

Transcript

Interviewee: Jody Pabich

Interviewer: Katie Johnson

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Abstract

Jody Pabich lives in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin and works as a senior safety manager at the corporate office of a nationwide big box retailer. Jody directly handled all of the COVID-19 protocols for her company across the country, and talks about how counties, states, and the country have been handling the pandemic differently. She explains how her family and friends have dealt with COVID-19, addressing health concerns about her daughter, mental health concerns about her friends, and the politics and distrust of media. She describes how her community has come together to support each other and local businesses. She also discusses her experience with and concerns about the vaccines. She talks about how her experiences have made her value life and experiences more than she did before COVID-19.

Katie Johnson 0:03

Here we go. Hello, my name is Katie Johnson and it is 11:04 am on April 27, 2021. As of today, there has been 31, 883, 289 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the US, with 569,272 deaths. In Wisconsin, there has been 595,049 cases with 6,756 deaths. Forty two point five percent of the US has had one dose of a vaccine, and 28.5 percent of Americans have been [fully] vaccinated. So, hi Jody.

Jody Pabich 0:41

Hi.

KJ 0:42

Can you introduce yourself and do you mind sharing some demographic information about yourself?

JP 0:48

Sure, sure. Hi, my name is Jody Pabich. I actually live in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Um, I'm 52 years old, mother of a soon to be 16 year old, I'm married. I'm originally from Rhinelander,

Wisconsin. Came to college and graduated many years ago from the university of Eau Claire, with a psychology degree. Currently, I am a senior safety manager for a big box retailer, and I've been doing that work for five years at this retailer, but I have previous twenty plus years at another retailer. And what else would you like to know?

KJ 1:41

No, that's good. So jumping right in, what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis?

JP 1:50

Well, I'll talk a little about what I do as a senior safety manager, and then if you want to know some personal things, I can go into that as well. But as a safety manager, as I'm sure you're well aware, Covid has been my life for- since the beginning. What I do for my company is that I- you know, my job is to make sure all of our employees and customers stay safe. And so making sure they don't- well, doing my best to protect them from Covid has been a major overwhelming part of my life for the past year and a few months. So I write all of the S.O.P.s, or Standard Operating Procedures, as it relates to safety or the company. I write trainings that our employees take in relation to injury prevention, all of that, but now also some Covid training that we had to write as well. I visit stores, to make sure that the things we develop at the corporate office are actually implemented out in the stores. I facilitate trainings with, like, new general managers for our stores to make sure that they have a good understanding of safety. And I really collaborate with a lot of internal partners as well, in relation to like, the merchandise displays that we put in stores, making sure that they're safe. If we have any kind of crisis in a store, like a fire or a flood or tornadoes or any of that, I'm involved with that work as well. That's just a high level overview of what I do for my job.

KJ 3:55

Okay, awesome. So where do you live right now and what is it like to live there, and how has that changed over the past, like, 14 months or so?

JP 4:05

So as I mentioned, I live in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, which is- almost like a suburb of Eau Claire, right? It's a nice small community. And how has it changed? You know, well, through Covid, I mean, we were home so much. And thankfully- thankfully, for me, we actually last year were able to, right when Covid kinda started, we bought a new house, which happens to be on a lake, on Lake Wissota in Chippewa Falls. So we were pretty lucky in the sense that, you know, being on the lake, having a boat, allowed us to have some freedom and go out and not be cooped up all of the time. But certainly, some of the things that we were used to doing, places that we would normally go, shopping, restauranting, all of that. Because Chippewa Falls is just a great, unique place, and it has really, you know, fun restaurants, fun bars, all of that. We really stayed home, and we really tried to avoid big gatherings so that we wouldn't get Covid. And my daughter has- was born with a heart condition, so she's considered a vulnerable person, and so as parents, we needed to be responsible, even though we weren't feeling- might've felt safe, we still certainly didn't want to do anything that would put my daughter at jeopardy. So a lot of things

have changed and then, I'm sure we're gonna talk about it, but you know, schooling and all of that.

KJ 5:58

Yes, I will definitely be talking about family life and all of that.

JP 6:02

Yes.

KJ 6:03

So when we first learned about Covid, what were your thoughts about it? And how it would go, and how long it would last and everything?

