

Hindsight is 2020: The Time that I Lost

The year 2020 began for me much like any other of my adult life with a new semester of teaching. My 22-year-old, Offspring, was slowly progressing through their degree and also started back to a new semester. When they visited over the winter break, we made plans for them to visit again over their spring break in March. We looked forward to the time we would have together.

In March 2020, COVID-19 started to feel scary. People all over the world were dying because of the virus. Yet, in the United States, things continued to be fairly normal, so Offspring came to visit. They were with me for seven days, and each day more and more closings occurred. The first university we heard about closing was The Ohio State University. Then Truman State University, Offspring's school, announced it would be completely online. Then, UWEC announced an additional time-off with spring break and the remainder of the semester online. I hugged Offspring. They headed back to school. I had no idea how precious that hug would become.

In July 2020, Offspring turned 23. For the first time in 23 years, we did not celebrate in person. I sent them a birthday package. We had a video chat and I had a deep realization that it was possible I would not see them in person for their next birthday either. We were losing time together.

In September 2020, I went back to what would be the most difficult semester of my career. One course completely asynchronous. Four courses were hybrid; I would meet with half of the class each day and the other half of the class would complete an online activity which I would have to grade. The amount of time I spent in teaching activities doubled. I could not maintain that level of screen time; a few days were at over 12 hours. I had to move two of the courses to online synchronous just to have a chance to function. Everything related to teaching was taking too much time.

In October of 2020, Offspring sent the text no parent wants to receive, "I tested positive for COVID-19. I feel sick, but not too sick." I panicked. My mind raced with thoughts like, "Should I drive to see them? I cannot see them; they have COVID-19. Not only do I not have COVID-19, but I do not want to spread it. Also, they clearly stated that they were fine. I'll wait." More time passed. Offspring had an easier version of COVID-19 and was feeling better in about a week; it was a week that felt like a year to me.

In hindsight, I should have just had Offspring stay with me in March. Their classes would be online for the end of that semester and then all of the fall anyway. They could have returned in January 2021. Instead, we lost time.