

## Stranger Danger

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I often make trips to the grocery store for food, because I dabble in eating on occasion. Often, the store is riddled with strangers weaving in and out of aisles whom I constantly pass by eagerly collecting food off their lists. I can't help but try to stay out of their way because I worry I may be standing too close to someone, infringing on their space, or spending too much time looking at a particular food item another person wishes to take themselves. On the contrary, maybe *I'm* waiting for someone to grab an item and go, but my presence is stressful and intrusive on their decision. Worse yet, maybe I'm going down an aisle and someone's cart is taking up a lot of space, so I have to ask them to move it, but that's too direct, impolite, and possibly even startling. There's a number of things that could annoy someone, and I hope not to be one of them.

I believe I am a rational person. Typically, I function by removing myself from a situation to determine realistic truths. I deter my nerves at the first sign and think logically if what I surmise may be offensive realistically is. I weigh the factors of a situation looking for evidence explaining why something is or isn't insulting and whether or not my "fault" is significant enough for dwelling. I use this process to convince myself my thoughts are nonsensical so I can be comfortable conducting myself around strangers without fear.

I'm not one to complain of strangers' conduct because, well, they're strangers. It's not my place to correct them, I hardly know them! When intrusive thoughts run through my mind, I have to remember that to those strangers I am also just a stranger. We mutually see each other as

the unknown and it would take a lot more than an accidental cart bump to cause an outrage. I like to imagine I have two minds having a conversation, one being the irrational mind worried about what the amount of time one should look at bagels before it's weird and the other being the rational mind which dispels such thoughts with logic. Through my minds' discussion, they come to a sensible conclusion which helps me lead without worry because I have a concrete idea about why I was previously wrong.

Being rational isn't always about knowing the reasonable answer, it's about analyzing a situation to understand what thoughts are sensible and what thoughts are pure subjective worry. By taking a moment to reflect on what is going on along with what reaction makes sense to the situation, I can allow myself to understand that my overthinking simply isn't relevant. I can safely say I am not going to be scrutinized or hated by a stranger because there really isn't much to be mad about, unless of course you have a trigger for people who look at bagels over 30 seconds. In which case, go ham (or even bagels).