

Peyton

Age 16

Grade 11

Somers High School

Somers, New York

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What were your thoughts when the first COVID-19 cases were being diagnosed in China?

I remember first hearing about COVID-19 and thinking that nothing would come of it. In some ways I thought, of course it would come to the US. Everything is so interconnected through travel that it was bound to escape China. However, I was not anticipating such an outbreak to occur so close to where I lived.

How have things changed for you and/or your family since the outbreak?

My family and I have been inside the house for more than a month, almost two at the time I am writing this. We have been around each other every day and yet we still feel so distant. As both of my parents are working from home, and my brother and I do schoolwork all through the day, we remain separate from one another. We have yet to erupt into fits of madness, but it seems that the negative emotions spurring from paranoia, the media, and our loss of hope are taking a mental toll on all of us.

For you, what is the worst thing about this?

For me, it seems that our species is losing hope. We are struggling to comprehend the situation amidst what is being told and what is being withheld. We have no idea what is happening in the future, and we have no idea what is going to come of everything going on. This lack of understanding is making us struggle, and we are collectively beginning to suffer because of it.

In your experience so far, what, if anything, has been positive about this?

I suppose for a student at my grade level, one of the few positives is that many universities are stopping their standardized testing requirements. I've always found these tests to be a faulty way to determine a person's ability to do well in college. However, universities are realizing this and with a sudden push from the pandemic change is beginning to be made. In addition, I think that the current situation is bringing to the attention of the public the struggles many face, and it is helping to bring about inspiration for future reform.

Tell us about a moment or experience during this time that you will never forget.

It was towards the beginning of this crisis, when families were stock-piling toilet paper like it was the apocalypse. I remember my mom and my brother had come home from the grocery store and I had thought nothing of it. My mom was in a panic, and when we found out what was upsetting her she said it was because the stores had no toilet paper and so she was worried. She had gone to two stores looking for toilet paper, but none had it. After this, my mom and my dad both went out to a different store after searching up online where it could be found. The reason this memory sticks with me is because it made me realize the full extent of what this pandemic could lead to, particularly because stores were being emptied so early on.

Pretend it is the year 2050 and another pandemic is looming--what would you tell someone who has just asked what it was like to live through the 2020 pandemic?

Prevent the spread of the virus by social distancing and washing your hands. For handling what to come, I would say don't get overwhelmed. It will be difficult as hysteria will overcome many and the media will constantly be displaying what is going on. Take time for yourself to cool off, make sure to take care of yourself, and stay safe.