Integrating Behavioral Economics Principles Into Vaccine Recommendations

Thoughtful incorporation of behavioral economics principles into vaccine discussions can help you respond to vaccine-hesitant parents and caregivers.





Status Quo Bias

People choose to *do nothing* or what they have always done. In some cases, people do not hold strong beliefs against vaccination but default to inaction.

- Make vaccine acceptance the default or neutral choice via **presumptive/opt-out** recommendations and **prescheduled appointments.**

Loss Aversion

People perceive *loss* as more significant than gain. People may *avoid risks* even if the benefit outweighs the risk.

- Frame vaccination as **preventing immediate, real risk.**
- "The very rare side effects of the vaccine are much rarer than the impact of the disease that the vaccine will protect you from."

Present Bias

People perceive *immediate* costs and benefits as outweighing future benefits; people often place higher importance on vaccine adverse effects and expenses vs future benefits, such as protection from disease.

- Make benefits feel **immediate and real.**
- "This vaccine will protect you from severe disease now."

Social Forces

Social media can act as an echo chamber. Social comparisons such as *peer pressure* can affect behavior.

- Normalize vaccination as a **community standard.**
- "Most of our patients have been getting the flu vaccine this year."

Availability Bias

People estimate probability, risk, or frequency based on *examples or stories*. This often occurs when people are in the process of making quick decisions.

- Use **short, relatable stories** to anchor risk.
- "I have seen patients hospitalized because of RSV or flu, and some don't get to go home—they have to go a long-term care or rehab facility. I'd like to see you protected."