

My name is [REDACTED] I am representing myself. I'm not representing any organisations. I'm just a guy who works and does things and wants to keep himself and the community safe and healthy. I won't be using references or sources, just my own experience.

I still mask wherever possible, take care, get vaccinated, and so far I have not caught COVID. I also haven't gotten sick with anything else (flus, colds, etc.) nearly as often either. Masking constantly has taken an adjustment, but I find the safety it brings me to be more than worth it, and it makes me feel like I have agency over my own safety. Same with the vaccines, and other COVID safe measures.

COVID has fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. I am much more wary of air quality; I measure CO2 levels with an aramet 4, I am mindful of humidity and if there's any windows or airflow. And what I have found is that we as a society are lacking. Lacking in our willingness to sacrifice in order to keep people safe, lacking in our awareness and education around illness and how dangerous it can be, lacking in how we treat people versus profit and business.

We failed with letting up quarantine, we failed by "letting it rip", we failed by treating it as a cold and unleashing pandora's box without thinking through the implications. And it is pandora's box. I would wager that the cost of all the lost productivity from illness and long COVID and all the other aftereffects that we are yet to fully understand will greatly outweigh any cost of a 2 week lockdown. Not only in profit, but in quality of life and deaths. COVID was the third-leading cause of death last year, behind heart disease, and dementia. And COVID will continue to kill. It will continue to disable and hurt and rip apart families, continue to spread.

COVID has changed the way we look at the world. It has killed so many people. 7 million people. 0.1% of the world's total population. And it's just become accepted, a part of life that this might happen, which I find jarring. I was raised with the understanding that illness is something we could defeat. We defeated smallpox, measles, polio, plagues that have wreaked havoc on our population and we stopped them. With quarantine and sanitation and protection and vaccination we eliminated major threats to our lives. And then we stopped. We will be remembered in the same way we now remember those surgeons who did not believe in washing their hands.

There was a time where I had hope that we could defeat COVID. Where there would be a clean air revolution, that the vaccines would manage to keep it at bay (instead of falling behind as variants mutate exponentially), that we could go back to the way life was before.

But there is no "normal". Normal and the status quo are a construction of the time, a false belief that the world will always be the way it was in your youth. The only thing guaranteed in life is change, and our delusion that we can ever return to what once was is the reason we are in the world we have today; different, deadlier, that some people pretend is the same.

We have become numb to death. This is not acceptance of death, but its callous disregard. It is the disrespect of the sanctity of life.

The story of pandora's box includes the release of hope. One bright light amongst the darkness. And to me, that is the lessons we could have learned, and that we could still learn.

There was talk about a "clean air revolution", to have air purifiers commonplace and redesign architecture to incorporate safe airflow. That is one of the recommendations I would put forward. The other recommendations would be clearer public health information, harsher penalties for spreading misinformation especially in regards to health including (or especially) politicians, mandatory masking/other safety precautions in high risk areas like hospitals (within reason – for

example, not masking for dental work), and for government policy to prioritise public health over PR and business.

Some more ideal/pie in the sky ideas I would like would be for public health to not be a political football and instead become a bipartisan issue where improving the public's quality of life is the priority, reduce misinformation on platforms and media and the sensationalism that enables it, and a world where people are more conscientious of their health and others. I would also like a world where people don't get harassed for wearing a mask in public, which has happened to me a few times, and when anti-asian racism (or racism in general) isn't a distressingly common part of the conversation and people's conceptions of disease.

If you take anything away from this ramble, please understand that COVID is ongoing, it is serious, and that actions must be taken to stop it happening again and to reduce the impact it has and will continue to have.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature.