

1 OPPOSITES ATTRACT



Isolation can inspire people, it's true. Many great ideas are a result of people being stuck indoors for one reason or another. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, for example, is believed to have been written as the author was sheltering indoors due to the consequences of a faraway volcanic eruption.

It is also no coincidence either that weather-beaten Scotland and Finland can lay claim to a huge number of inventions throughout their long history.

However, one Australian astrophysicist, Dr Daniel Reardon, does not really fit into the above creative category.

After learning that COVID-19 could be transmitted by touching your face with infected hands, Dr Reardon set about using his knowledge of pulsars and gravitational waves in order to invent a device that would help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Using powerful neodymium magnets attached to wristbands and a necklace, the gadget was designed to buzz every time your hand was tempted to go anywhere near your face; thus preventing you from transmitting the virus from your hands to your eyes or mouth.

Not a bad idea in theory it's true, but unfortunately it didn't out work exactly as this budding inventor wanted and he ended up scrapping the idea.

So, what does any PhD-qualified astrophysicist-cum-inventor do next? In his own eloquent words:

"I was still a bit bored, playing with the magnets. It's the same logic as clipping pegs to your ears.

I clipped them to my earlobes and then clipped them to my nostril, and things went downhill pretty quickly when I clipped the magnets to my other nostril."

Things went downhill indeed. Dr Reardon then placed two magnets inside his nostrils, and two on the skin on the outside. When he removed the magnets from the outside of

his nose, the two inside did as any good magnets would do, and got stuck to each other and simply wouldn't budge.

"After struggling for 20 minutes, I decided to Google the problem and found the solution was ... more magnets – to put on the outside to offset the pull from the ones inside."

He continues to explain his actions.

"As I was pulling downwards to try and remove the magnets, they clipped on to each other and I lost my grip. In addition, those two magnets ended up in my left nostril while the other one was in my right. At this point I ran out of magnets."

With the supply of magnets exhausted, he naturally turned to a pair of pliers to try to free the ones stuck up his nose.

"Every time I brought the pliers close to my nose, my entire nose would shift towards the pliers and then the pliers would stick to the magnet," he said. *"It was a little bit painful at this point."*

Fearing the incident would leave him looking like a modern-day Cyrano de Bergerac, he had no other choice but to go to the nearest hospital –where, incidentally, his partner works – to get the magnets taken out.

After having a good laugh at their colleague's partner, doctors finally removed the magnets, and in a possible medical first (at least where magnets are concerned and not vacuum cleaners) stated that the incident was due to *"isolation and boredom"*.

The official medical report from the hospital concluded with the words: *"denies difficulty breathing ... denies further magnets."*

