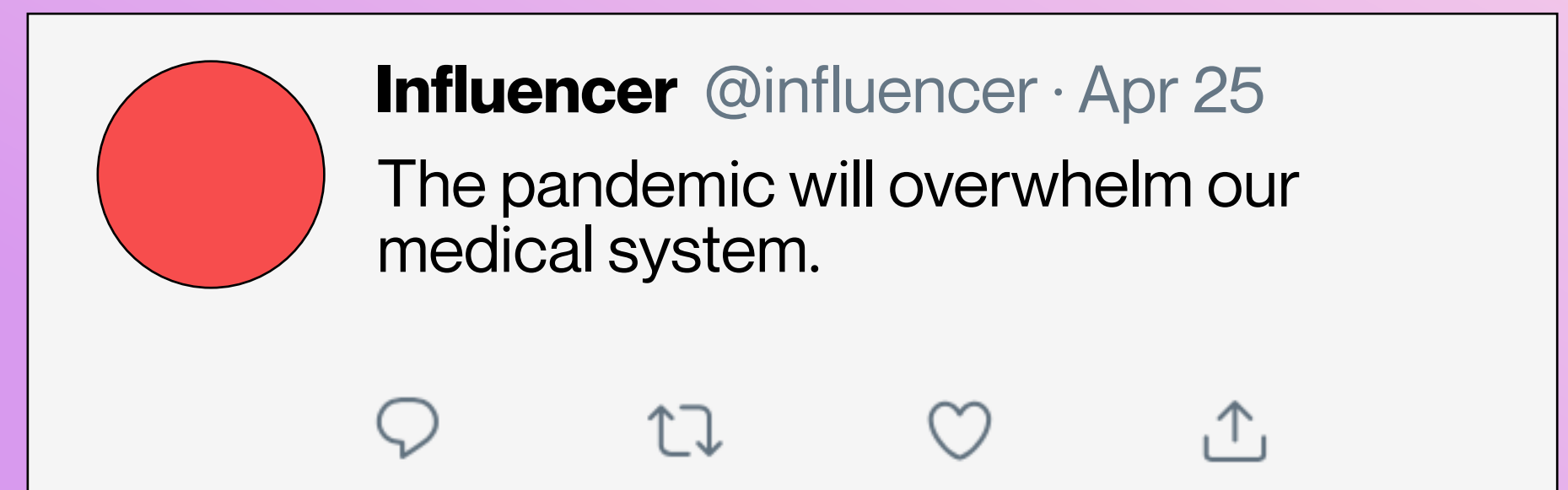
# TIP #5

**Hedge claims** - Use words like “might” rather than “will.” You’ll sound more humble, open-minded and less dogmatic, giving you more credibility.

## TRY THIS



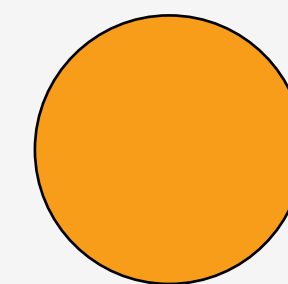
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #6

**Highlight agreement before disagreeing**- People listen to us when they feel like we understand them or that their opinions are respected. Use phrases like “I agree that...” to establish common ground and to gain trust.

## TRY THIS

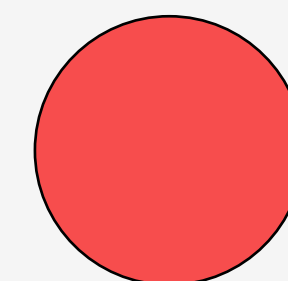


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

I agree that we need more transparency and that staying home is burdensome, but for the safety of our community, I'm not taking any risks.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

People need to take this more seriously.

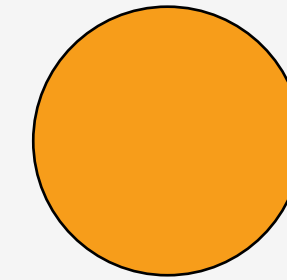




# TIP #7

**Normalize compliance** - People typically want to conform to social norms. Convey the idea that most people are doing the right thing. If we convey the idea that people are **not** complying, it becomes more socially permissible to ignore health guidelines (if others aren't complying, why should I?).

## TRY THIS

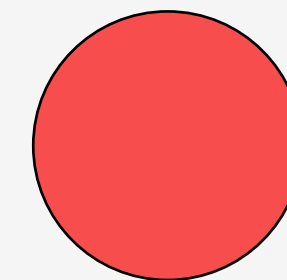


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

By staying apart, we are playing a part in an act of collective humanity to keep our fellow humans alive and well!



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Too many people are disregarding public health guidelines, and having fun at the park.

