

I'm Going to Shake Your Hand Way Too Hard

Manners have been transformed forever

[Drew Magary](#)

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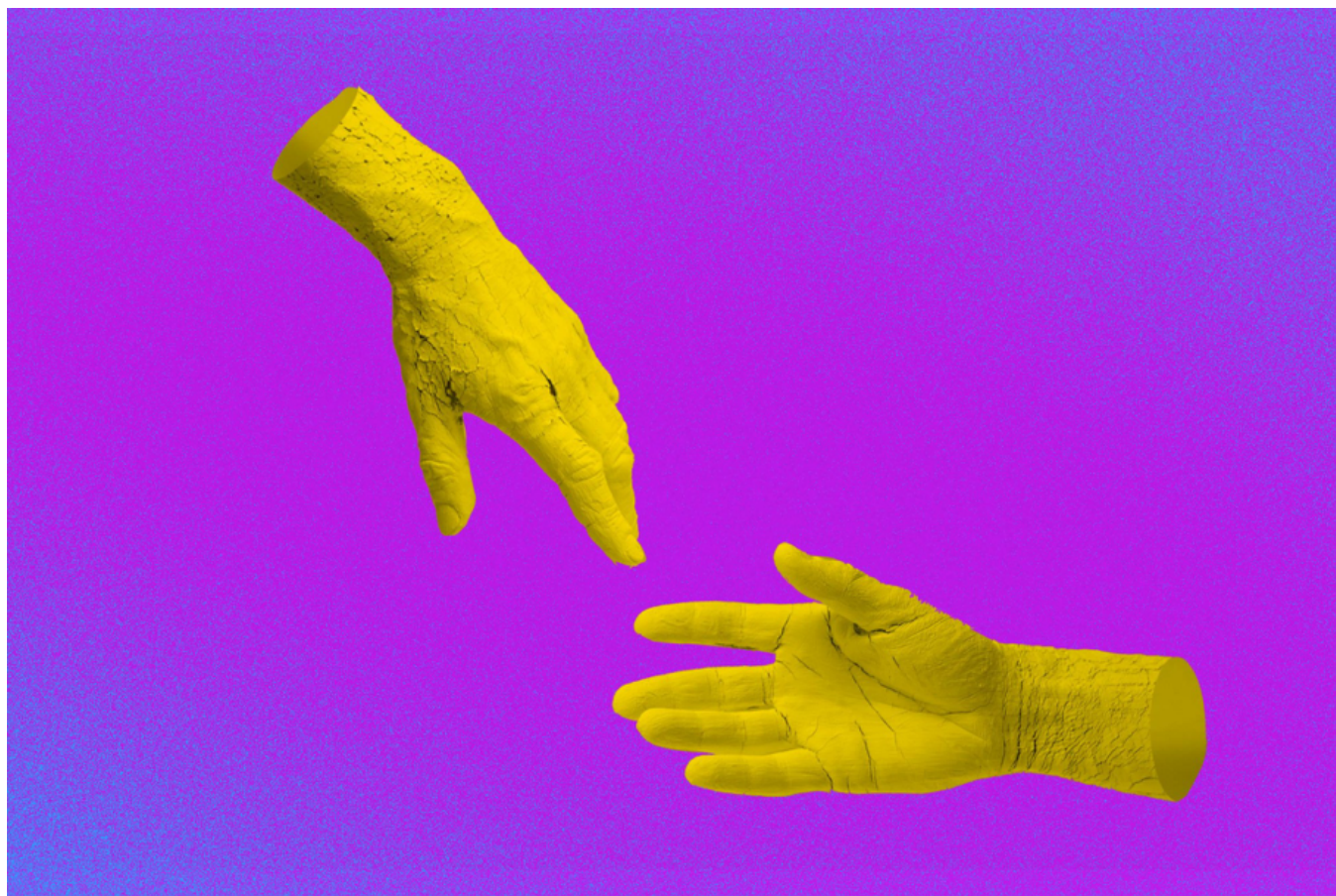


Photo illustration, source: Still Life Photographer Wolfgang Ludwig/Moment/Getty Images

I have a dog who almost never leaves his crate. Dogs are den animals by nature, which means they require a space of their own, where no one else is allowed to tread. I didn't know this before we adopted Carter, and thus I didn't know that welcoming him into our house and giving him free rein of the main floor would kick up his biologically mandated agoraphobia. Outside of his crate, there is too much space and too much noise and too

many things around for him to feel safe. And thus, he retreats to his den, sometimes for 14 hours at a time.

I am my dog now. Mostly confined to home during this extended coronavirus season, I have cultivated a healthy fear of the outside world. When I go to the grocery store, I sweat bullets. When I see strangers out on the street, I worry they might get too close to me. Sometimes I worry some aggro virus truther will deliberately try to shake my hand, and then I imagine myself telling that guy to fuck off and die.

I don't know which elements of my social graces will revert to form the instant my governor tells me it's safe to go to a restaurant again, and which elements will remain hogtied by my fear of becoming an unwitting infectious agent. I don't know what MANNERS will look like after this. Will I be able to hug my friends? Will I be able to kiss people hello at a party? Will I be able to shake your hand? Ever?

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I want to. Badly. I have my family at home to keep me company, but I (and my wife and kids, too) crave [the company of others](#). I used to think about handshakes only when I did them wrong. Now I think about them as a matter of fantasy. I would fucking KILL to see my best friend Jeremy right now and shake his hand, hard. Not in the pissing-contest way, but in that way where you're so glad to see someone that your joy can't help but echo through how you touch them. I dream about shaking my man's hand. I dream about hugging him tight.

But I don't know what my sense of trust will look like after this. Can I trust his

hand? Can I trust mine? How are we gonna deal with this shit when we finally lay eyes on one another again?

Already, my sense of manners has changed, and yours likely has as well. Before this, keeping your distance from people was rude, if not occasionally racist. Now, if someone avoids me? I'm like THAT GUY GETS IT.

The entire concept of manners has been upended, especially given our slipshod response to the pandemic. Some people are being smart and wear their masks. Other people, many of them very powerful, don't seem to give a shit. The latter group of people are rude, and I must now adjust my customs to account for that rudeness. I want those people to stay away from me.

How will I feel about people avoiding *me* after this, when there's perhaps no declared reason to? How close will I wanna get to them? Yes, I fear the virus and the catastrophic ancillary damage it has caused and will cause. But I also fear how it will alter the social DNA of both the world and myself. The longer I'm trapped here, the more comfortable I get with shunning the outside world. I don't want my house to become my crate. I don't know what that will do to me in the long run.

I do wanna shake your hand. It would bring me such an immense amount of relief if I could. But you'll apologize if I'm not ready yet. Come too close and I might bite.

This story is part of a Forge [series](#) on the effect that the quarantine has had on who we are and how we live.