

## My COVID-19 Experience

In the beginning of COVID-19, I recalled hearing stories in the news and reading articles related to the spread of the virus along with the symptoms some of the patients faced. I slowly became a little worried and feared that the spread of the virus would increase. In the back of my mind, the thoughts of the virus worsening slowly created a feeling of anxiety. The sensationalism in the media increased my attention to read and watch more stories related to the virus. When the virus was declared a pandemic in March, the closure of businesses created a loss of jobs and a hardship on the economy. Amidst the pandemic, I remained optimistic and hoped for the best. I knew I had to stay positive and be proactive in order to stay mentally and physically healthy. Despite the setbacks of COVID-19 to the economy, I had a good experience during the first and second waves of the virus: I enjoyed school from home, grew closer with my family, developed new hobbies, and started to see my close friends again.

In the first wave of March, I received an email from school regarding that classes are going to transition online. Initially, I was thrilled that the remainder of the semester was going to be online since I did not have to wake up early and commute to school three times a week. I no longer had to drive 20-30 minutes on the 405 Freeway there and back or find parking on campus. There were a lot of upsides of online classes: saving money from gas, spending less time and energy driving, and most importantly, staying safe from the virus. However, despite my initial excitement with the transition to virtual learning, I missed seeing my classmates that I grew closer with during the semester. I developed connections and friendships among some of the individuals in my major. I spent time with them studying for exams, grabbing a bite to eat, and attending clubs and events on campus, but unfortunately this all went away due to the virus. Instead, I had to communicate with them through text messages and Zoom calls. My initial

reaction towards classes transitioning to online did not change, I was excited that I did not have to commute to school, but I did become saddened that I could no longer see my classmates whom I grew closer to during the semester. With school transitioning to online, I increasingly spent more time at home with my family.

As the first wave of the virus continued, I carried on with my online classes and became more attentive to my family. My dad retired before the first wave and my oldest sister began to work from home. I did not work before the virus as I intended to focus solely on my education. With most of my family members being at home, we all spent more time near each other. Surprisingly, we did not bump heads or get into serious disagreements with one another especially with my mom whom I usually get into little bickers with. My family and I were aware that this was a stressful time and knew that we had to get along in order to stay sane. I noticed that my sisters became nicer to me, we went on daily walks together and had more conversations. I started to appreciate my middle sister more when we found out she had to work in COVID-unit at her hospital. She was transferred to work in the COVID-unit due to the increase of infections. She tended to COVID-positive patients at work while still living at home with our family. During this, I was not worried about the chance of the virus transmitting to her or to us since I knew she was following safety procedures and strict protocols at the hospital. As I grew even more closer with my family, I remained in self-isolation at home and developed new hobbies.

During the transition to the next wave of the virus, I continued to stay at home and developed new hobbies. One of the hobbies included organizing my room, this became an activity I now enjoy. Before I saw cleaning my room as a tedious chore, but as the stay-at-home orders carried on, I found cleaning my room therapeutic. I developed the habit to wash my sheets every other week and make my bed everyday. I realized that making my bed before I start my

day allows me to feel productive and bring energy to the room as opposed to a messy, unmade bed. As I knew I was going to spend more time in my bedroom due to the virus, I wanted to minimize the objects in my bedroom to appear less cluttering and more open. Most of the objects that were on my desk and dresser, I stored in closed areas such as the drawers in my desk and the shelves in my closet. By doing this, it helped me relax and feel better about the current situation going on. Organizing became a hobby I enjoy as the stay-at-home orders continued. Cooking and making meals became another hobby I developed during self-isolation. I started to pay more attention to how my mom prepares and makes meals for our family and I began to help her. We made homemade pizzas in the oven and chopped fresh vegetables as our toppings. I helped my dad season and grill steak and vegetable skewers. Although some of the meals I made were quite simple and easy, I found it enjoyable to create my own dishes. As the second wave of the virus began, I carried on with my new hobbies and began to slowly see my friends again as lockdown measures started to decrease.

Furthermore, when businesses slowly began opening up again and lockdown measures were lowered during the second wave of the virus, I started to hang out with my close friends again. I still kept in contact with my friends through text messaging and social media apps before lockdown restrictions lowered, but seeing them in-person and going out to places again was memorable and noteworthy. I went camping for the first time in the Sierra National Forest with a small group of friends. I never experienced sleeping in a tent or staying in a remote location for a few days with no running water or electricity. I adjusted to the outdoors setting and followed my friends who are experienced campers. We went on a scenic hike and took moments to appreciate the nature around us and reflect on ourselves. It was an unforgettable experience that will remain a memory that I will hold onto for a lifetime. I also took a few more trips to San Diego,

Coronado Island, and Palm Springs during the second wave of the virus. Finally turning 21 this year in the middle of the pandemic, I went to my first bar in San Diego and enjoyed an IPA and sangria. It was exciting to see the nightlife in downtown San Diego with the bars and restaurants opened for outdoor dining and drinking. Since the virus, I stayed in my first hotel in Coronado Island next to the beach. It was idyllic and picturesque and felt tranquilizing being away from LA for a few days. During the second wave of the virus, I went on more road trips and mini-vacations with my friends than before in a period of two months. As the virus continues, I am still visiting and spending time with my friends and going to restaurants and stores that reopened.

Overall, I remained optimistic during the pandemic and gained a positive experience out of it. The transition to virtual learning made me enjoy doing school from home. I saved money on gas from commuting to school and I did not have to worry about finding parking on campus. Some of my in-person classes turned asynchronous which allowed me to study on my own time and alleviated my stress. Since classes were online, I was at home more often and spent more quality time with my family. As the first wave continued, I grew closer to my older siblings and my parents. During the transition to the next wave, I remained self-isolated and developed new hobbies. I took on the activity of organizing and turned my room into a minimalist setting. I started to cook and learn how to make different meals and dishes. When it came to the second wave of the virus, business began to slowly open up and I started to go out with my friends again. We visited different cities across SoCal and ate at restaurants and bars. I made long-lasting memories and experiences with my close friends during the summer of COVID-19. In spite of the downturn of COVID-19, I remained optimistic and created a positive experience throughout the pandemic.