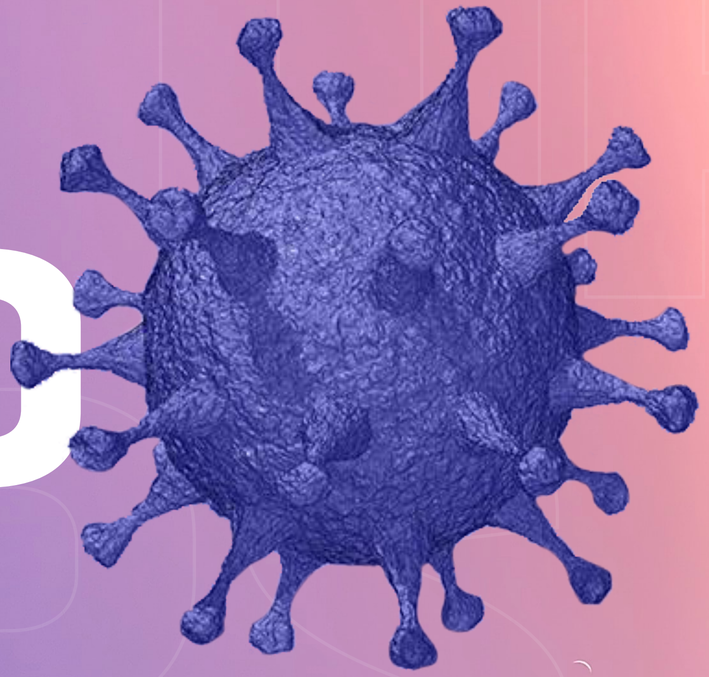
19 TIPS TO MESSAGE COVID-19



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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.

PURPOSE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We need you! You're influential, and can really make a difference on inspiring compliance and the right behaviors in order to bring COVID-19 to a halt. Before you publish your Tweet, take a look at these guidelines to see how it can maximize positive outcomes.

HOW TO

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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.

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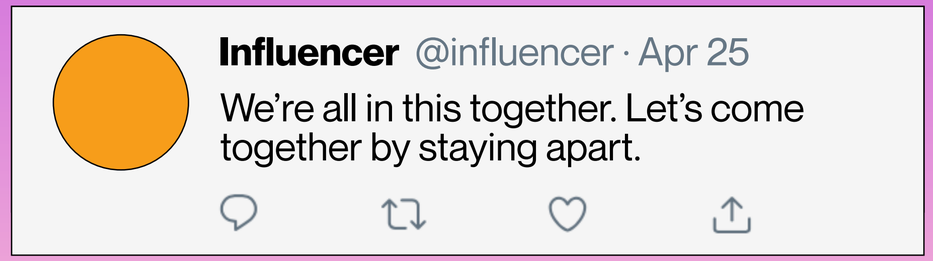

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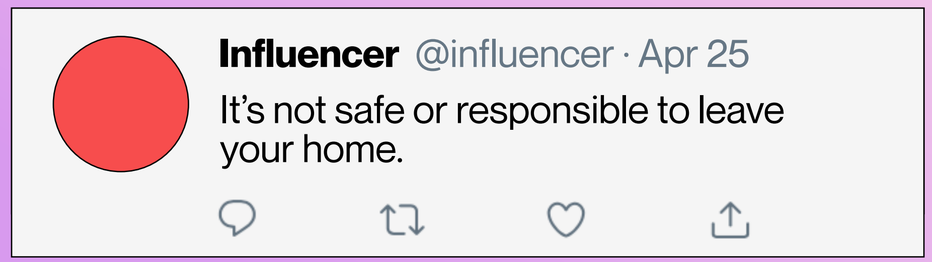

TIP #2

Use cause and effect - Rather than just stating the desired action, make it clear why the desired action is warranted.

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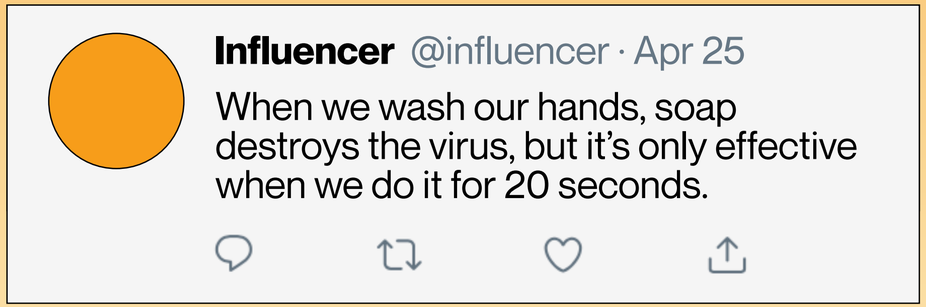