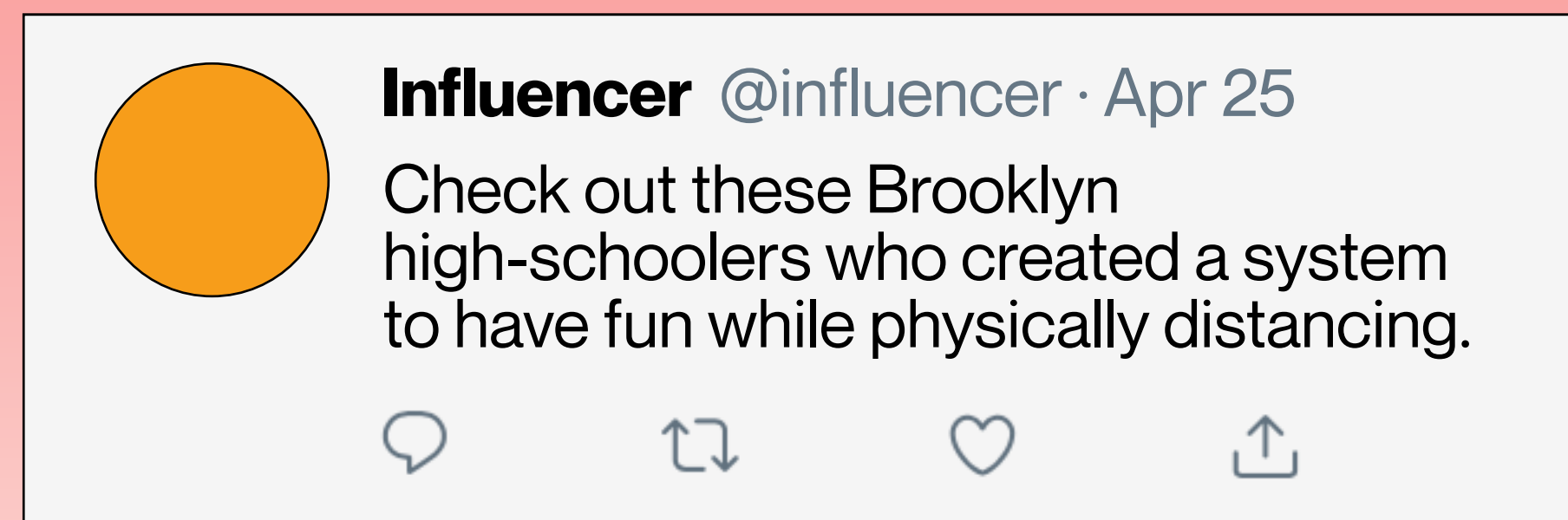


# TIP

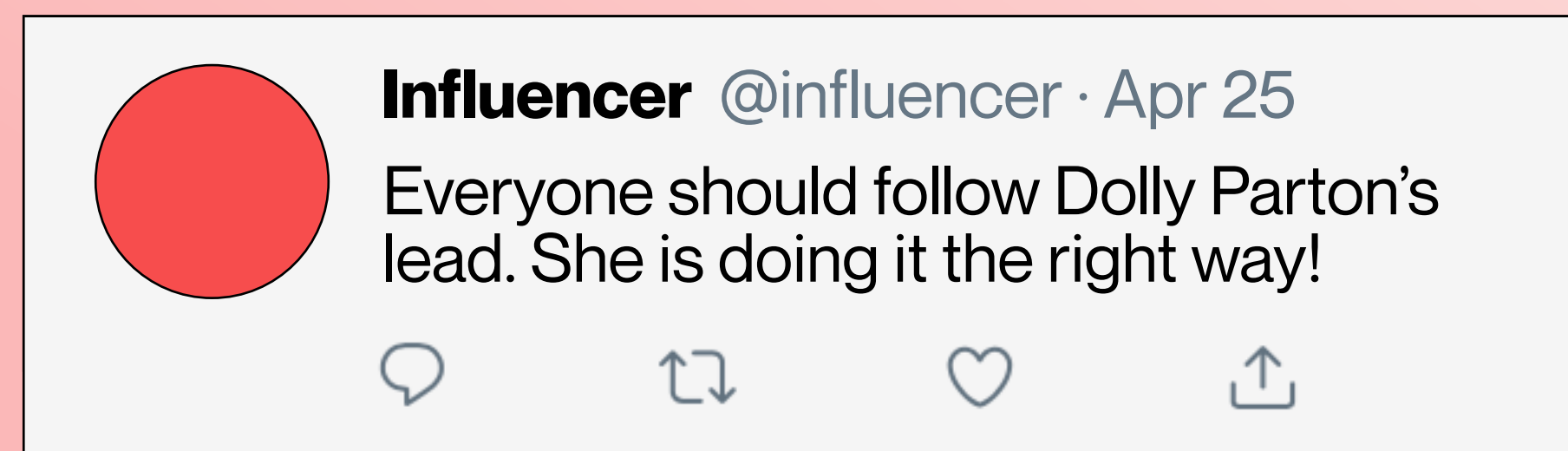
## #7<sup>1/2</sup>

Normalize compliance (**within social groups**) - Show examples of what people in your core audience's group are doing to comply. For example, if your audience is mostly Gen Z, show younger people engaging in positive behavior in order to maximize positive results.

### TRY THIS



### INSTEAD OF

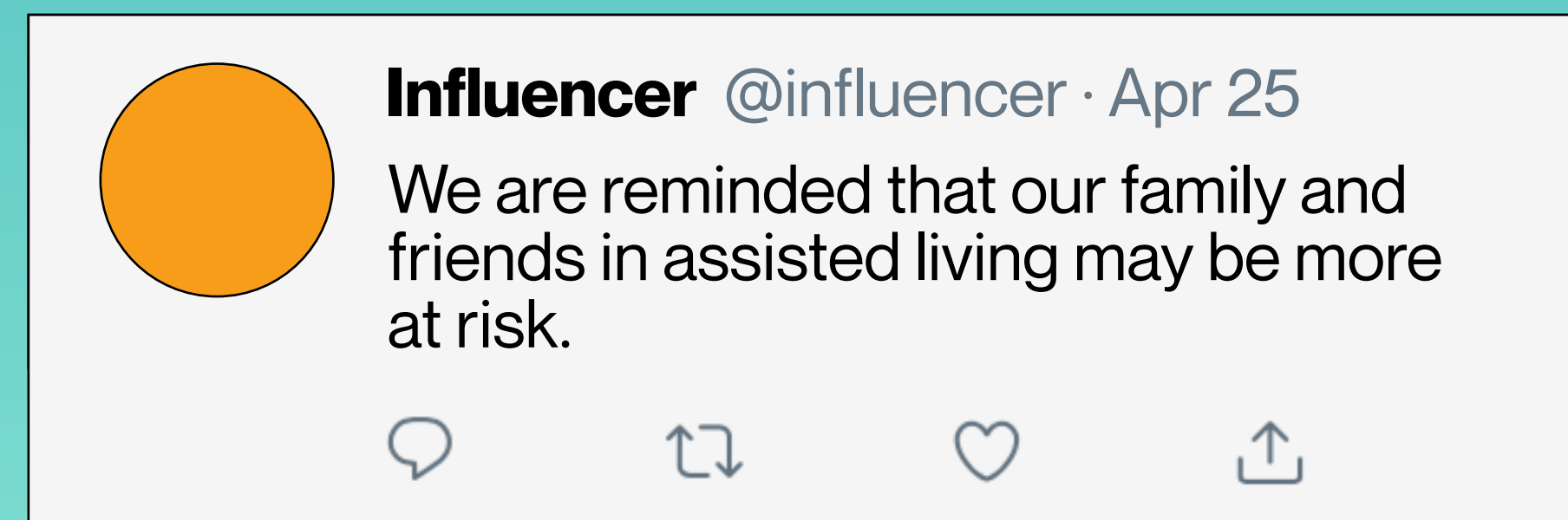




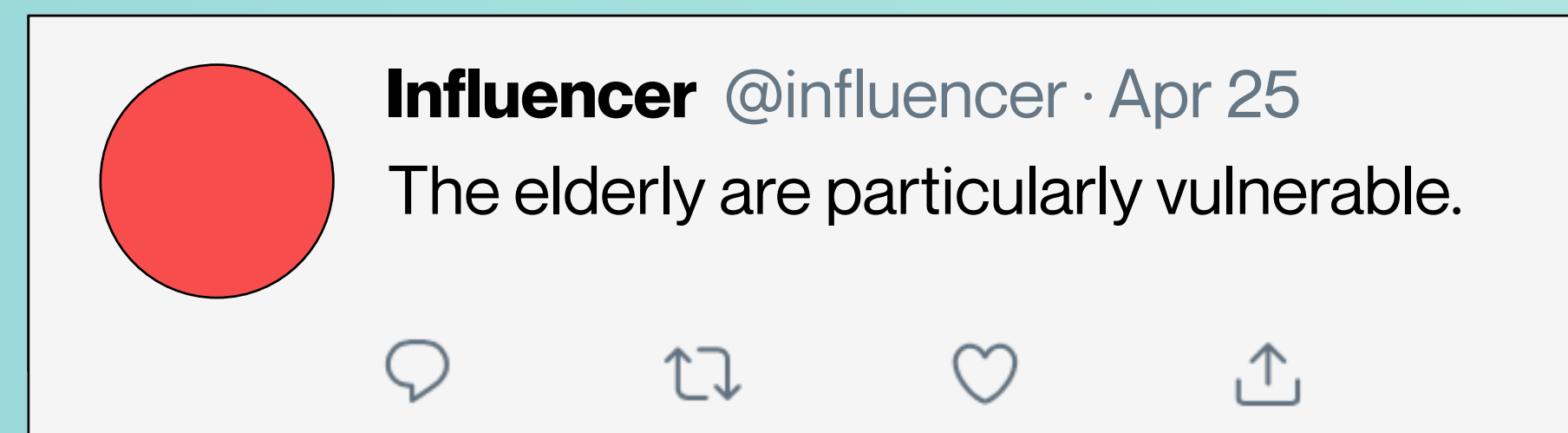
# TIP #8

**Be careful about accidental “othering”** - Using words like “the elderly” or “the incarcerated” makes these individuals come off as “them” rather than “us.” This othering can unintentionally divide us. (Rule of thumb: avoid labels that can be preceded with “the”.)

## TRY THIS



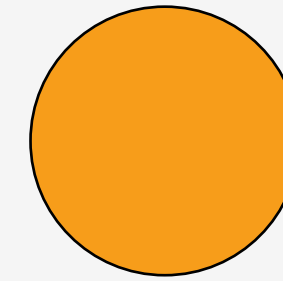
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #9

**Reframe power** - Avoid labels that suggest weakness (i.e., the vulnerable) and avoid the “savior” framing.

## TRY THIS

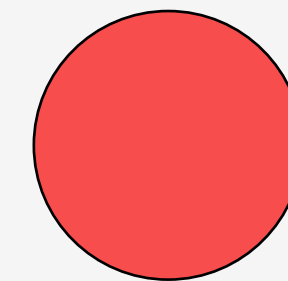


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

By keeping our physical distance, we slow the spread, which protects the availability of life-saving healthcare that we all depend on.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Be a hero, and make sacrifices to save the vulnerable.

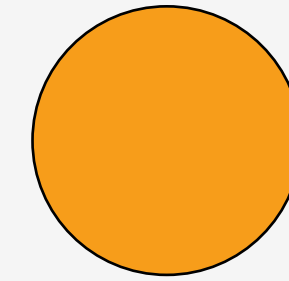




# TIP #10

**Focus on local interests** - To increase compliance, it's more effective to show the local effects of COVID-19 than to note how it's affecting a community across the country or across the world. The closer to home, the more seriously the crisis is taken.

## TRY THIS

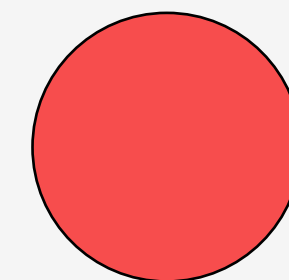


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

In New York, there are no more hospital beds for those who need them due to a surge in COVID-19 and ICU beds are currently filled.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Luxembourg has the highest per capita COVID-19 cases than anywhere else in the world!

