

*My Pandemic: What I've Learned So Far (again)*¹

Martin French

Over this past year [I've reached milestones](#)². I met my girlfriend Amy during the pandemic; we spent the day of January 6th together watching an insurrection. I wrote an album of music, which I don't like to tell people about because they inevitably ask to listen to it (or worse: not). But the theme of everyday of isolation, no matter what I do with the day, is I had done it already two years before. During the winter of the pandemic, I reached two years of sobriety.

Through the year I realized that the learning to live with the isolation in a pandemic was a lot like learning to live without drinking. We've had to rearrange our social lives and, more importantly, live *with* ourselves.

The [first days](#)³ of the pandemic were vacation. I saw my friends on little video screens as meetings moved online. After a little time, we had to figure out how to protect our Zoom meetings from people trying to bomb the meeting with porn...but after that it was smooth sailing. The world was filled with an overwhelming sentiment with which I was already very familiar: that getting through the day was worth celebrating.

It was the same lesson I had to learn in February of 2019. When the world gets bad, it's best to make it more digestible... maybe in units of days. I had decided that it was time to stop drinking. I made an appointment with a counselor to get into a program and get through the first months. Honestly, at that point I didn't know what the end goal was. If it was total sobriety or just learning to handle myself.

I sat in a basement office of a treatment facility looking at an intake counselor with a cardigan that whispered "professor" and a goatee that screamed "Nickleback". I told him about my history with drinking. At the end of my story, he looked across at me with a very practiced look.

"I think you're in the right place," he said. He crossed his legs, put his clipboard down, and sighed a big sigh. "Well, are you happy that you are here?"

I had to look at him hard.

¹ I realized at one point that I've already written about this time under the pandemic: I wrote music. I've attached my music files and indicated when they were written or what they were written about using footnotes.

² [You and Me \(Preamble\)](#)

³ [Dreary](#)

"Do you get a lot of 24-year-olds who are fucking stoked to be in the basement of a rehab?" I asked.

Apparently, he thought that was funnier than I did.

There are a lot of different bad situations that we as people get into, but the most consistently bad one is being lonely. I had been drinking myself into being lonely; the few friends I had no longer worked with my sober lifestyle. I had to make new friends. But I came out on the other side with the conviction that I had beaten that feeling with the connections I had made in sobriety.

When the pandemic hit, I was sure that my new, sober mental fortitude would guide me through without a problem.

I made it 4 months completely on my own before I had to leave my apartment. My beard was long and bright red. That old, lonely feeling was slipping back in. I was watching as friends of mine dropped out of contact. In my circle we were and are losing people to COVID without them catching [the disease](#)⁴. Being in the sober community meant that we had all suffered from an isolating disease and we recovered communally. COVID took that from us.

I did the adult thing and called my mom to pick me up (which is incidentally the same way that I got sober).

I was unkept with a long, [bright red beard](#)⁵ and over all kinda dirty looking. I finished the school term and returned to my apartment as things were lightening up a little. I got back into meetings, and eventually my [Dungeons and Dragons](#)⁶ group got back together on Zoom.

I had to remember what it was like in those early days without alcohol to rely on. I relied on everyone around me. COVID took away so many parts of our lives, but it did not take away the people who were willing to help. I reached out to friends, to my parents and my family. When I started dating [Amy, I could reach out to her](#)⁷.

This was my second time learning how hard it can be to live with myself, and both times I've had to come to the same conclusion: [sometimes it's not that we have to live with ourselves... it's that we get to live with other people](#)⁸.

⁴ [The Fall](#)

⁵ [Red Beard](#)

⁶ [Gala Waltz/Ular Theme](#) (Music for my D&D group)

⁷ [Between These Walls](#)

⁸ [You and Me](#)