

Why not?



A pandemic story in 2023

By Maria Gillespie

For my daughters

It was time to go into
The grocery store!
"But not without masks,"
Said my mom just before.

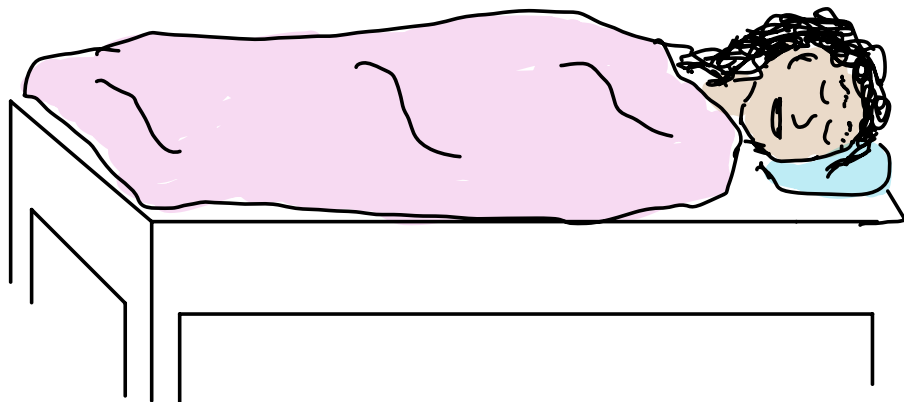
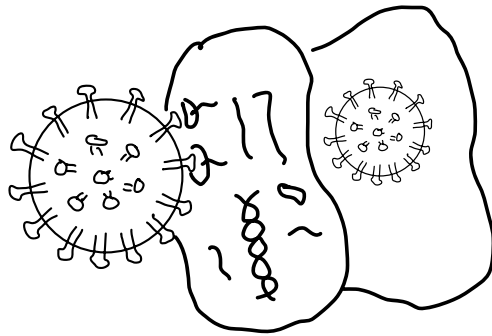
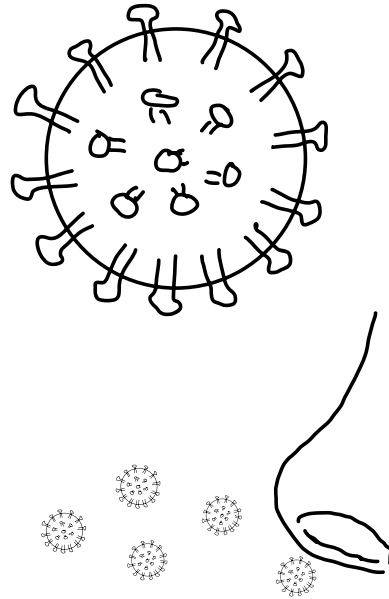


So I put on my mask,
But I asked her, "**Why not?**"
"Well, they clean up the air
Through which COVID is caught."

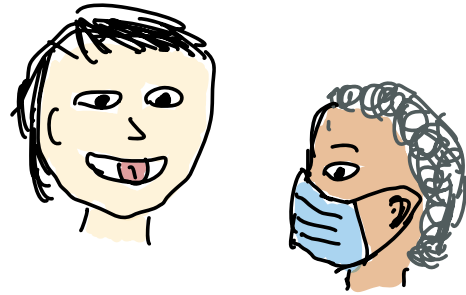
"What's COVID?" I ask,
"It's a sickness," she said,
"That makes you so tired
You just stay in bed!"

"It's caused by a virus -
They're tiny small bugs
That land in our noses
And give our cells hugs,

"To make more of themselves,
And it spreads and it spreads
Until we feel sick
From our toes to our heads!"

