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

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11-27-2022

### Emotional Whirlwind

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#### Recommended Citation

Wolfe, Sadeah, "Emotional Whirlwind" (2022). *In Sickness and in Health in South Texas: Narratives of COVID's Impact*. 7.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic really hit me like a ton of bricks. I was in denial that they would shut school down, and I truly didn't realize how serious it was until they actually did shut it down. I've very introverted, and I normally don't like going out, so initially, my social wellness was fine. I felt safe in my home. I would FaceTime, study, and play video games with my friends. We would have Netflix watch parties or watch Disney plus on FaceTime together, and it felt wholesome. However, that continuous cycle started to get tiring. I missed seeing my friends in person. I missed visiting my family, but I didn't want to take the risk of contracting anything or passing anything on to them. I was about to turn 20 years old when everything got shut down. I remember not even blowing out my own birthday candles but used a paper plate to fan them out. I didn't have this extravagant party with my friends. It was just my mom, aunt, and grandma. That's when it REALLY hit me.

I had to take a break from social media. It was so toxic that I wanted to be naive to what was really happening in the world, until it started hitting people I knew. I had COVID-19 myself in January 2022, and I was angry. I felt like I did everything right. I got the vaccines. I wore my mask. I sanitized my hands. I tried not to make contact with people. Yet, that still wasn't enough. I cried and cried for days. Physically, I only felt bad for a little while, but mentally? I couldn't shake this very dark feeling of fear off of me. I knew I was going to be okay, but in that moment, it felt like everything in my world came crashing down.

This idea of "normal" that everybody wanted to go back to seemed to get farther and farther away. I honestly don't think things will ever be "normal". Instead, I think we'll have to adapt to this disease, make sure we properly take care of ourselves, and push forward in the best way we possibly can to create a new "normal" within our lives.