

KITTY COMPANIONS AND HANDSHAKE ABANDONS

SOME STUFF THAT WENT AWAY BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC SHOULD STAY GONE, WRITES JAMES CULIC



JAMES CULIC
Column

A few years ago my wife's family from Italy came for a visit, so I went over to her parent's place to meet them. I walked in the front door and was greeted by this tall, burly dude, her cousin Antonio.

He came over and I went to shake his hand but he totally swerved on my handshake and instead ... kissed me. Twice.

I gave my wife and her family a "what is going on here?" type of look and they all burst out laughing.

"I probably should have warned you about that," my wife said, between bouts of laughter.

Kissing other dudes is not something I'm accustomed to, let alone a dude I've never even met before. I guess kissing as a greeting is just a normal thing for Italians, which is fine — it just caught me off guard when I was expecting a firm handshake.

Nowadays, in our bizarre new "Covidian"

times, nobody shakes hands anymore. Too germ. But as crazy as it might sound, when Antonio and I were taking part in our surprise kiss-greeting, we actually exchanged fewer germs than if we had shaken hands.

While it seems completely counterintuitive at first, a study published by the American Journal of Infection Control found that two people will transfer more germs through a handshake than through a kiss. According to the study, what researchers described as a "10-second intimate kiss" transferred about 80 million bacteria between two people. On the other hand, a handshake transferred 124 million bacteria between two people.

The reason is because, while we think of our

mouths as germ, we don't spend all day mashing our mouths on all sorts of surfaces. We don't open door-knobs with our mouth, we don't type on our phones with our lips, and we don't use our tongues to press buttons on an elevator.

Frankly, our hands are filthy. If we insist on greeting one another, a fist bump is better than a kiss or a handshake, as it transfers a mere 12 million bacteria per bump.

The pandemic has killed the handshake, but once things are back to normal (whatever post-pandemic normal looks like) we should probably just leave the handshake behind. We don't need the handshake when we have the fist bump, so let's just all agree to do away with the handshake, once and for all.

While we're at it, there are a few other pandemic changes that we should just go ahead and adopt as part of the new normal, pandemic or not.

Like physical distancing in checkout lines. When I'm waiting in line at the grocery store or the bank, I don't want you right up behind me, breathing down my neck. Six feet is a good distance for queuing up, let's go ahead and keep that.

While we're at it, let's go ahead and keep those sanitizer dispensers at the entrances to all the stores. Your little kids have gross little sticky hands and they are rubbing them all over the place. A dollop of sanitizer will go a long way toward not just stopping the spread of the virus, but of all the other gross things your kids are spreading around.

Another pandemic change I'd like to see stick around is people adopting

kittens. Adoption centres went from overcrowded pre-coronavirus, to barren during the pandemic, as everyone looked to get a furry friend for company. Since the start of the pandemic, people have been adopting lots of adorable kittens and that's awesome because kittens are the best. Kittens make everything better, which is why I should be allowed to adopt a second kitty, so please tell my wife to let me have another one.

James Culic is Niagara This Week's columnist and he deserves a second kitty. Email him at jculic@niagarathisweek.com or holler on Twitter @jamesculic.

YOUROPINIONS

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LETTERS

PLENTY OF BLAME TO GO AROUND

Doug Ford will pay a price for not doing enough to protect seniors in LTC homes. Clearly more needs to be done. But we seem to forget the pandemic began barely more than a year after he was elected with a mandate to reign in runaway provincial spending and waste. No one saw this pandemic coming. At the time, the deficient state of LTC homes in Ontario had

fallen from memory and was not being broadly recognized.

We should remember that the McGuinty/Wynne Liberals we're elected in 2003, the same year that Royalcrest LTC homes failed for the first time, and we were given an indication of the state of this industry in Ontario. Residents, families, creditors, and the Ontario govern-

ment were left in the lurch. The Liberals knew, or should have known, something was drastically wrong with "for profit" LTC homes.

In 2004, the newly elected Liberals introduced the "Health Care Premium," a massive new tax supposedly designed to ensure adequate and continuing health care funding and levels of care. In the following years, and despite collecting billions in additional targeted tax revenues,

they chose to freeze health care funding to hospitals.

The Liberals had 15 years to do something about this before being voted out, but chose to do nothing.

CAMERON STRINGER
HAMILTON

TOP LEADERS' DECISIONS TO TRAVEL DISRESPECTFUL TO THEIR EMPLOYEES

It is a shame those people who are at the top or em-

ployed by the taxpayer either as a political position or at the top of some board, system or other agency, think the rules do not apply to them. This shows a total lack of leadership.

The number of people who have ignored the travel bans and advisories and did not stay home during lockdown or during this whole pandemic should be removed without any special clauses taking effect.

They put fellow citizens in danger. What would hap-

pen to a lower echelon employee who broke health and safety rules? Fired and out the door on their own. Why not the same treatment for the upper echelon?

