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Capturing Quarantine: Student Pandemic Experience Journal

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February 6, 2021

Riley Faulkner

Why Remember

As I was packing up my college apartment in March all I kept thinking to myself was that it would only last a short amount of time. I was saying goodbye to all my friends telling them that I would see them soon just to find out later that 'soon' was a long time away. At the time I did not know the severity of COVID-19 but was about to find out. As soon as more information started to circulate the world the seriousness of the pandemic started to hit hard. The emotions of fear, worry, and frustration circulated my mind daily. Nobody has the answer for when this pandemic will end or if it ever will.

Documenting this time is extremely important for a variety of reasons. It reminds us to never take advantage of the time that we have with loved ones. I never expected something to happen like this in my life, but it has shown me that we must expect the unexpected. It did not just affect a certain few, but it affected the entire population. Therefore, being able to collect different viewpoints from this time will help the world if this happens again in the future.

I think the voice of a college-student like myself, along with any student of any age is extremely important to be heard during this time. It all affected us differently, but also in the same way. The changes and adjustments that had to be made to the education system were tough to go through. All students had to do it though, making it a little easier, knowing we were all in it together. I think the perspective of somebody my age is crucial because we are in the middle of our adult-life. We have a lot of time to see how this world changes after the pandemic.

New Normal

Since the pandemic started there have been many changes made to my daily routine and life. For one, my overall environment has changed. Instead of living on my own at school, I came back home to live with my family. This was a drastic change that was hard to adjust back to after being independent for the past two years. Another big change that was hard to adjust to was slowing down my schedule. I am someone who always stays busy and is on the go. I think that's one thing that this pandemic made everyone do, which in my opinion wasn't a bad thing in the beginning. We all need to release ourselves from all the mental strain we carry from our busy day to day life. The pandemic forced us to all do this. Since things started to slow down during the pandemic, I really had to figure out ways to save me from going insane. One thing I started to do was help my mom cook dinner every night. This not only gave me something to do but helped me pick up a new skill. Something else I added to my routine was focusing more on what I was putting into my body, allowing me to create healthy eating habits. Once gyms started to open back up, I also started to get into the habit of working out to keep myself busy. Those were just some ways different things that I added to my routine to help myself in a positive way. Altogether, the pandemic has helped me pick up some new good habits.

Throughout this time period there were a lot of new challenges that I had to overcome, helping me grow as a person. Being alone a lot of the time was something we all had to face during this time. Although some days were tougher than others, I feel like I became a stronger person learning that being by myself and not surrounded by people all the time is okay. I also learned that we must really live in the present moment and not take advantage of the time we have with others. Instead of always worrying about what's to come, we need to enjoy what is happening right now. Since we spent so much time away from our loved ones, I learned to

appreciate the times I have with the people in my life, while I still have it. Those were some life changing things I really learned during the pandemic and I think many others did as well.

After One Year: How Has the Pandemic Changed You?

One year ago, today I was leaving school because we were being told to go home due to the new virus going around. My first initial thought was, "how bad can this really all be?". My answer now, a year later, would be "terribly bad". Everyone's world got completely flipped upside down without ever seeing something like this coming. We were living in this crazy unexpected movie that seemed never ending. I can truthfully say for the first time in a year I have hope. I have hope that these new vaccines will help us return to a somewhat normal lifestyle. Although, I know it will never be completely "normal" again, it will hopefully be better than it has been.

Just like many others, there were many adjustments I had to make to my life. The biggest being school. It was frustrating for not only myself, but my professors as well. We had to both learn a new way to go about education. It led to me taking a gap semester because I felt like paying the same tuition for my classes not being in person was ridiculous. Which led to me having a large amount of time off. This changed me as a person drastically. Being someone who is extremely organized and loves having a schedule, this was extremely difficult to adjust to. It helped me learn that not always going by the book or the societal construct of what order we think we should go in is okay. That had to have been my biggest takeaway from this whole experience.

Knowing that everyone had a skew thrown into their daily lives gave me reassurance that no matter what, we were all going to be okay and figure things out. We must expect the unexpected in life and this year was something that really taught me that. Taking the time off that I had brought me many other experiences I would never have been able to have if I hadn't given myself some time off. I learned a lot about myself spending so much time just being able to focus on that. Altogether, I feel like a much stronger individual now and hope to continue to grow from all this as time goes on.

