

A Manifesto

A Sane Person's Guide for COVID Times

- 1** As a pro-masker, I will understand that some people may have genuine breathing problems with a mask. They do not necessarily oppose the mask and they do not secretly hold me in derision for wearing it.
- 2** As a pro-vaxxer, I will understand that some people may have genuine health factors that lead them to view the vaccine risky to their personal health. I should not assume they are not cool with my having had the vaccine.
- 3** As a pro-vaxxer, I will understand that people who oppose the vaccine are guided by their belief system. They have the right to hold those beliefs even if I disagree with those beliefs; I must respect them as independent-minded persons, nonetheless.
- 4** As an anti-masker, I will understand that I am free to not wear a mask when: a. I am alone by myself; b. I am in my own house; and c. when I am with friends and family members in a private residence or in open public spaces. I understand that strangers have the right to keep social distance from the unmasked me.
- 5** I understand that it is the right of a business establishment to set all policies related to how customers should behave inside their premises, as long as any restrictions they impose are allowed by the law of our land. The same law of the land does not condone my harassing other customers who may see those restrictions as serving the public good and therefore honor them.
- 6** Whoever be my opinion leaders that I follow, I will expect them to publicly declare their vaccination status. I respect their argument that it is one's personal matter. But if they choose to opine on vaccine, then it is not their private matter anymore, because if I follow their opinion, it affects my ability to stay healthy and alive. I must also consider that celebrities have privileged access to premium medical services that I may not have.

- 7 When a media celebrity or a politician offers an opinion, I must ask, is there a personal benefit motive for this person to broadcast that opinion. For example, they might try to echo my beliefs just to please me and manipulate me into giving them my “like” and my patronage. I must know that social media influencers do not know me and therefore will not know what is good for me; their main goal is to get a large following by spreading sensational ideology.
- 8 I am not gullible if an anti-vaxxer friend were trying to persuade me. I am not gullible if a pro-vaxxer friend were trying to persuade me. Likewise, when a media celebrity with no subject matter expertise and having a personal agenda expresses an opinion, I should not be gullible.
- 9 Whether I am a pro- or anti-masker and whether I am a pro- or anti-vaxxer, rather than believing just what I hear or read on social media, I will try to get the facts behind the effects of masking and the effects of vaccine; I will try to learn from independent expert sources that have no ambition of gaining a large number of followers. I should also try to learn for myself the trends in infections, overcrowding in hospitals, and COVID-deaths, and I must try to do my part in mitigating these sufferings in others by not aiding the pandemic to spread.
- 10 Before the pandemic came, we got along well. Now, we are doing what we can to overcome the pandemic. COVID’s toll on our fellow citizens is sad enough. We will not allow the pandemic to also ruin our relations, pitting us on opposite sides. No matter which side of the lockdown, masking, and vaccine we find ourselves, we shall not harbor disrespect and ill will toward the other side. We want to guard, naturally, our right to be treated with dignity. With equal zeal, we will guard the right of the opposite side to be treated with dignity. No matter which leader we follow, this is the God’s *Golden Rule!*