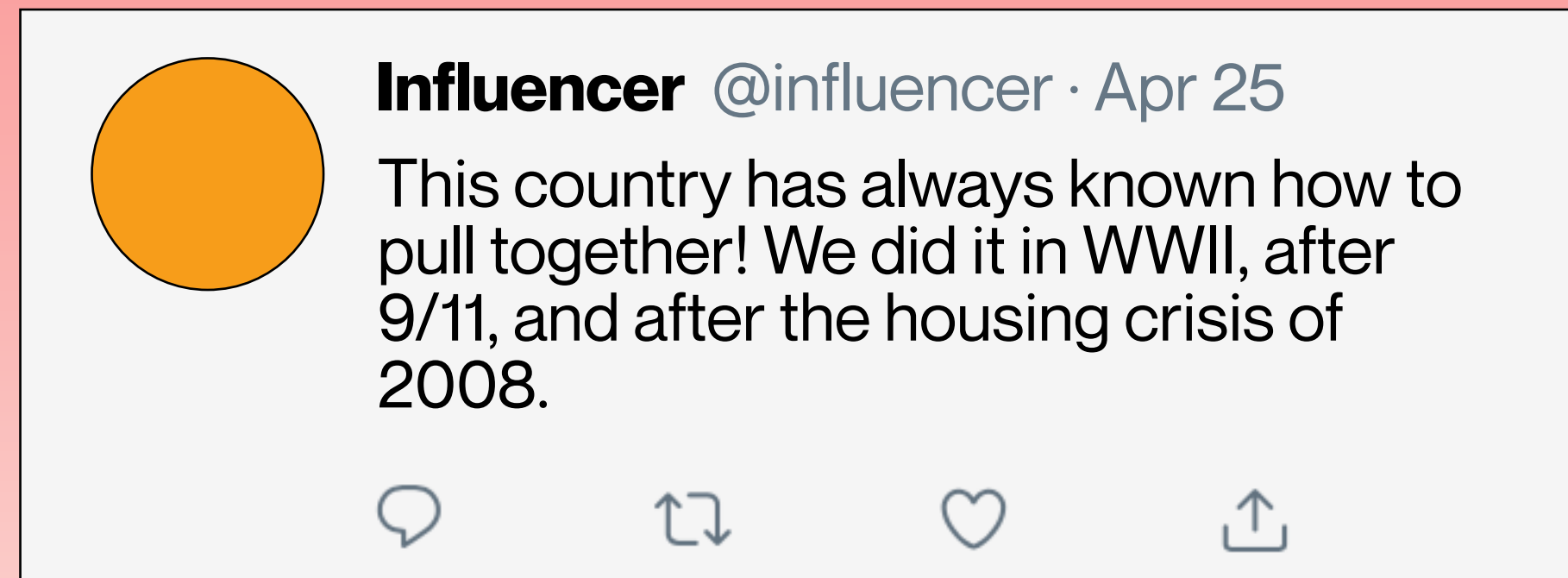


# TIP #11

## Make success feel attainable -

Using fearful language might incite feelings of helplessness. Despite the seriousness of the issue, help people believe that we can overcome it and focus on solutions.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF



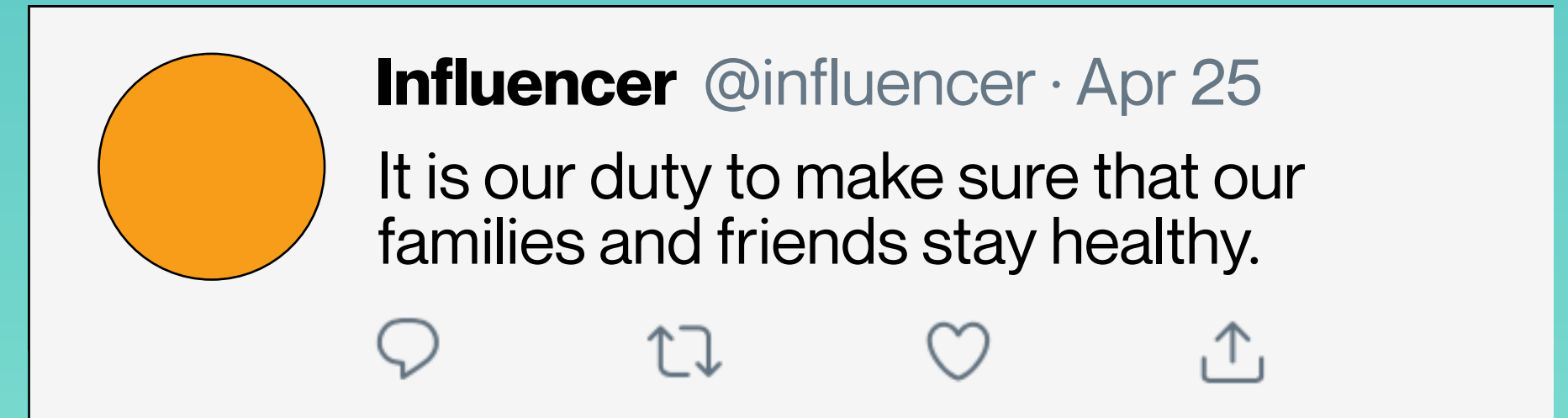


# TIP #12

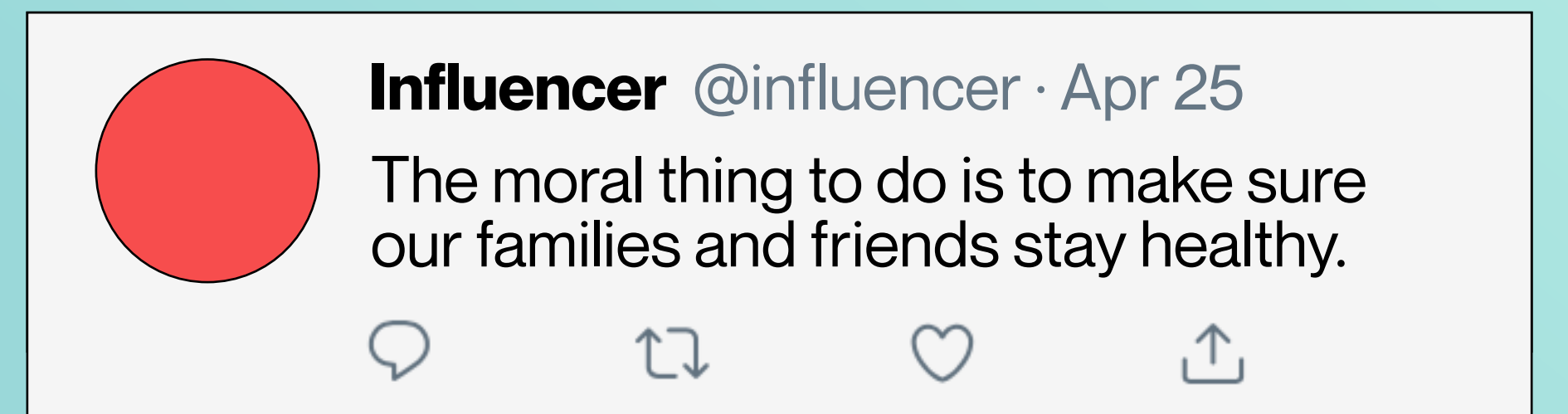
## Emphasize our *duty* to others -

You are seen as more trustworthy and messages are more effective when they speak to our our duties towards loved ones and group members.

## TRY THIS



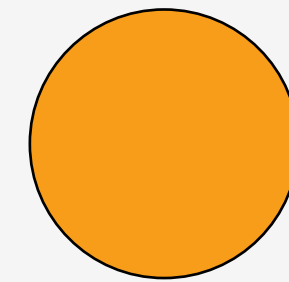
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #13

**Focus on new meaning and purpose** - Crises provide rare opportunities to grow past our perceived limitations. Focusing on higher-order values can help your followers find meaning in this crisis.