Journal Entry #4

During this time of the pandemic there were many moments that I missed. When the stay-at-home order got put into place I felt so trapped and the lack of being in other people's presence was hard. Being an only child, I felt like I was losing my mind at home and as much as I love my parents, I needed other interactions with my friends and family. I soon came up with different ways to communicate by facetimeing or zoom calling groups of friends or family. I remember calling my friends and family everyday wishing I could see them in person. Being able to have in person face to face conversations is something I missed the most during the pandemic. I also felt like I was missing making incredible memories, as trips started to get canceled along with many more events I had planned. That was the toughest pill to swallow because I just felt like time was wasted. Lastly, starting at a new university and not being able to go experience everything was another challenging time. I keep thinking about who I could have met and all the new experiences in a different place I would have been having but could not at that moment. I am looking forward to getting back out into the world and making up for lost time.

Although, these have been some trying time there are many ways I look forward to spending my time in the near future. I look forward to seeing all the faces of the people I love and have missed so dearly. Being able to connect with people through those in person interactions is a feeling I cannot wait to have again. I also look forward to traveling the world as soon as places start to open back up. Travelling is something I am so passionate about because I want to see all of this beautiful and experience it while I can. Another activity I miss are concerts and live music. Being able to be in a place where the people there have a similar taste in music and are just as happy to be there as you are another feeling I look forward to having again. I know these things may not go exactly back to how they were before the pandemic, but any

variation is better than nothing at all and I look forward to seeing how that can be achieved.

Altogether, I cannot wait to enjoy the little and big things that life has to offer that I have not been able to do.

Journal Entry #5

Personal Timeline

Getting Sent Home from School Due to COVID-19 : March 21, 2020

On this day, I packed all my belongings up at my university and made my way back home. At this time the virus started to get profoundly serious as cases started to go up quickly in the U.S. After returning home I continued to finish my classes online via Zoom, which was a hard transition for both myself and my professors. Throughout the rest of March, I enjoyed the time I was able to spend with my family and the “break” I was getting from day-to-day life.

Stay at Home Order Gets Extended in Michigan : April 30, 2020

At this point I remember feeling so unmotivated and the days were starting to get harder. I just finished school and was going to be stuck at home for 3 months now. At this point everyone was starting to feel discouraged. I was ready to see my friends and family and get a job for the summer. These were all things that had to be put on pause. My Aunt had gotten COVID during this month but was able to recover fully.

Seeing some Family and Friends for the First Time : May 15, 2020

My mom and I started to drive by some family members and friends' homes to say some distanced hellos. It was so nice to see my loved ones' faces in person again after months. Although I know I could not hug them, it was a pleasant change from sitting at home. I started to work out at home and find other enjoyable activities to the time.

Started Working Again : June 3, 2020

On this day I remember starting a job for the summer while taking COVID precautions. I started nannying for a doctor, who was able to give some different insight into what was happening with the virus, which gave me some hope. During this time, I started to feel more productive and busier. Also, during this month, I remember starting to see some friends and family in person from a distance. This is when I started feeling a lot better.

Road Tripped to Colorado to See Friends and Family: July 15, 2020

This was the first trip I had taken since COVID and although we did not feel comfortable riding on a plane, we road tripped a full 20 hours. I was able to see some family members and friends during this time. Most of the time spent here was going on hikes and doing a lot of activities outside. This felt good compared to the previous months of sitting inside and doing nothing.

Transferring Colleges: August 20, 2020

I finally made the decision of what school I was going to transfer to after two years at a university in Michigan. I was super excited to go somewhere new and study the career pathway I wanted to go into. This decision took a lot of thought and consideration.

Changed My Mind on University Decision : September 10, 2020

During this time, I remember feeling very overwhelmed as I struggled to find a college that suited me. My original plans and university I enrolled in to start during this time was not a good fit for me, so I unenrolled and then chose Columbia Chicago. At this time, it was too late to enroll into the Fall semester, so I deferred to the Spring and decided to take a gap semester. I figured this was not the worst thing that I could do considering all my classes would be online anyways and having a break would be nice.