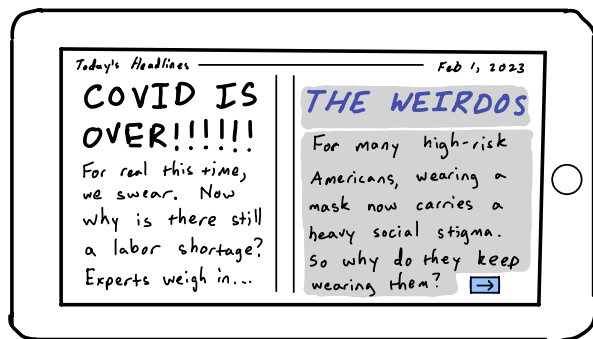


So we tightened our masks,
And went into the store.
But some people weren't wearing
Their masks anymore!



"Why not?" I asked Mom,
"Are they out of their minds?"
She laughed. "I don't know,
But I know they're all kind."

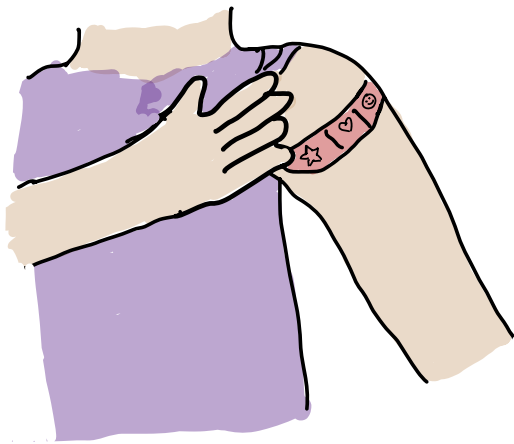
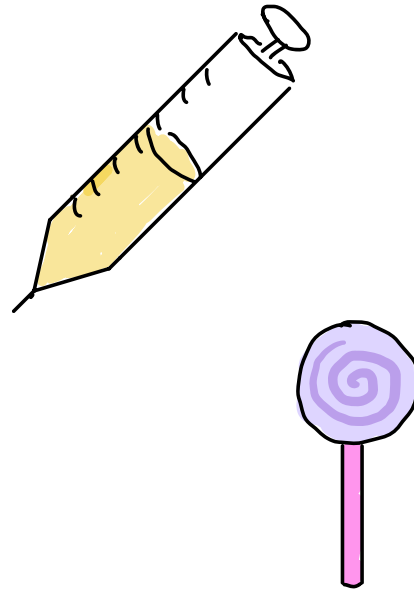
"Some of their phones
Tell them bad information.
And some have some other
Quite tough situations.



"Before the vaccines,
They all masked," said my Mom,
"Some think it's now safe,
Though I think they are wrong."

"What are the vaccines?"
I asked as we shopped.
"They're preventative shots
That make viruses stop!"

"Before them, the virus
was much much much worse.
To make the world safer,
We needed shots first!"



