

Transcript of Interview with Narin Hassan By Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Narin Hassan

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

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Location (Interviewee): Toronto, Canada

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Cass CC Walrath

Some of the things we spoke about include:

Working as a Professor at Georgia Tech University, research in the medical humanities. Busy life with a lot of travel pre-pandemic. Deciding last minute not to go to a 19th-century studies conference in March 2020; last-minute restructuring of the conference. Uncertainty at the beginning of the pandemic about how serious it would be. Idealism turning into urgency. Being the child of Pakistani diplomats and growing up all over the world. Opening a yoga studio in 2018 in a shared space. Closing early in the pandemic and adjusting to Zoom; business expanding after moving online. Teaching yoga online and teaching college courses online. Teenage son transitioning to online classes, changing reaction to online teaching, and going back to school. Son playing sports. Raising a teenage son during the pandemic. Getting more connected to the home, rearranging the home to share space differently. Institutionalized medicine, ayurvedic medicine, and holistic medicine. Bringing mindfulness techniques into university classrooms. Deepening friendships; traveling with friends during 2020. Not being able to visit elderly parents in Canada due to border closure; getting compassionate exemptions to visit mother after an injury. Comparisons between Canada and the USA's management of the pandemic. Watching more TV, fluctuating news media consumption. Trauma-informed yoga and embodiment. Normalizing check-ins. The nervous system's response to stresses, and microaggressions. Husband and son caught COVID in December 2021, masking at home and avoiding close contact. Catching COVID in May 2022; first thought it was allergies, waves of symptoms. Having avoided dentists during the pandemic and a slow recovery; jaw pain is a long-COVID symptom. The humanities and their relevance for medicine and science.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hello.

Narin Hassan 00:01

Hi.

Kit Heintzman 00:02

Can I ask you to start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

Narin Hassan 00:08

Yes, my name is Narin Hassan. It is June 7, 2022. I think it's about 10:30 am. And I am currently in Atlanta, Georgia, in my home here in a neighborhood called Grant Park.

Kit Heintzman 00:27

Do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded, and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution non-commercial share-alike?

Narin Hassan 00:37

Yes.

Kit Heintzman 00:38

Thank you so much. Would you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you and the place you're speaking from?

Narin Hassan 00:49

Sure. So I am a professor at the, Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia. I'm an associate professor. And I'm also the director of a program that is called Global Media and cultures. it's a joint master's program between my school at Georgia Tech, which is called the School of Literature, Media and Communication, and another department that is called the School of Modern Languages. And, so that's sort of my, my life in terms of how I have built a career. for the last 20 or so years. I've been here in Atlanta since 2003, which is hard to believe. So I've lived here for a long time but I grew up in, living a life that was much more about moving and mobility. So, I'm the child of Pakistani diplomats. so I kind of grew up growing up around the world. I was born in Turkey, my father had a lot of postings kind of throughout the Middle East and Europe. And so as a child, I grew up moving about every two to three years. and then I went to graduate school in upstate New York, and from there, moved to Virginia for two years, and then came here and started teaching at Georgia Tech, in 2003. So, that's sort of who I am in terms of my, professional career. but I also have been a yoga teacher for the last, 20 or so years as well. yoga is something that I've practiced, really pretty consistently, since college. And it actually really got me through writing a dissertation and getting through graduate school. And soon after that, I started doing training. And then when I moved to Atlanta, I continued studying and practicing yoga. And in 2018, opened a studio, which happens to be very lucky, its walking distance, and it's down the street from my house. and so I've been teaching yoga, I was teaching at studios in Atlanta for the last several years, and then opened my own space in 2018, which was just two years before the pandemic hit. So, it's been sort of interesting to be managing that, you know, during this phase. and one of the things that sort of happened over the pandemic is I had kept these different parts of my life pretty separate. so my yoga life was sort of this thing I did outside of the academic spaces that I inhabited. but more and more of my research has sort of become merged with that part of my life. And the pandemic has also kind of opened up a lot of questions around sort of health and well-being and the things that we do to manage trauma and stress. And so in recent years, I feel like those two parts of my life have come together much more. So, in my scholarship, I am actually a Victorianist. I teach, 19th-century literature and culture, I work on post-colonial studies and Gender Studies. And a lot of my work looks at the intersections of medicine and gender and colonialism in the 19th century. so my first book was about British and European women who traveled to India in the Middle East in the 19th century, and became doctors or became involved in sort of domestic and health practices in the foreign spaces that they were traveling to. and since that project, I've been doing more and more work on the history of yoga and women in yoga in the sort of 19th and early 20th centuries and how that history ties into questions now about yoga as a very popular global phenomenon. and so, because my research has moved in that direction, that's another reason why the two parts of my life have sort of come together in this way. But the pandemic has definitely also opened up the space for that. And I guess in terms of who I am, besides all that, so I'm a parent, I have a just turned 17 years old it was his birthday this week. And yeah, I'm, I have aging parents, there's like a lot of things that you know, have sort of, in the pandemic popped up and become, I guess, more urgent in particular ways. Like I've really had a sense of time going by. And, you know, kind of where we are now in 2022, still sort of in the moment, but then also reflecting back to 2020. So that was sort of a long, long introduction. But that's, that's who I am.

Kit Heintzman 06:04

Would you tell me a story about life and a pandemic?

Narin Hassan 06:08

Oh, my goodness, there's so many stories. It's hard to think of a very particular story. But what comes to mind for me when I think about life in the pandemic, I guess the first thing I thought of when you asked that question was sitting on our front porch at the beginning of the pandemic, and this might have been maybe April or May 2020. And at that time, it felt like we were all sort of like, okay, we're in this, but we're going to be out of it soon, right? There was always this sense that, you know, July would kind of and we were just sort of in it for maybe a few

months. And it just remembers moments like that, where I was with my family sitting on the porch, and there was something really beautiful about how crisp the sky was and how quiet the street was. And how as much as there was a lot of upheaval, there was this sense of us all being home and being together. And at the time, my son was 15. And just sort of feeling like, wow, there's something kind of magical about the fact that, you know, we can all be home right now. And it's a beautiful spring, I just remember the weather being really nice and sort of seeing neighbors walking by. And as much as there was a lot of stress, there was also this sort of feeling of Ooh, this is a really unusual, great moment. And you know, kind of having breakfast outside and doing things like that. So, I guess the first thing that comes to mind for me, is something like that. But that was sort of that moment in the first spring, where we didn't know how far it was gonna go. But but there was that feeling of sort of closeness with home, and sort of figuring out the speech spaces in our house where we were all doing various things, but then the way that we would sort of come to camp together, for meals or for time outside, that was really special. And in similar ways, I mean, when I was teaching online, I felt like, as much as we were all kind of navigating that virtual space, especially as we were, you know, all kind of just learning how to use Zoom, and all of these other, you know, virtual spaces, there was a kind of beautiful sense of intimacy with sort of seeing my students, you know, in their home seeing a parent walk by seeing their pets, like, as much as it was sort of difficult. On the one hand, there was also something really special about the way that we were getting to know each other in a way that was very different from being in a classroom. So those are some of the things that come to mind for me, just First off, you know, which are actually kind of more positive, you know, memories, but, yeah, there's something about the intimacy and the closeness that was happening, like within the different spaces we were in, whether it was the physical spaces of home or the virtual spaces of, you know, meetings and teaching.