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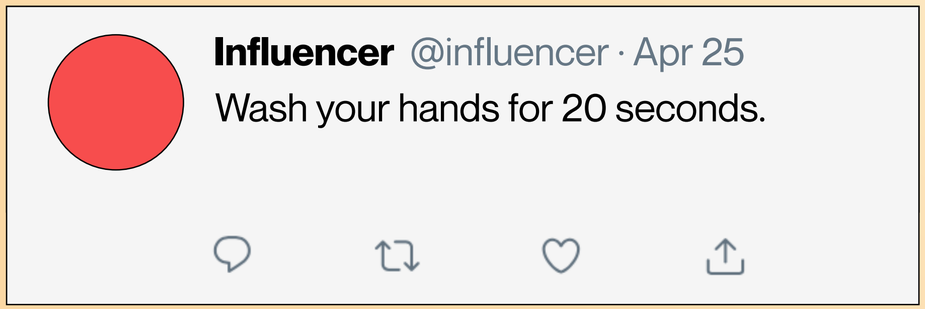

TIP #3

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

Influencer @influencer · Apr 25

To be safe, it’s a good idea to maintain physical distance.

INSTEAD OF

Influencer @influencer · Apr 25

You should not be socializing right now – it’s dangerous.

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.

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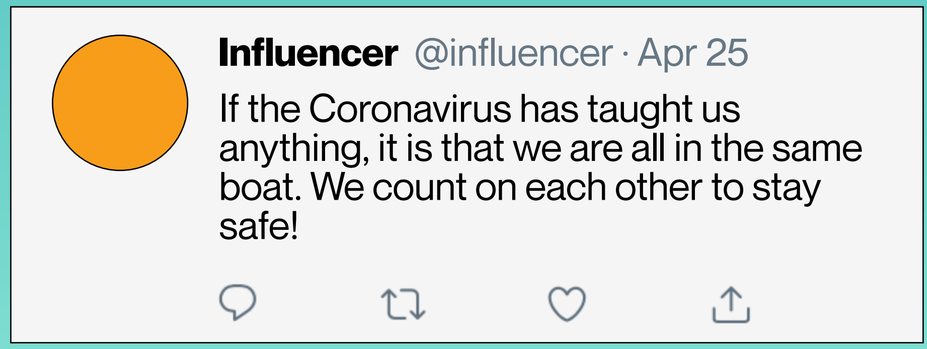

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TIP #5

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

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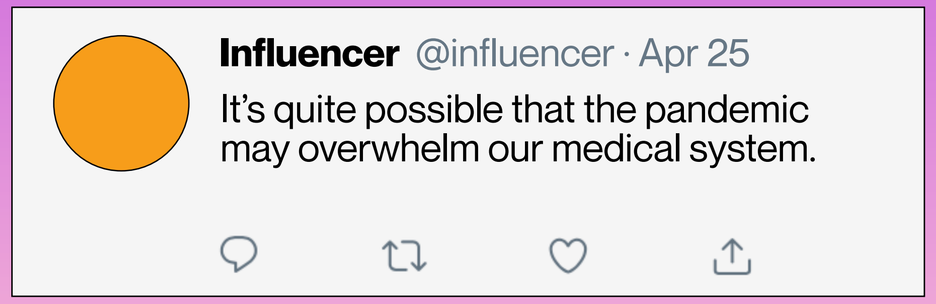

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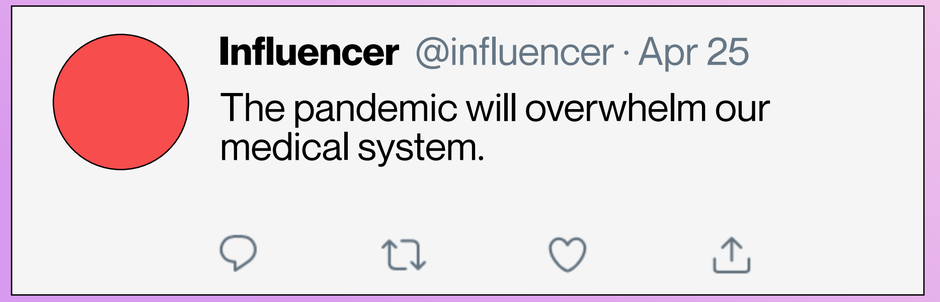

TIP #6

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.

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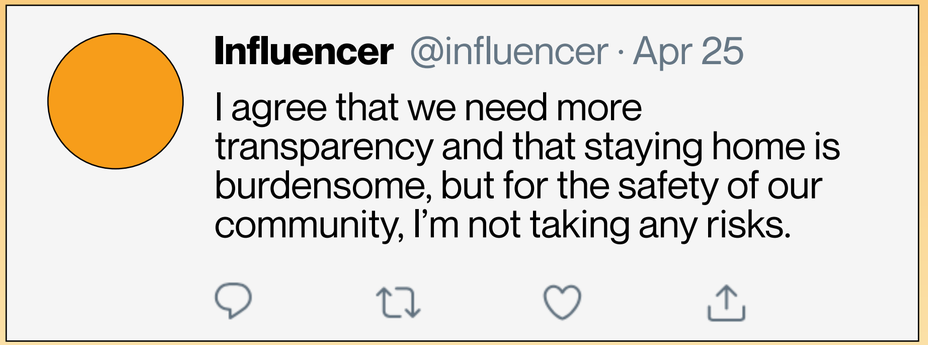

