My Experience with Antivaxxers and Why I Continue to Advocate for Vaccination
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After a year of harassment, here’s how I deal with Antivaxxers...and where I come out on my vaccination beliefs and advocacy.

I walked out my front door and checked the mailbox. Inside I found a few letters, most of which were addressed to my father. After going back inside and talking to my dad for a bit, I laid the mail on the table and forgot about it for a little while. Later, looking through the pile I found a letter addressed to me with writing and penmanship that looked like it had come from a toddler, and it was from California...weird.

Inside the envelope I found a two-page letter from an “anonymous person.” The writer was clearly upset with my pro-vaccine advocacy, name calling and all. My accuser labeled me “a communist anti-freedom liberal” and challenged me to get fully immunized as my health surely would be irreversibly damaged.

I was really unsettled reading the letter, but more concerned that this person had my address.

I decided to post pictures of the letter on Reddit, which you can find here. But on top of receiving the letter, after sharing the pictures of my pen pal to Reddit, an anonymous Redditor then commented that a bomb should be sent to me next time. I had had enough.

I share this story with you, and could share so many more stories, to demonstrate that pro-science advocates like me are often attacked, torn down, intimidated, and harassed for bringing awareness to immunizations. CNN detailed the struggles of Jill Promoli, who lost her child to the flu, and was attacked for encouraging people to get their flu shot in the hopes of avoiding such a tragedy again. Countless others have been attacked, online especially. Dr. Richard Pan was assaulted by an antivaxxer who threw liquid on him at a senate hearing for a pro vaxx bill, and was the target of numerous death threats.

Stories like these are important to share to demonstrate what people go through in support of immunization. But it’s also important to share that these attackers are a far minority of individuals, the smallest demographic.

Though we hear these stories of online crazy and mean Antivaxxers, most individuals are simply asking questions. Most are not malicious in their intentions and that’s why empathy is important. They seek to understand, yet are faced with massive misinformation campaigns from antivaxx sources.

After receiving bomb threats and letters sent to my home, all on the backs of a full year of harassment and attacks online, I still see the value in empathy so that people might change
their minds. So that people understand that being confused, asking questions, or trying to find the answers, isn’t wrong. And they still deserve respect.

I challenge you to do the same, to build bridges, not walls.