Twitter Thread by Louisa ■■



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Reading a Reddit AMA with a former Q believer and he had a really insightful thing to say: “Conspiracy theory thinking hooks the brain because it feels like critical thinking.”

That seems very true from what I’ve observed. The thread is here if you’re interested: https://t.co/3NsmL0pjHB

I also thought it was interesting what shook him out of it: a post from Q containing obviously false information about the field he worked in, computers. He realized the technobabble made no sense, so what else was wrong?

As for what got him in in the first place? He grew up a fundamentalist Christian and so was primed with stories about how only they knew THE TRUTH about things like evolution, the end times, etc, and the rest of the culture was just full of powerful lies. Perfect breeding ground

If you want to see a really good in-depth exploration of how someone falls down an internet rabbit hole into extremism (not Q, but related to it in that it’s about white supremacy and far right politics), I’d recommend the podcast Rabbit Hole, from Kevin Roose at the NYT

He found a guy who’d gone from an Obama voting vaguely liberal college student to a far right devotee and “race realist” (faux-scientific racism), then back out, all through YouTube. The guy opened his entire YT history to Roose, and they tracked the descent

Now, I don’t recommend these things just for the sake of “having compassion.” I have lots of compassion, maybe too much sometimes, but you can’t just offer sympathy and a cup of tea to people and have these virulent conspiracy theories disappear

I like to learn about this stuff so I can recognize warning signs of someone going down these paths, learn effective counter-messaging, and preferably figure out how to prevent it from happening in the first place

And as someone who’d like to have a kid, and knows that kid will be white, and someone who knows and loves other white kids and is involved in raising them: I do not want to raise a kid who is vulnerable to believing racist claptrap

And while sometimes I feel like “keep them off the internet forever” is the only true solution, I also know it’s not going to happen. So what must happen is a kind of bulletproof education in critical thinking. Which requires studying its failures