

**From:** [Pajers](#)  
**To:** [Wiesman, John \(DOH\)](#); [Lofy, Kathy H. \(DOH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [DOH.WSBOH](#)  
**Subject:** Are you paying attention to the rising ugliness?  
**Date:** Friday, July 17, 2020 9:47:02 PM

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Dear John, Kathy, and Board Members,

Are you paying attention to the rising ugliness, the escalating irrational anger, the incidence of violence? I beg of you to send out messages of tolerance and kindness as loud as the mask orders because if you don't, it will get fatal. The emotional trauma is already intolerable for many. Those who should not wear masks for medical reasons are wearing them anyway, risking their health, to avoid the hateful stares, the bullying, the growing threat of violence. I am concerned most for those with emotional and psychological issues, victims of violent rape, soldiers with PTSD, for whom a face-covering is like a smothering hand over their face, making them relive their trauma. Many are simply retreating, falling into depression, unable to deal with the ordeal day after day.

It's bad enough that the overwhelming body of science does not support public mask wearing. It's bad enough you are ignoring the existing working treatment protocols rather than finding ways to ensure they are supported and all efforts made to use every resource available to save lives. But to stand by and do nothing while the state erupts into ugly violence driven by irrational fear is unconscionable. I beg of you to send messages of tolerance and kindness to the public regarding those not wearing masks.

Below is an example of what is out there. Did you ever in your life think you would see something like this in print in the U.S? Look at the anger on their faces, the raised fist. Read what the article says is OK.

You and I stand on opposite sides of the vaccine issue, but I always thought we were on the same side of the humane issue. You have the ability to help calm down the people of the state. Please help!

Sincerely,

Bernadette

<https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/ok-yell-strangers-don-t-134608959.html>

# It's OK to Yell at Strangers Who Don't Wear Masks

**Matt Schneiderman**

July 14, 2020, 6:46 AM



Roughly two-thirds of Americans say they [wear masks in public](#). Unfortunately, that still leaves a substantial portion of [potential COVID-19 carriers](#) unmasked. Coming across anyone flouting public health recommendations and putting you, [your family](#), and your community at risk triggers a number of thoughts and feelings. Depending on the situation, your annoyance could range from a mild simmer to an all-out rolling boil. So, what do you do?

First off, your indignation at that Target shopper in front of you in line without so much as a

handkerchief around their neck is warranted. Wearing a mask is crucial. The medical community, including White House health advisor [Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), has said in as many ways as possible that Americans who aren't wearing face masks are increasing the risk of spreading the coronavirus. Even asymptomatic carriers of the virus may be spreading the disease. It's absolutely reckless to expose the elderly and other at-risk groups to airborne coronavirus — the reason for social distancing and wearing face masks in the first place.

But understanding a situation is important. Some people might not be wearing their mask, letting it dangle around the neck for a minute because they were hot or uncomfortable. Some people may have simply spaced out on wearing a mask outside of their home because, honestly, mask-wearing is not yet second nature. Other people, particularly minorities, might not be wearing a mask of any sort in certain areas because covering their faces could be more dangerous than catching COVID-19. And yes, there are some for whom not wearing a mask is a willful act of assholery. These people are unwilling to conform to a new societal norm and refuse to yield what they believe to be their right to breathe “free.”

Of course, there's no way to know exactly which type of non-face mask-wearer you're dealing with. And there are ways to approach a situation delicately before your anger boils over. So, before you [form a posse of fellow shoppers to shame them](#), consider alternatives to confrontation. Start slow, and escalate as needed, following these five steps.

### **The Five Stages of Mask-Wearing Grief**

When you find yourself in a situation with someone who isn't wearing a mask, here's how to gauge your reaction, how to handle the situation empathetically, and when to really let them have it.

#### **Stage 1: Minor Annoyance**

When your anger is at this level, your best option in most scenarios is to let it go. As long as they're not willfully putting anyone else in danger, and as annoying as it may be to have to walk away, your gut is telling you this is not worth a fight. Listen to your gut.

#### **Stage 2: Pretty Annoyed**

You're ticked off, your anger heightened by a justifiable fear for your family and community. Still, the risk of getting COVID-19 from this person is unlikely — and getting close enough to exchange words is a surefire way you can increase your chances of exposure. Get away, if possible.

#### **Stage 3: A Growing Anger**

This is the level where not saying something bears a greater risk than saying something — say,

at a kid's birthday party. Obviously, knowing the person not wearing a face mask, or knowing someone there who does, makes engaging them far less fraught, but it should still be done considerately.

Initiate any conversation with someone not wearing a face mask as just that — a conversation. Instead of instructing them to wear a face mask *or else*, get curious.

“People do not like to be forced to do things, and that’s what we are getting with non-compliance in wearing masks when people feel like they are being pushed to do so,” says [Dr. Alan Chu, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay](#). “Ask the following statements based on [motivational interviewing](#) techniques in order to help people take ownership to make the change you want to see.”

Here are the statements Chu suggests, with their intents:

1. “I’m curious why you are not wearing a mask” (gathering information)
2. “I see your point. What do you think about the research evidence that shows wearing a mask can significantly reduce chance of infection? Are you concerned about your health and your family’s?” (showing empathy, indicating facts and care, prompting thoughts)
3. “What are the costs and benefits for you to wear a mask?” (understanding any perceived barriers and getting them to analyze the fact that there are more benefits than costs)
4. “What would you do after this conversation in order to make this a habit during these times?” (helping them put thoughts into actions and take ownership instead of being enforced to do so)

#### **Stage 4: Are You Effing Kidding Me?!?**

This is when you’re really pissed — you’ve got to say something.

While Chu doesn’t recommend confronting strangers about face mask-wearing in public, he does suggest that a similar conversation could happen in, say, a Walmart checkout line provided it begin with unrelated chit-chat — the weather, a deal on cereal, etc.

“If, after two-to-three back-and-forths, you can tell the person is not aggressive, if they seem friendly and welcoming, you could bring it up with the motivational interview,” Chu says. “But if they’re not interested in a conversation, I wouldn’t mention it.”

#### **Stage 5: Go F\*ck Yourself!**

Here, the person seems to willfully be endangering those around them, your anger is appropriately ballistic. Just as you’d scream at a driver doing 100 MPH in a school zone, you’re going to scream at the person not wearing a face mask when you’re standing in line because you’re in line with your kids and elderly people.

If you've tried the softer approach and hit a wall of willful ignorance or downright anger, get help. If you're in a store, inform customer service — the on-site manager or another employee should enforce the business's rules a la "no shirt, no shoes, no service." As much legal right as the person may have outside the store to flout mask-wearing, inside it's the store's right to refuse them.

If a person is blatantly putting others at risk, you've tried the above tactics, and you're not in a business setting, and want to get a message across, go for it. Let loose a salvo of swear words. Sometimes, you just need to yell.