Kit Heintzman 09:17

Pre-pandemic, what what's your day-to-day looking like?

Narin Hassan 09:22

Oh, gosh, it seems so long ago, right? I feel like all the years have blurred. But pre-pandemic, I remember, a couple of months before the pandemic hit, were really, really busy for me. So, you know, I teach on a college campus. I have meetings there. I was sort of, you know, busy with that part of my life. I was teaching three classes, three yoga classes in the studio. I had I was actually in the middle of a yoga teacher training. That was in Seattle, so I had been traveling to Seattle for these There are basically three, two-week chunks. So, we had, we had just finished the first two major, like intensives. But that meant, you know, traveling a lot to the West Coast. I remember I had a big conference, that's usually an annual conference, I go to, you know, in the spring, so, my life was very much about sort of, you know, moving to these different working spaces. Doing yeah, a lot of travel a lot of you know, time in meetings on campus and teaching on campus. And then yeah, I mean, socially, sort of, you know, having the different spaces, the different sort of restaurants, friendships, you know, things that were going on, my, my son at the time was playing baseball, and just that sort of the weekends of different things happening. So, my [inaudible], my life definitely seemed faster paced now that I look back at it. But of course, the pace of living hasn't changed that much. It's just the physical, you know, movement from place to place was a lot more in that period before the pandemic.

Kit Heintzman 11:15

Staying in the pre-pandemic world, to the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure, again, prior to the pandemic?

Narin Hassan 11:27

Yes. So, I've been very lucky to be a healthy person, you know, without any major illnesses, or health concerns. And so pre-pandemic, you know, my research deals with health and medicine, but part of why it does that is that I really don't like doctors, I don't like hospital space, I critique the spaces that make me anxious. And so, you know, my experience with sort of health and health care was sort of minimal in a lot of ways in terms of my own, you know, time in those spaces. And so, I mean, I have always been someone who tries to take care of myself, and, you know, is very interested in health and often in different complementary sort of forms of care. And so, I've

always sort of had that way in which I, you know, have particular rituals or things that I do to take care of myself, or things that I like to cook and eat and all of that. But in terms of institutionalized medicine, I've always been sort of, like, you know, unless I need to go, I'll just take care of myself. Right? So, so yeah, my, my interactions in those spaces, in terms of my own care, were pretty minimal, pre-pandemic.

Kit Heintzman 12:54

I'd love to hear more about some of your resistance to the institutionalized medicine, both in your like, own life, but how it informs your work.

Narin Hassan 13:03

Yeah, so I mean, a lot of it for me is just, I mean, at a basic foundation, like, primal kind of level, it's like not liking needles, not liking being poked, and prodded, you know, not liking the sort of setup of those into institutional spaces where you have to check little boxes, and you don't always fit the box, and just, you know, all of the kind of baggage that kind of comes with all of that, so are not quite feeling like there's space to speak as a patient right, or to question and so some of it sort of has come from that some of it is also that I mean, even as a child, you know, my, my family had people who studied homeopathic medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, and my mother would be like, let's try this first, you know, so kind of growing up in an environment where taking drugs or medications, you know, was something that like one didn't do unless you really, really had to. And so, I think I kind of grew up with that, and was always really interested in different healing modalities and different ways that different cultures kind of dealt with illness. And so, I grew up being really interested in that, I think, from an early age, and that sort of became part of my research then. But yeah, I mean, it part of it is that part of it is that sort of habit of not really necessarily growing up with having a lot of it. And then another part of it is just, I don't think I've had like really bad experiences with doctors, but just sort of wanting to avoid sort of being trapped in that hole. Like if I go to the doctor, they'll give me this prescription, then I'll supposed to take it, you know, I mean, just sort of wanting to resist that a little bit. And I think that you know, medical environments and spaces are not the warmest code These places, right? I mean, now you have hospitals trying to, you know, make these spaces feel like home or all of that, but you're still very much, you know, part of the control of that system, right. And I've always wanted to sort of resist that. So yeah, even when I, when I went into labor, it's kind of a crazy, I was in labor for, like, 40 hours. And I remember the, one of my doctors saying, you know, if you want to have a natural childbirth, then don't go early, right to the hospital. So I kind of delayed and delayed and delayed and then when I got there, it's like, it must be really close. You know, I've been I've been feeling this for a while. And I got to the hospital, and the nurse was like, Oh, honey, you're only one centimeter, like, you have a long ways to go. And I was like, get me out, like, I was already in a room and the nurse was like, You can't leave? And I'm like, no, no, I'm leaving. And luckily, the doctor on call was like, It's okay. It's her first child, it's okay for her to go home, you know. And so I went home, went back to the hospital, the next day was just this very long weekend of being in labor. And then in the end, of course, I was like, give me the epidural. Like, I'm so tired now. Like, I need it, you know, so I'm just kind of wanting to resist it. And then finally, you know, giving in but, but yeah, I mean, I haven't had really negative experiences, just not really liking being in those environments, and not really liking, you know, the physical aspect of it, but also some of the interactions.

Kit Heintzman 16:33

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

Narin Hassan 16:38

So, actually, it was, it was a very interesting couple of days. So. And I was, at the time, the vice president of a 19th-century organization that's called Inks, interdisciplinary, 19th-century studies. And our annual conference was scheduled in Los Angeles, for whatever that weekend was, in March, when it was all really hitting, I guess it was like around maybe March 10, or something like that. And so there were more and more stories in the news about sort of COVID-19 coming over to the West Coast. And there were a lot of these last minute, you know, are we having the conference or not, like, literally a day or two, before the conference was about to begin? And, you know, the conference ended up happening, because the news stories were still kind of vague. And, you know, we

decided to have the conference, and I was supposed to fly out on Thursday, which was the first like the conference started that evening. And the president at the time, and the second vice president, were already on the plane on Wednesday. And it was on that Wednesday, that it really became like, L.A. may be on a lockdown. You know, like it was it was all sort of the news was breaking at that moment. And so I was supposed to fly the next morning. And because they were on the plane, they didn't know what was happening, right. So they landed in LA hadn't heard all the news. And those of us who were still on the East Coast had been sort of, you know, tracking what was happening. And so, that night, it was like, I made the decision that, you know, 11 o'clock at night or something not to fly and several other people who were on the board didn't, and there were just a flurry of, you know, phone calls and like, what's the right thing to do? And not quite knowing, you know, how, how urgent it was, but most of us who had not flown out, didn't want to get stuck, like we were afraid, you know, we wouldn't be able to fly back. So that was sort of the moment. I mean, I had been hearing things in the news before that. But there was definitely it sort of all came to a head that Wednesday or Thursday, I don't remember the exact dates before this conference. And then that was really the first time that, you know, the conference had to kind of manage right, this hybrid model, because I think more than a third of the participants didn't make it to the conference. And so there was a lot of last minute, like, flurries of you know, how do we do this, and the conference organizers already had a few panels that they were going to do virtually. So that at least was kind of in place. But for many of us, like that was the first time we were trying to really figure out how meetings were going to happen in virtual spaces, and, you know, sort of navigating travel and all of that. So yeah, that was that was when it really hit and then I guess it was about a week later that all the decisions about you know, do you close a yoga studio? Do you start doing everything online? What's happening with, you know, classes on campus, like suddenly that was all starting to evolve? But yeah, I had heard of it prior to that, but that was when it really sort of hit me.