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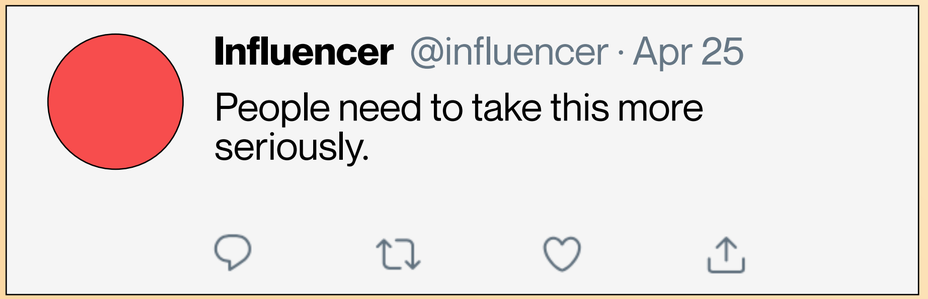

TIP #7

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?).

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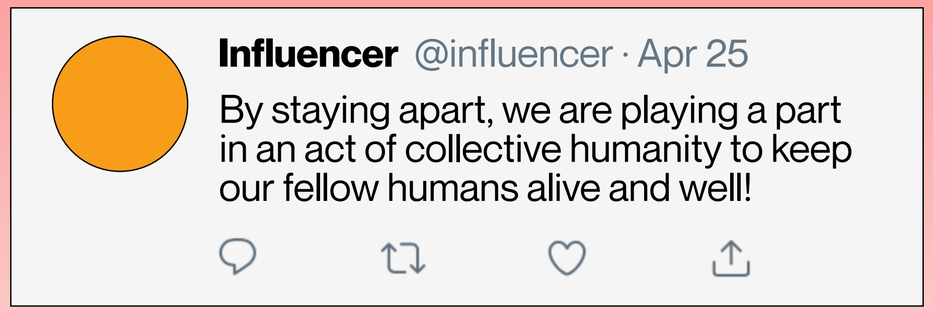

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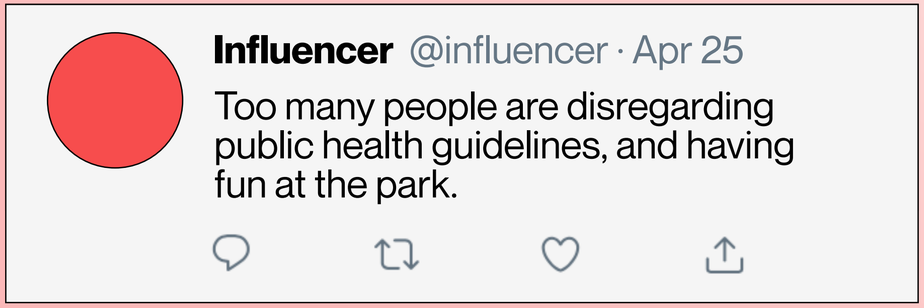

TIP #7 1/2

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.

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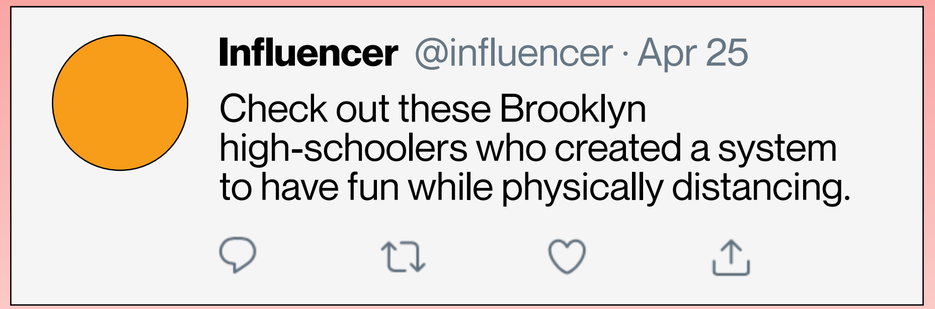

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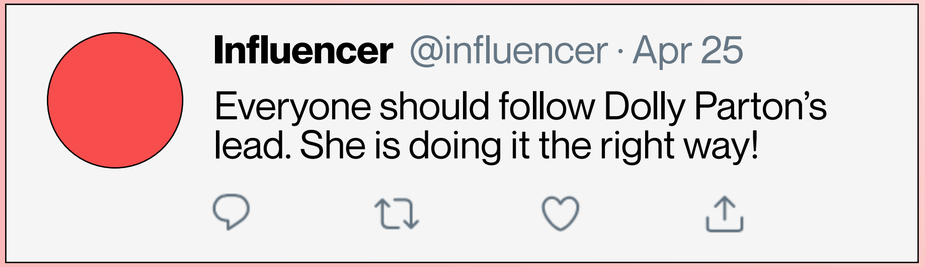

TIP #8

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”.)

