

When does physical distancing become impossible?

By Karen Aubrey April 2020

Easter Monday, I left the confines of Lane Cove and ventured across the border to Gladesville. It was a mercy dash actually – a needy neighbour had run out of toilet paper and there was none to be found in the Cove. A trusted source assured me I'd find some at this particular supermarket.

On entering the store, I was impressed by the social distancing measures in place and was happy to see hand sanitizer and paper wipes readily available. Mind you, I was also happy to ditch the trolley and paper wipes in favour of using my own shopping bags. One of the side effects of the current restrictions on my life is that the thought of touching anything that someone else has touched sends shivers up my spine. I know, I'm paranoid. I'm also that person who wears a facemask and accidentally scares little children as a result. I blame my son who's a doctor currently living in Boston USA.

Working with a short but specific shopping list and my husband in tow I decided we'd stick reasonably close together but move as quickly as possible so we could get out of there as soon as possible. It was in the bread section that it happened.

You notice people more now that you're meant to keep your distance. I noticed a lady gingerly reaching for a loaf of bread, I was actually waiting for her to move so I could move in on her territory and claim the bagels I was eyeing off. She was shaking a little but nothing that warranted concern. My only thought at the time was that it was taking her a longer than normal time to grab her bread. Next thing you know she was on the ground, shaking uncontrollably. The shopping trolley she had been holding onto so tightly was now on top of her legs. She had cracked her head on the ground when she fell and blood was oozing from the cut. She was having a seizure and I froze for a split second before I yelled for help. All my first aide training went out the door as a million thoughts ran through my mind. Surely there was someone on the staff who would be able to handle this situation far better than I? I don't know the answer to that question, but I do know that the face mask went off real quick as I and a few others rallied to help her. The shopping trolley was lifted off her legs, someone rang for the ambulance, she was put on her side and no one seemed worried about getting blood on themselves as we tried to stop the bleeding. Once the seizure was over and it seemed like it took an eternity, we were able to reassure her as we patiently waited for the ambulance to arrive. Such displays of human kindness often go unnoticed but today I was especially touched by two young gentlemen who held the lady's hand. One of them even took a staff members mobile phone off them so he could guide the ambulance driver. They stayed the whole time and didn't leave her until the ambulance arrived. I also left when the ambulance arrived once I could tell them exactly what had happened. Once again, I became just a shopper physically distancing themselves with their face mask on, but this shopper now had toilet paper!

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