Kit Heintzman 20:01

What were some of your early reactions?

Narin Hassan 20:05

I guess there's just an anxiousness around, and also a lot of navigating just quite how serious it was going to be. And so there was just a lot of going back and forth on, you know, decisions. And I'm trying to figure out how serious at that moment how serious this was, and how long it was going to last. So the reactions, I think were very varied, because there was that sort of sense of, Am I overreacting? You know, that was, that was a lot of what many of us were trying to figure out. And that sort of sense of, is it going to impact me or not? How, how is this? There was definitely that feeling that this was coming that it was spreading, but I don't think at the time, we quite understood how much it was going to do that. And obviously how long it was gonna last? You know, I think that sense of where this was gonna go was just now that I look back, I feel like we were all just so idealistic and innocent about the whole thing like, Oh, it'll just be a few months. So yeah, so it was a lot of just kind of figuring out navigating, you know, all of that. I think a lot of it in the beginning was just figuring out how much one should react, you know, like trying to figure out if you're overreacting, trying to sort of have a sense of how close it was. And so, yeah, I don't I mean, I think there was clearly a sense of stress, and there was a sort of sense of upheaval, and disruption. But I think in the beginning, it was more trying to figure out, you know, what the right thing was to do when and, you know, try to have a sort of sense of, I think, in the beginning, we were sort of all very naive and idealistic and sort of thought this was just a quick passing thing. So, you know, trying to kind of think through all of that. In the beginning, I felt like, there was some stress, but there was also just some sort of, like, Am I overreacting or under reacting trying to, you know, figure out what it was, you know, what, what the right things were to do. So there was just a lot of that, in the beginning for me.

Kit Heintzman 22:24

In hindsight, how do you feel about your early reactions?

Narin Hassan 22:29

Well, as I said, I definitely feel like, I was pretty idealistic, I definitely had this sense of like, Oh, we're in this and, you know, we're just going to sort of navigate it now and adjust to it, and then we're gonna sort of go back to something. And over time, clearly, there was just that sort of sense of, oh, you know, we just have to keep endearing this moment, right, and keep evolving in the way that we handle it. So yeah, so looking back part of it, I think, is just like being sort of idealistic about what was going on. And also, yeah, just trying to sort of, I guess, figure out in terms of, you know, my life and my practices, like how I was going to make things work at home. And figuring out those boundaries. I mean, there was a lot of that a lot of sort of navigating space and narrative, navigating home, and just a lot of my memories around that, in the beginning were, you know, reorganizing spaces, spending so much time at home and cleaning it up, and then figuring out what the best workspaces were, but then that blurring of work, and life and everything. And so, I think all of that was sort of, at the time, sort of, like, Oh, we're doing this to kind of get through this moment. But now there's been this like, long term, you know, it's become sort of normal, right, for us to be doing these kinds of online meetings for us to be spending more time at home. So yeah, looking back, I mean, it's just sort of funny a time even seems blurred, you know, like, what was in 2020? What was it? 2012 I don't even know what what really happened there, even though each day at that time seemed very relevant. But now looking back, it just feels kind of like this little gap, this little void. That there's so many things that I don't quite remember about.

Kit Heintzman 24:26

Do you remember much about Georgia's reactions at the state level?

Narin Hassan 24:31

I, so I feel like a lot of what I was reading was sort of what was happening globally, how it was moving, where it was moving. And I do remember you know, I mean, that movement towards like, people wearing masks, you know, the shift, I think when schools closed was the big sort of moment. Then, because then, you know, having my son at home doing my own teaching at home, like, somewhere at that point around March, you know, 18th, 20th I definitely felt like there was a oh, this is serious. And in Georgia typically like that stuff that, you know, things are a little more laid back. And then there was that sense of Oh, no, this is this is happening, you know. So I don't really remember specifics to the ways that those changes kind of came in Georgia, but I do remember, a few nights before the schools and everything close, I do remember just stopping in at a grocery store and how chaotic it was, and how, you know, you started to see empty shelves, and you started to sense that, you know, there was an urgency to all of it. And that definitely stands out as a memory. Like, I had never seen the grocery stores like that I had never seen people like sort of hoarding things. And you know, so that that definitely sticks out. And then that sort of evolving sense, right, that things are going to be different. We should stock up on things that, you know, there's, there's this sort of the daily news around sort of what was happening. And then, of course, all the really sad news about what was happening in hospitals. I mean, as that started to really evolve, I think, yeah, I think there was a sort of process, right, of going through the different phases. And then really recognizing, you know, what was happening? And then even the process of of processing that, you know, of like, Is this really happening? And there was a lot of that that was going on in that spring.

Kit Heintzman 26:46

What did you end up deciding to do with the yoga studio early in the pandemic?

Narin Hassan 26:51

So, I have a yoga studio partner. So, we call our space, The Little Yoga Co-Op, and it's two businesses coexisting in one space. So I'm Tend Yoga and Wellness and Lynne Brandley, my partner is Yoga Poses Daily. And so, you know, we were very quickly kind of, we were, we were preparing I should say, pretty quickly, I think we're one of the first studios in Atlanta to just get on Zoom, like, we were like, something's happening, and we need to be ready. And so, you know, we started to, I think it was on March 17, we just kind of switched over to online. I remember the first few days, there was a little bit of you know, some people were coming, some people were online, there was a bit of a hybrid model going on, but we did quickly sort of close, because at the time, we thought, okay, if we all just do the right thing, now we're gonna get through this, right. So we did make the

adjustment pretty quickly. It was a lot to sort of switch out systems and, you know, keep our students informed and go through all of that, and have everyone, you know, have the props they needed, we made props available to our students from the studio, like we were doing various things, to help people have a home practice and to kind of, you know, help them maintain, right, the sort of routine that they had with yoga. So there wasn't much of a gap, though, like we sort of went right for it. I mean, I remember that last one, I guess it was the first few days, just being immersed in, like learning how to use Zoom, figuring out, you know, how that was going to be set up, was I going to have a demo model was I going to spotlight people, you know, as students, so just a lot of those things, we both actually used Facebook Live a little bit, we sort of created private groups for our students, so that they could get you know, messages from us and get access to class, even if they didn't register. So our goal in the beginning was really and it is a big sort of principle in our space is it's very community based and very much about sort of building, you know, comfortable, safe spaces for people. So we were, you know, trying as many ways as possible to stay in touch with our students. So we were using zoom, we were using Facebook Live, we were creating little online, like forums and Facebook groups and things like that. So students could communicate with each other. So yeah, that was there was a lot that was going on to set all that up. But I don't think we even canceled any classes. I think we kind of went right from, you know, a week of of regular classes to then transitioning to the online model. But it's been hard to sustain it. It's been it's been exhausted and also, you know, some people just really don't like being online. And so that's been a little bit tricky. And what's also been really great though is, you know, people I've known in different countries and cities were able to join. So there was a kind of expansion as well, right? So, yeah, so just kind of figuring all of that out and figuring out how to build community online versus build it in the studio. It took a while to develop that. And it's just an ongoing process.

Kit Heintzman 30:34

How would you compare that to the way in your educational teaching things were transitioning online?

Narin Hassan 30:42

So in the educational teaching, it was very similar. Georgia Tech at that time was using a system called blue jeans. So there was a lot of learning, like learning blue jeans, learning zoom, navigating the different spaces. but I was actually lucky that this semester that all this went down, I actually was not teaching. So I had additional administrative work I was doing. So I didn't have to go through that really difficult process, which for a lot of people was just really rough in March of trying to shift the physical classroom space to an online space, I did teach that summer and then taught through the rest of the pandemic. So you know, I feel like I had that that experience. And in the in the college classroom, as I mentioned before, I actually felt like there were things in the online space that worked really well, you know, and beyond just sort of feeling like I could see my students in the spaces of their homes or their dorm rooms, or somewhere on campus. Features like the chat, like the chat would blow up, you know, students who are quieter using the chat, or sometimes it would feel like there would be multiple, you know, discussions going on discussion spaces a lot, again, to navigate. But things that were sort of coming out of the class, that were actually kind of building our discussion in a really great way. And I think sometimes students, I felt like students were much more open, virtually than they might be in a classroom physically, with all of us so much more coming out from students, you know, about their reactions to material to the reading, and so on. So it was a bit of a shift for all of us to kind of get there. But I also feel like we got some things out of that virtual setting that I think is sort of enhanced, you know, the the teaching and learning experience. So but I was lucky that I wasn't teaching right at that really critical, difficult moment, and that I had a little bit of time, you know, to then prepare the summer class and teach in that way. After that.

Kit Heintzman 33:00

What are some of the things you saw in your happening in your son's online education?

Narin Hassan 33:06

Yeah, my son's online education. I feel very lucky that he did okay online. I think for some kids, it was very hard. I can't even imagine having a younger child, or, you know, having elementary [inaudible], I was lucky that, you know, he was a freshman when the pandemic started and then spent his sophomore year, all virtual, it was a very

long stretch. When the pandemic first hit, I actually think there were elements of it that he liked, you know, that because they had already had much of the school year, and then it was just kind of wrapping it up. And so there was something about being home and being able to get a snack and then being able to go back in and, you know, sort of feel like teenagers are so good at picking up on like how to use it that I felt like for him that experience was fine. I think his sophomore year, it was really rough, because then it was just the exhaustion of everything being virtual of all the classes being virtual of virtually taking tests, you know, and so I sort of saw that decline. I mean, he was very ready to go back when it was time to get back and he he does not want to do anything virtual related to teaching anymore. He's just done with it. but I think that, yeah, having him home and having him be in the, in those early classes. Again, there was something sort of special and intimate about that, you know, and I felt like there were more conversations between his classes about what was happening, I felt more connected with what was happening, you know, with his classes and with his teachers, but as time went on, I think we all sort of you know, started to really tire from that process of being on a screen. I think for him, you know, it was a lot of time like to be on a screen from like 8:30 to 3:30. And to switch classes in that way, was a lot. I think we're very lucky because he had sports and activities that were almost every day at school. And that's what really saved. Because as much as the learning was happening, virtually, there was still, you know, those opportunities to see other students and to be on campus and to have some sort of high school experience with outdoor sports and things like that.

Kit Heintzman 35:39

What were some of the safety precautions and other things put into place for that staying in real life sporting activities?

Narin Hassan 35:48

Yeah, I think they had to wear masks the same thing. They were, you know, like, having the hand sanitizer or having all of that, I mean, that's my son was playing baseball, so they're pretty far away from it's not like a game like basketball, where you're right up next to each other. So, and again, I'm trying to remember the different phases of this. Because last year, you know, they started to do more indoors again, right. So even though they were still, virtually in school, they were sort of opening up more opportunities for students to, you know, use the gym inside and also be outside. But in the beginning, I mean, there was, there were a lot more precautions in place in terms of like, where they could be what they could do, there were no games, you know, it was just, you know, doing practices and things like that, but at least it kind of kept them going. But because it was baseball, while it was not, I think, as strict as some other sports. And, you know, there was definitely being outdoors and being pretty separate from each other, made it a little bit easier.

Kit Heintzman 37:00

How did you feel about that?

Narin Hassan 37:03

I felt great, I loved I loved that he was able to have that routine, it was sort of a part of the day, and that he had time, you know, to see other kids his age. And, you know, to be outside, I mean, for me, I felt like it was a pretty safe way to be, you know, in contact with other people and to kind of maintain the social time and like, the training and all of that. So I didn't feel as very concerned in terms of you know, where he was, I mean, I think what was really hard, though, was, in terms of friendship, you know, there were only a few people that he was seeing and that we are seeing and the way those different friendships evolved, or, I guess, people had their pods and who you're seeing here, you're not, you know, like, all of those sorts of decisions, right about what you are prioritizing, and who you're prioritizing. And there was something refreshing about that. But then there was something also sort of sad, right, because there were all the things he wasn't doing, or all the things we weren't doing. But those moments of having interaction with other people, or having some sense of normalcy, in terms of activities, was really important. And so I'm actually very glad that he had that during that time.

Kit Heintzman 38:23

What about you, what are some other ways that your social relations changed?

Narin Hassan 38:27

So definitely, in terms of scale, you know, fewer people. but there's something that was really special about that, too, because, for example, we sort of, we had some friends that we had done some trips with before, and those people sort of became part of our, I guess, COVID friendship group. and so, you know, one of the things that did happen, I think it was in October maybe of 2020, is that we all made a trip to Tybee Island together and, you know, actually got a whole week of working and doing school in another place, and after not being anywhere for quite a stretch, like, that was really special. And now those people are people I've continued to see through the pandemic, and we've done other trips, and, you know, so sort of seeing, I guess, that sense of, you know, maybe spending time with fear with people but having deeper friendships and, and really, those people kind of become like your family right over the course of time. So, so there was that and for me, the yoga friendships were really big as well. So a lot of my yoga students said, you know, that, that that yoga really kept them going. So for me, I mean, I've taught consistently online this whole time we haven't really had a break and now we're back to being in the studio again with a little bit more of a Hybrid model. But, you know, having those communities build, like those friendships also really deepened. Because, you know, students would see themselves online, we would all get the sort of check-ins, you know, before and after class. And that was a whole sort of other community of friendships that sustained me through the process. And now that we're starting to be back in the studio, it's really nice to just to see everybody again, you know, and to be back into in that space. So I would say, in terms of my social life there sort of, I guess, yeah, scaling down of the number of people that I was seeing. But then with yoga, this sort of, in a way, it was a broadening of, you know, like, I have friends from high school I hadn't seen in years who now take class and you know, being able to reconnect with people through the virtual space was also happening.

Kit Heintzman 40:57

I'd love to hear more about the travel you did.

Narin Hassan 41:01

The travel, oh, so during the pandemic, yeah, so I think that trip to Tybee Island was one of the main trips we did and then we did two or three other trips, mostly locally, though, we weren't flying. So we made a trip to the north Georgia mountains. And again, it was with a group. And you know, the same sort of group of people. So most of our travel during that period, was local, I think we maybe made two or three trips. In the first maybe year and a half. My family, my parents now live in Canada. And so that was actually really difficult because the border was closed for 18 months. And during the pandemic, my, my mother who has Parkinson's had a pretty serious fall and ended up being in the hospital for a while. And that was very, very stressful, especially because no one could visit her in the hospital. And she ended up being in the hospital for I think about three weeks. So, you know, that was a pretty difficult part of all of this in terms of travel is I couldn't visit them. And then I ended up having getting a compassionate exemption to go and see my mom when she came back from the hospital. So I spent sort of almost a month I think, in Canada, after that, but just navigating Borders was just awful, and continues to be pretty difficult. And then navigating, you know, family far away, and just all of that time, in which we were also isolated. Especially with, you know, older people, like I just really feel for how my parents had so much time without us, you know, and without other family and my father is like my mother's main caregiver and kind of seeing that relationship and how difficult it's been for him, even though they do have some help at home, but during the pandemic, it was all a little bit up and down in terms of you know, whether people would show up, and how much help was, you know, actually coming to the house. So that was probably one of the most difficult parts of the process and just not being able to even go, you know, without getting permission to travel that was very, very difficult.

Kit Heintzman 43:25

What was the process of seeking out that permission like?

Narin Hassan 43:31

it was kind of a nightmare in terms of paperwork. So I'm, for the Canadian government to give compassionate exemption. So my parents are Canadian citizens, which makes it a little bit easier, but I am not a Canadian citizen. So, because I wasn't a Canadian citizen, and I had to kind of go through more of a process for this. So they had to get a letter from their doctor, basically saying it was an emergency situation. And then we also had to get something from the hospital, you know, saying that she was actually in, you know, had been admitted, et cetera, et cetera. And then I remember various other long forms, you know, that required all kinds of things and signatures, kind of going back and forth. And a whole sort of online process of submitting the forms and waiting for approval. And so it actually took, you know, a couple of days to actually get it and then once you get your compassionate exemption, there's a kind of window you know, in which you can travel. So then also kind of figuring out that with, you know, the air travel and in that process of, you know, crossing the border. And it was really tricky because even though I had compassionate exemption, which meant I didn't have to quarantine because I was there to help care for my parents. But the systems are such that it would still assume I had to quarantine so I'd kind of get these daily calls like Like what, you know, where are you and you know, and so just kind of navigating all that, because all those systems were just being put into place, but then, you know, trying to figure out how I fit, you know, in the category through which I traveled. So there was just a lot of that going on. And I was actually lucky that I got two exemptions, because then I had another family emergency. So one was sort of, I think, in 2020, and the other one was in 2021. So I did visit my parents twice, and ended up staying there, you know, for an extended time of three or four weeks, just because it was so hard to go. But that also made leaving so much harder, right? Because then there's that sense that you're sort of immersed right in your world there. And I was lucky that I could teach from there and do everything virtually. But then once I was back, that sort of sense of you know, when will the border open? Will I go back? You know, well, I have to go through that process again. So, yeah, there was a lot of sort of paperwork and stuff around that that was not pleasant.

Kit Heintzman 46:05

Where are your parents in Canada?

Narin Hassan 46:08

They live in Oakville, Ontario, which is a suburb of Toronto, it's like maybe 35-40 minutes from there.

Kit Heintzman 46:18

Did you observe any differences between how Ontario was handling things and Atlanta?

Narin Hassan 46:25

Yes, they were much, much stricter, pretty much throughout. Uh, I mean, things were pretty strict in Atlanta for the first I would say, a year or so. But, in Canada, it's been much more of an extended process, in terms of, you know, policies around vaccination and entry into the country, masking, you just seemed much more of it. Just it feels like in Atlanta, things started to open up in terms of things like doctor's visits, or, you know, being able to kind of start to go back into spaces for various things. But in Canada, they were, they were continuing the virtual for quite a long time, and just much more strict about what could happen. So like, my mom has been in a program that like, includes physical therapy, and you know, sort of like a day program, and that just shut down completely, which made it very difficult, because then she was just home, you know, without those services, and they finally opened it up in 2021. But, you know, reduced the hours to just like an hour and a half or two. And so, that's really continued. They're like, now even though we're in our third year of this, most of those things that were sort of cut back are still cut back. And, you know, there's a slow return, but it does feel like it's much stricter, definitely things like, you know, lock downs, and like, how many people you can have in your house, or, you know, all of that was a loss, also a much more strict process.

Kit Heintzman 48:07

So 2020 had this like, notoriousness of it of one thing after another piling on, as to 2021. And this year also has a lot going on. I'm wondering, other than the pandemic, what have been some of the social and political issues on your mind?

Narin Hassan 48:24

So many things. I mean, I think, yeah, 2020 was really just such a year of upheaval between the pandemic and also the, the national election in the US, and Black Lives Matter. And so to me, it just feels like the summer of 2020 was so overwhelming and just felt very, very traumatic, the political rhetoric, you know, everything that sort of went down before that election, just all of the sort of racial unrest, and he was just a lot of that. So, yeah, it's felt to me like that has been, that really sort of added so many more layers of, of trauma, and stress to that year, and just also that feeling of isolation through all of that for all of us, like we were sensing that that was happening, and then sometimes very away from it. And I just remember, for example, with some of the Black Lives Matter protests, like that was the first time after a couple of months of the pandemic of seeing so many people out on the streets together and there was something really amazing about that, but then also something sort of like oh my god, they're all right next to each other what's happening like the, you know, the, I guess, really weird, oppositional like forces I guess, that were at play with having to navigate where we were in space and what was happening you know, in particular area was up the country. And then also just trying to navigate all the news about COVID. And how it was affecting so many people. So it was very difficult to process all of that at once. And then, you know, I think in both 2020 and 2021, just also processing what was happening around the world, right? Because there was so much more of a sort of sense of like, what happens in one place can come to another like, I think it really, the pandemic helped us really see our Inter connectivities. So much more. But yeah, I felt like just, sometimes it was just overwhelming to even keep up with the news, because so much was happening. And things were also so difficult just in our own lives. So that sort of sense of where one was in your private space versus public spaces, and all of the news and all of the intensity, it was just it definitely felt like a lot.

Kit Heintzman 50:57

Did your media consumption practices change much?

Narin Hassan 51:01

Yes, so pre pandemic, i, and this does not necessarily have to do with the news. But pre pandemic, I was not a big TV watcher, like I was not, you know, I was always behind on whatever shows, people were watching, or whatever, whatever films they were watching. And during the pandemic, that was actually something that my son and husband would really get sucked into shows, and I wouldn't really watch them. And then I actually started to do that. And so that was something that changed, like, suddenly, I was watching all of these things, you know, on Hulu or Netflix and, or we were all watching these things. And so media consumption in that way really went up. I felt like my media consumption in terms of the news would fluctuate, you know, like I would, I would often be using my phone as a way to kind of get that news, I wouldn't actually be listening to the news as much. but I would go through phases of you know, wanting to know everything going on, and then just needing to shut down, you know, needing to have kind of a pause from it. And I think that's where sort of being lost in a television show was such a relief sometimes like to kind of be in that other world. So there was there was definitely I think, in many ways more media consumption, right between that and the news. But it would go in phases, it would sort of shift around.

Kit Heintzman 52:24

What are some of the things you watch?

Narin Hassan 52:27

Gosh, now I can't it's going back. I'm trying to remember all of them. But well, I guess I'll go from the most. So we watched Ozark which we just finished. We watched The Morning Show, we watched Mrs. America. Gosh, I'm trying to remember some of the other ones. In the beginning, it was like humorous things like rewatching The Office or trying to watch things that were kind of more of a distraction. And then, you know, over time, it became

sort of viewing these other, like longer lens, you know, sort of dramas or TV shows. There were so many, but now I'm not I'm sure I'm forgetting so many of them. But yeah, those were a few of them.

Kit Heintzman 53:19

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

Narin Hassan 53:24

Oh, gosh, health to me... I think it means a sense of wholeness and comfort in one's body and in one's place. And so I think it's just a feeling of yeah, feeling of wholeness. Like every part is coming together and functioning, and you're moving through your life without feeling like you have to control something in your body, or you have to like, you know, deal with a certain element of pain. And so for me, at that individual level, that's what health feels like. But it's also mean the term health to me. also makes me just think about, like, broader ways we think about health, right, like our community's health, the way that we think about, you know, self care and community care, the way we think about access to health care and different forms of health care. It's sort of thinking about systems functioning, you know, in a healthy way. So yeah, I mean, the word makes me think of so many different things. When I think of the word health, I don't immediately think of like a medical setting. I sort of think more in a holistic way about you know, kind of being in touch with oneself and one's body and its functions and you know, being able to take care of oneself and take care of others like those are the things that I think about when I think about health.

Kit Heintzman 55:04

How do you see the relationship between health and wellness?

Narin Hassan 55:10

I see them as very intertwined. I mean, I think that the term wellness is also kind of loaded and, and can be, you know, discussed in so many different ways, and particularly the wellness industry, which is really sort of exploded in recent years, but especially during the pandemic. And so, yeah, I mean, I think thinking about health and well, I mean, I see them as very intertwined, because having a sense of wellness to me, includes feeling healthy, right includes, you know, being in good health, but then what does being in good health really mean, right? Like, there's different ways that we all manage and navigate the different things that we have going on with our health or with our bodies, and, and also with our minds, like the different ways we've sort of process all that. But wellness, to me is sort of trying to think of how I would define it. But it feels to me sort of even more broad, right, in that we can think about wellness being tied to well-being are two different sort of states of being well, right are two different kinds of spaces that we inhabit, that we want to be spaces of wellness, right, so and I guess both health and wellness also have like the different rituals and processes that we engage with right, to produce them, but then also thinking about accessibility, right for different communities in terms of what kinds of wellness practices do people know about or hear about what kinds of health practices so I think that that's, you know, there's a lot of privilege around both those terms, and then sort of thinking about how the terms mean different things to different people, right? And, to me, there's just a, there's a lot you can talk about with that. And I'm not quite sure how to think I'm still thinking through right how I think about those differently, like I'm very aware of, like, as a yoga instructor, part of my job, I think, is to help people be more in touch with their health, but also feel more well, and be more aware of wellness practices that they can integrate in their lives. But then I also recognize that yoga is a really loaded term to write and means different things to different people. And it's also associated with a certain level of privilege, at least the way that it's practiced, you know, in Western countries. So I think all of those terms are really complicated, but have also become more more and more relevant in this time.

Kit Heintzman 57:51

You've mentioned earlier, the relationship between yoga and trauma, and I just wanted to invite some space to talk more about that.

Narin Hassan 58:03

Yeah, there's so much research on that now, and so many practitioners who are, you know, really teaching like trauma informed yoga, and, you know, just different ways of thinking about embodiment, and how it's tied to trauma. Yeah, there's so many things I can say about that. I mean, I think one thing that's, that's really important is, I think, to recognize that we're all living in a moment of trauma, whether we recognize it or not, and that our nervous systems are really like working overtime right now, I mean, that we are in a state in which our nervous systems are not at rest, you know, because everything around us, you know, is stressful and traumatic, even still at this moment. So I think thinking about how practices like yoga help us to understand that, they help us to sort of understand the role of the nervous system. To understand how stress impacts our body, and then give us tools right to sort of learn to manage and navigate. I think that's where, you know, the two things are very integrated, because mean, the whole goal of yoga as much as you might, you know, in the US yoga is described in a way in, which is very tied to physical practice, right? To exercise, to Lululemon, to all these things, you know, yoga at its core is, it's, I mean, that's Asana (sanskrit), right, that's the physical thing, but, but yoga is about so many other things that have to do with lifestyle, with love with meditation, with philosophy. I mean, there's so many traditions that are built to help you navigate life and to help you find your purpose in life. Right? And so think when you think about yoga and how it helps us recognize trauma, right and not even just trauma that comes from you know, the pandemic but just the different aspects of our being of our lives that have sort of impacted how we feel, right, how we see ourselves. Yoga can be one of those modalities that helps us recognize how past traumas or how past experiences can be held in our bodies. And I think we've all felt like you come out of a difficult meeting, whether it's in person, or even online, and your shoulders feel tight. I mean, there's just our body, you know, recognizes those things. And there's more and more research now about that about, you know, how trauma is held in the body, how our stresses are held. And there's a famous book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, which is basically like, you know, that your body holds on to these things, and then they emerge as illnesses, right? So I think because there's more research that's sort of showing that more and more people are becoming aware of how practices like yoga and meditation can help with all of this, but can also help us with, you know, the other traumas you mentioned before, like the political upheaval, that just all of the things that are happening, not just necessarily things that are, you know, diseases that we can catch, but also, other things like micro-aggressions that we all experience in, you know, different stages and parts of our lives, different situations that we all sort of, hold on to, there's a sort of sense of awareness that comes out of taking time in practices like this, that help you recognize those that help you be a little bit more intuitive, and then help you also process and manage, the sort of physical or emotional burdens that come from those situations.

Kit Heintzman 1:01:48

Would you share a little about how being trauma informed shapes your teaching?