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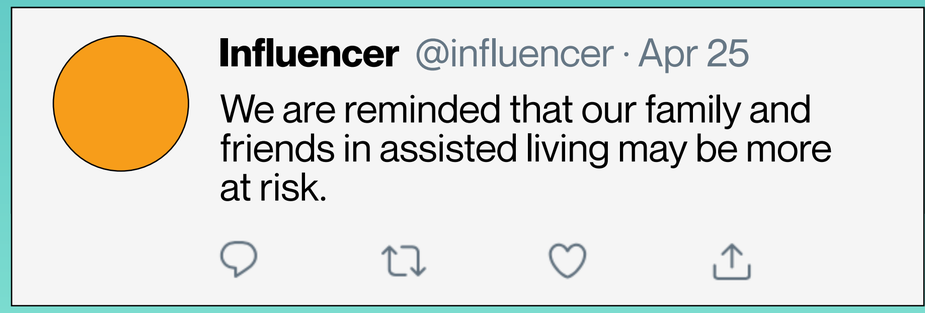

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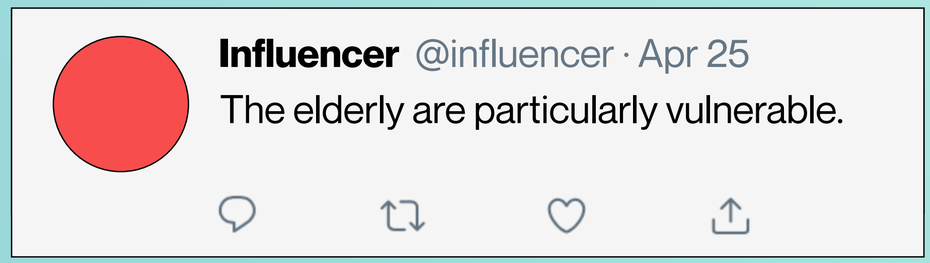

TIP #9

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

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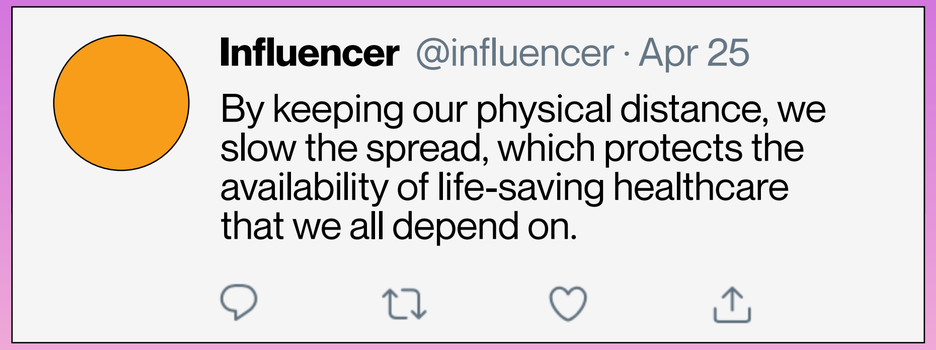

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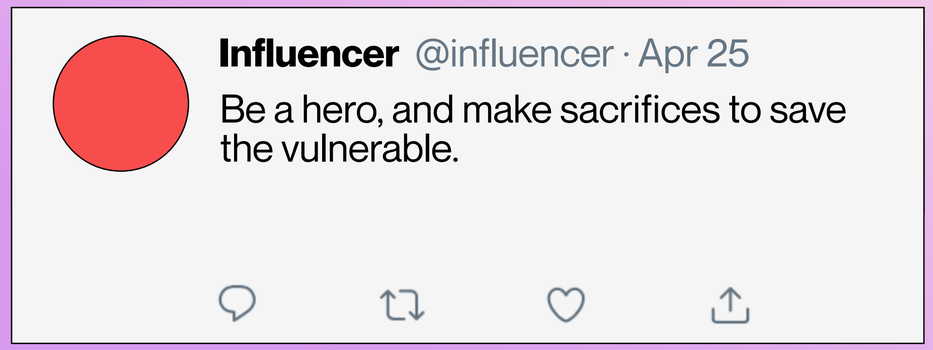

TIP #10

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.

