

# Mass Delusion: How It Happens and How to Protect Your Mind

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 13, 2022



A mass delusion, also known as mass formation or group psychosis, is when a group of people share a fixed false belief. The shared belief is irrational, and those who believe it are resistant, even hostile, to evidence that exposes the belief as untrue. Those who share a mass delusion often take irrational actions that are damaging to both themselves and others.

Psychologist Mattias Desmet has identified four factors that coalesce and contribute to the development of a mass delusion. Those who value the Bible will recognize these variables as those used by evil forces to oppose God and are part of Revelation's description of the rise of an abusive, beastly, end-time system.

The four factors that work together to create a shared delusional belief are:

**Factor 1: Loneliness and social disconnection from others.** Over the past half-century, several factors have contributed to a marked rise in loneliness and isolation. These include:

1. a godless worldview taught in public education, resulting in millions giving up on church and losing the various accompanying social networks;

2. the increase in digital social networks, which decrease real human contact and friendship;
3. the increase in remote employment.

My own view is that, rather than loneliness and social disconnection being the direct cause in making one vulnerable to a mass delusion, it is rather a lack of a developed sense of individuality. It is the need for social acceptance in order to feel complete. Loneliness and social isolation can be indicators, but for many, feeling lonely may not be present if they already belong to a group. The true root vulnerability is the lack of a healthy individuality and autonomy.

Elijah, who was often isolated and alone, would not have been vulnerable to mass delusion, because he had a well-developed sense of self, a personal relationship with God, and could tolerate societal rejection, including the rejection of religious and political leaders. People, whose sense of self is dependent upon the group to which they belong, may not feel lonely as long as they belong to the group and, therefore, may not recognize their vulnerability to mass delusion. But if the leadership of the group to which they belong accepts and promotes the delusion, such members of the group will likely accept the false belief, because not doing so would threaten membership in the group and would incite increased anxiety and other emotional distress. The parents of the blind man, whom Jesus healed, were vulnerable to this dynamic. Their identity, their sense of self, their emotional security were from being part of the orthodox system, and they were afraid of being called heretics by the religious leaders (John 9:18-23).

**Factor 2: Loss of meaning and purpose in life.** The godless worldview has not only undermined socioreligious connectivity, but it has also undermined a sense of purpose and meaning in life. If we evolved from lower life forms and are merely a cog in an evolutionary wheel, then what difference do our lives make? For millions, life seems futile and hopeless, nothing more than scraping out an existence. When life problems arise, they no longer turn to God, but experience helplessness, anxiety, and hopelessness. And this plays right into the next variable.

**Factor 3: A general sense of unrelenting and non-specific anxiety, worry, fear, and uneasiness.** Again, this is fueled by the godless worldview, isolation, and a lack of meaning and purpose. Humans are social beings and long for connection and belonging, but modern society is undermining healthy relationships. Mainstream media worsens the situation through its constant fear-inducing narrative of existential threats that are beyond an individual's ability to resolve — global warming, with all the potential destructive horrors (flooding of coastal cities, superstorms, catastrophic food shortages, etc.); economic collapse (inflation, increasing individual and national debt, limited good-paying jobs); and health threats (micro-organisms could kill you at any moment, more infections every day). No one is allowed to feel safe.

**Factor 4: Anger, frustration, irritation.** People don't like feeling anxious, and they don't like feeling helpless. These feelings lead to frustration, restlessness, irritation, and anger. We want to do something, anything, to make things better, to feel better, to be safe.

## **The Formation of a Mass Delusion**

When enough people in society experience these four factors with enough intensity, the group becomes vulnerable to forming a mass delusion. All that is needed is for some charismatic authority figure to present a focal point—a belief, typically some threat—that becomes a lightning rod for their fears, worries, anxiety, and sense of helplessness. The most vulnerable to this mass delusion immediately

latch on to the belief and begin sharing it. If the authority figure can gain significant media support, the false belief will be echoed rapidly, and more vulnerable people will embrace the delusion. Soon, a tipping point is reached and the delusion spreads exponentially throughout society.

The false belief serves the purpose of taking away vulnerable people's fears, giving them a focus that they can attack by engaging in one or more irrational behaviors, which makes them feel empowered (taking away the feeling of helplessness). Holding to a common false belief and the proscribed irrational behaviors, the delusional form a social identity (the "virtuous"). This makes the delusional feel connected (taking away the feeling of loneliness), and these deluded souls collaborate to spread their false belief to others (win converts) and force their irrational behaviors on others—all of which gives them a sense of purpose ("saving lives").

Evidence, truth, and facts that would normally expose the belief as false are denied, discounted, and resisted. This is because the purpose of the belief is not about the stated threat; rather, it's about resolving the underlying anxiety, loneliness, loss of meaning, and helplessness and giving those ensnared by the delusion a sense of community and purpose. Since people don't want to experience these negative feelings, they cling to the false belief and engage in irrational behaviors.

