**COVID-19**

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Department of English, East Carolina University

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Dr. Cheryl Dudasik-Wiggs

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Throughout this pandemic many people have complained that they have lost their social skills and that they are finding it harder to meet new people and make new friends. However, in my opinion, the people who have truly struggled are the shy, reserved, introverted ones who already had difficulties socializing without the added stresses of Covid-19. Being a shy and reserved person myself, I can honestly say that it has been very difficult maintaining old relationships and building new ones. This pandemic has only given me an excuse to further my shy nature and not go out in public, which in all honesty, endangers my ability to socialize like a normal person. However, that isn’t to say that I like being by myself; I have just enjoyed avoiding awkward social interactions. Meeting new people and making new friends have never been easy for me, though I am grateful for the few friends that I do make as they usually become my close friends. My receiving a reprieve from socialization has been one of the best and worst things to come out of this pandemic.

However, my hermit-like nature did put me at a disadvantage when college started after nearly five months of isolation. My already rusty social abilities were even worse after the quarantine and the added pressure of having no friends in a new environment was stress inducing to say the least. During high school, I never had to work my social skills very hard to make friends because I had gone to school with the same people for most of my life, so I was comfortable with them. Any other friends I made were through dance and therefore, already had something in common to talk about. Making friends in college, however, was much different than reminiscing over childhood fads or comparing ballet techniques. On my first night on campus, my roommate suggested that we go eat dinner with some of her friends and some others they had met. When being introduced to them, I suddenly remembered a scene from Pride and Prejudice that struck a little close to my situation. I finally understood what Mr. Darcy had felt during the first assembly in Meryton. I was too shy to speak up and my roommate had suddenly become my Mr. Bingley. She was the only person I knew well enough to start a conversation with; thus, she was the one I followed around like a puppy. She was always the more social and out-going one between the two of us, so it was no surprise to me that she got along so well with our new friends. I am sure I did not make the best impression on them as I’ve been told by my close friends that my resting face is impassive at the best of times and disdainful at the worst of times. Nonetheless, to my credit, I did try to keep the conversation going if there was a topic discussed that I could relate to. Alas, in the end, I believe I still came off as a little rude.  However, I think, or at least I hope, that I improved their opinion of me after we met for lunch a few more times over the course of the two weeks we were there.

Sadly, this pattern continued with the rest of the people I met in my classes or on campus. Most of the people I interacted with on the first day definitely thought I didn’t want anything to do with them when all I could think of was how to keep the conversation going without just trying to seem polite. The only person who seemed to understand me was a barista in a local coffee shop which I frequented a little too often. Thus are the woes of a shy human. Though my socialization skills are on the mend as in person interactions are beginning to increase once more, I believe there is still a long way to go before I, along with many others, will be even somewhat comfortable with casual interactions or making new friends.