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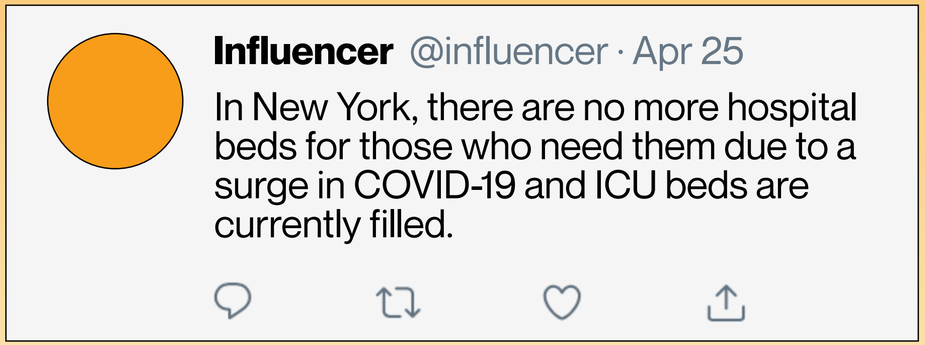

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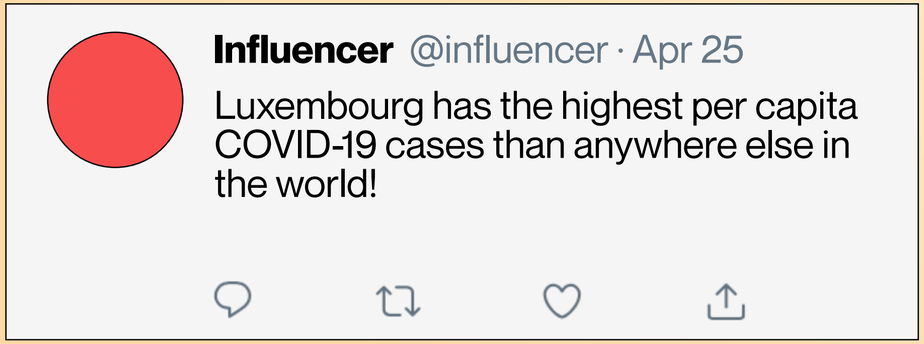

TIP #11

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.

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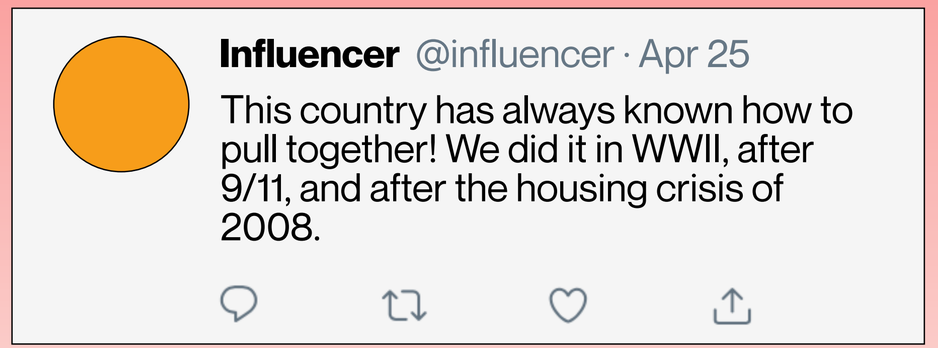

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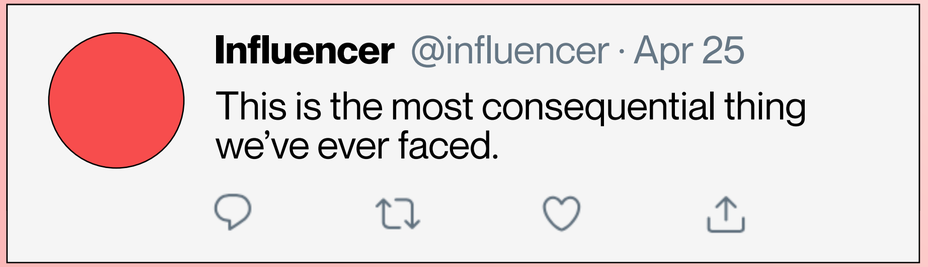

TIP #12

<u>Emphasize our *duty* to others</u> - You are seen as more trustworthy and messages are more effective when they speak to our our <u>duties</u> towards loved ones and group members.

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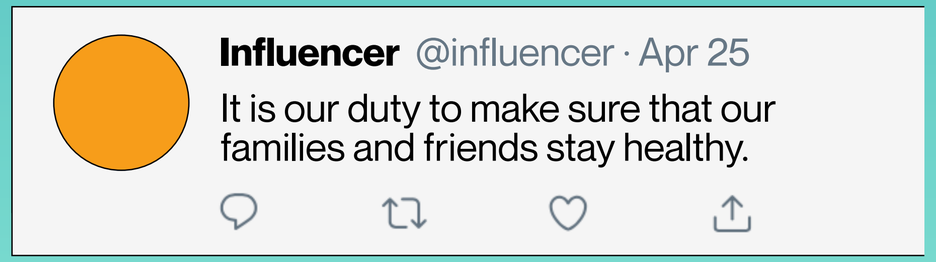

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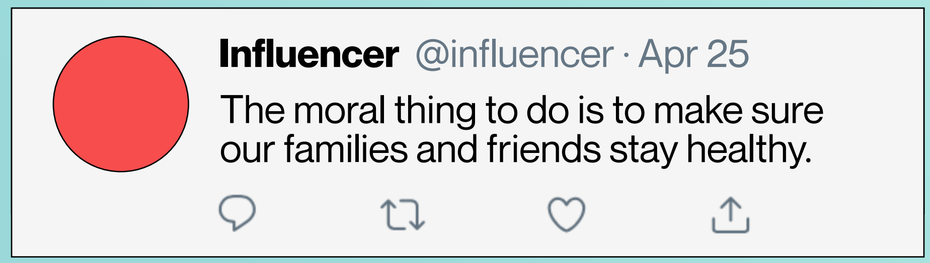

TIP #13

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.

