**COVID-19**

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Two years ago, if someone would have told me that we would have a disease ravaging our planet only a few months later, I would have thought that they were insane. If only I knew how the quickly and drastically the world was about to change. I went from having no idea what a coronavirus is, how it spreads or even the potential signs or symptoms of a person that has contracted it, to reading about it every day in order to learn what I could about this disease in only a few short months. Myself, like everyone else in this world have been affected by COVID-19 in so many ways. From going to work, trying to maintain relationships to navigating an economic recession, my life has substantially changed since the outbreak of COVID-19.

I can still remember when I first heard news of this deadly virus that is spreading like wildfire through the modern world. Myself, like almost anyone else, didn’t know what to think. Would I end up getting sick, if so, how sick? Am I going to die? Are we really going to shut down the everything for two weeks? When will we have a vaccine? Questions about COVID-19 consumed me for a period of time after first hearing about this disease. As time passed and our health experts shed light on COVID-19, I was able to develop my own game plan in the rapidly changing world around me. Wash or sanitize my hands as often as possible and to don a mask were my first orders of business. I also had to be mindful of who I come in contact with or who I had been around since this outbreak started. Avoiding groups or gatherings outside of my immediate family stopped shortly after. I unfortunately suffer from an auto-immune disease of which, I take an immunosuppressant to treat. With my medical condition and what I take to treat it, I am at a disadvantage in fighting any disease compared to an otherwise healthy individual. Therefore, prioritizing my health at my workplace, in public and at home is paramount.

Very early 2020, with the world seemingly falling to pieces around us, my employer made the decision to allow anyone that wanted to work from home and had the ability to do so, do just that. Taking into consideration my health conditions, I quickly said yes to that generous offer. Once I figured out how to complete tasks through cyberspace that I would normally handle in person, such as training new employees or attending townhall meetings with our management team, the transition from an in-office position to a full-time work from home position came relatively simple.

The organization that I work for operates in and caters to the outdoor recreational space. Which has seen a gigantic boom in new customers since the beginning of COVID-19. With social distancing quickly becoming the new normal for the world, outdoor activities provided somewhat of a safe escape and a mental reset for those experiencing “lockdown fever.” Since the beginning of this pandemic our organization has grown tremendously, while so many other businesses have been shut down and for that I am extremely grateful. In a time where millions of people not only in the United States but around the world, were unemployed and having to rely on stimulus and unemployment benefits my employer was able to give bonuses and increased “COVID-19 wages” for every tenured employee.

In the past year and a half, I have had many things change in my life. Some have been good changes, such as taking part in growing the organization that I work for and picking up new hobbies. Some changes have been bad, like becoming distant with coworkers or seeing friends and family lose loved ones due to COVID-19. I have learned and evolved from these changes and will continue to do so. I hope that someday, preferably in the very near future, we can put COVID-19 behind us and return to somewhat of a normal world where we can rekindle old relationships, safely gather in large groups and repair the damages caused by this vicious disease.