JP 6:12

Yeah. So for my job, like if we had a case of measles in the store or tuberculosis, something like that, I was one of the people that would deal with that. And, you know, when you have something like that happen, it- you investigate it, you deal with it, and you kinda move on quickly. And there was just so many unknowns with Covid. And I happened to be on call the week that things really started to change. And we were getting calls from employees that were really, really scared. And they didn't know what they didn't know, right? I touched something that touched something that I think someone has Covid. And you know, do you- how you make that person feel better? Should we overreact? What is the right thing to do, because if you remember in the beginning, we didn't know how people caught it, we didn't know if it lived on this coffee cup or- we didn't even know if the products that we were bringing in from China and all these other places, did you have to wipe down boxes that came off freighters and- So there was just a lot of misinformation. There was a lot of collaboration, I would say, at my workplace, just because we were all in the same boat. Nobody was an expert. You know typically somebody kinda knows, you gather all your people together and somebody's usually like well I'm not- I really know a lot about this topic. Nobody knew anything. Everything we were getting was spoonfed from the CDC (Center for Disease Control), so- and it still was very grey, you know. How- if someone in the workplace does have Covid, does that mean you need to shut down the facility right away? Does that mean everyone else is at risk? There was just so much unknown. So it was really quite a tumultuous time, I would say that. And then coupled with, you know, then trying to do what you need to do for work, and meanwhile at home, everyone is really nervous too, right? Like your parents and your neighbors and your friends, and it was certainly- I'm not alone in that it- it was a very scary time, but frankly in my job, I have to kind of be the voice of calm. You can't- if I panic, everybody's gonna panic. So [laughs] we have to- just try to get the facts, and that's simply all we were really trying to do, was make the best decisions in the moment. And a lot of times we would err on the side of overreacting as- instead of underreacting, because we never wanted to look back and say we didn't do enough. I hope it paints a picture of my mindset about a year and some odd months ago. March.

KJ 9:34

Yeah, exactly. So, compare that to now. How do you feel now, and how have your reactions to it changed, how has your company's reactions changed? If you can talk a little bit about that.

JP 9:46

Yeah, sure. Well as sad as this is to say, I think we got it- we've got a rhythm. We have a way that we deal with employee cases. We have a way that we deal with sanitation and cleaning and all of that, that of course we scrambled to figure out in the beginning. We've got kinda that down pat. We've had to deal with a lot of government agencies, such as OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), health department, mandates from governors saying you have to do this, this, this, this, this, to operate your buildings. So I feel like it's never over, we're certainly not over yet, but we are- there is a level of calm, in how we deal with things. It's very- you know, it's as strategic as it can be when things still change from the CDC or, you know, cases may go up up for a week and then come back down. But we really are on kinda the downturn now, so things are much more calm. Things aren't- even as far as work, we were- we gotta get this [snaps fingers] done, people are freaking out, we gotta have like instructions, quickly. We've gotta get masks quickly. We've gotta get sanitizers in the stores quickly. Now, it's kind of all baked out. At this point, what we're doing is we're following CDC guidelines, to see if there's anything we can maybe dial back on a little bit. And how do we, you know, take the new guidance, follow mandates, be still in compliance with government agencies, but how do we kinda get back to a new normal? So that's kinda where we're at now. A much more peaceful place.

KJ 11:39

Yes, absolutely. And then what issues have concerned you the most about the Covid 19 pandemic over the past 14 or so months?

JP 11:48

Hm. What issues have concerned me the most?

KJ 11:53

Yeah, it can be related to your job, to your family.

JP 11:55

Sure.

KJ 11:57

Anything.

JP 11:58

Sure. Well, I'll start with my family. I think my main concern- I've never- I've never felt concerned for my own self. For some reason, you know, probably most people are like I'm fine. But you know, I worry about my parents, who are older. So I've worried about making sure they don't get it so that they stay healthy. And then as I mentioned, my daughter. You know, making

sure she's healthy, Covid free, but also mentally healthy! And you know, being out of school and not being with her friends, for someone who is- you know, she's an only child, so socialization is pretty important and she's got a great social networks. And thank goodness for phones right now, because the kids were pretty able to at least stay in touch. But you know, making it not feel like it's the end of the world when all the scary stuff was happening, and being like the- trying to stay calm for your kid, it's kind of a heavy burden. And then on the flip side, with work. I mean, my main concern was, you know, were we gonna be able to keep the company afloat in the crisis, where we were having a lot of people sometimes, in locations, be- come out with positive diagnoses. And then I think to is just keeping the rest of the employees calm. Because when you- even if you have a positive case, there's still so much- there was still so much misinformation that everybody would freak out, even if they had had no contact with someone. So there was just- you know, trying to get the right information out there, keeping our employees safe, and then also making our customers feel like our stores were safe to go back in and shop. Because at the end of the day, if we weren't able to manage that, the company may not have survived. And that- you know that would've affect the overall economy as well as my personal life, right? And many others. A lot of concerns.