## TRY THIS

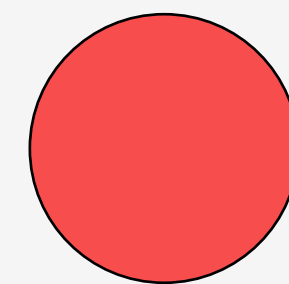


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

This crisis has taught me to refocus on what's really important in my life, like family and friends vs. work.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

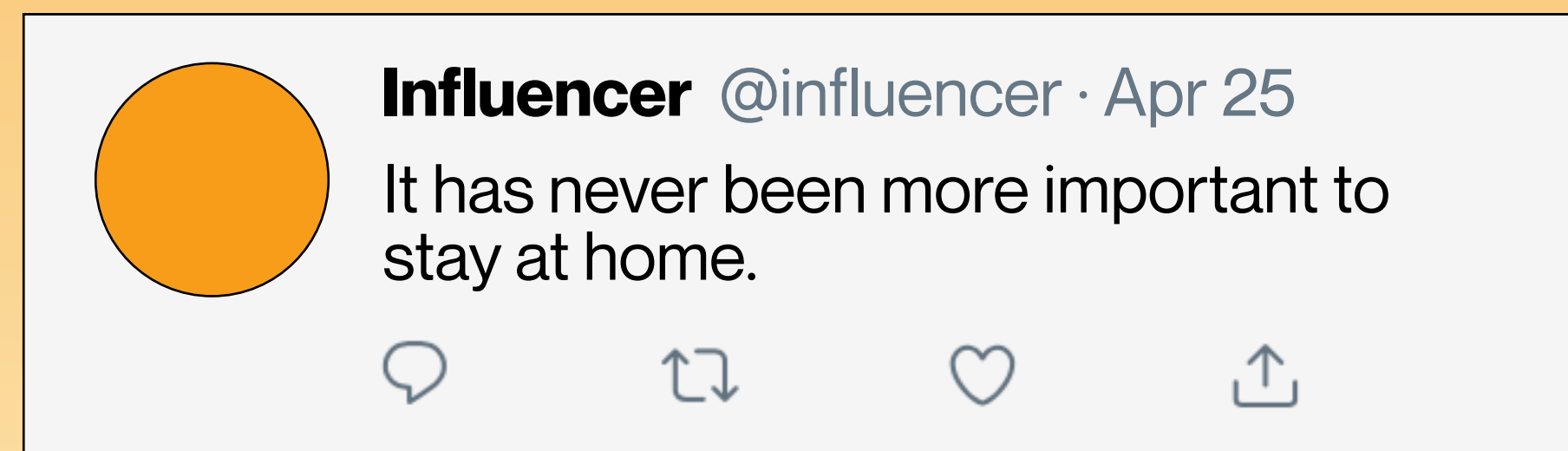
I cannot get a slot for Amazon Fresh delivery no matter how hard I try!



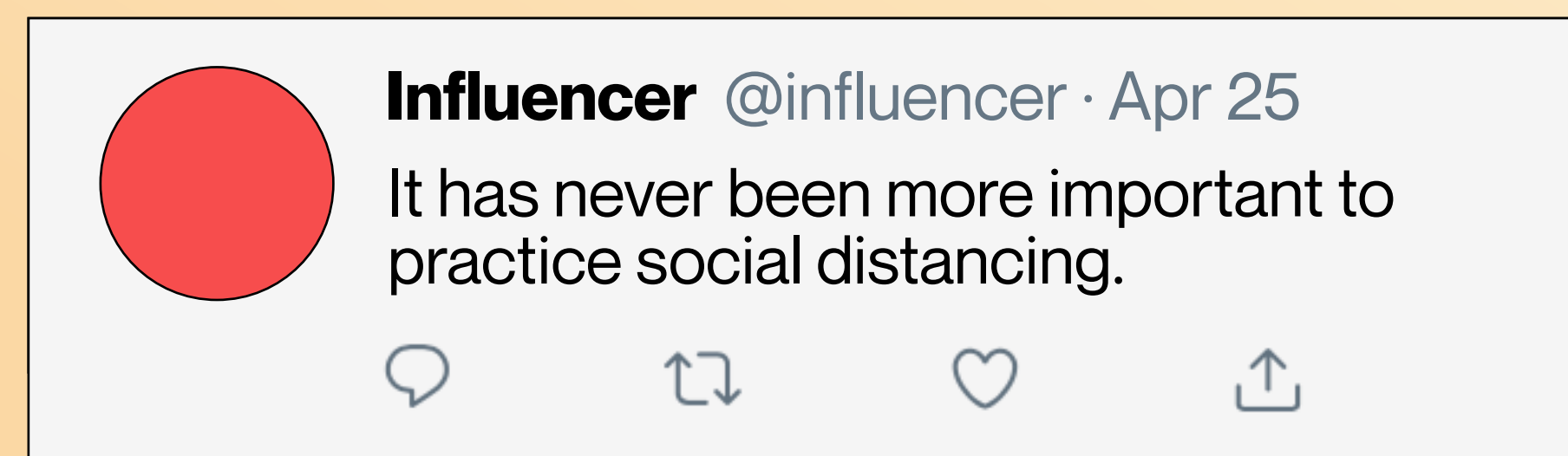
# TIP #14

**Be specific with the desired behavior** - Using broad terms (ie “social distancing”) is not particularly useful. Instead, frame your message around a clear, tangible, action.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF

