

The CDC recommends wearing a mask. The president says he won't do it. I decide that it is courteous to others. It will allay their anxiety and, perhaps, increase their sense of well being when they see that the social compact is working. It is also just possible it will keep me and others safe. Although I doubt I am sick. I and the two friends I've seen have had no contact with anyone else. And I'm unsure of the danger on the street. I have yet to see anyone cough or sneeze when I am out on my walks.

Making a mask poses a problem because I have given away my sewing machine. And I have never liked doing by hand something that can be done quickly by machine. I haul an old scarf out of the closet and staple it into several layers. Once draped around my face with the help of safety pins it looks like a hijab but seems effective. I can't see through the layers but I can breathe. I also find a sleep mask given to me by an airline. I alternate wearing these for a week.

Then I read that the mask should be machine washed every night. That hand washing is ineffective. When you live on the 14th floor and are told to conserve the use of elevators, daily laundry in the machines for one tiny item just won't work. I look on line to see if microwaving is a possibility and find that yes, two minutes in a microwave destroys a goodly percentage of the germs. Unfortunately I can't do that with my hijab because of all the staples.

I go on line to investigate no-sewing masks. I find one on the CDC website. I have confidence in this authoritative source so I find pinking shears, an old t shirt and a ruler. The pinking shears are in pristine condition because they belonged to my second husband's first wife. She had grown up in poverty and took extremely



good care of all her possessions. The shears were still in their original box although I'm sure they were bought sixty years ago or more. They cut through the t shirt like butter.

The directions call for one layer of t shirt. I can see through that. I go on line and find that t shirt material is considered quite inferior to tea towel or 600 count pillowcases. Why in the world would the CDC recommend an inferior mask material? Just one more indication of our failing federal bureaucracy. I decide to cut out four additional layers of t shirt and sew them to the front of the mask. Then I insert two layers of paper towel. I feel very well protected. It looks a little like a Ku Klux Klan mask because it covers my neck but it is microwaveable. And very easy to put on.

A few days later I Zoom with my family and find that my daughter in law, Jen, and her daughters are making masks with their sewing machines. The masks are beautiful, professional looking, pleated numbers. I ask for one. When it arrives I detach the yellow post-it note and put the mask on in order to text a photograph back to San Diego.

I proudly wear the mask out on my walk. When I return home, I put it in the microwave. After 30 seconds, there is a horrible stench and I rush to shut it down. The beautiful mask is consumed in flames. I open the windows, cover the smoke alarm, and mourn the ruined handwork. After half an hour I open the microwave and discover that there is a wire sewn into the edge of the mask. I put the remnants in the trash and clean the microwave – the top requires several applications of wet paper towel to remove the soot. I am thankful that the fire did not do worse damage.



I return to my t shirt number. Two days later I find the post it note in my study. "Here you go, Tiana! The top has wire to form to your nose. Stay safe on your walks! Xoxo. P.S. It is preshrunk and

washable.” I had been so excited about putting on the mask and thanking them that I didn’t stop to read the note. Soooooo stupid.

Now I’m in a quandary. Should I tell Jen of my stupidity and ask for another mask, this time without wire? Or do I let them think I am out and about in their beautiful mask. What do you think?