KJ 14:22

Moving on towards your job, what concerns do you have about the effects of Covid-19 on your employment and the economy more broadly? So kind of going off your last point.

JP 14:36

Yeah. Well, I feel, as a safety manager, I never want to ever say I have job security, because there's- you should never say that. They can always find someone else to replace you, right? But I think during Covid, safety managers as an industry has never been talked about more. So in that regard, I think that the work that we did as a safety team was very well regarded and very needed and I think we did a really great job. And even in our company, you know, meeting people that maybe I had never even met before, but now they needed me to help them maybe write a SOP for their area of the business so that they could stay safe. Even if it was a little outside my wheelhouse. So I think- I kind of lost my train of thought on what the question that you asked.

KJ 15:45

[laughs] So the question was what concerns did you have about the effects of Covid 19 on your employment and then the economy, more broadly.

JP 15:53

Yeah. And so- I feel, right now, good about my employment.

KJ 16:00

That's good.

JP 16:01

I'm not worried that all of a sudden, safety managers are gonna go away. So I feel like as an industry, we're probably in a pretty good place. As far as the economy goes, I'm feeling like things are on the upswing? But it was pretty scary there for a while, when people weren't able to manage their own- if they owned a business or you know, I don't like seeing other stores close. I don't like seeing other- any- restaurants closed. That's scary to me. That's scary to me. So, while I'm feeling like I'm valued at this time, certainly I'm well aware that our economy is- has been a little bit shaky.

KJ 16:48

Then how has the Covid 19 pandemic affected the employment of people that you know?

JP 16:56

[nods] Yeah. I think I've- I think I have quite a variety of people in different types of work. I mean, some of my friends are in manufacturing and some are in car businesses, some are teaching. And quite honestly, I think for the most part, most of my circle of friends has made it through Covid. Either their business was booming, or it was still okay. My experience hasn't been with people really losing their livelihoods. So- but I know maybe that's unique. There certainly are a lot of people that are losing their livelihoods. But hopefully that's gonna rebound.

KJ 17:51

Hopefully some can get them back soon. Yeah. Then moving on to family and household. So how are you managing day to day activities in your household? Like going to school, doing different sort of clubs or sports that you used to do, stuff like that.

JP 18:06

Yeah, so you know if this was- this interview was six months ago, it would be a different interview I think. Because right now, my daughter is going to school five days a week. So she is doing in person learning, which is wonderful. She is an athlete, she plays basketball, and they were able to play basketball, with masks on. It was an abbreviated season. Of course we couldn't have all the grandparents and everyone else there anymore, for spectating. So it was really a different environment watching the kids play basketball, when it's only just us parents on the sidelines cheering. But I'm just so grateful she was able to play, I think sports for the kids is just so super important for them to be able to get out and do things. But, you know, six months prior that was not the case. And my daughter was in school at home and that was difficult. I would be here, working away on my laptop, because I've been working from home since the pandemic began. My husband would be here. He's self employed but you know, his winter months based on his employment are kinda slow so he'd be lingering around. And then my daughter would be doing her schoolwork in her room. So it definitely was different. But now things are a little bit back to normal. My husband's working more because he just has his typical job where spring, summer, fall are busier for him, so he's out of the house more. She's in school. But it is new for me to be working from home. I have personally found that I absolutely love it. I love working from home. I loved being in the office too, but I'm actually- I feel like I get more done at home because I don't have as much interruptions. I'm a little bit of a chatty Cathy, so I will- if there's

people around I'm gonna want to talk to them, but when I'm home working, it's just me and the dogs, so there you go. [laughs]

KJ 20:23

Okay, and then has the Covid-19 outbreak affected how you associate and communicate with friends and family?

JP 20:32

Yeah, for sure. You know, people are getting vaccinated right now. And I'm sure we're gonna get to that in a bit. But that certainly is opening some doors. There are a number of friends that- we- and family we haven't seen in over a year, because of their own concerns too about COVID, about seeing people in person. I have several friends I have not seen in a year and a half because of their concerns. Maybe they have a child or whatever that they're concerned about. So we've done- instead of in persons, we've done happy hours where we're on zoom calls like this. I think it's important to just try and connect, however, whatever that looks like. Just- still, everybody knows that we still love each other and we're still here for each other. There- you know, I will say there- we have a group of friends that live by us that we've kind of like- okay, you're in our bubble, right? You're in a bubble, but still, I'm not going to be hugging you. And we're gonna still be sitting apart because I- listen, I'm aware that you might stray from the bubble and go to someone else's bubble. So just being cautious, avoiding huge gatherings, no- just trying to be smart about when we do get together. Are we sitting outside by campfire? Are we- if we're all in my kitchen, which is very small, maybe we don't have the same number of people coming over that we used to. So I think we were really trying to be, and still, are trying to be pretty cautious.

