

How Did We Become So Broken?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Many of us were anticipating an announcement this past Monday, although exactly what each of us were anticipating may have actually been quite different.

Some, distressingly few actually, were probably hoping for some type of mask mandate to be put back in place ? at the very least in our schools ? where children sit, for a large number of hours each day in a confined environment and subject to all manner of contagions.

Others no doubt were hoping to have their ?freedom? maintained, allowing them to continue moving about the world, ?without a care in the world,? for anyone other than themselves. It appears the latter group won this round. How did we become so broken that we care not a whit for a six-month-old baby struggling to breathe or about a school-aged child who is now sedated, intubated and fighting for their life?

I am not oblivious to the fact that masks have long since been forgotten. As I venture out and about I wear one regularly but I am very much a lone wolf. That's fine, I don't care because I am doing what is right for me ? and in my opinion ? what is right for society. I understand that you may have a different opinion. I often talk about the importance of dialogue and recently asked why we have to be ?this OR that,? instead of trying to find a way to be ?this AND that.? So today, I'm asking an honest question that isn't an either/or mask scenario at all but rather this: Can we all agree that children are our most vulnerable citizens who look to us for guidance in all things, and that as parents ? and indeed a village ? we are charged with their care and keeping? If so, could we perhaps also agree that caring for them means protecting them from illness? Surely the health and welfare of our next generation is of equal value to all of us, whether we are parents or not? Surely everyone, somewhere along the line has a favourite niece or nephew? Their best friend's newborn whom they think is the cutest baby? Your cousin's kid who at 8 or 9 years of age worships you and tries to emulate your every move because they think you are cool? Have we become so broken as a society that even for their sake we will not, ever, under any circumstances wear a mask? If we have ? why? How? Please explain to me, without using swear words or the term ?face diaper? (because just, ewww) why on earth we can't wear a mask when we know we are sick, if for no other reason than to protect a child from dying?

For the Covid deniers, I freely acknowledge I am NOT just talking about Covid. No doubt you have heard the words ?triple threat? uttered in the last several weeks. It isn't just Covid taking our kids off to the hospital, it is the flu and respiratory RSVs, and Covid. So, this is nothing to do with your opposition to a Covid vaccination ? it is about coughing and sneezing and spreading germs period. Germs, that with the help of a simple mask, might not spread as far, as quickly, or with such devastating consequences as those we are seeing right now.

Children's health is suffering because we have zero access to medicines to control fever and pain creating situations where their health deteriorates faster and with more severe consequences. What tools we do have available (masks, vaccines, stay at home if you have Covid) have become nothing more than flashpoints in a war of words no one will ever win.

Meanwhile, casualties are mounting.

Children's ICUs (PICU - Pediatric Intensive Care Units) aren't just full, they are significantly over capacity. In some instances, they have double the children they can properly care for. They are shipping teens and pre-teens to adult facilities who aren't properly equipped to handle them and who are already struggling themselves.

We don't have many tools left in the toolbox to support our kids but masking is one of them. Our Chief Medical Officer of Health is now ?strongly recommending? masks in all indoor settings ?including in schools and childcare settings? and stresses that ?Ontarians need to get back to using all the layers of protection that have proven to work over the course of the pandemic.? We know masking

reduces transmission. We know it is a non-invasive opportunity to protect ourselves and those around us. Masking isn't asking you to 'take the jab,' or inject something into your body that you fundamentally disagree with. It's simply a mask. It's like adding a layer of clothing in winter (like a hat or a parka) to protect you from the cold, or visiting the dentist to have preventative oral health care so you won't get a cavity. It's just a damn mask.

I'm asking ? why can't we all agree to have 'this AND that'? Let's agree to disagree on a vaccine but in return, agree to work together to minimize exposure for our most vulnerable citizens by wearing a mask. It's called a compromise. If you don't want to be vaccinated, so be it but do you think you could just slap a mask on your face while you do your groceries? Could you maybe hold off on seeing the latest movie release until you've stopped coughing and sneezing? I've spent far too much time at Sick Kids in my life. Walking the halls with your child while they receive treatments, miss out on holidays or swallow their fears as they are strapped onto a board and slid in and out of an enormous and frighteningly loud MRI machine is no parent's dream when they cradle their child in their arms. I can't imagine doing all of that while ALSO watching them fight for every breath. Is that what you want for your niece, your best friend's baby or your own child ? all because you can't be bothered to wear a mask? Please tell me we aren't that broken.