A Telling Moment

I understand the science behind my recent COVID-19 vaccination. But, subconsciously, I'm feeling safer than I probably should right now.

March 18, 2021 By Shawn Decker

Picture it: it's eight days after my Johnson & Johnson vaccination. I walk into a coffee shop on St. Patrick's Day. My friend who works there is wearing a festive green hat. Irish folk music plays in the background. As I notice how extra covered up my friend is, with the brim of his hat down, and his mask covering his face right up to the bottom of his eyes, I realize...

"Oh!"

My face was flapping in the wind. Holding my breath, I returned to my car to retrieve my mask.

The coffee shop is the only place I've set foot in since the pandemic started, aside from the rare, late night empty grocery store jaunt with Gwenn. Still, I've faithfully worn a mask every single time I've exited my car to enter a building. But since I got the vaccination, subconsciously, I've stepped out of the car only to realize that I'm unmasked. Saint Patrick's Day was the only time I made it in without noticing my mistake. Maybe I was feeling lucky?

Of course, I know intellectually that it's going to be a few more weeks before the vaccine reaches it's full efficacy. And even then, I'll still wear my mask to the coffee shop for those ever-so-brief visits, because it's apparent that a lot of folks aren't going to get vaccinated. Thankfully, my parents have turned a corner on their thinking. My dad being inspired by Joe Biden's speech, and my mom inspired by me getting the vaccine and talking it up a little.

I've been insulated more than most during this pandemic. But I can remember the first time Gwenn and I masked up and went to one of our favorite haunts to get caffeinated. Even though we felt it was safe, there was still some fear in the air. I think some of the people who are nervous about being vaccinated aren't stubbornly anti-science; they wrestle with that same dilemma we had when we left our house for the first time to go for a non-essential essential item. It's tough when your brain and the pit of your stomach are at odds, and anyone with any life experience knows that neither the brain, stomach or heart have an unblemished record.

Was I slightly embarrassed by my Saint Patrick's Day faux pas? Yes. But I still managed a joke that made my friends behind the counter laugh. When I said that I was sorry that my face was flapping in the wind before, Gwenn said that phrase is usually reserved for someone's privates. Which prompted me to say, "My crotch is the least deadly part of my body these days."

With all of the losses this pandemic has wrought on the world, I have to believe that this year will be better than last year. That whatever mutations of the virus will be less deadly than it's predecessor. That people will be more willing to protect themselves and others. With footage of Spring Breakers flooding my socials, that last bit is probably the hardest hurdle of hope to overcome...

All I can really do is protect myself. Make sure Gwenn is safe. It's like the HIV campaign, "HIV Stops With Me". If everyone had that attitude about COVID-19, we'd be in a much better place. But, we are where we are, and we can't live in an idealized version of what we hope the future holds... subconsciously or otherwise.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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