KJ 22:31

Yeah, I was gonna ask about the pod or bubble thing. Was it like a conscious decision that you made? Or was it just kind of like, oh we all live together, let's all make our own sort of thing?

JP 22:45

I'll tell you the bubble that we had was more around like my daughter's friends that she would go to school with. And then play basketball with. And typically, those are kind of our friends that we hang out with anyway, and so kinda, you know, we would make that exception. Well, we're gonna get together with them. Because, you know, we know they had COVID, or we know they're being responsible, and they're not hanging out somewhere where they shouldn't hang out all the time. That's- and we would joke about it. I don't think we sat down and said, who's in our bubble? But it just ended up being like, kind of the same people all the time. And then you kind of go well, you're in my bubble. You're in my bubble.

KJ 23:32

What have been the biggest challenges that you have faced during COVID-19 in regards to your family and friends?

JP 23:49

Well we are- quite honestly- I mean- We're just- I'm a very social person. We tend to host a lot of people over to our house, and I wasn't able to do that. And that- and I- that's sad. You know, I think we were kind of the gathering place for her friends in the past. And not extending that invitation or just saying, you know what, we're gonna-There were plenty of times where some of our friends are like we're gonna go to an event or a bar or whatever it is. And I'm like, I'm not comfortable. You know, first of all, how's it going to look to my work people if I'm the one that gets- because I'm not following what I'm preaching to other people to do. There was this kind of moral dilemma, especially if there were things going on- a wedding. You wanna go to things like that, not to say that's any kind of fun to go to. But yeah- but you know certainly, people had birthdays, people still had some- people still had gatherings. And you know, well, we'll stay six feet apart. Well, you know, sometimes they're not. And so having to turn those things down, it's probably my daughter- she couldn't do things. There was like slumber parties and things that kids were still having. And I get that you know, you want to go and be part of it. But I'm not comfortable with six of you being together right now, so. It's hard. They can't go and be part of it.

KJ 25:35

Absolutely. What have you and your family done for recreation? To like get out of the house or do something new, while we've been on lockdown?

JP 25:45

Well we have been extremely blessed, and like I said, we just bought this house that's on the lake, and that was huge. Because we do have a- we have a dock, so we can just sit outside. And by the water, at least in the summer, Winter was a little more challenging. But we really have been doing more things outside. And if we're not boating- we have had more campfires, even in the winter, than I ever would have thought. Because I'm not usually about sitting outside, but if it meant we could have a couple people over, and even if we're outside in the cold around the fire, it's still made kind of worth it. So you know, my husband fishes, he's so- he fishes in the boat, I read in the boat or I just sit there and you know, hang out. So that's some of the things that we're just- we just try to be outside and go for walks, you know. And so those are some of the things that we've done and we do have a- We haven't done a lot of it yet but we did buy- we also bought an ATV, just to ride around on. That's why nobody can buy recreational vehicles because everyone is doing those kinds of things to entertain ourselves when I'm away from people. Okay well, let's buy some more stuff. These places are booming because of people like me.

KJ 27:34

You've got to do something fun outside now, now that it's warm out again.

JP 27:37

Yes.

KJ 27:38

All right, and then moving on to more questions about your community. So how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected your community that you are in all the time? Or what you define as your community, whatever that may be.

JP 27:50

I mean- I think probably like most other communities, I feel like I'm- I mean, I was watching the news daily, right? And then you would get the health department gal that would, you know, give the updates and you're kind of like, okay, well, are we on the increase? So I was also kind of, you know, just kind of really interested in how much- how Chippewa Falls was doing. Even more so than Eau Claire, because I'm like, we're really staying in Chippewa Falls for the most part. But you know, Chippewa Falls- I was worried there were a lot of businesses that you know had to close because of COVID, or temporarily closed because of COVID. And I had a friend that ran a restaurant and, you know, he's- he was doing everything to get new people in. And the delivering. I mean, I will say, my goodness, what a wonderful thing that you can go pick up your Olive Garden now or your- I mean, car side to go for everywhere.

KJ 29:12

I hope that sticks around. It makes it so easy.

