**COVID-19**

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The coronavirus has impacted me, and my life in ways that I never could have thought or imagined. Being in college during a pandemic has been absolutely unideal. I think I am meant for better things in life than staring at walls waiting for time to go by, or for something to happen. I will never be more free in my life than right now. At this age, the world is my oyster. I should experience the freedom to be able to do anything. 2020 has made me realize that I am existing, and not living. I am not living up to my full potential, and I am wasting my youth away.

Being at college during the pandemic was so much harder than what I expected it to be. I did not think that making friends be as challenging as it was. With a face mask on, you are automatically so disconnected from people. I have learned to stress emphasis in my voice, rather than facial expressions to help communicate emotion. It is difficult to recognize familiar faces, or people that I have met earlier because I could not tell what people look liked anymore. I could not yell out to people because I was only fairly certain what their name is. People are not going around saying “hi” and introducing themselves to other people. At a time when I was surrounded by more people than ever before in my life, I felt more alone, and depressed than I have in years. Everything I was looking forward to, or felt excitement for, was not what I was expecting, or just did not happen. I do not think of myself to be “in college.” I consider myself to be an online school student. I am an out-of-state student, residing in my childhood home. When I think about being in college, I think about being in classes, living in a dorm or apartment, being with other people a lot. That is not my reality at all. The students at universities that are still operating, are so fortunate to be living a close enough life that they pictured for themselves. I am not a jealous person, but I am envious of the people whose lives have not been put on hold. I am genuinely mad at the universe

At my high school, they arranged times to get your temperature taken, and walk across a stage for a photo. It was absolutely unrewarding for all of the hard work and struggles I endured for four years. Graduating high school is supposed to feel rewarding, and happy. I mainly felt hatred for the deal of cards life has dealt me.

My feelings surrounding the disease changed from scared for my family, and the future. To resentful, and tired of hearing about it. I think that the disease was created as a population reduction, and a test. COVID-19 makes me wonder if we are living in a stimulation. I wish every day, that the past eight months have just been a dream, and that I have not been wasting my life away. I hope that this time has been a strange comatose dream. I hate what my life has turned to. My family owns a motor coach bus transportation company. The business was struggling before coronavirus had hit, now my family is selling everything they own to keep the lights on, and put food on the table. My sister is in rehab for the third time, she even tried to kill herself by running my car into another car. My dad’s alcoholism has never been worse. My grandma loses a little bit more of her ability to think every day.

Then there is me, who has to take care of everyone else, and be the sane one. I got really into a health regime that helped me to lose 45 pounds. Due to isolation, I have developed an eating disorder. It is terrifying to me how activities I once loved like working out, and eating healthy turned into self-inflicted punishment. I became obsessive about the nutrition in the foods I ate, and how much I moved my body. I felt I had nothing better to do, and pressured to use this time to become the best version of myself. Sure, I am the most fit, and beautiful I have been in my life, but mentally, I am not the same person I was at the start of the pandemic. I am so much more mindful now about my relationships, and I appreciate the people in my life more than ever before. I treasure the time I get to spend with other people. I have fallen in love with cooking, and became really good at it. I look forward to cooking every day, I love doing it for other people especially. It gives me validation that I do not think I hear enough of in my life. I fell in love with nature as well. The other evening, I was driving, and I cried because the sunset was so beautiful. I appreciate the little things in life, sunshine, smells, plants, bugs, and a clean environment. I used to despise doing the dishes, now when I look at a sink full of dishes, I see it as an activity.

The pandemic more than anything, has made me realize that I am the only one capable of making myself happy. Academically, I realized that I do not enjoy school, I only ever liked the social aspect of it. I want to do and experience everything life has to offer. I plan to transfer to a school in Florida because I genuinely feel as though I would be happier there. Happiness is what I am chasing and what coronavirus has taken from me.