

'Stay Home, Stay Safe': The Clarion Call of Head-in-the-Sand Hypocrites



By Alex Berezow, PhD — December 4, 2020

Those who favor indefinite lockdowns believe they have the moral high ground. They do not. In reality, they callously turn a blind eye to the economic and social devastation that their policy is causing.



Credit: Charles J Sharp / Wikipedia [1]

"Stay home, stay safe" are currently the four (well, technically three) most obnoxious words in the English language.

While this trite platitude might be clever enough for a bumper sticker, it makes for terrible policy. Yet, it has been implemented throughout much of the world, including in my state of Washington, where the Governor [literally canceled Thanksgiving](#) [2]. [Christmas is probably next](#) [3].

What makes "stay home, stay safe" so infuriating? At least three reasons.

(1) Rules are for thee, but not for me. As is so often the case, the people who make the rules don't actually follow them. California Governor Gavin Newsom -- and a day later, [San Francisco Mayor London Breed](#) [4] -- went out to a fancy dinner with friends. Other California politicians went on a [junket to Hawaii](#) [5]. Of course, hypocrites don't just live in California. Many other elected leaders across the country have been [caught blowing off their own advice](#) [6]. It's difficult to take a public health message seriously when the messenger clearly doesn't believe it. Good leaders lead by example.

(2) "Stay home, stay safe" isn't even true. Household transmission of COVID is [a lot higher than originally thought](#) [7], and in some places, nearly half of new COVID cases are due to [household members infecting each other](#) [8]. If "stay home, stay safe" has dubious benefits in the short-term, it is downright dangerous in the long-term. According to an [article](#) [9] published on the Psychiatry & Behavioral Health Learning Network:

"[T]he American Mental Health Counselors Association estimated that 41% of Americans are experiencing a mental illness, such as general anxiety disorder or major depressive disorder, compared to just 8.2% of adults who had symptoms of anxiety disorder and 6.6% with symptoms of depressive disorder in 2019.

*Moreover, **by the end of the year, 103 million U.S. adults are projected to have a mental health or behavioral health condition, which includes substance use disorder, compared to 75 million prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.**" [Emphasis added]*

After a long trend downward, [suicides have spiked in Japan](#) [10], particularly among women. [Delays in diagnosis](#) [11] due to COVID might increase the number of people who die from cancer. For these and other reasons, some researchers have suggested that the [lockdown may be costing more lives \(as measured in life-years\) than it's saving](#) [12].

(3) Travel restrictions have kept families and loved ones apart. This isn't just about missing Thanksgiving or Christmas. [Binational couples have been separated for months](#) [13] thanks to harsh travel restrictions. Pregnant women have been forced to give birth [without their husbands or partners](#) [14]. That's just cruel, plain and simple.

The Pious Lectures Are Getting Old

ACSH supports thorough science and evidence-based policies that acknowledge our humanity. Unfortunately, anyone who dares point out the obvious -- that the lockdown is hurting and even killing an awful lot of people -- is immediately greeted with, "Do you want more people to die?" This dishonest question (which is basically the epidemiological equivalent of, "When will you stop beating your wife?") is predicated on a head-in-the-sand attitude that pretends there are few economic, social, or health consequences to an extended lockdown. It also prevents an actual debate on whether COVID should be the obsessive focus of politicians and public health officials to the exclusion of all other diseases and health threats.

So, maybe it's time to turn the question back on the questioner: Do you want an additional 28 million Americans to develop mental illness? Do you want more people to commit suicide? Do you want more people to die of cancer? Do you want to rip families apart?

For those who favor yet more indefinite lockdowns, should we assume the answer to those questions is yes?

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/12/04/stay-home-stay-safe-clarion-call-head-sand-hypocrites-15195>

Links

[1]

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_ostrich#/media/File:Common_ostrich_\(Struthio_camelus_australis\)_male_running.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_ostrich#/media/File:Common_ostrich_(Struthio_camelus_australis)_male_running.jpg)

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/11/16/how-washington-governor-jay-inslee-stole-thanksgiving-christmas-next-15157>

[3] <https://www.kuow.org/stories/covid-19-updates-for-the-northwest/>

[4] <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/12/01/mayor-london-breed-french-laundry-dinner-scrutiny-covid-19-dining-gatherings/>

[5] <https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2020/11/17/aloha-several-california-lawmakers-emerge-as-apparent-attendees-of-maui-excursion-1336713>

[6] <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/elected-officials-criticized-covid-19-advice/story?id=74486861>

[7] <https://www.livescience.com/covid-19-household-spread.html>

[8] <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/most-covid-19-cases-come-from-household-transmission-washington-county/283-9517b117-cd39-42dc-95c6-641f8a6bf415>

[9] <https://www.psychcongress.com/article/rates-anxiety-depressive-disorders-soar-amid-pandemic>

[10] <https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/28/asia/japan-suicide-women-covid-dst-intl-hnk/index.html>

[11] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045\(20\)30388-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045(20)30388-0/fulltext)

[12] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/05/27/coronavirus-lockdown-costing-more-lives-its-saving-14815>

[13] <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/binational-couples-separated-covid-19-112624848.html>

[14] <https://www.thecut.com/2020/04/coronavirus-hospital-birth-partner-ban.html>