Narin Hassan 1:01:55

Yes, so I think it shapes my teaching, both in terms of my yoga teaching, and my academic teaching. So one of the things I guess I'll start with the academic teaching, one of the things I think, being trained in these practices for so many years has done for me is, first of all, a recognition of yourself in space, like, how are you presenting yourself, right, in a teaching environment or in any sort of setting, and how that really no matters, right in how a space is sort of set up? How you navigate the different people in that space? So, it's the self awareness, that sort of that, to me, it sort of begins with and then it's the sort of ability to read a room in multiple ways, right? So body language, who is interacting with who, who's speaking and when, like, what are they saying, what are they not saying? So, think practices, when you're trained in these embodiment practices, you sort of learn how to do that, right. And to me, that really helps thinking about, you know, the situations, my students may be in why someone may speak on a certain day, or not just being more sensitive and aware, right to those kinds of things. It's also impacted my academic teaching, because it used to be that students didn't know I was a yoga teacher. But these days, you can look these things up, right? And so in recent years, more and more students have actually asked me to bring that into the classroom, I sort of resisted that at first, because I didn't want students to feel uncomfortable, right, that their professor was like, let's take a moment to take a deep breath, ya know? Not everyone feels comfortable in a public or classroom space, sort of thinking about their body or thinking about how they're feeling. And so that was something I didn't really do. But in recent years, more and more students have said, can

we actually do something at the beginning of classes, sometimes it's really simple. Like, before we start the class, let's take a moment to be grounded, like, let's think about where we are, you know, let's take a few breaths. sometimes it's been a little bit more like I had a class recently, where I had students who actually asked me to do a short minute, like, what would it be like to do a meditation before a class like just for five minutes, you know? Or what would it be like to just take a moment, to be in our bodies and recognize how we're feeling and unwind a little bit, you know, before the class and so that started to happen more and more in academic settings. I think that this generation of students has kind of grown up with that a little bit more, but also, these conversations about trauma or about, you know, stress and how it's held in the body have become more available to people, right. So there's kind of both a need and an urge, you know, from students that I'm seeing in that direction, and I think we all need these practices. Now. I don't I don't know how people survive without them, especially this one. wouldn't. So that's kind of how I see it sort of impacting the academic spaces. And then within yoga spaces, people who come to yoga classes are usually already pretty aware of how these practices help them. And the more comfortable they become with the practices, I think the more the more they recognize the value of them, but also become more open about what's happening in their bodies, how they're feeling, you know, so I think yoga spaces can be these spaces, where spaces of openness, right where people actually can talk a little bit more about how they're feeling on that day and recognize that that's just everything with you. And it's like, it's a process, right? Whether it's a process of the practice or a process of how you're feeling yourself, and how you're navigating that there's a sort of natural inclination in a yoga class, because it asks people to become quiet right to sometimes confront things that are difficult. And so that's where I think a trained teacher knows that the things you teach, and you don't teach, right, when you when you recognize the power of the process of the practice, then you kind of learn how it can be healing, but you also learn what students need and don't need, right a little bit more. So my classes tend to be pretty small, like, I'm very, I'm not at, like 30 people in a room, I tend to have students who last for a while, and who, whose bodies I sort of know and understand. And there's just things you're taught, like, if a student's study is suffering from depression, you don't have them do more forward bending, like there's just an internalization that happens there, they need back that they need things that open them up, right. So a trained teacher kind of has that knowledge, right, that comes from a deep learning about, you know, what parts of the body might hold certain emotions, or what parts of the body, you know, tend to be impacted by certain situations. And you, you integrate that in to the way that you teach or the way that you address particular student needs.

Kit Heintzman 1:07:11

You'd use the word micro-aggression earlier, and I just wanted to ask you to explain what that means?

Narin Hassan 1:07:22

Yeah, so it's a term that seems to come up a lot more these days, especially with more and more conversations about diversity, and equity, and justice and all of that. And, I think that the term micro-aggression one of the ways that I've heard it described in a workshop that now I need to go back and remember who it was, who gave this workshop, because I'd like to be able to credit them, but the title of the workshop was something like 1000 paper cuts, and it was about microaggressions. And so you know, micro-aggressions are like little things that come up, that may not seem like a big deal, but as they add up, they're like, 1,000, paper cuts, right? So each one is like a little cut. And then it's more and more and more. And so a micro-aggression is like a minor thing that can be used to kind of reinforce like, certain power dynamics, right, in particular situations, or, you know, serve certain organizational structures. And so for me, like a micro-aggression is something like, you know, frequently being, like, forgotten on an email, right, which a few times after, you might start to realize this pattern, or, you know, certain people who are consistently being interrupted, like, what does that mean, right? Or comments that are made that are maybe passing comments, but that later on you process and think about in terms of other sort of imbalances, right, or sort of power structures? And so I mentioned the term micro-aggression. And now I don't even remember why, but, I guess one thing I'll say about them now is that when you are trained in sort of holistic practices, or practices that that teach you how to observe and see, you become more aware of those kinds of things that come up, and you just become a little bit more conscious and sensitive to them. And so yeah, I don't remember exactly why I brought that up. But you know, that's that's just one of the ways I would sort of describe what that means. And often when you look at narratives, and this is I think true with narratives around well-being

and also narratives related to diversity is that there's a lot of talk about shifting cultures or you know, the things that people should do to create more sustainable and healthy environments. But the ACT Short practices are not always in place. And that's where micro-aggressions often come in, right? Like, you can easily say, like, Oh, we're gonna have a structure where we're hiring more people of color, we're gonna do all these things, but then how are you actually treating those people? Or how do the structures actually support those people and ensure that they feel welcome, right? So that's just kind of an example. And the same thing happens with wellness, the wellness industry stuff, you know, like you do these things. And, oh, we should just like in the office, you know, make yoga class classes accessible to people or give them gym memberships. But then in the end, if you're giving them those things, but then still expecting them to work 12 hours a day? What's the point? Right, it's just kind of building the same machine, right? Or supporting the same institutional structure. So I think micro-aggressions can be at play, you know, in the ways we think about those things, too, right? Like, we have bigger systems in place. But then what are the subtle things that continue right, that sort of keep the structures in their place? Or keep the sort of balance of power in the same place?

Kit Heintzman 1:11:13

What does the word safety mean to you?

Narin Hassan 1:11:15

Oh, my goodness, safety. I guess, safety means a comfort and security and a sense of well being but also a sense of, of calm of of not worrying about the next thing of of not feeling like you may be violated of not feeling like you may be in danger. But, in an sort of idealized way, safety would be something permanent, right? There's something about, like, you may feel safe in one moment, but in another space, you may not or in another situation or the next day, you may not like to me, safety with permanency would be real safety, right, or a safety and knowing that things will be okay for a while. Yeah, that's what I think that with that

Kit Heintzman 1:12:13

We've had this really narrow conversation about safety under the sort of narrative of the pandemic and sort of biology. I'm wondering, under that really narrow framework, what are some of the ways that you've been attempting to keep yourself safe?

Narin Hassan 1:12:31

So I mean, through the pandemic, I guess I'll start with that narrow mean, it was all the things right. So, the masking and the social distancing, and all those things that you know, sort of staying home. also, just making the home a place of safety, not just at the level of safety, like security, but safety as in feeling comfortable, like feeling like you can do the things you need to do at home. That it's a sort of space of calm, right? Or is a space where things are functioning. So I mean, a lot of it, I think, in the beginning was that, but then thinking about safety, I guess, more broadly, at the beginning of the pandemic, it did feel like things were kind of safe, because everybody was in their home. Like, now there's that sort of shift of Oh, going back to something, and traveling again, a little bit more, and what does that mean, you know, in terms of safety, and then I guess, in terms of like, taking care of myself, and safety. I mean, I have been traveling more, but like, again, you know, still masking on planes, still, you know, still doing the things that we're being told or the things to do, you know, to be safe, or still sort of doing the things to take care of myself in terms of my own health, which can't always happen, but you know, eating well, or taking care of myself or trying to sleep, which doesn't always happen. But you know, trying to kind of more broadly be well in a way that would keep me safe. So yeah, those are a few of the things but I'm not sure if I've answered your question fully.