It shows a total lack of respect for the people who have to work and slave to pay taxes or fees to this group who think they are special.

Their actions have proven they are the opposite.

JOHN HUNT
NIAGARA FALLS



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THAT'S RIGHT, I'M WEARING A PURSE

WITH ALL THE STUFF WE CARRY AROUND DURING THE PANDEMIC, A PURSE JUST MAKES SENSE, WRITES JAMES CULIC



JAMES CULIC
Column

drop the pretension and just call it what it is. I wear a purse these days and there's nothing you can do about it.

My niece refers to it as a "man-purse" but I like to think of it as a "pandemic purse." Like most dudes in the pre-pandemic era, I would stuff my dumb little pockets full of my things because society says I'm not allowed to have a func-

tional purse like the ladies do — and as a grown man, I'm also not allowed to use a backpack either.

My pockets were jammed with a cellphone, a wallet, keys, and — since I wear glasses but only for far away things and not up close things — I gotta carry around a glasses case and one of those little squares of microfibre to wipe them clean.

And then the pandemic hit. So, on top of all that stuff, I gotta have a little bottle of hand sanitizer, a couple disinfectant wipes, a face mask, and a backup face mask (just in case the first one breaks or I lose it).

It's too much. My pockets are at max capacity and no longer capable of haul-

ing around all the stuff that the pandemic era demands of me.

And then I had my epiphany moment. I remembered that when I was walking around Tokyo, all the men had these single-strap bags that they would use to carry their masks and phone and all that junk.

A little bit of Googling and I discovered they were called shoruda-baggu, which is a kinda Japanese-English katakana approximation of shoulder bag.

For lack of a better word, they are man-purses. For lack of a better solution to carrying around all this stuff, I bought one.

And you know what? It works wonderfully. My

pockets feel fabulously free and unencumbered. No longer do I worry about my face mask getting mashed and torn against my car keys.

Now, everything has its own space inside my lovely purse.

Everything can easily be found and used and put back where it belongs.

Do I occasionally get an odd glance from other guys when they see my purse? Yup. Do people sometimes make jokes when they see me reach inside to grab my wallet? Yup.

Do I care? Nope. The practicality and functionality of my man-purse far outweighs any mild criticism I may suffer.

Besides, framed another

er way, I'm smashing heteronormative gender conformity or whatever. Look, the bottom line is that utilizing a purse, a man-purse, a shoruda-baggu, whatever you wanna call it, has made my life easier. During the pandemic, anything that makes lives a little easier should be welcomed with open arms and an open mind.

And honestly, most of the time that some dude mocks my purse, I'm pretty sure they are just jealous. They are envious of the ease with which I can now carry around all my stuff. That, and they are jealous of how bloody cool I look rocking a sweet man-purse.

James Culic is Niagara This Week's columnist and fashion icon. Email him at jculic@niagarathisweek.com or holler on Twitter @jamesculic.

ACTION NEEDED TO SAVE THE ST. CATHARINES YMCA

Despite the assurances provided in January that the St. Catharines YMCA was safe, after the closure of the Niagara Falls Y and the Fort Erie Y even earlier, the Walker YMCA is now up for sale.

How can one have faith in YMCA of Niagara interim chief executive officer Steve Boone's words?

Can the city not do something to save the Walker Family YMCA?

Its programs are a nec-

essary part of our community.

St. Catharines can and should afford a YMCA.

PAT BARNES,
ST. CATHARINES

KEEP THOSE DOGS ON A LEASH

With the warming weather, people will be coming out in large numbers to enjoy the myriad of beautiful multi-use trails. There will be a mix of people ranging from pedestri-

ans, cyclists, families with kids and dog walkers

Most dog walkers have their pets on leash, many don't and the excuses range from, "oh I didn't know "to don't worry he won't bite."

I get that you love your pets but not everyone does to the same extent that you do.

Little kids are at eye level to some dogs and parents shouldn't have to feel uncomfortable with off leash

dogs.

There are signs everywhere saying dogs should be on leash

KEITH MORGAN,
HAMILTON

TRAVEL BETWEEN REGIONS WILL RESULT IN NEW LOCKDOWNS

New variants are spreading, vaccinations are lagging and Ontario's decline in daily cases of COVID-19 is trending back up

— just as restrictions are easing across the province and more Ontarians are on the move.

Since public health units began easing restrictions in mid-February, scores of Torontonians have circumvented stay-at-home orders to visit freer areas, some bringing variants of concern with them.

Experts say regional discrepancies — "leaky lockdowns" — made re-

strictions less effective.

The week Hastings Prince Edward County moved into the green zone, the region saw a 66 per cent bump in visitors from Toronto.

When Grey Bruce ended stay-at-home orders and ski resorts reopened, 71 per cent more Torontonians flocked to the area than the week before.

A third wave is inevitable.

For lockdowns to actually work, Ontario needs to restrict local travel.

