

Complicated feelings: my COVID-19 her-story (2020-10-15)

I am a 56-year old woman living alone in a Canadian city. Since the pandemic started, I have been working from home, and except for daily walks and bi-monthly grocery shopping, I seldom go out. I hate wearing a mask, but I always do when I leave my apartment and when entering any indoor space. I know of two people who have died of COVID-19 and numerous who are at risk, so I do what I must to prevent its spread. I count myself lucky: I am healthy, employed, independent, take good care of myself, and have no dependents. As an introvert, I do not mind spending so much time alone. I sometimes see one other person, a woman whose circle is comprised of her husband and sons on weekends only. But I cannot say that I feel entirely safe. I am profoundly affected by the stress and anxiety that we share because of events in the world and those closer to home. Here is one such small but significant event that touched me.

At the end of September, a friend asked if we could go and have a meal together. We reviewed our recent activities and social bubbles, and we both agreed that we were acting responsibly. We met on a warm and windy Saturday afternoon at a quiet outdoor café on a side street with little traffic. We had a lovely time, and it was a great boost to my morale and hers too. We celebrated her birthday and chatted for a few hours about our experiences.

On the Monday morning, I received an email message from her husband that completely crushed my spirit (see the original message below – proper names are redacted). Concerned for my friend, his wife, I chose not to reply or attempt to reassure him. Instead, I wrote to her to apologize for the flack she no doubt received because of our outing, reiterating my recent activities and lack of exposure to COVID-19 for reassurance. But this was news to her. What bothered me most was not only that he took two days to write only to me, but that he assumed that our decision to meet was done without careful consideration. What does that say about his trust in his wife and his opinion of our judgement? And why didn't he check with her? Is this mansplaining? I understand that he is at risk and is feeling particularly anxious about the pandemic, as his wife explained, but why not invite me to offer reassurance. To honour my friend's request, I will never reply to his message. Indeed, to foster peace, I have chosen never to speak of this matter to either of them, and I suspect that she and I will not be meeting again in person anytime soon. I felt threatened and deflated more than angry by his message, and still do. I sincerely hope that he at least felt better after writing to me.

Mon, Sep 28, 6:18 AM

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The health guidelines are very clear, people need to stay 6 feet apart of wear a mask.

I do not know why you and ██████████ thinks you can sit face to face for hours without protection.

I am dealing with enough crap right now, I do not need ██████████ to bring covid home.

Thank you for keeping this in mind in the future.

No need to reply!