

University of the Incarnate Word

The Athenaeum

In Sickness and in Health in South Texas: Narratives of COVID's Impact

10-16-2022

The Longest Spring Break of my Life: COVID's Impact on Emotional Wellness

Gina Liles
liles@student.uiwtx.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/sickness_health_narratives

Recommended Citation

Liles, Gina, "The Longest Spring Break of my Life: COVID's Impact on Emotional Wellness" (2022). *In Sickness and in Health in South Texas: Narratives of COVID's Impact*. 31.
https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/sickness_health_narratives/31

This Narrative is brought to you for free and open access by The Athenaeum. It has been accepted for inclusion in In Sickness and in Health in South Texas: Narratives of COVID's Impact by an authorized administrator of The Athenaeum. For more information, please contact athenaeum@uiwtx.edu.

The Longest Spring Break of my Life: COVID's Impact on Emotional Wellness

Gina Liles

COVID-19 presented several unprecedented challenges globally, one of which is the threat on emotional wellness of the people, including myself. With such sudden and rapid changes, coupled with the chaos unraveling within the world, the anxiety of making sense of a confusing, distorted future soon overcame the lives of many. One day I was laughing with my friends on campus, finishing up our last class before Spring Break in 2020. The next thing we knew, Spring Break extended from one week to two, two weeks to three. Three weeks became almost two years until I was finally able to step foot on campus again. I, like so many others, found myself unemployed due to health safety concerns. People like my parents, whose livelihoods depend on their small business, were forced to temporarily suspend operations for an unknown period of time. Day after day, they anxiously watched the news in hopes of this virus being eradicated, or being deemed harmless enough for the world to resume normality. Instead, both the morbidity and mortality rate rose, and so did fear, anger, and anxiety within the population.

In addition to health anxiety, financial instability was another consequence of COVID and a strong contributor to emotional wellness. Although I was not directly affected by my parents' loss of income, I suffered from major financial anxiety and worry for my parents and others like them, who have been financially impacted, the entire duration of the lockdown. My parents have worked so hard to be where they are today, and they've sacrificed so much for their children, that the reality of it being stripped away, even temporarily, was almost unbearable. It was not until the lockdown was lifted about 2 months later that I was able to breathe a heavy sigh

of relief knowing that my parents can start making money again. Still after, there was a multitude of concern as businesses and establishments had to quickly learn how to adapt to the new life during COVID— general health safety of consumers, patients and staff, abiding to CDC guidelines, navigating polarizing individual perspectives on the situation, filing for loans and grants, payment deferments, and so much more. Whatever your occupation or status was, COVID either directly or indirectly had an impact on your life and how you were to adapt and navigate new forms of living or surviving (e.g. mask mandates, provoked emotions, polarizing views, curbside pick-up becoming a new norm, increased health precautions, financial impact, etc.). This was the new reality we had to face. Even worse, numerous individuals experienced the tragedy of loss or knew someone who has. Others are still mentally and/or physically suffering or trying to cope with what occurred during the grim series of COVID-driven events.

The impact COVID has had on me emotionally cannot be dismissed. It was a period that tested the strength and resilience of us all. COVID was a biological threat, a divisive political weapon, a bearer of bad news, sickness, and death. But even after the most devastating of storms can come a rainbow. Though it was a difficult time, COVID has made me appreciate everything life has to offer, big or small, negative or positive. While I've been keen on these topics before, COVID has made me even more cognizant of socioeconomic and healthcare disparities, the significance of self-care, love, and kindness to yourself and to others, and how individual health, priorities, and social treatment matter whether you are at home, at school, or at work.