

My first year of college has been a very full experience. There have been periods where it has felt as though too much is going on and is to come. At the start of the year, it was hard being separated from home. I am very close with my younger siblings and it felt devastating not being able to hug them after school or see them. And as I stayed here and talked with them on the phone I realized they are doing okay, and that they are growing up too. Just as i have developed so i can be at this stage of my life, they've done the same for their ages too. Coming to terms with that helped me accept our relationship is still there and we still love each other just as much as we did before, circumstances just had to change and that was okay. It was also tough because my grandfather was put on hospice and moved in with my immediate family at the end of September of 2020. Because of that, it was hard being here and feeling like I was missing his last little bit of time he had left, but again, I had to think about it from a different angle. He wanted me to get an education and be successful. Ever since I was four years old he has been encouraging me to go to school and he always told me I should seize opportunities when I am presented with them. Plus I have so many good memories of him that I didn't want to remember him any other way. It was a very hard decision, but ultimately he passed in November and it was just nice to know he wasn't in pain anymore. Being here has taught me I need to do things to maintain my own health. I also got treatment for mental illness for the first time and am working to improve my symptoms from bipolar 1 and general anxiety. I also never had a diagnosis until October of 2020 so that guided me a lot in understanding why somethings are so much harder for me than others, and working on solutions to curve that. So far it has been going well, although I have trouble every now and again. However, I know to pick myself back up and work through problems now rather than to let them build. That was something I have always struggled with.

Michael Mallum