JP 29:16

I do too. So, I mean, that actually- while I miss going in a place, I mean, we're all about the going and getting your food. And I'm checking out who has delivery, because even better yet, you don't have to leave and go get it, they can bring it to you. So yeah, we actually tried different restaurants that we haven't even tried before and different things, too. I want these places to succeed, too. So, you know, I'm happy that, that Chippewa Falls has really rallied. And you know, I'm not aware of a whole lot of businesses that have closed permanently. So hopefully they all start to really rebound here, as things get better.

KJ 30:03

Yeah, absolutely. How are people around you responding to the pandemic? Or have you noticed any changes in how the public response has been in Chippewa Falls?

JP 30:20

I think I feel good about how Chippewa Falls has responded to the pandemic, and I really do feel like people took it seriously. I see a lot of masking going on and I still see a lot of masking going on. But in my work, not that you asked but I'm going to share I'm quite horrified by some of the responses that I see in other areas of the country, where people are just becoming violent about- we're asking you to wear a mask, because my company is still- we are asking our customers to wear a mask, and we're not doing it in a way that's confrontive, we're not doing it in a way that it's like you can't come in if you don't have a mask, even just asking someone to wear a mask. And the sheer response from some people is baffling to me that they take it as a personal affront. They take it to the political side, they are belligerent, and it just makes me sad that that still exists. And we're seeing a lot of that still. And that to me, is the ugly part of what this pandemic

has brought. I mean, it has become very political. And it's sad because we're all in the same boat together. We're- nobody wants to wear the mask. But, you know, I don't know anyone that's like, yeah, I love wearing this thing. You know, none of us want to wear it, but we're trying to protect the other person. And yet, there are some people that are just like, I'm not doing it, I don't want you telling me I should do it, and I'm never gonna come to your store, and by the way, you know, bleep bleep bleep bleep bleep. So it's- I worry about our employees because there's just a lot of people on the fringe of their last nerve, and it's really turned into a lot of work place violence, and it's unfortunate. But I feel like Chippewa Falls has been rock star.

KJ 32:28

That's good. That's good to hear that. Have you seen the people around you change their opinion, day to day activities, or relationships in response to the pandemic?

JP 32:38

So- can you repeat that?

KJ 32:40

Have you seen the people around you change their opinions, or day to day activities, or relationships in response to the pandemic?

JP 32:48

Some, yes. Yes. I think everybody changed their- most people changed what they did, right, in some fashion or another. Now people are kind of getting back to a new normal in some way. And some people are over it. When you talk about opinion, I think there are some people that maybe were religious about wearing their mask, they were staying home, duh duh duh. And the COVID-19 fatigue is, is a real thing. And I think there are a lot of people that are just like, I'm over it, I'm over it, I'm done wearing my mask, or I got COVID so I'm good, or I'm vaccinated so I'm good, I'm not gonna wear my mask anymore. And then I do have one friend that I haven't seen in a year and a half that is still deathly afraid. Deathly afraid. To the point where I'm worried about her level of fear of it, you know, because we should all have a healthy- a healthy fear of it. But it's almost immobilizing for that person, and that- that's the underlying evil of this whole thing. It's really taking a toll mentally on a lot of people.

KJ 32:22

Yeah, absolutely. So isolating and flattening the curve have been two key ideas that have emerged during the pandemic. How have you, your friends, your family, and your community responded to the self-isolation and the flattening the curve sort of ideas?

JP 34:40

Yeah, so I think when this was hot and heavy, right, was last summer, fall, right? When we were all like, alright, if we just all stay home, let's just all mind our P's and Q's, stay home. We can flatten this curve, we can- we can stop that spike from happening. Because, you know, it did seem pretty clear that when people weren't masking, and were getting together in groups, and not

staying six feet apart, that the numbers just kept climbing, right? So I believe the science. I was all about Dr. [Anthony] Fauci, you know, listening every single day, you know, to what he was saying. And so we did self-isolate, you know, for when these- especially there was like, a two week period where, like, everybody just needs to stay home for two weeks. And we did- we were good about that. And I really do think that helped. And, you know, it didn't get rid of it. But it did certainly kind of- I think, because the whole point of my interview with you, this is how I live. Flattening the curve is to give those poor hospitals a break. They couldn't manage all the influx of patients they were seeing. So I definitely feel like we did our part in trying to- as a family, to try and get to that flattening of the curve.

KJ 36:13

And has COVID-19 changed your relationships with any friends, family, or your community?