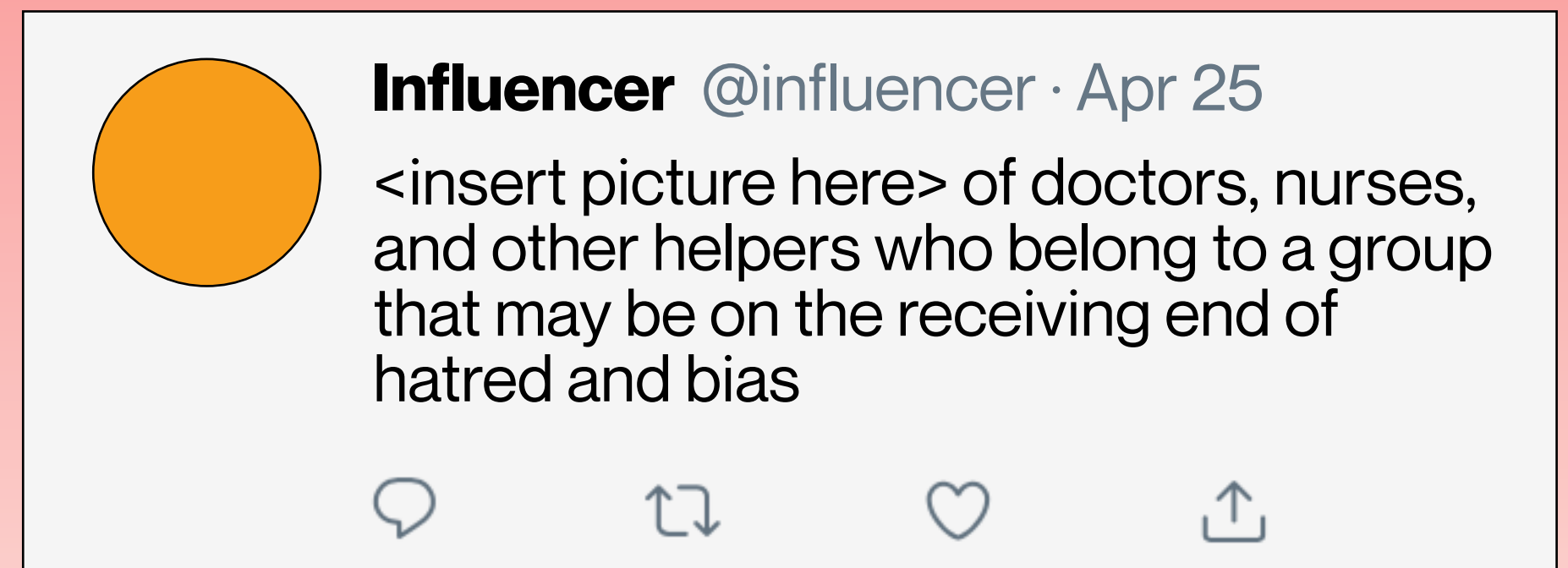




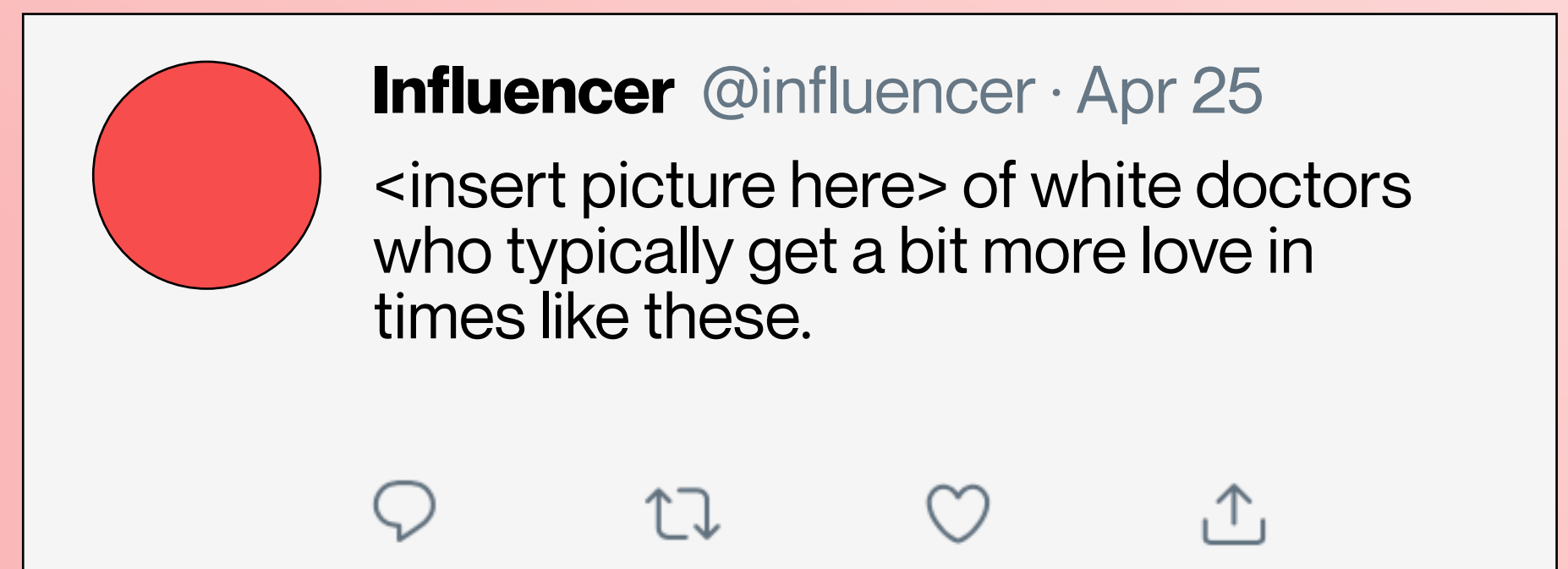
# TIP #15

**Look for the helpers** - People are inspired when they hear about someone doing something selfless for another person. Take the opportunity to challenge prejudices and biases by showing how certain marginalized groups are participating in finding solutions.

## TRY THIS



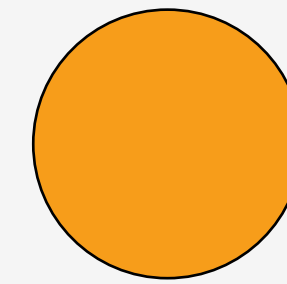
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #16

**Underscore agency and choice** - Emphasizing choice and agency acknowledges people's needs for autonomy and control. If people feel like "business as usual" is a harmful choice, rather than a passive/default situation, they will be less likely to do it.

## TRY THIS

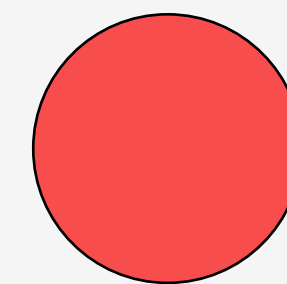


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

We put our loved ones and ourselves at risk when we choose to leave the home without face masks.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

We have all been ordered by the government to wear face masks.

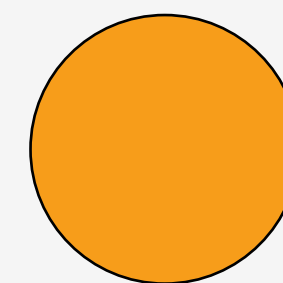


# TIP #17

## Help people understand -

Help people understand confusing information rather than reprimanding people who don't.

## TRY THIS

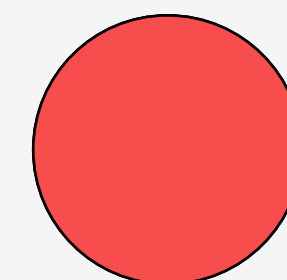


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

These charts show that the virus is still spreading to many people so it is essential that we all do our part to stop it by staying at home.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

People are clueless about reading graphs that show how much the virus is spreading so they are reckless about going out.



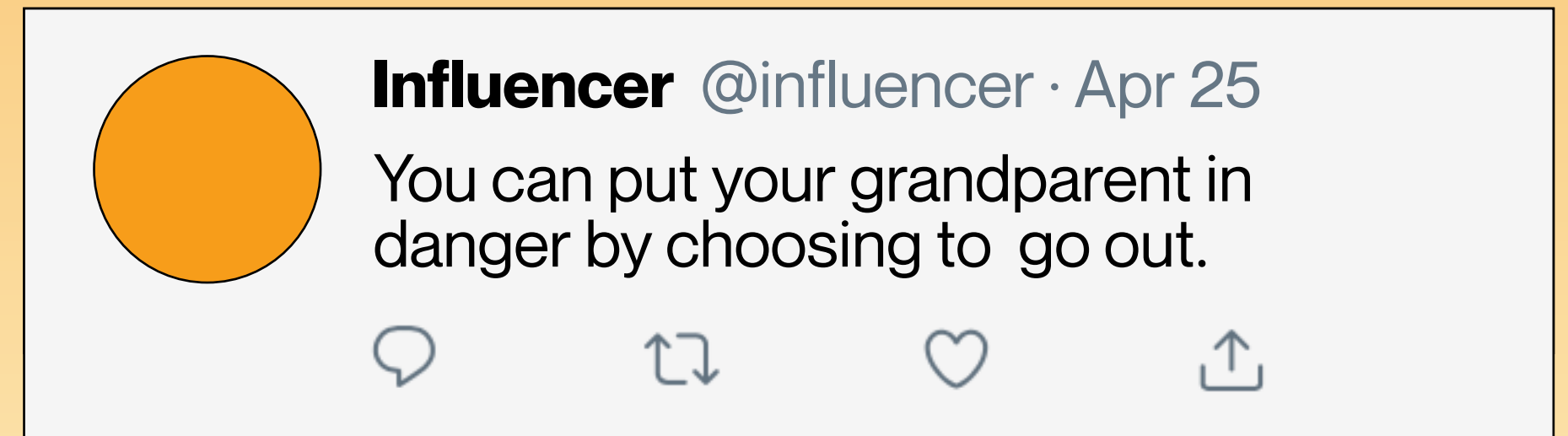


# TIP #18

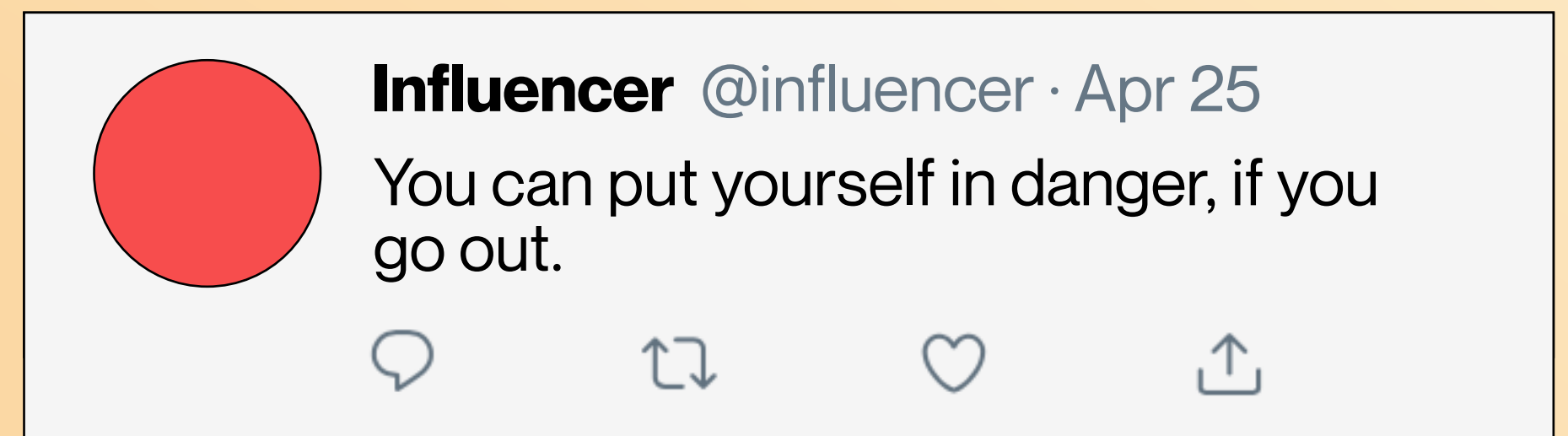
## Focus on the danger to loved ones -

Rather than stating potential risks in the abstract, or even the risk to oneself, state the risks to their loved one's lives. People are less affected by messaging that communicates the potential risks to the individual, rather than the risks to the ones whom they love.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF

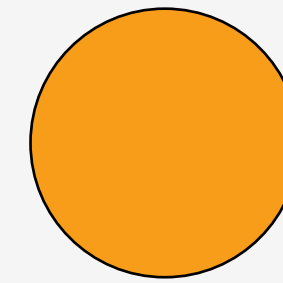


# TIP #19

## Focus on reciprocity -

When people learn sacrifices others are making to keep us safe, it subtly but effectively encourages reciprocity.

