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

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### Emotional Wellness

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My world was turned upside down even before COVID was announced as a pandemic. All COVID did was deteriorate my emotional health even further. Handling my grandmother's death, a long term relationship breakup, and my last semester of my undergraduate career on Zoom, all at once was extremely tough. To have COVID on top of it and decrease my social circle made coping extremely difficult. I was fortunate enough to have a home to live in during COVID when all the campus facilities were closed. However, there was no foundation in the relationship I had with my mom when she was the main person at home. My dad was fortunate to be an essential worker and provide for the rest of my family. There was no knowledge of how to communicate with each other in my family to the point where even speaking about our own feelings would make each other mad. My mom and I being together at home for most of the days didn't help. There was no reason for us to be bickering at each other but just questioning why my mom was lashing out at me would make her extremely defensive. I realized that nothing was getting to her which motivated me even further to find a job regardless of my fear for COVID. I would rather risk my physical health than go mentally insane at home. Making myself more busy by working was probably not a healthy way of coping with the mental health I struggled with during this time. Luckily, I found people I was able to find people I could connect with at my optometry practice. Not only did I love optometry in a new way and grew my passion for optometry, but I was able to make even more special connections. I found my long life friends at this private practice. In retrospect, this allowed me to let go of all the hard feelings I had for my mom. As I mentioned earlier, those little things that my mom got mad at me about every single day during the pandemic, didn't matter as much anymore. I felt that the more I got closer to

my new friends, I felt the illusion where I was more distant from my mom. I wanted to rebuild the relationship I had with my mom. I thank COVID for bringing us closer together. We now have a stronger relationship