JP 36:24

It- I definitely have some people in my friend group, and in my family, but more so my friend group that just are- have never really bought into it. And I- regardless of what I can tell them about, yeah, it's real, that's all I've been doing, I've talked to people who are sick, I know people who are sick, just still had some distrust about what we were being told from the media. And of course, there was some politicalness to it all. Now, I like- I'm on Facebook and the swill on Facebook- it's not like I cut anyone off from my friends or family that has a different opinion. However, I just don't hang out with them as much. And if I don't like what they're saying on Facebook, I just make them go away for what they're saying. Especially during the election time, when it was really, really bad. I just- it's called putting them to sleep for 30 days or whatever. I wouldn't say it destroyed any friendships or relationships but it's certainly- oh, you know, this person. I can't even talk to you about what I'm doing right now, because they just think it's all a bunch of phooey. So yeah, but the majority of people understood the seriousness.

KJ 38:03

That's good. And then as someone who lives constantly, basically, in Chippewa Valley, did you have any worries or anything about the amount of kids that would be coming back to college in the fall, or back in February when we came back for spring semester?

JP 38:20

You know what, that never- I felt very comfortable. I think, hats off to the school administrators across Wisconsin for sure. I really feel like they did a good job in balancing, you know, the remote and then the in-person part of it. And I certainly, certainly felt for sorry for any student, especially those freshmen, going to college for their first time and maybe having to start off alone. I mean, what a bummer, right? Because for me, college was most- was just an awesome time. I loved every minute of it. Not all the homework, but the fun of it, but I wasn't worried. You know, I know kids come from all over but that wasn't something I worried about was, oh gosh, there's people coming from all walks of the country and they can be bringing COVID. No, that didn't cross my mind honestly. Honestly.

KJ 39:31

All right. I apologize if you hear any sort of buzzing, my computer fan just kicked on, so I'll mute myself if it gets too loud or anything. So now moving on to like the health aspect. Have you or anyone you know gotten sick due to COVID-19?

JP 39:47

Yes, yes. My stepmom actually got COVID and got it pretty bad. My dad got COVID but said it was like a really bad cold. But she- my stepmother has MS [Multiple Sclerosis], and so it kind of kicked her butt, but it was, you know, made her- she never ended up having to go to the hospital. And she's a nurse by trade, so, you know, we had many discussions of, you know when you need to go to the hospital, right? Don't put it off. She's probably one of the ones closest to me that got the most sick. But otherwise, I had several people get COVID, but just not that sick.

KJ 40:35

In what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and physical health?

JP 40:44

A lot. A lot. The mental thing is- so they're two very separate things, right. I think- so let's just talk about the physical side. So my stepmom still has a chronic cough. There's people that are the long-haulers, right, that can't quite shake some of the symptoms, or they still can't get their sense of taste back. I worry about what you can't see, you know? What it might have done to someone's heart, or lungs, that we might not know for years, so there's that. There's a lot of unknowns still around COVID and long-term effects. Mental health, I think, is at an all time high- either we're more aware of people's mental health challenges, which could be too, we talk about it more. But I certainly think that covid isolation, fear, all of those things. And people with anxiety, it's fuel to an already burning fire. I am concerned with people's mental health. I'm concerned about the people who don't say anything. You know, thankfully there's people who do speak up and hopefully make it easier for others to speak up. But you know, it's no secret that mental health- for many years, to talk about your mental health was a shameful thing. And it's just not widely discussed- it's more widely discussed now than it ever has been before, which is a blessing, and quite frankly, probably saves a lot of people's lives. In fact, hopefully more people are more comfortable talking now than they ever have before. But, you know, think about my friend, who is still so fearful and it's like it triggered something in her that I don't think maybe existed before. It's a bad disease that- it's really messing with people's mental health.

KJ 43:24

Absolutely. Do you mind talking a little bit about what you saw with your daughter and how she used social media during the pandemic?

JP 43:33

Well she's- she's a big social media person anyway, as far as- you know, she's not on Facebook or any of the things that the old people are on. You know, the Snapchat, the [_____]?, and all

of- and who knows what else that I'm probably not aware of, but in a good way. She's one of- I mean, I feel good about what she's doing, I trust her. But, I think- I hope that's not famous last words, I trust everything she's doing on social media. I think she is- it's really- they're constantly talking to each other, her girlfriends, constantly talking to each other. She's just got a great group of friends. And to me, I think it- for right now, for her, I think social media has been a bit of a blessing through the pandemic. I think there's a lot of absolute crap on social media too, which can get you in that mental bad space. But I really don't think- I think for her, she's using it for the good. For somebody vulnerable, I think it could be a bad thing.

