

What the Pandemic Taught Me

Change is an imminent fact of human nature. It's scary, it's exciting and it is the driving factor that allows us to learn from the past, live for the present and await the future. Today, I think we like to place ourselves in two separate categories: the person I was before the pandemic and the person I am now. I wouldn't say that I am a completely different person, yet I do think that I was forced to grow as a person due to the circumstances of the world. However, I also will be the first to admit, I am not incredibly fond of change. Especially when that change is out of my control. I can't blame my shortcomings and attribute my successes to solely the pandemic, but rather the new outlook I was granted on life.

Before the pandemic, I was fairly comfortable with the way that I was living my life, not perfectly happy but more so simply content. I was surrounded by my friends, living in the city I love the most, and was attending a school studying my lifelong passion. The most important thing was that I was comfortable. I was at a point where I wasn't certain of what I wanted but was okay with where I was at. I would constantly remind myself of how far I had come in the past few years, and that was enough.

However, we know how the story goes.

Living through a major historical event is not something that you expect is going to happen, especially something that forces you to leave behind all that you know and love, and adjust to living in a world that has shut down completely. It's almost apocalyptic. And for someone who was absolutely terrified of the movie *2012* and still refuses to watch it even though it has been 10 years since its release, understanding the gravity of this pandemic was most certainly not something I was able to adjust to easily.

I am the type of person who likes to rationalize the issues that I face and tell myself that I'm not allowed to struggle because so many other people are going through the same thing. Zoom school, working from home, moving back to my hometown, leaving my friends and growing distant, experiencing heartbreak over a "relationship" that was forced into being completely online, feeling like I'm missing out on my 20's, it's all things I'm sure plenty of people experienced, and that's only to name a few. I can't single myself out as someone who dealt with these hardships during the pandemic because realistically just about everyone had to deal with these adjustments. I look at it this way, these are not problems but rather learning experiences and at the core taught me so much about the person I am and the person I want to be. Quite honestly, I feel shallow, that these were the lucky cards I was dealt during the pandemic. It could have been so much worse, but these lessons that I learned have made it clear to me that everything does happen for a reason.

The biggest realization I had during the pandemic was that I was wildly unhappy. I mistook comfortability for satisfaction. While it was difficult for me to come to terms with this, I had discovered I was no longer passionate about what I thought I loved the most, theatre. I spent my entire life wanting to pursue a career as a performer and to realize that I had lost the love and joy I once felt from theatre was equally heartbreaking and refreshing. It had become a burden on my life and the way that I treated myself for not living up to my own insanely high expectations was

unhealthy. I do believe the catalyst was “zoom school” but it is definitely not the reason as to why I knew I needed to change what I was doing. I realized I needed to involve myself in a field that I was *genuinely* passionate about and not something that I felt like I needed to do in the fear of feeling like I gave up. Making this change allowed me to discover my new passion in writing. I feel so much happier not only in the career path I am pursuing, but as a person too. I was able to shake the incessant need to be “perfect” all the time and not be so concerned about my future when the present was right there ripe with opportunity.