

# Random Thoughts 75

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## Cabin Fever

The current Covid-19 pandemic spreading uncontrollably throughout the world now is forcing governments to require or force their citizens to stay home. There still is not much known about this coronavirus other than it is spread by social contact. What is frightening about this disease is that an individual may appear to be asymptomatic<sup>1</sup> when in fact he or she may be infected. Such individuals unknowingly then spread the infection to whomever they come into contact. Thus, the emphasis on self-isolation and avoiding social contact. That has been the initial response of governments, but as the spread of the infection increases, often rapidly, stricter measures are now being enforced in the form of lockdowns. Cities and countries are closing their borders to travelers.

As a result of being forced to stay indoors with limited or no social contact, an increasing number of people are experiencing **cabin fever**<sup>2</sup>. That is not an actual fever, but a sensation of feeling claustrophobic<sup>3</sup> - the fear of being confined in a narrow, isolated space. In the far north, close to the Arctic Circle, the winters are very long and a person living in such an area, typically a small cabin, is forced to spend much of his time in that cabin. Isolated and often lacking utilities and other conveniences; there is very little to do other than read, if the person should be fortunate enough to have many books.

There is another expression to describe the frustration of being isolated in a small space and that is to go or become **stir-crazy**<sup>4</sup>. The word “stir” is slang for “prison”. You can easily imagine how being confined in a small, narrow cell<sup>5</sup> could be very uncomfortable and frustrating. It is probably even worse than being stuck in a cabin in the far north because at least in a cabin you can go outside whenever you like. In a prison cell that is not the case.

**Cabin fever** is used in any situation where a person feels confined and isolated. Sailors on submarines get **cabin fever**. It is also used in a wry, humorous way to refer to being bored, sitting at home with nothing to do.

While **cabin fever** is not a disease, it can cause someone to make irrational decisions that could potentially threaten their life or the life of the group with whom they are isolated. For example, it might cause someone to commit suicide<sup>6</sup>, become paranoid<sup>7</sup>, or go outdoors even though it is dangerous.

Let's avoid **cabin fever** by keeping in touch on Skype!

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<sup>1</sup> 無症候性の

<sup>2</sup> 閉所性発熱

<sup>3</sup> 閉所恐怖症

<sup>4</sup> ずっと出かけられなくてイライラしている

<sup>5</sup> 監房

<sup>6</sup> 自殺

<sup>7</sup> 偏執症的な、被害妄想をもった