KJ 44:50

Absolutely. Then for the vaccine, have you or does anyone you know have questions or concerns about the vaccine, or any of the vaccines?

JP 45:03

That's a good question. So, yes and yes. I just went and got the vaccine myself, my husband and I both, and we got the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. So that was prior to, like, four days later, watching The Today Show, where they said "ope, they're halting the Johnson and Johnson vaccine". And even myself was like, well that's great. So now that's in me, forever. So I'm not going to lie to you, of course it gave me a little anxiety. Now learning what it- why they put the pause on- the rational part of me is like, okay I probably do riskier things like driving my car, right? And I can get in an accident and if something happens with the vaccine. But I have family members and friends who adamant that they are not going to get the vaccine, because they feel like it alters their DNA, they don't know what all is in it. So again, a big mistrust on how quickly the vaccine was- came to fruition. But also just a distrust in putting something in your body, right? And then what does that mean in twenty years? I mean, even I have thought about what does this mean in twenty years for me? Nobody knows. I mean, they- I'm just gonna hope it's okay. [laughs] I'm going on a little bit of faith. Now, if you ask me if my daughter- I am not, at this point, convinced I'm gonna get my daughter vaccinated. I'm just a little nervous about it. I'm like well, let's see how I do. Let's see what my husband does. Let's give it a little bit before I just rush and get her a vaccine. And she has that heart condition, so I'm kind of like I don't want to give her anything that- I don't know. So I'm probably misinformed too at this point and don't have all the proper information, but that's what- there's a lot of mistrust going on right now with the vaccine. And I don't think the Johnson and Johnson little pause helped matters much. Nothing about Johnson and Johnson, I mean. And it didn't really help too that you need two vaccines, you know. Because now people are like I got the first one, now I'm not so sure I want to get the second one because the first one made me sick or the second one is going to make me more sick. So there's a lot, I'm sure you're aware.

KJ 48:01

Yes. And since you got the vaccine, did you notice any side effects? And what was your process for signing up for an appointment, going and getting it done?

JP 48:11

As far as side effects, I had just a slight, slight headache that I don't even know if it was from that or just life. And that was probably like three days after I got the vaccine. My husband, the night of the- after we got the vaccine, he had kind of a bad headache, but then the next day it was gone. So that was it. So we, I think, came out pretty good on that end. And then what was the second question?

KJ 48:44

What was your experience signing up for the vaccine, going to get it done, being there and getting the shot?

JP 48:54

I was a little confused with how Wisconsin was allowing people to get vaccinated, because I also talked to people who lived in different states and it was different in Minnesota than it was in Wisconsin. I felt like I- I kind of wished my doctor would have reached out to me and said, okay, you're good, you can come get the vaccine, or vaccination. But really, it's left to the patient to figure out how and where to sign up. And I just happened to go on my clinic website and then it finally said now taking appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine. But it hadn't said that. I was like do I need to go to Zorn Arena and get my shot? I mean it just- there was- I don't think that was great. And then when I got the shot, making the appointment through my clinic, easy peasy, fabulous. That went super smooth. The gal called us, got our information, made the appointment the next week, and then we got it and we were good. It was just kind of the not knowing how to sign up, where to go. Should I get it through my clinic, or should I go to a different clinic, or should I go to Zorn Arena, or wherever they were doing a little more mass- so that was a little confusing.

KJ 50:30

Absolutely. There's a lot out there on who can get it here and it's at this time. Moving on to some stuff about government. How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

JP 50:45

In my community, I think- I think fine and appropriate. In other communities, because I deal with this for work, government mandates and health departments doing one thing, the governor's saying a different thing. California's a great example. California is crazy, no offense to anyone to California who might watch this in the future, but the governor's saying here's what an outbreak is, and then the health department said no, we think an outbreak is actually three cases, or two cases. And things don't match and everyone's trying to be the hero and do their own thing. And it's quite honestly- we didn't have a national, across the board expectation or mandate, so because of that, every state was left to their own devices, and then every county decided to do their own thing. Thankfully, I think what was happening in Eau Claire and Chippewa County was appropriate and everything was pretty smooth. But dealing with some of these counties and states across the country, it was quite messy. And then difficult to interpret. Very difficult to interpret.

KJ 52:13

When you were trying to figure out stuff for your company, did you do- did you have a set sort of rules that you did, like you always go with the most severe guidelines or something like that? Or was it just case by case?