## TRY THIS

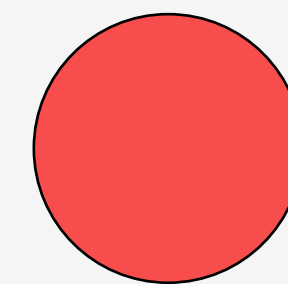


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Doctors, nurses, and other health care workers are risking their lives to keep us healthy, and many of them are falling ill. As our healthcare workers put their lives on the line, we can do our part simply by staying home and limiting physical contact with others.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

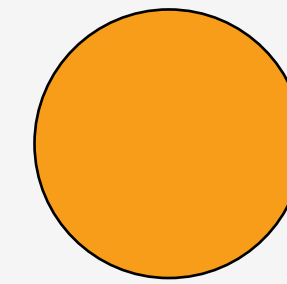
Everyone should stay home because too many people are getting sick.



# TIP #20

Repeat and amplify messages from trusted sources - Endorse official messages from experts that your followers trust. Repeated exposure to the message is key to campaign success.

## TRY THIS

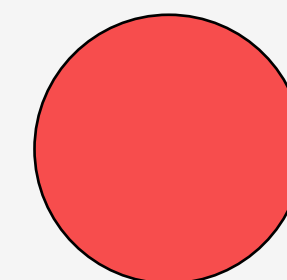


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

The CDC says that many people may have had COVID-19, without even knowing. This is why physical distancing is so important.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Tom Hanks' son says that his parents aren't even sick, despite their COVID diagnosis. We're probably all overreacting.





# TIP #21

**Politely disapprove of unhelpful behavior** – The risk of social disapproval will motivate people to act in ways that benefit the wider group. Be sure to avoid mocking humor and shaming.

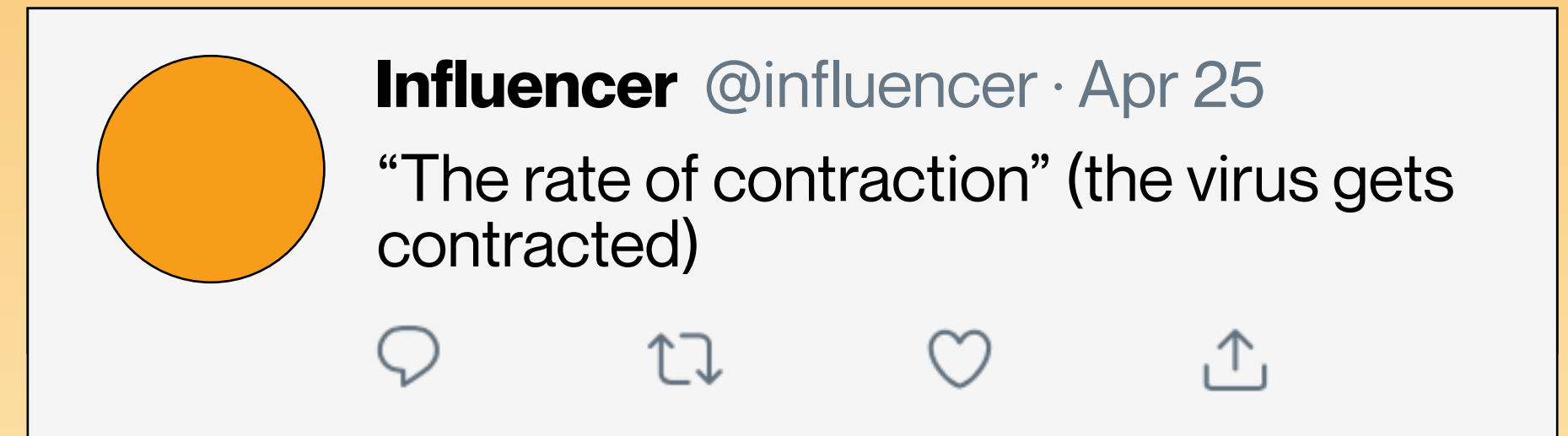
## EXAMPLE

If you're a college student, politely disapproving a college student who partied on the beach instead of staying home can help determine how certain behaviors will be judged by other college students. (Meanwhile, older people trying to public shame younger people can make things worse).

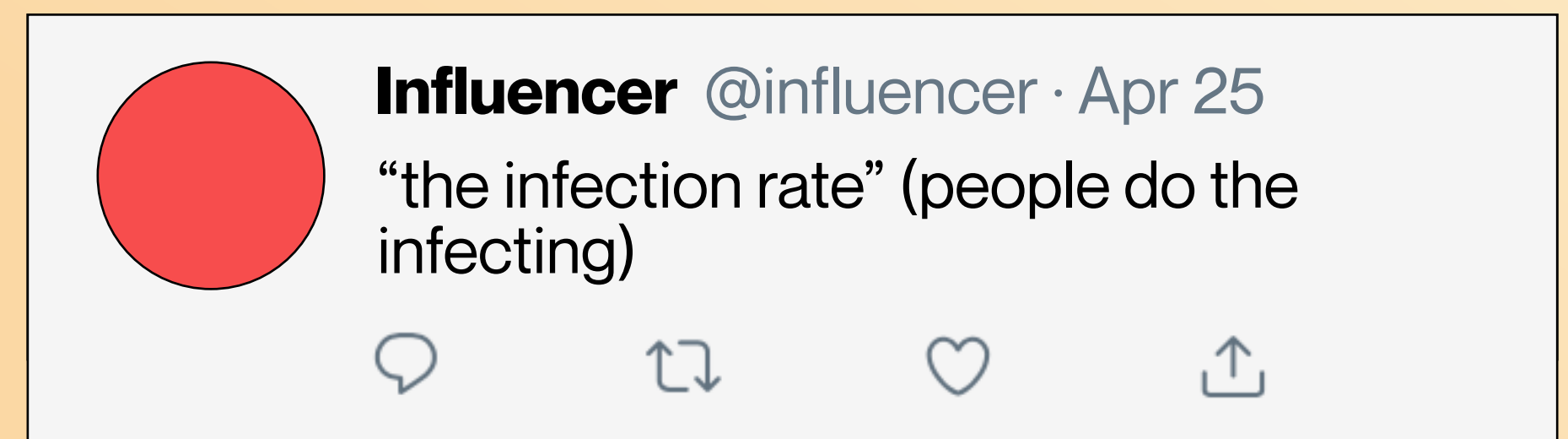
# TIP #22

**Address the real threat** - The threat is the virus, not infected people. To dampen antagonism and fear of those who have the virus, focus on the virus as the threat, rather than the infected individual. **However**, when trying to convince people that their actions carry consequences, focus on their potential actions as the threat.