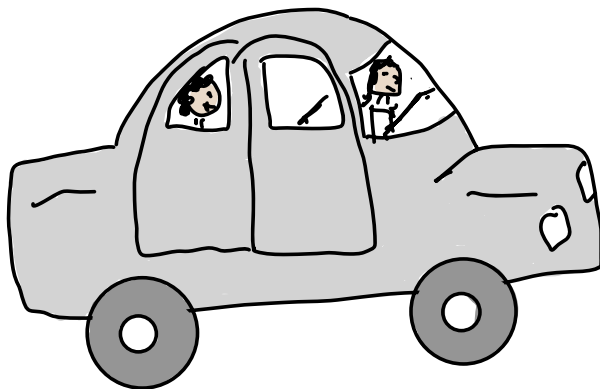
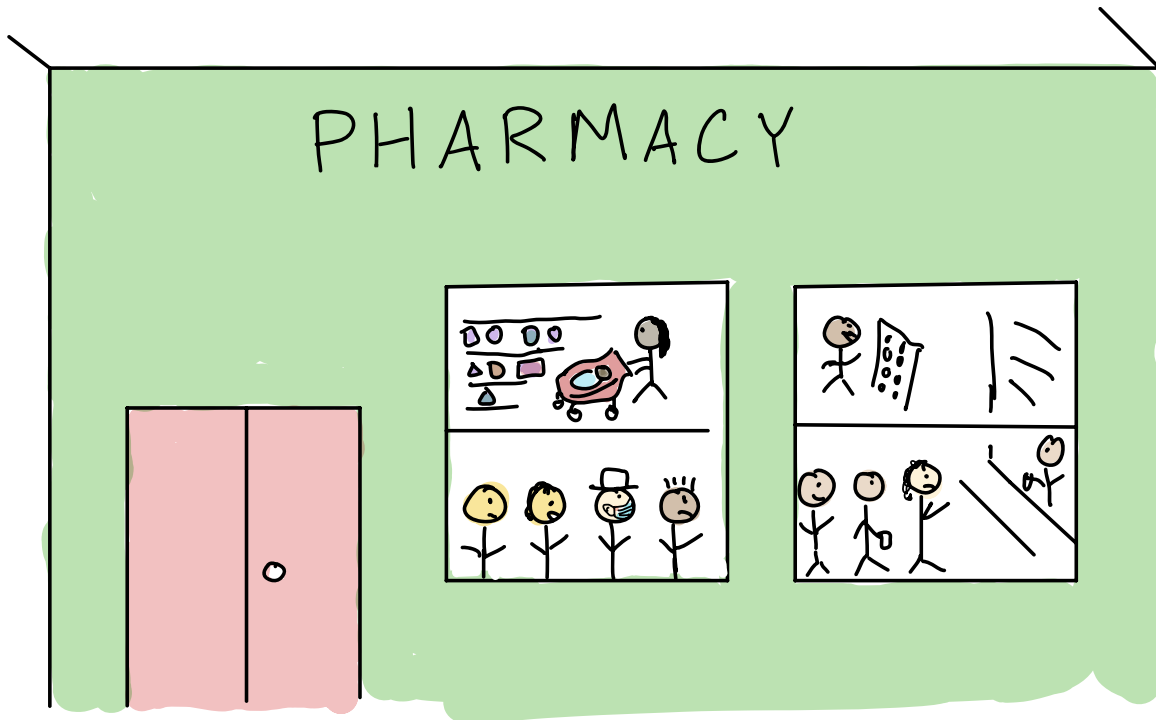
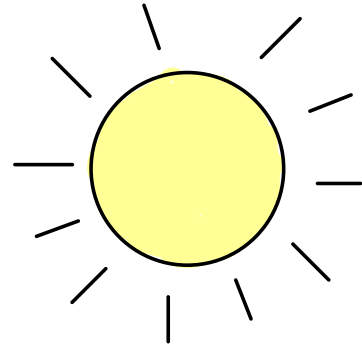
"Though some people chose
not to get all their shots."
I puzzled at that, and I asked,
"Mom, **why not?**"

She sighed for a moment,
Then wondered, and shared -
"They're confused, I suppose,
And perhaps a bit scared."

But I wasn't scared,
I thought to myself!
The shots are no trouble,
And I love to help!

We walked out the store
And we packed up the trunk
And we headed next door
When my mom's shoulders sunk...

"Let's come back tomorrow,"
she said, her eyes clouded.
"We can't go in there
when it's that packed and crowded."



"**Why not?**" I asked Mom.
"Well, when crowds pack a place,
The virus builds up
In the closed indoor space."

"The masks work quite well,
But not all of the time!
And crowds can make masks
Not enough to be fine."

We drove to our house
And our bags, we unpacked
And I said, "Mom, can I have
my favorite snack?"

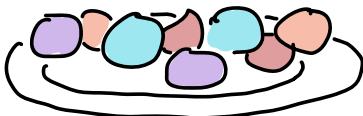
"Not before washing your hands!"
said my mother.

"**Why not?**" I asked, stomping.
Washing hands was a bother!



"A virus can be on your hands,"
she explained.

