

Welcome to COVID-19: Preparing Yourself and Your Family. This module will discuss degrees of separation and what people mean when we talk about 'flattening the curve'. My name is Sam Lushtak and I am the owner of Absolute EHS.

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COVID-19 is an abbreviation given to the viral strain "SARS-CoV-2", which is also known as Coronavirus Disease 2019. Coronaviruses that infect humans, or human coronaviruses, are not new to us. MERS and SARS are coronaviruses that evolved from infecting bats to humans, just like COVID-19.

The contagion is being classified as community spread which means that just going out into your community and contacting shared surfaces can result in being affected. The current research suggests that COVID-19 can live on a surface for an average of 9 days if not cleaned. This length of time can be longer for items that are porous, such as fabric or wood, and less time for items that are non-porous or less porous such as metal or plastic. Because of this ability to live for such a long time on a surface, it is extremely easy for us to transmit the disease between each other by touching shared surfaces and then touching mucus membranes such as our eyes, noses, or mouths.

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I have come up with a degrees of separation exercise which might help some of use realize just how interconnected we all are. Please recognize that this is meant as a mental exercise and a conversation starter for your family. Of course, if you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me directly by email or thought my website, AbsoluteEHS.com

First we will write out our routine in one column, then estimate how many other people make contact with those surfaces during each step of our day. We will evaluate the frequency of this disease in our area at the time, our personal and home's age and comorbid factors. What this means is taking into account the ages of the people in your home as well as any underlying issues anyone might have – otherwise known as comorbid factors. This might be cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or something else. We then want to evaluate any direct contact's age and comorbid factors. So if you go over to help your elderly neighbor every day, consider their age and ailments. For many people on quarantine already, assisted living and nursing homes are not allowing visitors because they have already done this risk assessment. We then need to decide what is mandatory, optional, or not necessary. I would also like to point out that the CDC has published a risk assessment chart that you might find useful in this conversation as well.

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Here's an example exercise. For this example, the subject is a 30 year-old who is healthy and in a location where there are some reported cases but it isn't everywhere yet.

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Now some people might still not understand why we are doing this because, I know on social media at least, a lot of people are equating COVID-19 to influenza. There are some perceived similarities but

some major differences as well. Firstly, the biggest similarity is how to combat it and that is by practicing good hygiene – wash your hands with soap and water, clean your clothes with laundry detergent – and social distancing – keep a minimum of 6' between yourself and others.

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This flattening the curve diagram is everywhere now and it's worth discussing to make sure we all understand why we are doing this. The pink curve shows what happens if we all get sick at once, we do not practice good hygiene, social distancing, or quarantining. That looks like it's ok because then we are all over it quickly but if you look at the dashed line, that line indicates the capacity of our healthcare system. As you can see, the pink curve will completely overwhelm our healthcare system as it stands. I would also like to point out that if the doctors and hospitals are inundated with COVID-19 cases, contaminations, and people 'just there to see if they have it', this will take away from those who are giving birth this spring, going through chemotherapy treatments, people with bacterial infections, or broken bones, basically things our healthcare system has to deal with normally.

If we practice good hygiene, social distancing, and even a slight change in our interactions with common surfaces – for example one shopping trip for a two week period instead of going to the grocery store three times a week every week – we can reduce our chances of getting sick and flatten the curve into what you see in grey. This is just below our healthcare system's capacity but this would also mean that everyone who needs assistance will be able to get assistance.

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If you must go outside, consider leaving your purse, shoes, umbrella, jacket, or gloves by the door. If you live in a climate or a home that allows for it, you can leave these items outside of your home so you reduce the chances of contamination inside and throughout your home. As soon as you walk in, wash your hands, wipe down your phone, keys, and doorknob. You might then consider wiping down any other supplies that you use both indoors and outdoors such as a wheel chair, crutches, or inhaler. We want to be more thoughtful about what our kids take outside as well – a plastic or metal toy will be easier to clean by your front door than a stuffed animal. While this is difficult to think about for many parents – myself included – we really want to avoid going on a trip, having parties, or even having playdates. If you must have a playdate, consider that degrees of separation exercise and have just the kid over, or the kid and one parent. This is really still only advisable if it is considered low risk for your area and it is needed for mental health reasons otherwise let kids have skype playdates. I know my daughter thinks snapchat, or 'funny pictures on the phone' is a lot of fun and we can do that with other family members.

Finally, consider your daily routine. If you wear contact lenses, scrub your hands before taking them out or putting them in, if you wear glasses you will want to disinfect those regularly throughout the day, we tend to fidget with our glasses without realizing it. Also, if you wear makeup, consider stopping all together or minimally avoiding the use of makeup around your mouth, nose, and eyes.

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Thank you so much for listening to this module on degrees of separation. Feel free to email me if you have any questions, personal or about this presentation, at Samantha.lushtak@absoluteehs.com. Feel free to also check out my website for a full length, 45 minute, webinar that was previously recorded with a lot more information in it or check out one of my other short modules on the topic.

Finally, please consider supporting my small business at this time, particularly if you found this information or the worksheets and documents on the website helpful. Donations can be made via PayPal or through Venmo to Samantha-Lushtak.

Stay safe out there and wash your hands!