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## The “backfire effect” aka. belief perseverance

### Description

**Belief perseverance** (also known as **conceptual conservatism**<sup>[1]</sup>) is maintaining a belief despite new information that firmly contradicts it.<sup>[2]</sup> Such beliefs may even be strengthened when others attempt to present evidence **debunking** them, a phenomenon known as the **backfire effect** (compare **boomerang effect**).<sup>[3]</sup> For example, an article in a 2014 article in *The Atlantic*, journalist Cari Romm describes a study involving vaccination hesitancy. In the study, the subjects were concerned of the side effects of **flu shots**, and became **less willing** to receive them after being told that the **vaccination** was entirely safe.<sup>[4]</sup>

There are three kinds of backfire effects: Familiarity Backfire Effect (from making myths more familiar), Overkill Backfire Effect (from providing too many arguments), and Worldview Backfire Effect (from providing evidence that threatens someone’s worldview). According to Cook & Lewandowsky (2011), there are a number of techniques to debunk misinformation. They suggest emphasizing the core facts and not the myth. If you must mention the myth, before you do, provide an explicit warning that the upcoming information is false. Finally, provide an alternative explanation to fill the gaps left by debunking the misinformation.<sup>[5]</sup>

Since **rationality** involves conceptual flexibility,<sup>[6][7]</sup> belief perseverance is consistent with the view that human beings act at times in an irrational manner. Philosopher **F.C.S. Schiller** holds that belief perseverance “deserves to rank among the fundamental ‘laws’ of nature”.<sup>[8]</sup>

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belief\\_perseverance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belief_perseverance)

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## Category

1. General

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