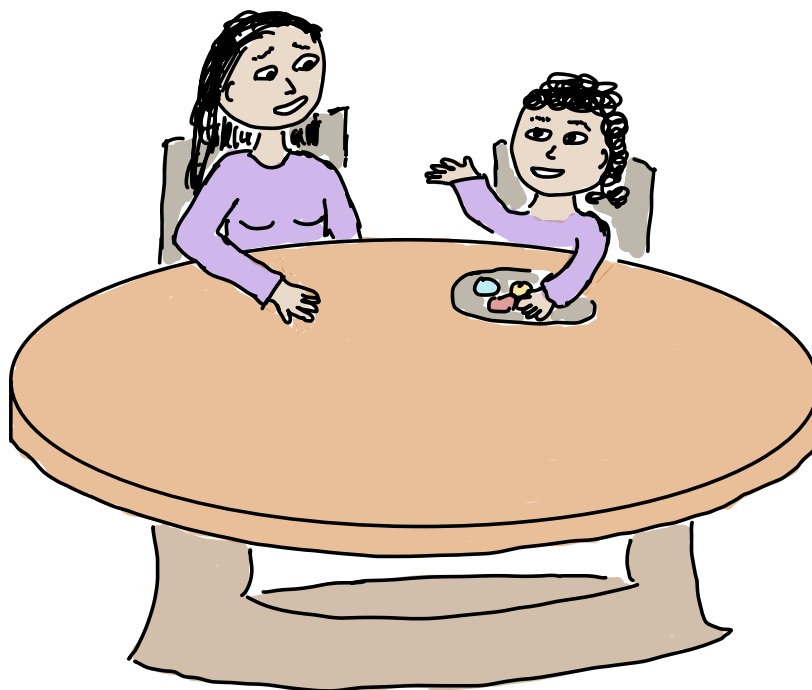
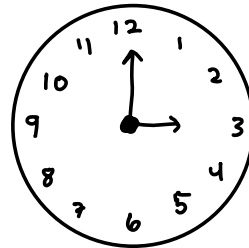
"It's just water and soap,
There's no need to complain!"



So I grumbled and washed them,
Then hopped off the stool...
And there was my snack!
My mom is so cool.

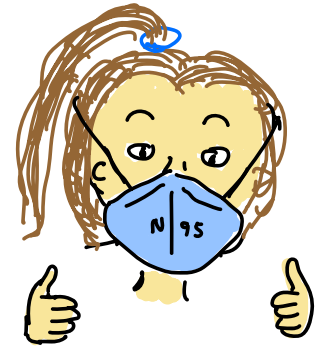
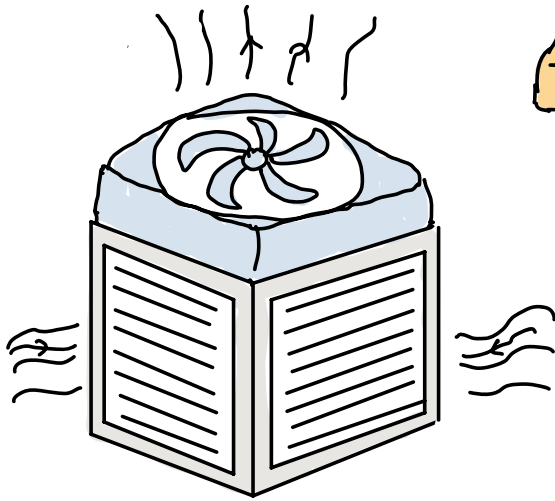
"I want to go back
To preschool," I declared,
"I miss all my friends,
And the things we all shared!"

"I know," said Mom,
"But we kept getting sick.
They stopped masks and testing
And well, it's just... ick."



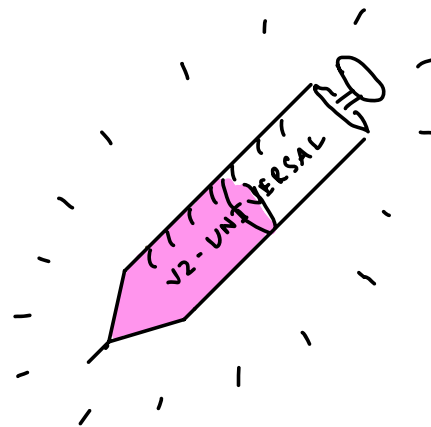
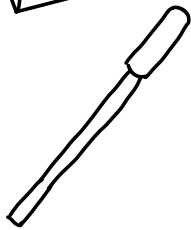
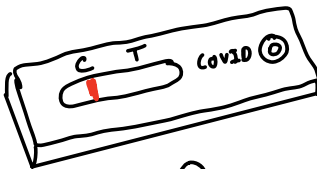
"So we're learning from home now,
And meeting safe friends!
And when you'll go back?
Ah well, that depends."

