

Thoughts on Teachers and Trauma – March 8, 2022
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Yesterday I met with a group of teachers and talked about why it is easier for some to ditch the mask than others. Even with low local rates of COVID this week we have some who are intensely fearful. They feel conflicted, guilty, afraid. It just feels “too soon” to take the mask off.

We talked about trauma. It has been 2 years this week since they/ we have been placed on the front lines, pivoting to remote learning and then back, and the whole time worried for themselves, their families and their students. These are the same people who would literally take a bullet for a classroom.

Trauma.

Some people perhaps haven't had to live for three years with as much fear and front facing exposure, and for them removing the mask might be more of a relief.

Some might have been fearful for a while, but no longer harbor that anxiety and are ready to have a mask burning!

But for some of us, in medicine, teachers, first responders, “essential workers” who could not work from home, some of us intensely remember the fear. The mask was part of that security - “it will keep us safe”. And for many of us it did help.

So the mask was part of the armor when we had nothing else, but had to do our jobs.

Letting go of the masks is therefore hard. Very hard for some. Terrifying for others.

I told them to give themselves time. Don't force the change. Wear the mask if it feels right. Masks are optional and that is great. (It also probably keeps them safer from flu and strep!).

But most importantly, don't downplay the trauma they have endured.

It will be different for everyone, and that's ok.