Those entangled in a mass delusion are almost always compelled by the group to share their false belief and seek to convert others to the cause. They will be angry at those who don't share their belief and will seek to punish them. This is a telltale difference between healthy beliefs and delusional ones. People with healthy beliefs will proselytize others, but they don't become angry if others refuse to accept their beliefs, nor do they seek to punish or coerce others who refuse to become converts. But since the delusional belief serves the purpose of containing their unconscious anxieties, the delusional are unable to tolerate dissidents. Opposing ideas cause anxiety and upset those caught up in the delusion; thus, opposing voices must be silenced. Normal societal tolerance of divergence of thought is soon labeled as heresy, science-denying, dangerous, and malevolent. Freedom of speech becomes restricted by public and private channels, and opposing facts, evidence, and perspectives are repressed.

Those who continue to expose the delusional belief as false are targeted for removal from society. In the Dark Ages and in totalitarian regimes, this is accomplished via imprisonment and execution. In our Western society, it is through digital and professional execution—deleting social media accounts (deplatforming), terminating from jobs, refusing to publish research, revoking professional licenses, etc.

## **Acolytes of Mass Delusion**

Interestingly, highly educated people appear to be more susceptible to mass delusion. This may be due to several factors—more awareness of existential threats and, thus, more anxiety. Higher education today is designed to breed godlessness, leading to less church attendance and the loss of a biblical worldview. Highly educated people may prioritize work over family and friends and, in turn, experience a greater sense of isolation. They may also have a greater sense of their own finiteness and limited ability to make meaningful changes in the world. But perhaps it is that professionals are more vulnerable to a professional group identity and, therefore, fear rejection by their peers and are more willing to accept professional authority rather than direct evidence.

Medical doctors seem particularly susceptible to medical mass delusion once medical authorities have embraced and promote a false belief. This is likely due to several factors. Healthcare is big business. More doctors work for corporations than are independent practitioners. Specialty societies,

credentialing boards, licensing boards, and insurance panels have worked together to regiment medical practice through various algorithms, protocols, and treatment guidelines. Many doctors are trained to think through the lens of protocols, rather than their own judgment. And the threat of malpractice further incentivizes doctors to stay in the middle of the pack and to not think outside the box.

One of the factors identified in people who are resistant to being caught up in mass delusion is the ability to think outside the box. People who have developed the ability to question authority, to examine evidence, to tolerate the criticism of others in their pursuit of truth, including their peers, are the ones who don't fall into mass delusion.

Currently, SARS-COV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) has created a worldwide mass delusion in which the perceived threat is out of proportion to the actual threat. Objectively speaking, to more than 99.5 percent of the population, COVID is not a life-threatening danger. It is no more serious a threat than any of the moderate influenza strains that have occurred in the past. It is much less of a threat than the Spanish flu of 1918.[\[1\]](#) Thus, the current fear level around COVID is delusional and serves the purpose of giving people a focus for their unresolved societal and existential anxieties.

Various societal leaders have used the pandemic to promote a false belief that is championed by the mainstream media; the vulnerable in society have embraced the belief, promote it, and advance it through their irrational behaviors upon others. Those who question the narrative, even with significant evidence, are seen as a threat and must be silenced. For example, doctors who have questioned the delusion have been deplatformed from social media, fired from hospitals, removed from professional networks, and threatened by their state boards with having their licenses revoked.

Here are some examples of irrational behaviors that make people feel like they are doing something meaningful, but which either have no positive effects or have measurable harmful effects, yet these irrational behaviors are still aggressively advanced and forced upon others:

- Community mask-wearing, indoor and/or outdoor
- Children being required to wear masks anywhere
- Restricting families from visiting loved ones in nursing homes, hospice, or hospitals
- Remote education (closing schools)
- Forced injections of a substance called a "vaccine," yet which does not prevent infection, spread, or reinfection
- Actively obstructing various inexpensive therapeutics

## **Overcoming a Mass Delusion**

It is important to understand the reason why many resist the truth and cling to the delusion: because the false belief insulates them from feeling lonely, helpless, hopeless, and purposeless. Taking away the false belief returns these intolerable feelings to the deluded and thus they resist truth and evidence. They resist scientific evidence of the non-virulent nature of the virus; the harm of school closing, mask-wearing, and social isolation; the ineffectiveness of experimental injections; and the benefit of inexpensive therapeutics—and worse they actively seek to coerce these irrational behaviors upon others.

But Christians are called to continually present truth in love. Here are some steps to stop the mass

delusion:

1. **Think for yourself and keep asking questions of others.** Don't believe anyone because of their office or on "authority." Watch the methods employed. Truth loses nothing by investigation and inquiry. If it can't be questioned, it isn't science—it is propaganda.
2. **Do not remain silent.** Voicing your concerns, raising questions, and sharing why you disagree slow the spread of the mass delusion. Others will stop and think and be influenced by hearing you calmly questioning the narrative.
3. **Advance real solutions for anxiety, loneliness, and meaninglessness.** Invite people to your church or Bible study. Advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. Point to the real hope for the future, which is our Savior.
4. **Practice the methods of God.** Present truth in love and leave others free to process and deal with the truth or not on their own terms. Never use violence, intimidation, force, or coercion. Stand for truth, but always do it peacefully, in love, and allow others to disagree.

[1] <https://swprs.org/studies-on-covid-19-lethality/#age>