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Documenting my Experience

When I think of my time dealing with the pandemic of COVID 19 in my head, I visualize a timeline of the events that occurred through it and how I feel as I have gone through stages. The best way to describe this experience would be by telling a story of all the things that happened. I can then explain the feeling that I had during those specific times.

My knowledge of this disease started at the end of January 2020 and the beginning of February. It started when I heard on the news ( news pages on Facebook) that a new virus broke out in China. At this time, there was no fear that it would affect our lives in America. No one worried about it and didn't think that it would alter our lives the way it did. Towards the end of February, more talk of this started to surface as the disease spread to other countries. Cases of this disease were happening in the United States as well. I still wasn't super concerned about it, not because I didn't realize it was happening, but in my head, I was thinking there wasn't much chance of this affecting my life in any way. I was more concerned with school work and my life in general.

As a sophomore college student at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, I was away from home and accustomed to that lifestyle. I was focused on my grades and friends. I was also just a bit hesitant to worry about the disease because often, news can get blown out of proportion.

The beginning of March was when I recognized the disease was getting more serious. The government was starting to warn about gathering in large groups and making sure that we sanitize. It was about the second week of March when people began to get concerned. The idea

of canceling school for a couple of weeks was in the air. People were wondering if that would happen. University of Wisconsin Eau Claire has a Meme page for students that go to school there. People make up memes and post them on Facebook, and people can go and like them. Sometimes they are memes that are just funny by making fun of things at our school, or sometimes it is about political things happening on campus. I find the meme page to be a resource to find out information on what's going on around campus by watching which items become popular or begin trending. In the middle of March, many memes were about canceling school because of the virus. Other Universities were canceling. Eau Claire was one of the last schools to declare that they were extending spring break. I remember the exact moment when I got the email, though, that we were going to cancel classes. I was in my dorm room and received the email. At this time, I was excited because I was getting a little homesick and was excited to go home and see my family. I was stressed from school at this time and had a big project that was due soon. That project due date changed because of Corona. I was a bit excited about this because, in my mind, I thought that this was going to be an extension of spring break, and then our lives would go back to normal, that the disease would eventually pass over. I called up one of my best friends on FaceTime, and we were talking about when we would pack our bags to go home.

I went home that week to my small hometown of Muscoda, WI, with 1000 people living there. I was happy to see my family. We discussed how this was so strange that I was home. We were dumbfounded by the events that were happening. It didn't feel real; it felt as if we were in a movie. Things at this time were not extreme; I still remember going into restaurants. Everything was just very cautious, and sanitizing was a huge deal. At this time, wearing masks was not a

huge concern. The following week which would have been the week of March 23rd was our original Spring break. I was working for my dad's engineering company doing road surveys. I was only with three other people, but we all kind of had a feeling that we shouldn't be around each other. If we needed to get lunch for work or go to the bathroom, we went to gas stations because that was one of the only places that were allowing people in them. Around this time, I received an email from school saying we need to move out of the dorms. People were not allowed to live there for the rest of the semester unless given permission from the University. My mom, best friend, and I went to Eau Claire and moved out all of my things. I had to say goodbye to my roommate, who was luckily still in Eau Claire at this time. I was not able to say goodbye to my other friends. The University made a schedule of when people could move out so that the whole school wasn't moving out at the same time. My other friends did not sign up at the same time, so I didn't get to say goodbye.

Around this time, people were starting to freak out a bit. Everyone was going to stores and buying items in bulk. One of the things that got a lot of coverage was toilet paper. Stores were out of their stock! My mom had gone to Walmart and said that most of the aisles were empty because people were buying everything in mass amounts. Wearing masks in public was being taken very seriously. Some places would not let you in if you were not wearing one.

Eventually, only the essential businesses were allowed to be open. This caused many small businesses to be closed and left a lot of people without jobs for months. In April and May, I worked on homework all the time. My classes had to transition to going online. I pretty much stayed in my room for the majority of the duration of the quarantine. I Snapchatted my friends a lot and talked to my family, but that was about all of the interactions I had with other people. I

honestly was going stir crazy. I had never experienced such boredom before. Even though I had so much school work, I didn't do anything fun or entertaining. I missed being with my friends so much. School eventually just turned into handing in assignments before the due date. I didn't feel like I was learning any new knowledge at all. After this, we had finals and summer vacation where I worked and stayed inside most of the time. I did go out and see my friends a bit more but it was not back to normal.

During the summer my mom got Covid. She started to have a headache and was not feeling well. She went and got a test and instantly quarantined herself in one of our spare rooms. I didn't see her at all. After a week she got her results back saying that they were positive. The illness lasted about two weeks. She got all the symptoms associated with the disease. My family and I also had to quarantine lucky the rest of us did not get it. School started again in September. I was living in a house with my roommates back in Eau Claire. All of my classes were online other than one was a hybrid class where I went in person one day a week. Online school is hard and it can be draining to stay in one place for months. I'm looking forward to when the vaccination will be out. There are reports of one coming out in 2021. This story was my experience with COVID 19. Everybody had their own experience with this disease, but this was mine.

