Living my Life in Covid

Two months ago, if someone told me that I would be spending my days at home, unable to attend my college classes and my only contact being my immediate family, I would not have believed them. Looking back, it is crazy to see how quickly things can change and how life as we know it, as we're used to living it, can be turned upside down before we can even process what is going on. Through this crazy, unexpected pandemic, everyone in the country and most parts of the world have been forced to say goodbye to their "normal" and adapt to this new way of life. With anxiety about the present and uncertainty regarding the future, it is important that during this time we all take care of ourselves, support one another, and find productive ways to pass the time. It is also crucial that we all keep in mind that this will eventually pass and will one day be nothing more than a story to tell the generations to come.

Before the Coronavirus was infecting thousands of people in the United States, it was honestly the last thing I was thinking about. Although I was concerned for China and other affected countries, it wasn't affecting my life personally, so I didn't give it much thought. I was focused on doing well in all four of my college classes, working part time at a new job, and having a good time with friends- just typical things that most college students do. My life wasn't too exciting or crazy, but it worked for me. I didn't think about the fact that the Coronavirus could easily make its way to the United States and become a great tragedy. Little did I know that everything was about to change, and I'd be forced to accept a new normal.

I remember when in my lab class for Food Science an email was sent out that spring break would be extended for a week and then a decision would be made after that whether or not to switch to online school all together. This was the first time for me when I realized that this virus was a big deal, and everything was about to change. I had never heard of an illness being so bad that all colleges would have no choice but to send their students home and switch to virtual classes. Even though a lot of people in my class were excited about an additional week of spring break, for me it was not that exciting. Going home that day after class I was in a state of shock because deep down, I knew that we wouldn't be going back to school for the rest of the semester. Although at times I would complain about having to go to class, to make the twenty-five minute drive to Framingham five days a week, at that moment all I wanted was to be able to stay in school and see my friends every day.

The following weekend, a couple days later, I went out with my friends and had a good time. I debated going to see them as I was tired, both physically and emotionally, from the week that I just had. Looking back, I'm glad I made the decision to see them because little did I know that it would be the last time I would be able to see them for months. Going back home that Saturday, the current state of the world was at the back of my mind, but things still seemed normal for the most part, so I didn't worry much. My Saturday continued to go as planned and before dinner time I headed off to work. I remember just twenty minutes into my shift everything seemed off. It was unusually slow for such a usually busy time on a Saturday night. In addition to these changes, new cleaning policies were being implemented due to the Coronavirus. I ended up

getting sent home about five hours early as there was no business due to the increasing fear of being out in public.

Later that night was when everything seemed to become official and I knew that things were definitely going to be different moving forward. My sister and I decided to watch a movie. While watching, my mom came downstairs and explained the concept of "social distancing" to us. Basically, what I took out of it was that I wasn't allowed to leave the house for any reason, and I couldn't see all of my friends, some that I hadn't seen in months as they had just come home from college. When I first heard this, I got very upset. As I didn't understand the disease in its entirety yet, for example how contagious it was and how high the mortality rate was, I didn't accept the fact that my social life and all of my freedoms were being taken away from me all at once. After I had time to process the sudden changes, I realized that this was the best choice in trying to avoid getting infected and possibly infecting people who were at risk like the elderly and the immunocompromised. It also helped that others around me, like close friends and extended family, were also participating in social distancing so it didn't seem like I was doing this alone.

Now my day to day life is much less eventful than it used to be. Going to school every day has turned into online classes through Zoom which has been hard to adjust to. I've found it pretty difficult to keep totally on track of what assignment is due on what day. When having class in person it's very easy to learn material and know what's being expected of you, but with online class it is hard to get the same message across and you miss out on that in person interaction that's such a vital part of the learning environment. I know that most of my friends have found difficulties with online classes

as well, because lectures are meant to be delivered in person, so it's really an adjustment for everyone, students and teachers. I'm much more motivated to do work when I'm attending classes and studying in the library, rather than trying to get all of my assignments done from the comfort of my own bed or couch. I really miss getting dressed up every day and having the privilege to go to school and learn. Even though I used to complain about having to drive to school every day and attend class, I realize now that I took it for granted.

Another challenging thing for me during quarantine has been not being able to leave the house. This is difficult in two ways; one being not able to go out and have fun with friends and the second one being stuck inside with only my family to interact with. I love my family, but when trapped in a house together with no clear sign of an end, people can start to get restless and take things out on each other. While things have been relatively tame at my house, with both my parents working from home, the house can seem crowded. I want nothing more than to be able to see different people like friends and other family members. Being able to go out to dinner, to see a movie, or just go to a friend's house and hang out were activities that I never thought would be taken away from me. Even being able to go to Target if I needed makeup or something seemed so simple and like a basic human right. When it's safe to go out again I think it will be funny how freeing and amazing all these basic activities feel now that we are able to participate in them once again.

While the negatives of this situation are very apparent, it's important to keep in mind that there are positives as well. I feel like for the first time since I was little I am able to completely relax and take time for myself. While I do feel like I thrive on a busy

schedule, it has been very nice to slow down and not have to go to work and worry about fitting everything in that I have to. Whenever I get frustrated about the quarantine I try to remind myself of this and tell myself that when this is over I'll never get such a long period of time to just take care of myself.

Being trapped inside with family also seemed terrible to me at first, but good things have come of that. My little sister and I have always been close but being stuck in the house together has brought us closer together. We've been coming up with fun, new activities that we would've never come up with if we weren't stuck in the house. We have been having cooking competitions, been doing art projects and watching lots of movies together. In addition to becoming closer with my sister, I feel like I've been connecting with members of my extended family more than I normally would. Every Saturday night, we get takeout to support a local restaurant and then hop on a Zoom call with my mom's side of the family. The first hour of our call we all just talk and catch up about what's been going on in our lives and how we've been coping with everything. Then during the second hour we have a game night which seems to take everyone's mind off of the stress going on in the world. If our lives were never interrupted I don't think we would have ever come up with the idea to connect in this way. I feel like this quarantine has brought me closer to a lot of people in my life.

I think during this difficult time it's very important to keep in mind that this will eventually end, and we will be able to go out and live our lives again. While it's easy to get down on your situation, thinking of the positives and things you have to be grateful for really helps. Being there for your loved ones and supporting each other during this time will help us all pull through and come out of this stronger.