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## "My Covid Experience"

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Life has changed considerably through this time of the Pandemic. Everything officially began closing down on Friday, March 13, my sister's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had joked about her birthday being on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and what that could mean. Who would have thought that our get together that day would be the last time many of us would see each other in person. I'm glad her friends got to come to her party, because school closed down soon afterwards and she hasn't gotten to see them since. Personally, I didn't have too many friends in my classes so I didn't miss much, besides a few people I was sad I wouldn't see again. That's how college works sometimes, you make friends and then never have another class with them again. Now everything is on Zoom, and most of the time there are no zoom sessions at all or everyone has their camera off anyways.

My biggest struggle was having the technology necessary to do class online. Once the pandemic started and everyone began to work from home, microphones and video cameras became scarce very quickly. This was not good for me, as the laptop I had didn't have either feature working. Some classes, most notably my math class, required the lockdown browser, a camera, and I believe a microphone to be on. I didn't have a working camera and microphone. My sister had a chromebook from her school that had both working, but for some reason chromebooks and lockdown browser aren't compatible. I ended up having to borrow my boyfriend's laptop for the end of winter quarter and the entire spring quarter. I was lucky that I found that option.

I got a grant for the fall semester so I was able to purchase a new laptop with a microphone and camera, and a printer. Those things have made it so much easier for me to do online classes. Having to take certain tests and do certain assignments without access to the school library printers was very difficult during the spring quarter. It was easier to afford them though, since I don't have to pay for gas to get to and from school every day, which does add a lot to my expense list. A bit of a silver lining in this difficult time. I say difficult not because of life in general (though it was in the beginning when stores were picked clean) but because I, like many other students I've talked to, find it difficult to keep up with classes when we don't go in person. I find it easy to get behind and forget about projects and assignments when we aren't reminded about them in class. We are expected now to keep up with the syllabus and find what is due, when it's due, and just hope that we don't miss anything important because we didn't see it to know it even existed. I always worry that I'm missing something.

There is also the trouble of having a reliable internet connection at home. I had one test in the spring that was very important- it was one of those tests that we had to pass to pass the class, and that was the last time that class was going to be offered before everything changed for the semester system. Well, it would have been offered in the summer but I would have had to pay almost \$1,000 for one class and I didn't want to do that. I had taken most of the test, and I was doing well on it. I had borrowed a good working laptop so I could take this specific test, and I had studied and was confident that I would pass it this time. Close to the end however, the internet in my entire city went out. I didn't know it at the time, but Charter Spectrum internet went down, taking down even the stores POS systems in my area. I started panicking immediately, I almost started crying, I felt like all the work I had done that quarter was for nothing if I didn't get credit for this test. My sister's phone Hotspot got me back online but I lost so much time.... I had a friend in the class who said she immediately started crying when her internet went out because she was just as confused as I was. It is things like that that make online testing all the more stressful. I think that's why many people have decided not to continue with school for the time being. It is just too hard for many people to control themselves when it comes to taking classes online. It is hard to stay focused, to stay motivated, to keep on task and on top of everything you have to do.

If you also work along with doing school, it is even more stressful. A lot of people were put out of work when everything started. A place I worked at a few years ago completely shut down and went out of business. I feel bad for all my old coworkers who were there for so long and got the rug pulled out from under them so suddenly. I work at a grocery store now, and you can only imagine how crazy it was at grocery stores in the beginning. Everyone was angry all the time. The phone was going off constantly with people asking if we had beans, rice, flour, yeast, milk, eggs, meat, water, people getting so angry that we had limits on how much of each of those things they were allowed to get. And of course the toilet paper, hand sanitizer and paper towels. No, we don't have any, no we don't know when we are going to get more, I'm sorry I know it's all gone, it's just not coming in....there was the stress of deep cleaning the store constantly, stopping people from coming inside when the store hit pandemic capacity, making sure they wore masks and getting yelled at by people who refused. We were lucky to have jobs, yes, but it was very difficult dealing with so much anger and panic when there was nothing we could do to help it. All we could do was be there. Things are better now though. I am writing this in early October, and I'm glad to finally see plenty of food back on our shelves. There's a bit too much hand sanitizer and toilet paper hanging around now, but it's better to have too much than too little when the threat is still in the air.

I am happy to be graduating this December. However, as a person who is trying to go into elementary education, I worry about the process of obtaining a credential when schools are closed and we can't do our in-class portion of the program. How do we teach future teachers to teach in the classroom when there is currently no classroom?

With all the negatives present, I guess it is good to also think of the positive impact the quarantine has had on some people. I think it is easier to save money when stores aren't open and we can't go out as much. When those things we normally blow money on are closed, we have nothing to spend it on so it just stays in the account. At least that is how it was in the beginning. A lot of people have learned new skills like cooking, baking or carpentry. Home Depot and Lowes had such long lines because people finally had the time to work on their homes and yards. My sister started what seems like a small tropical forest in our house...we have become huge plant parents in the last six months. It is good to have the time to start enjoying a new hobby. It's not great that it's forced time, but we do what we can with what we are given.