

Wearing a Mask Is About Compassion



Wearing a mask has been a point of contention for many people.

But by wearing a mask, I feel I'm being compassionate to others, and by them wearing a mask, I feel they're being compassionate to me.

When I was diagnosed with MS six years ago, I was in the hospital for more than two months. I don't want to go back. I had pulmonary edema, multiple pulmonary embolisms, and I could not clear any secretions. My lungs are still compromised.

I am doing everything in my power to avoid getting COVID19. I do not live in fear of the virus, but I do take it seriously. I wish everyone else did.

I try to listen to science and my doctors. Every 28 days, I get my MS infusion. I heed the public health advice. I stay outside when I'm with people. I socially distance, wear a mask and wash my hands. After all I've been through with my MS, following the public health advice is not a problem for me.

Right now, I only go to doctor's appointments. A couple of family members and friends have come to my house, but we've stayed outside, socially distanced and wore masks.

I know we are all different. Many people have a much more dire situation than me, and conversely, some people just want to get back to "normal." I live with MS. I understand wanting to get back to normal...

Using a wheelchair and not driving already makes me relinquish a lot of my independence. Before COVID-19, I used to take paratransit all the time by myself. Now, my husband drives me because I don't want to risk public transportation. I don't even ride in a car with anyone else because it's such close quarters.

My husband and my dog are my only companions and probably will be for the foreseeable future. I am fortunate to have them.

My house is handicapped accessible, so most family functions are at my home. The winter where I live lasts long, and I still likely won't be able to have anyone in my house safely. So, no holidays at my house, which I know some people wish for, but not me.

I exercise with a trainer, and I used to go to physical therapy. COVID-19 has made me now train via videoconference sessions, and I haven't been to physical therapy. I'm still exercising, but I'm getting no practice walking. I can walk with a walker, but only while wearing a gait belt and someone holding on to the belt to ensure I don't fall. So, social distancing is out. And I need the space to walk, so I need to go to the gym. Again, not an option for me.

I know everyone has a different battle to fight, and I respect that. You never know what battle someone is fighting. Although there are challenges I'm facing, I'm grateful for my blessings.

My risk reward equation might change as we learn more about this virus. But I can tell you, I will wear a mask in public and continue to limit my social engagements.

In the U.S., the virus is not under control. We need to learn to live with it, we're told. Wearing a mask is part of living with it and hopefully getting it under control.

I hope that people think of wearing a mask as an act of compassion for all of us.

Editor's Note: The Society continues to be there for people affected by MS. The recommendations referred below reflect the information available during the time of this blog's publication. For the latest information and resources related to COVID-19, please visit the Society's [Coronavirus Resources Page](#). Find additional resources through our [Ask an MS Expert webinar series](#).