Moved to Hawaii: October 1, 2020

Since I had so much time on my hands and needed a change from staying at home since COVID hit I decided to move to Hawaii for about 2 months with some friends. We quarantined for two weeks when arriving. After quarantining we started to explore the beautiful island of Maui. Here I started to make new friends and find some small job opportunities.

Hawaii : November 15, 2020

During my stay in Maui, I met so many amazing souls and it opened my eyes to the beautiful world there was to explore. The island was still bare of tourists as COVID was still taking place and there were barely any new cases on the island since I arrived. I felt like I was living in a bubble while I was here, safe and protected.

Coming Back Home : December 1, 2020

After moving back home from Hawaii I started to feel unmotivated again, as my school semester at Columbia did not start until January. I got another job while I was back and started to make some plans for the future.

Starting at Columbia : January 25, 2021

After taking a semester off, getting back into the routine of taking classes was a little challenging, but soon felt normal again. During this month I started a new nanny job and was busy with school. Life started to feel more normal again, until I got COVID. Luckily, I did not have the virus badly, but made sure to stay home and quarantine until getting tested negative.

Went to Costa Rica : February 7, 2021

During this time, I traveled to Costa Rica with my best friend, while staying with a host family. We made sure to test negative before going, as well as when coming home. While classes were online my passion for traveling continued and I wanted to take advantage of this time. Here we were able to meet people from all over the world who were doing the same as us. We stayed with a host family we knew out there for a couple of nights and then hostels the rest. This trip was a fantastic experience, and I learned a lot while on it.

Came out to Chicago to Look for Housing : March 27, 2021

During this month I made my way out to Chicago to find the area I wanted to live in, while also looking for housing accommodations for the Fall 2021 semester. This was something that excited me because some of my classes for the following semester were in person.

Stayed Busy Working and Finishing Classes: April 1, 2021

This past month I have been extremely busy with finishing classes for the semester as well as working. I feel like life is starting to look a lot better, as vaccines are now out, and people are starting to feel a lot safer. I hope this allows more businesses to open and life to start to return to what it was before the virus.

Sixth Prompt

Riley Faulkner

May 5, 2021

Self Portrait

Who am I today?

I am a different individual than I was in March of 2020. I am different because of what the pandemic has helped me learn about myself. I have learned that I am capable of a lot more than I thought I was. I am stronger because of some of the experiences I went through over this past year. I am more independent because I have learned that being alone is a wonderful thing. I am more grateful because the pandemic has shown me we do not know what to expect in life.

I have had all these qualities, but this pandemic has allowed me to strengthen these parts of myself.

I am stronger, more independent, and forever grateful.

Strength

This awful virus has put many at their lowest points. It not only has taken away the beautiful lives of others, but it has taken much more from us. We have had to learn to be strong for our family and friends when someone we know has gotten this virus. We have had to love people a little extra during this time. Most of all we have had to help support those that were down on their luck because this pandemic took away their jobs. All these things have helped me become stronger for myself and the ones around me.

Independent

Through all the months stuck inside and all the isolation I had to endure. I have proved to myself that being alone can be nice. I have grown as a person because I have spent more time getting to know myself. I have learned some more things that I enjoy and some things I can get better at. I have been able to reflect on myself a lot more with all the time I have been able to spend time alone. I think that learning to be alone is one of the most important things to know how to do.

Grateful

This time has allowed me to feel grateful in so many ways. I was able to spend more time with my immediate family than normal. This time allowed us to bond a little bit more and have quality time together. I also feel grateful that both of my parents were able to continue to work during this time. Especially because many people lost their jobs during this time. I am more grateful when I get to see my family and friends now because you never know what could happen one day. I am also grateful for all the essential workers that put their lives on the line to continue to make this world go on. Altogether, during the pandemic there were a lot of things to be thankful for and appreciate a little bit more than before this all happened.

These past 14 months have changed me in many ways. It showed me that life is too short to worry about things that are not important and it taught me to always keep my loved ones close. This pandemic shaped my life in an especially important way.