"If others start helping,

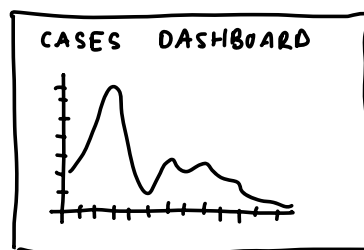


If school air is cleaned,

If shots are updated,

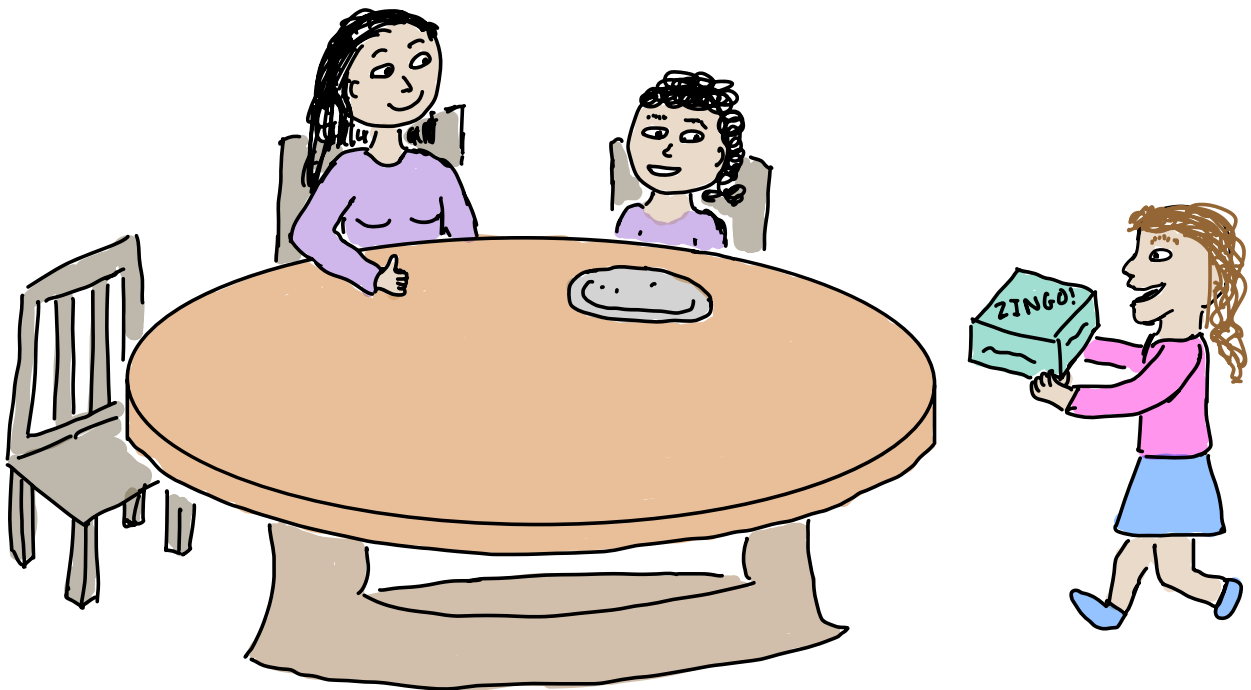


If the danger is seen - "



"Then we can do more,
But, well, not just yet,
We'll just have to keep fighting
'Til that's what we get!"

My sister came over.
"Hey Mom, that's a lot.
Can we play a game?"



And Mom said, "Why not?"