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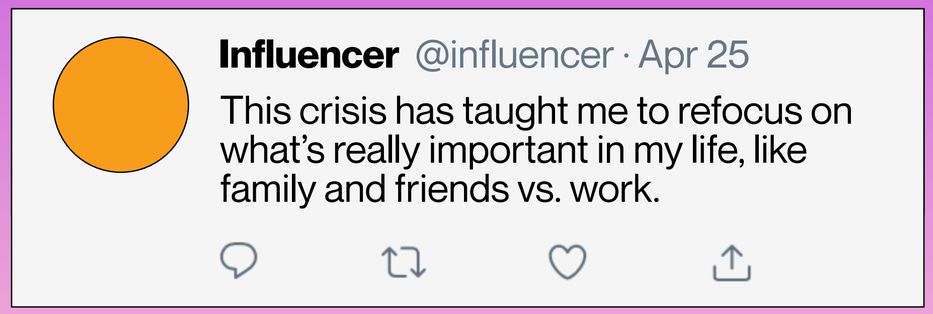

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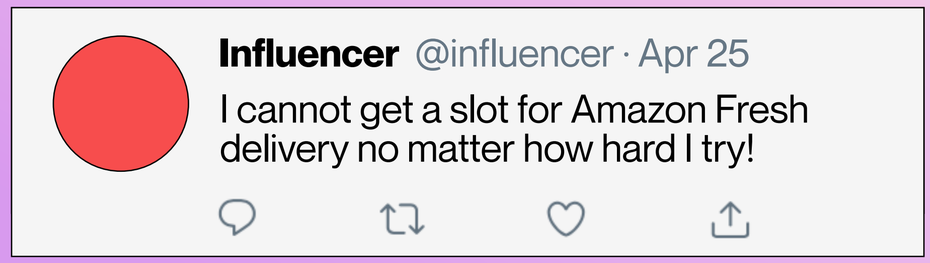

TIP #14

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.

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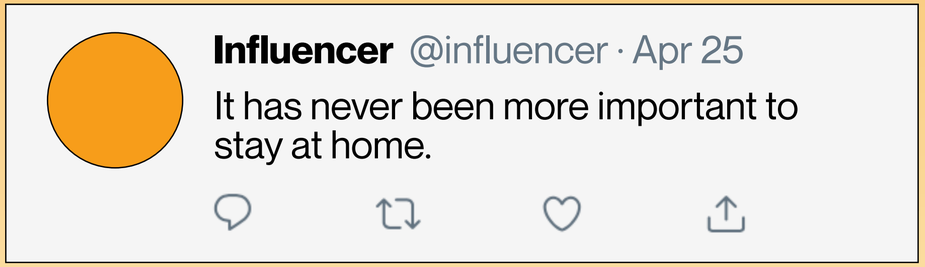

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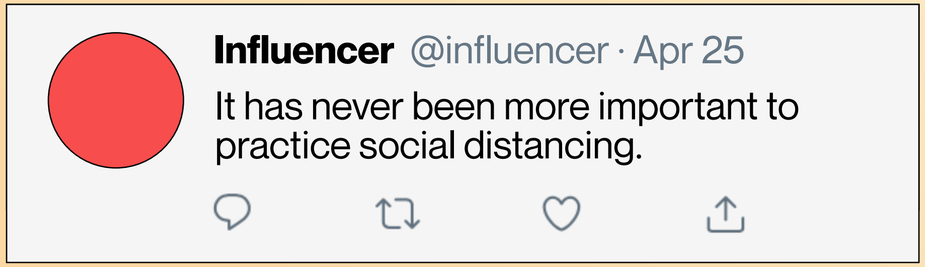

TIP #15

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.