## TRY THIS



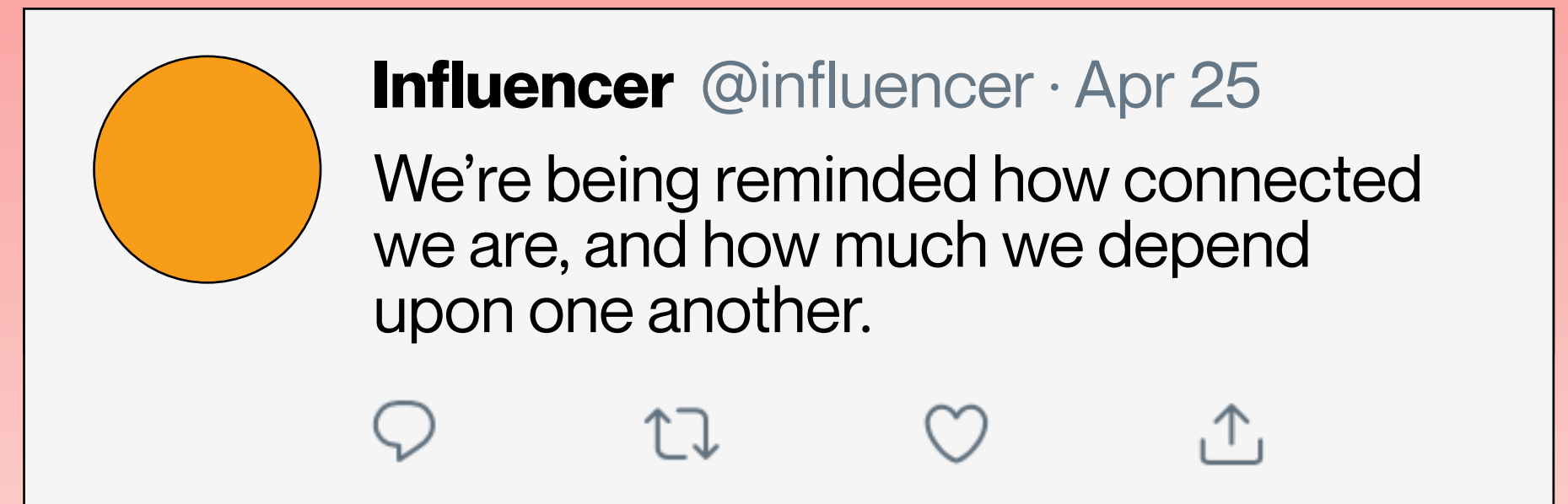
## INSTEAD OF



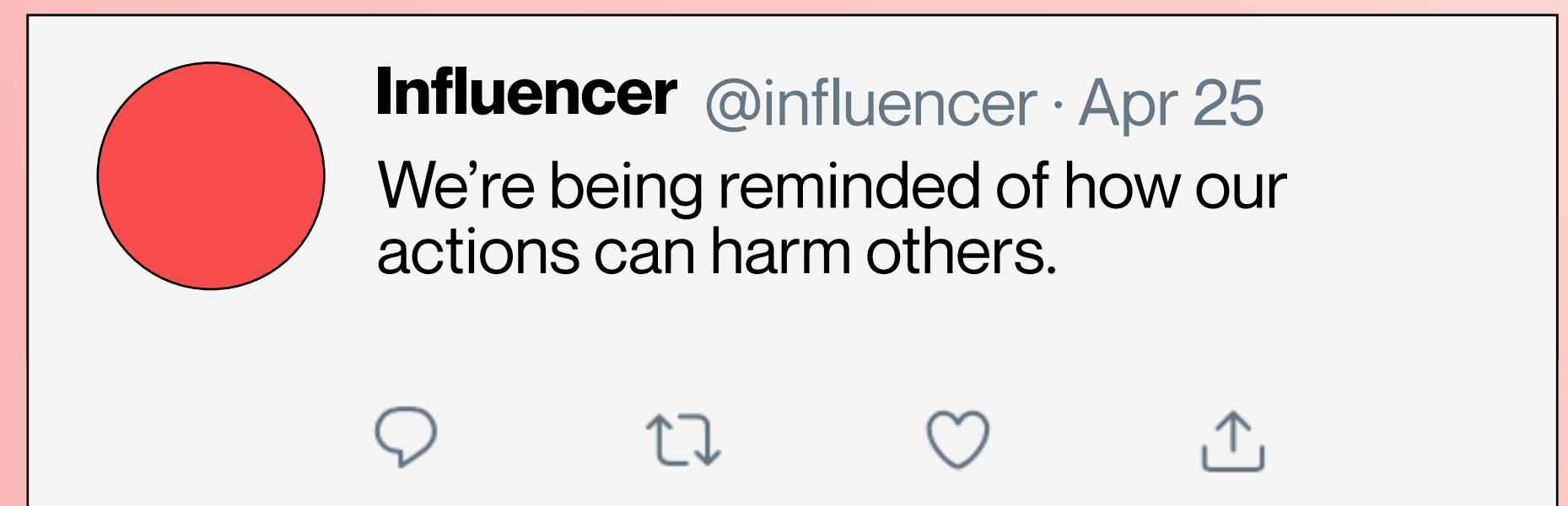
# TIP #23

**Frame interconnection as a strength** - Showcase how we all rely upon each other to stay healthy and safe, rather than blaming interconnection for the spread of the disease.

## TRY THIS



## INSTEAD OF

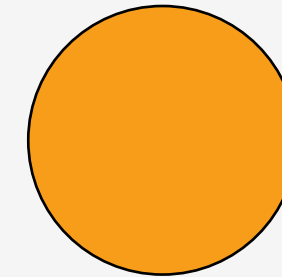




# TIP #24

Avoid patronizing language - Words like “because” and “therefore” can feel pedantic, preachy, and condescending.

## TRY THIS

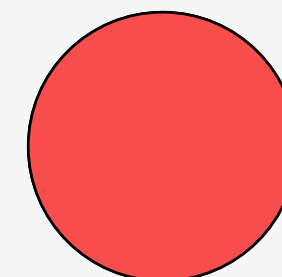


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

My family and friends are doing our best to stay calm and safe. And we know we're not alone. One of the things we're really trying to do is practice physical distancing — we think that might be the biggest help.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

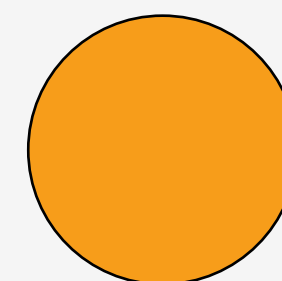
The virus spreads from person to person, therefore you should avoid human contact. If you don't, we'll all get this virus because you didn't stay home.



# TIP #25

Avoid polarized labels in your messaging about health- It is essential for scientists and health providers to be seen as neutral if we want the public to trust them and follow their advice.

## TRY THIS

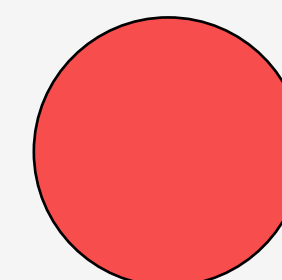


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

The more I hear from medical experts, the more seriously I'm considering using these next months of physical distancing to finally write a book!



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

The more I hear from medical experts, the more they prove that Trump has blood on his hands.

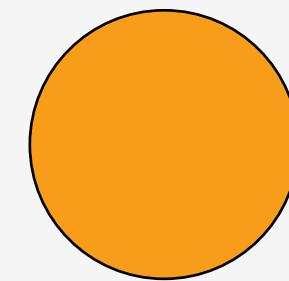


# TIP #26

## Communicate different outcomes

- It is all so interconnected, but some people are more concerned about health outcomes, while others are more concerned about economic outcomes. Communicate both outcomes to maximize resonance.

## TRY THIS

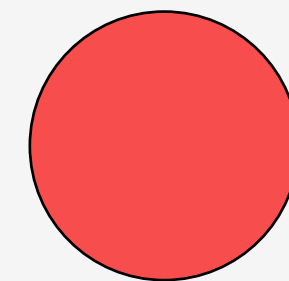


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

I know that it is difficult for people to pay their bills, but how we respond will determine whether we save millions of lives and jobs in the long run.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

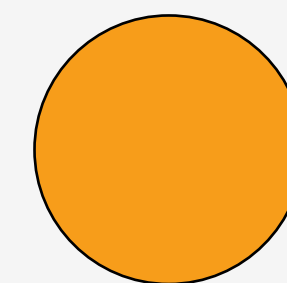
Together we will decide whether we save millions of lives in the long run.



# TIP #27

**Realistic, but calm** - There is already so much stress and anxiety out there. Calmly calibrating expectations decreases the potential for further stress, confusion, anger and a strain in one's relationships with others. Panic creates anxiety and others become viewed as a competitive threat.

