

Dodge Ball
By Beverley H. Johns
Illinois

I never liked dodge ball and would try to get as far away from the ball as I could. After all, who wants to get hit? I would run in the opposite direction when I saw the ball coming. The pandemic has evoked many feelings. For me, it reminds me of that dreaded game.

As an adult, I vowed to never participate in that competition, but now I feel like I am playing dodge ball much of the time. The only difference now is that the balls are people who refuse to wear a mask and who refuse to watch the markers on the floor to socially distance. If I go to the pharmacy to get a vaccine, I dodge mask-less women who rush by with no awareness that they are getting too close. They want to get their prescription filled. I dodge men who are standing in line to get the vaccine sans mask and oblivious to the fact that there are markers on the floor. When I go to check out, I encounter men and women who are invading other people's space.

I love to go outside and walk, but I wear my mask. Even with two shots, the booster, and flu shot, I am protecting my husband who has little or no immunity and because of a rare blood cancer has been told if he were to get the virus there is a 70% chance he would not survive. When I walk, I am once again faced with playing a game of dodge people. I look ahead to see who is coming down the path and whether they are wearing a mask. An informal poll shows me that only 10% of the people I encounter wear one. I look for isolated paths, I try different times of the day to walk, I do all that I can to have a safe walk.

In the early days of the pandemic, more people wore masks because they knew they were not protected, then they were all grateful when the vaccines became accessible. However, the vaccines have given a false sense of comfort. People think that because they have been vaccinated, they are safe.

What some people don't understand is that there are individuals who are like my husband and Colin Powell; vaccines don't work or have reduced effectiveness. When we wear our mask, we are thinking of those individuals. We are also thinking of the individuals who may have a relative who is immune compromised. We are putting our own needs aside showing respect for other human beings who need to be protected.

Let's not expect our fellow citizens to have to play a continual uncomfortable game of dodge ball.