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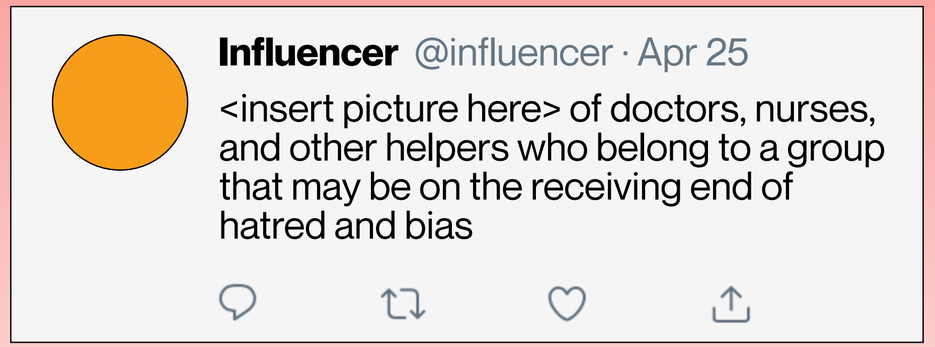

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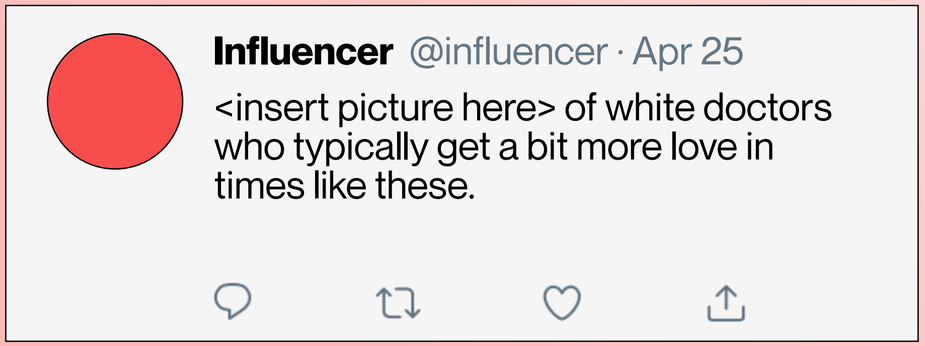

TIP #16

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.

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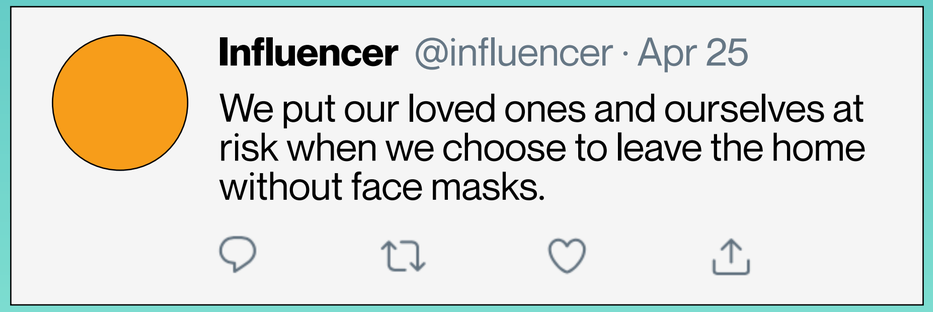

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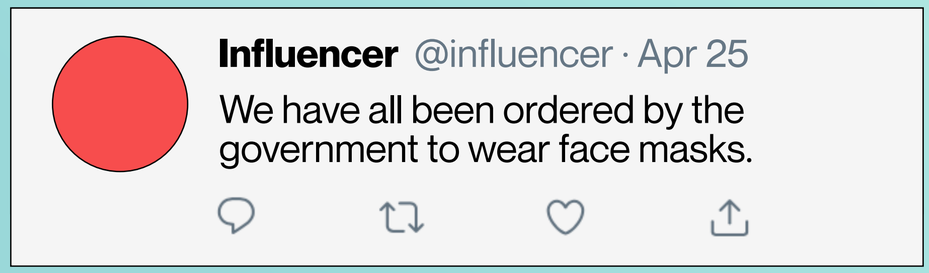

TIP #17

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

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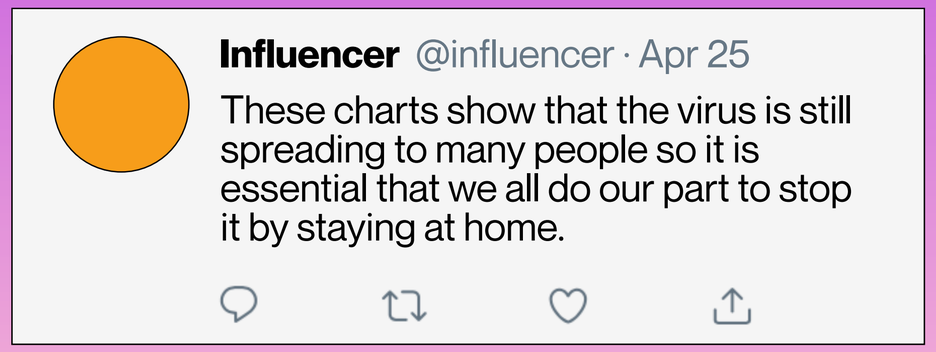