## TRY THIS

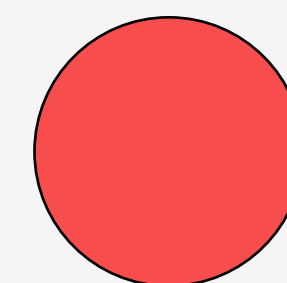


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

I know it seems really scary, but we are all in this together. And if we stay at home and practice social distancing, we can help beat COVID-19 — together.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Experts are saying that we could see smaller epidemics of COVID-19 for years to come. It's a scary time to be alive.





# TIP #28

## Keep the attention on your core

group - Your influence may backfire if you try to convince people in groups that are not widely represented amongst your followers. Even if they follow you, they won't be influenced by those who they feel don't share their group's identity and experience.

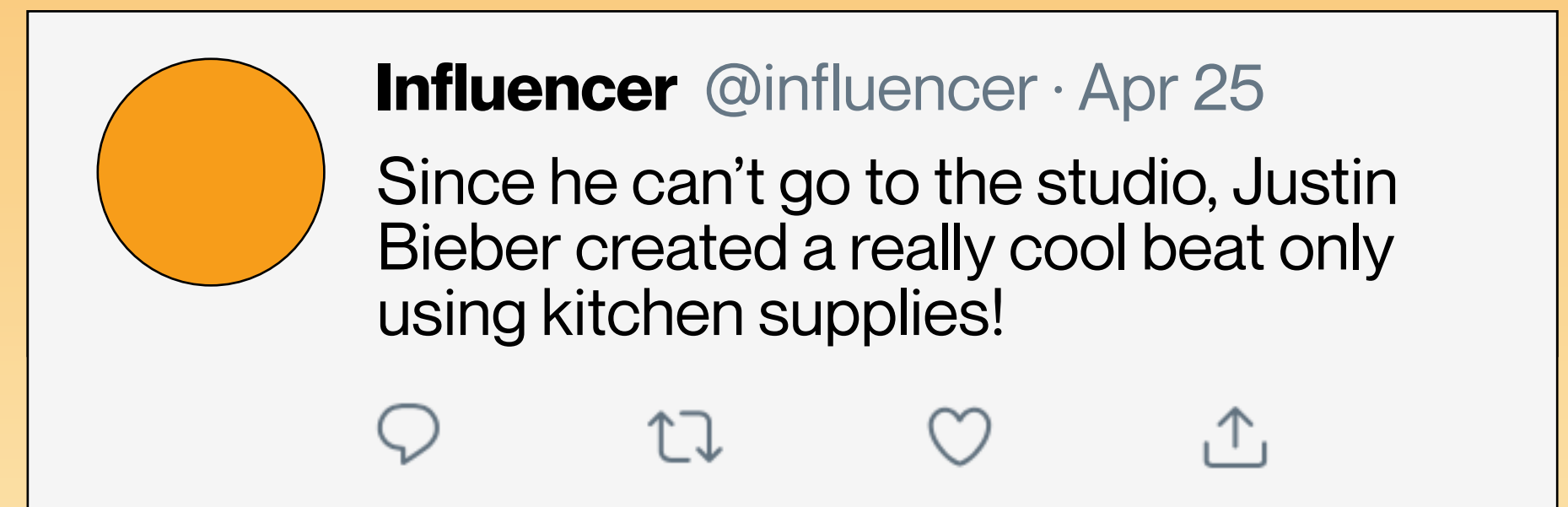
## EXAMPLE

If you have a mostly liberal following, avoid trying to influence your conservative followers. It could backfire (people resist being influenced by those in different groups).

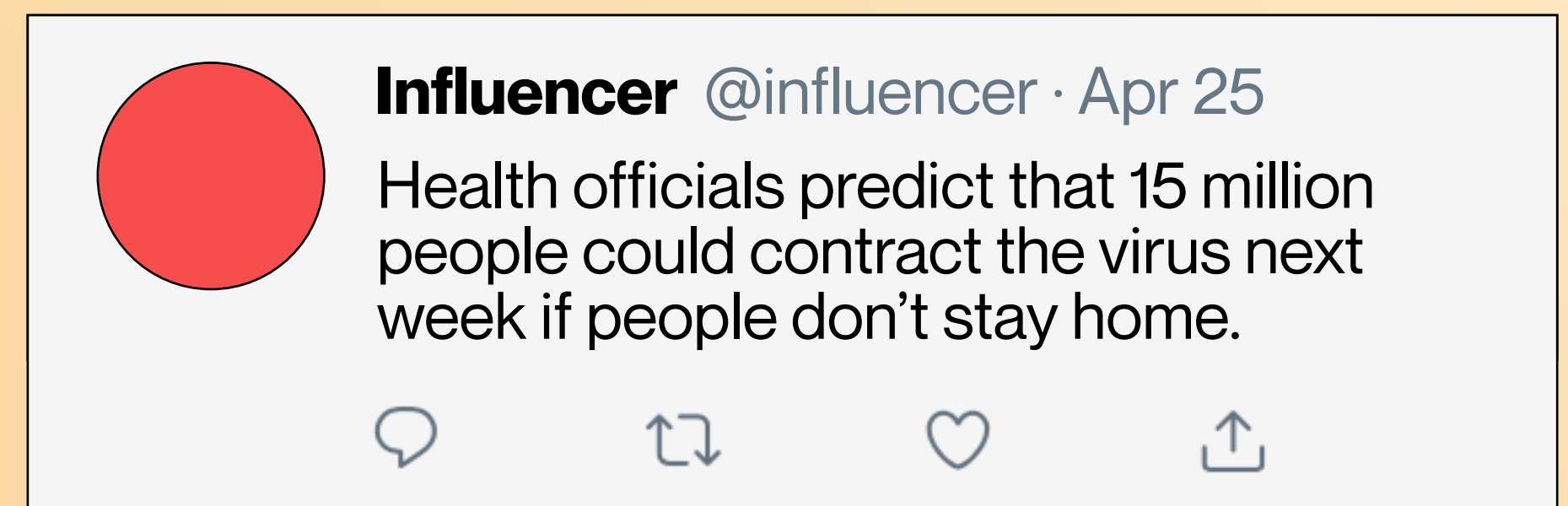
# TIP #29

**Highlight an exemplary leader** - Instead of leading with facts, use specific examples from people your followers admire. For even greater results, show that the action is taken by a person who your follower may not expect.

## TRY THIS



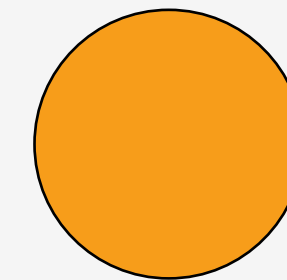
## INSTEAD OF



# TIP #30

**Avoid talking about the government** - Some tend to disengage from advice given by the government. Talking about preventative health behaviors without mentioning the government may make these people more likely to comply.

## TRY THIS

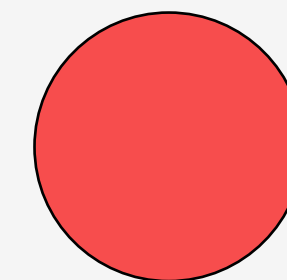


**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

Staying at home might be the best way to keep our loved ones safe from the virus.



## INSTEAD OF



**Influencer** @influencer · Apr 25

The govenor of California has issued a stay-at-home order to keep everyone safe.





# THE QUICK RECAP

Tip #1: Remind people that we're in this together • Tip #2: Cause and Effect messaging • Tip #3: Phrase in the positive • Tip #4: Avoid flaunting privilege • Tip #5: Hedge your claims • Tip #6: Highlight agreement before disagreeing • Tip #7: Normalize compliance • Tip #8: Take caution not to accidentally "otherize" • Tip #9: Reframe power • Tip #10: Focus on local interests • Tip #11: Make success feel attainable • Tip #12: Emphasize our *duty* to others • Tip #13: Focus on new meaning and purpose • Tip #14: Be specific with the desired behavior • Tip #15: Look for the diverse helpers • Tip #16: Underscore agency and choice • Tip #17: Help people understand • Tip #18: Focus on danger to *loved ones* • Tip #19: Focus on reciprocity • Tip #20: Amplify messages from trusted source Keep the attention on your core group • Tip #21: Politely disapprove of unhelpful behavior • Tip #22: Address the real threat • Tip #23: Interconnection as a strength • Tip #24: Avoid patronizing language • Tip #25: Avoid polarized labels • Tip #26: Communicate different outcomes • Tip #27: Be realistic and calm • Tip #28: Keep the attention on your core group • Tip #29: Highlight exemplary leaders • Tip #30: Avoid talking about the government





# THANK YOU!

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