

## How to Protect Yourself From the Emotional Dark Side of Preparing for a Bird Flu Pandemic

I believe that a bird flu pandemic is quite possible and that people should prepare for it.

I devote a lot of time to thinking and writing about how to protect yourself and your family from bird flu.

I believe that my motivation -- and the motivation of others sounding the alarm and the many people around the world who are working to prepare for a contagious form of bird flu is positive. We want to make sure that a bird flu pandemic kills as few people as possible.

However, people are people and few of us are 100% saints.

Therefore, although it dismays me, it doesn't surprise me that some people display a less pleasant side of human nature.

None of us are immune. I'll admit that I have a list of people whom I'd like to die from bird flu. I mean, I don't really want anybody to die, but if SOMEBODY has to -- let it be them. A few on my list are in my personal life.

Others I'd really like to see die from bird flu are all the enemies of freedom. That's all terrorists and those supporting and encouraging them. Not to mention dictators who threaten world peace such as the head of North Korea. And although he's not as dangerous, I'd be happy to see Fidel Castro go.

However, I realize that if a bird flu pandemic actually happens, the virus doesn't care anything about the nature of its victims. H5N1 would just as soon infect an innocent baby as a terrorist planning to set off a nuclear bomb. And the children of Iran would be far more at risk than its fanatically dangerous president.

Yet I know that there're many people who love to read post-apocalyptic science fiction because they love to fantasize about solving the problems of today by starting over. Some of them believe they'd be better off by living in a world where might made right. And I remember one feminist SF fan telling me that she enjoyed imagining that if the world had to start over from scratch that women could make sure the patriarchy was eliminated.

I was not surprised to read in a bird flu forum recently that the poster believed that it was good that bird flu would eliminate a lot of people, because the world was overpopulated.

A professor nicknamed Dr. Doom recently acquired some notoriety by expressing much the same sentiment in a speech to some scientists. According to him, people are no better than bacteria. He actually said that he hoped a terrorist would spread Ebola to kill 90% of the human race. But "bird flu would work too." The audience actually applauded him.

One problem here is that we are concerned for ourselves and our loved ones, and the other 6.5 billion people are meaningless to us. However, most everybody is loved and valued by their own friends and family. It's easy to kill off 5 or 6 billion faceless numbers, but people who have faces, personalities and emotions -- especially children -- that's a lot different.

It's also easy to believe that you are one of the protected ones who will survive the bird flu pandemic. Yet Americans are no more virus-proof than Vietnamese children. If the Earth wants to get rid of people, why not you too?

Then there're the religious crazies. When bird flu was first found in Israel, an extremist Jew said that was God's punishment for removing the settlers from the Palestinian territories and a Palestinian Muslim cleric said it was God's punishment of Israel for being Jewish.

Since bird flu has so far infected countries and people who are: Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, officially atheistic, unofficially Taoist and Christian -- I don't think the virus cares about religion.

So all I ask -- and I know that when emotions, especially fear, run high this is difficult -- is to recognize the more hateful emotions within you, and then remember that our real enemy is the H5N1 virus.

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## About the Author

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