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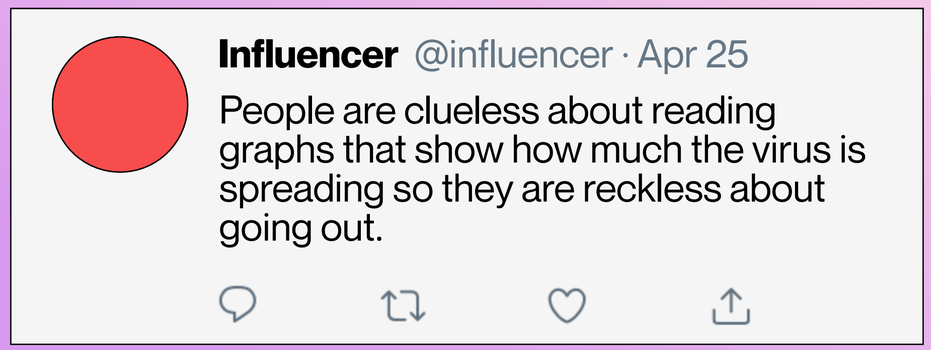

TIP #18

<u>Focus on the danger to loved ones</u> - 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.

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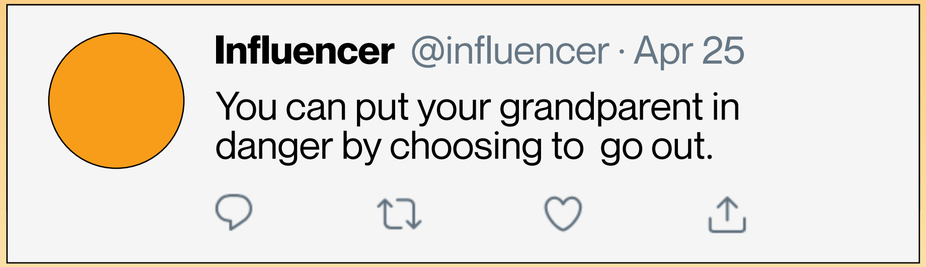

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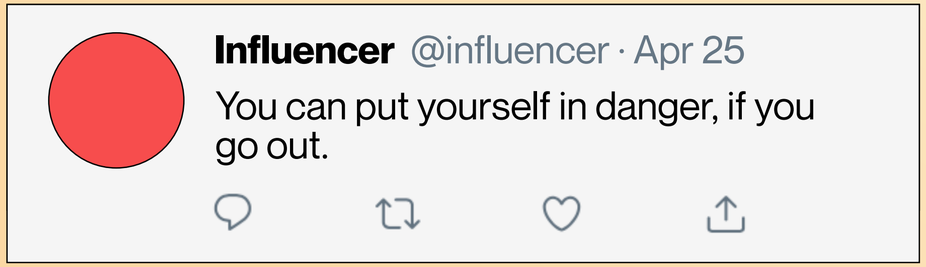

TIP #19

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

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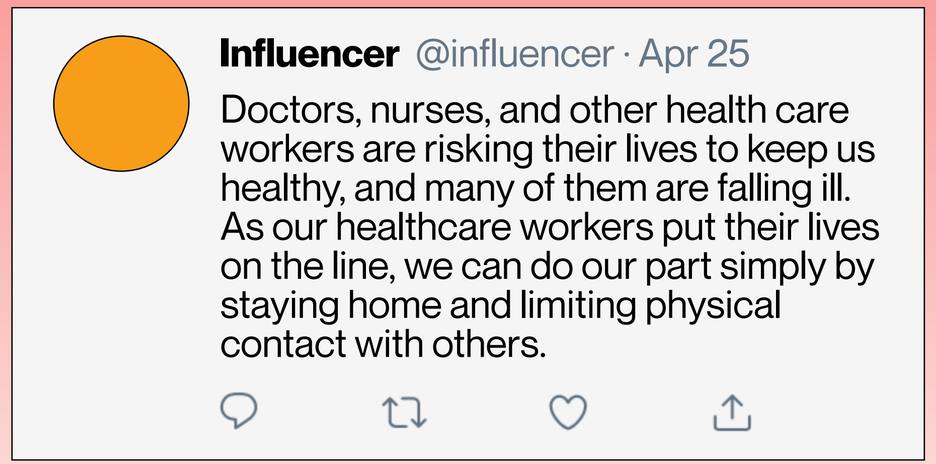

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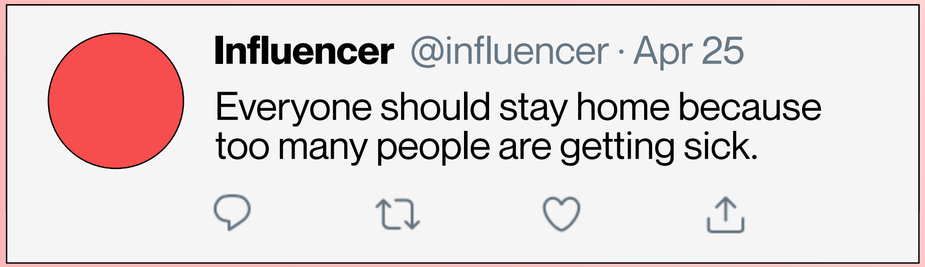

THE QUICK RECAP

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

THANK YOU!

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