April 11, 2021

Reflecting over the past 13 months, remembering how this has progressed from a blip on the radar to where I am right now, finally seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, it has been nothing short of turbulent. Personally, I have so much going on in my life on a daily basis. I have a full-time job, I am enrolled in a master’s degree program at ECU, I have two young children…the list goes on. I am not normally one to sit and reflect. I simply don’t have the time, it’s a waste of time, there are things to do etc. But right now, purposefully sitting and thinking about the last 13 months, it’s almost dizzying.

There is not an aspect of my life that was not impacted by COVID-19. My job, my studies, my family life, mental health etc. It was all-consuming. It first became “real” to me when my job shifted to work-from-home operations in March of 2020. It was the first personal impact the pandemic had on me. And it immediately heightened my anxieties. Soon after, my oldest child’s school shut down temporarily, ultimately shifting to virtual schooling. My youngest child’s daycare temporarily shut down. In addition to my other roles, I suddenly became part-time teacher to my daughter and childcare worker for my son. Stay-at-home orders soon followed, businesses shut down and I watched the COVID-19 cases rise on the news. I felt like everything in the world was now uncertain. Can my children catch this? Is my wife going to be safe at work (she was deemed essential as she works at a doctor’s office)? Will I lose my job? Will I ever see ground beef, toilet paper, Clorox wipes in the grocery store again? Can I go outside without a mask on? Do I have my mask with me? When will I see my Mom again? Things that were previously a given were now in question.

I now sit here fully vaccinated. A year after the start of this pandemic. And I’m 100% thankful for where my family and I stand right now. So, so many people saw devastating effects that I was spared from. My family is healthy, anxieties lowered as we learned more about COVID-19, my family stayed employed, no one contracted COVID-19, my studies continued, my kids are back at school/daycare…I could go on. It hasn’t been easy. I’m hopeful that I will remember the lessons that this pandemic taught me. Take nothing for granted, exercise patience, do my part to be a good citizen and many more. I’ve been more reminded of how fragile life can be and how life can be flipped upside down in no time. We are all more connected to each other than we may sometimes think, and I hope we all can move forward being more caring and empathetic towards each other.