DAVE GILLIES,
NIAGARA FALLS

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AND I'M BACK BABY

NEWBORNS ARE A POOPY-PUKEY-MIRACLE, WRITES JAMES CULIC



JAMES CULIC
Column

It had been less than two minutes since I got outta the shower. I was still so fresh and so clean like André 3000, so of course my newborn baby puked all over me. My wife seemed to find this really funny, so she was just having a good ol' laugh as I jumped back into the

shower to wash sticky baby-vomit off me.

Guess I buried the lede here a little bit; my wife had a baby a few weeks ago. I'm a dad now. I went from just some dude, to some dude who is a dad. Very weird feeling.

If you've been checking your favourite source for local Niagara news this past month and didn't see my regular column and thought to yourself, "weird, I wonder what James is doing," well the answer is: being puked, peed, and pooped on. All of which is gross.

But all the baby grossness combined (and there's a lot) doesn't even come close to outweighing the amazing feeling of being a dad. It's incredible. It's unmatched by anything I've ever experienced in my life.

All the poopy diapers in the world can't bring me down off the



James Culic/Metroland

The Croatian national soccer team has a new fan.

dad-high that I'm currently riding. Even though I'm underslept, and the room I previously used for playing VR video games is now a nursery, and I'm spending all my money on baby supplies, and I have to haul a 50-pound bag of poopy diapers to the curb every Thursday, and leaving the house involves a 20-minute ordeal of packing things and strapping in car seats, and my dinner is usually cold by the time I get to eat it, and my eardrums have grown numb to the shrill cry of a hangry baby; despite all of that mess, it's still worth it.

Also, despite all that mess of things I'm complaining about, it's all 10 times worse for my wife. Everything I'm grumping about is 10 times as bad for her, since she's the one who has to feed the baby and do the lion's share of the parenting because I'm already back to work. Moms have it harder than dads, and they do a lot more of the work; that's just facts.

The same thing holds true for the delivery process at the hospital when it comes to the division of work between doctors and nurses. Not to knock doctors or anything, but I did not realize that - in the event of a complication-free delivery - the nurses provide so much of the pre- and post-delivery care. The doctor comes in at literally that last possible minute, delivers the baby, then walks right back out.

And lemme tell you, the nurses at the St. Catharines General Hospital are superstars. They are amazing beyond comprehension. The nurse who delivered our baby, Bailee, is an absolute rockstar

baby delivery champ. The entire Niagara Health System did an amazing job, I should say, but Bailee gets extra points for being the coolest nurse in the world.

But as cool and awesome as Bailee was, I can honestly say, I hope I never see her again in my life. One baby is enough. Nobody needs more than one baby in their life. We are barely managing the one we've got and we outnumber the baby two-to-one. I can only imagine the nightmare of being at even strength with these little poop monsters.

I cannot believe that my mom went through this ordeal three times, but now I truly understand how she felt when my dad said he wanted a fourth child, and my mom responded by booking an appointment to have her tubes tied.

James Culic is Niagara This Week's columnist and newest member of the doughy dad-bod club. Email him at jculic@niagarathisweek or holler on Twitter @jamesculic

LETTERS

INDIGENOUS NAMES ON GOVERNMENT ID THE LEAST WE CAN DO

Indigenous people can now reclaim their Indigenous names in Canada.

Oh, how generous of the federal government to allow the Indigenous people, who lived in this country for thousands of years before white European explorers arrived less than 500 years ago, to reclaim their names on passports and other legal documents. Who took this right away from the Indigenous people in the first place?

Priests and nuns in the Catholic Church, teachers, lay peo-

ple, missionaries, politicians, police, bureaucrats, and people back then, tried to take the 'Indian' out of the children living in Canada's notorious residential schools. The atrocity committed by white people against the Indigenous children is appalling, and evil, as graves are being found filled with the bodies of children. The lowering of flags in Canada, and politicians saying, "We're sorry" is a hollow gesture.

Indigenous children were 'kidnapped', ruining the lives of

families for generations. How would parents feel today if someone came to your door, grabbed your screaming child, crying out mommy and daddy, and being dragged away - as you were held back - pleading to release your child?

If the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is sincere about trying to fix this form of genocide, they should also hunt down any of the living people who were implicated in the residential schools. Their names should be made public and pun-

ished no matter what their ages are.

LOU CESAR
ST. CATHARINES

COLUMN ZEROED IN ON UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS

Re. I'm starting not to love this country, Column, June 21:

I always enjoy reading your column in The Grimsby/Lincoln Niagara News. I also share your concerns and comments from your column "I'm starting not to love this country".

The residential school issue and children's deaths is just starting to be made aware. The news on June 24 about the Saskatchewan "discovery" of possibly 700 more graves is just the beginning; more tragic news will be becoming more available in the next few months.

It is a shame. William, please continue to keep writing your "unbiased" comments for this publication.

Hopefully, your words of wisdom will make more Canadian people and government take notice that this is not tolerable.

DAVID BUDZINSKY
VINELAND



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