JP 52:57

That is a great question. For the most part, there were some areas of the country that were more strict, like Oregon is very strict, California is very strict, New York was very strict. We did try to implement things that would satisfy the most strict. Now, if something was ridiculous, like I'm gonna give you an example. New Mexico said close contact is me and you, within six feet, for three minutes. And the rest of the country is 15, and the CDC is 15, but New Mexico decides three minutes. Well we're not gonna roll that- you know, when we talk about contact tracing, which we were involved in, we're not gonna roll that out nationwide, because that's- but we did have to roll it out in New Mexico. So when it was really severe and really off the norm, we would comply where that was mandatory, but then we didn't roll that out to everybody. I'm pretty lucky that we have a government affairs team at my business so they really- and a legal team- and they read the mandates and they read the fine print. It says must or it says should. There's a big difference between must and should. Some is guidance, some is you have to. So just reading through all of that and then making sense of well, what does this mean now for the stores and what do we have to do and what should we do. And sometimes we would, even on the should we do, we would do it, because we felt it was the right thing to do.

KJ 54:27

Do you have any thoughts on how local, state, or federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently?

JP 54:38

I just wish we had a consistent message across the country. I just think that there is too much room for certain states who say nope, we're not gonna do this because we don't believe in it, and other states are like nope, we're gonna do this and plus we're gonna recommend you do this. I thought that was weird from the beginning, that we wouldn't do things the same as a country. I get that everyone's, you know, Wyoming is different than Wisconsin. Wyoming's different than any other state right, because the open spaces. Part of me understands why we can't have a cohesive approach, but I also think that having it be a free for all was really difficult.

KJ 55:34

Looking towards the future, has your experience with COVID-19 changed how you think about your family, friends, and community?

JP 55:44

Yeah. I do think so. I think it makes you value things more. I think as a person, I'm trying to not take people for granted, luxuries for granted. You talk about people losing their employment, I

mean, I'm lucky. I'm lucky that I do what I do and I work for the company I work for, and I've been blessed. So trying to just- and live in the moment. I'll be honest with you, I'm booking trips right now because I'm like, you know what, this life is short. This life is short and you don't know what's- nobody knew this was gonna happen. And it uprooted everyone's lives, everyone's plans. Why wait until- for me, I'm 52, right? I'm getting up there. But why wait for retirement? Why not do the things you have been dreaming about, traveling, or whatever? Even when I talk to my daughter, I'm like girl, you wanna do something when you're in you're 20s, go for it! Do it now, don't wait until you think it's the right time because quite honestly, something else could derail you and it might not happen.

KJ 57:09

As someone in my 20s, I second that.

JP 57:12

Yeah! I mean, you wanna go climb a mountain, go climb that mountain. You want to jump out of an airplane, jump out of an airplane. I'll be scared as your mother, but I also think yeah, you just don't know what's around the corner. And not that you should live in fear, that is not what I am saying, but I do think we should all embrace things more. We should embrace good friendship. I think too, some of those people that maybe you were hanging around with that weren't that great, maybe I didn't need to spend that much time with you anymore. [laughs] Prioritize friendships, prioritize what you wanna do to have a meaningful, enjoyable life.

KJ 57:44

Yeah! And knowing what you know now, what do you think individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

JP 58:03

Well, I think out of COVID, there are some things that we are doing now that may be not a bad idea to keep doing. I don't want to wear a mask forever for sure, like we can do away with that. But, you know what, maybe it's not a bad idea at cash register to have a piece of plexiglass in between you and the other person. People are- like when you're at a buffet and you have the sneeze guard, I'm okay with that sneeze guard being there. You know, it's protecting your spit or respiratory droplets from getting on- and if you think about flu and colds and just our norm, right? We're always catching colds and- but nobody was catching colds, nobody's catching the flu. Flu numbers are way down, well, because number one, we're all staying away from each other. But we are doing some things to protecting- I'm not in favor of everyone standing six feet apart or anything like that forever, but I also think some of those protective things that we did might not be so bad. Not masks, though. I'm ready to be done with masks.

KJ 59:25

I understand that one. That's all the questions I had. Is there anything that I didn't address that you wanted to talk about?

JP 59:33

No, you really hit on almost everything I could think of, that it relates to COVID. I think this is really cool, what you guys are doing, as far as archiving. Maybe someone a hundred years from now can watch me and hopefully not make the same mistakes we did. Learn from it a little bit. I just think it's a cool project you're working on. And I'm flattered that I was asked to participate. Thank you.

KJ 1:00:07

Of course. Thank you for taking time to contribute to our archive.

JP 1:00:14

You are so welcome, Katie.

Transcribed in part by <http://otter.ai>