Kit Heintzman 1:14:16

You did perfect. How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Narin Hassan 1:14:22

Uncertain, it just feels like at least where I am now. It's it's so hard to know, I think we're in this interesting space where we're moving towards another phase right? Where I think people are really tired of the pandemic and they're really tired of like, where we are with everything, but it's still sort of there. And so, things to me still feel a little bit uncertain because at least where I am. There's a lot of new cases again, and they're pretty mild luckily. So I think that's where it's sort of interesting where we're at In entering a space where it's becoming so much more common that people have had COVID are going about that, you know, they're they're testing positive. But then it's a confusing space, right? Because, you know, testing is still unclear. And what you should do when is still a little bit unclear. And sometimes the testing confuses things, because you could be fully recovered from COVID, but still show up positive on the PCR. So what does that do? I mean, I have an upcoming trip. And I'm nervous about that, because I just got over COVID. And so like, we're just in this interesting space where we still have, you know, in a lot of situations, ways where we have to, like follow protocols like doing tests, but then how accurate those are, and you know, how much they can continue to disrupt things when maybe things don't need to be as disrupted. It just feels like we're sort of in this place where we're maybe moving towards, yeah, COVID is more normalized, but then there's still some disruption. And so it's, it still feels a little uncertain to me. You know, where things are, because it seems like the news is still shifting day to day and policies around travel are shifting day to day. So, it's that feeling of still not quite knowing and not quite feeling like you're in control, and still having a lot of other things to manage around what you do in your daily life or what you do with travel. It seems to me like that's, that's still the way that I feel. I mean, I feel, I think more positive that now we have, you know, just less severity around all of this. But it does feel a little bit like we're still on edge like I still because it's been so long, and it's gone through so many phases. I don't feel completely, like I don't feel relaxed and comfortable by any means.

Kit Heintzman 1:16:58

Would you share more about what it was like to have COVID?

Narin Hassan 1:17:03

Yeah, so I was really lucky that I escaped it for so long. So, you know, back in December, my son and husband had it, we had to cancel two trips, before Christmas because of it and

Kit Heintzman 1:17:20

Sorry, was that December 2021, or 2020?

Narin Hassan 1:17:23

That was December 2021. So, into January 2022. So, just about six months ago. So so no one actually close to me had it. I think I mean, I heard I had friends who had had it, but no one that feel very, very lucky that, you know, no one close to me really suffered. And that my close family unit, like no one in my close family had it until December 2021. So that's when my son had it. And then my husband had it. And then I felt like almost everybody in my neighborhood had it; it was sort of like it went through my son's High School. And it was suddenly like, you know, all these families had it. And so, I took four or five tests that week and did not have it, I took PCRs and to [inaudible], I felt fine. So, it was it was awkward, we were still kind of masking at home, and like avoiding, you know, close contact, but I escaped it that time. And then at the end of this semester, it was actually the day or the day after turning in my grades, at the end of the semester, that I felt really tired, but you feel tired when you you know, are at the end of a school year. And I really did feel like I had allergies. And there was a lot of pollen and mold in the air. And I just sort of felt like I was a little bit you know, had a scratchy throat because of that. And so I felt like that for a day or two. And then started to feel more and more like, Ooh, this is, you know, my throat is really, really sore. So I ended up getting it, you know, positive test. For me, the symptoms were largely a very sore throat, and a headache. And it was interesting, it was affecting my eyes, like I felt like my eyes were burning a lot. Like I didn't want to be on a screen. And you know, I just kind of wanted to rest a lot. So I was feeling quite tired. And I felt that for maybe three days, I had a light fever on and off, not very heavy, not very high, not heavy. and then after that I went in waves like after two or three days of not of not feeling great. I actually felt great. And then but then the problem was I would do all these things because I was like I got to catch

up on you know, on my work and I have to do laundry and clean the house and you know, and then it would be like, Oh, I'm not over it yet. You know, so there was a lot of sort of ups and downs with it. But I would say I felt, you know for a full like five or six days those waves scrolling up and down. And then somewhere along right at the end of it, and I think it was my ninth or 10th Day of having it, I felt fine by, you know, the eighth day maybe. But I am traveling a lot this summer, I'm teaching in a Georgia Tech program that's in France. And so I've been teaching online, and I started teaching online that week, I had COVID. So that was part of it is I was waking up really early teaching on French time, and not necessarily, you know, sleeping enough. So it sort of dragged itself out. But on the ninth day, I actually had, so I've had a cavity, I've had all kinds of hate the dentist, another thing I avoided along with doctors. But over the course of the pandemic, I hadn't been to the dentist. So I had a pre-pandemic cavity that kept getting worse, and needed to get this done before the trip. So there was a last-minute cancellation. And I did have some dental work done on my ninth or 10th day of, you know, kind of recovery. And that was really interesting, because for two weeks after that, I still feel it, I had a lot of dental pain. And you know, it was a big filling. And so I kind of expected that there would be some pressure and discomfort. But I had a lot of pain in my jaw at the sites where they had put the Novocaine injections. And so I went back a few days later, they could not find anything wrong, they didn't think anything was infected, the dentist could not understand why my jaw was in so much pain. And then as I started to research it, I read more and more about how a COVID symptom or like long COVID, you know, thing can be jaw pain like that it can affect your jaw, because of inflammation and all of that. So that was a really interesting sort of longer term side effects that I'm still feeling. I think having all that dental work and drilling while I was probably still inflamed in this part of my body really made it so the recovery from the dental work was long, I mean, I had to, I'm one of those people who doesn't really take Advil or anything, but I was I had to take the stuff, you know, like to sleep. So now I feel you know, much, much better. But I think having that dental work and COVID together meant that like the last two or three weeks were pretty rough. But I feel very lucky that I fully recovered from COVID. And that, you know, don't seem to have had any other long term effects.

Kit Heintzman 1:22:42

Has your relationship to productivity changed much?

Narin Hassan 1:22:47

in some ways, so. Yeah, I think thinking about priorities, I think for all of us, our relationship to work and productivity just changed, like the way we work, the things we prioritize how much time we want to devote to work, I think that there's definitely been an been a shift. For me, there was definitely a shift sort of in the beginning of the pandemic toward like, you know, thinking about, okay, I cannot be working on this all the time, I can't be on a zoom all the time, I can't be, you know, on my laptop all the time, like needing to really carve out space away from a screen. And so in those ways, my relationship to productivity changed, but in other ways, now that the last two years have felt like a bit of a loss. I've been feeling the pressure now to sort of make up for lost time, right? So, I'm trying to get my book done trying to get back into things, you know, after a little bit of a pause, I feel like now there's a little bit more of a move back towards that. I will say during the pandemic, though there were two really big collaborative projects I did, which were really great. So there was a sort of shift in the way that I worked, where it was really difficult to do long term projects that demanded a lot of focus, like writing a book, and, you know, a book that was my book, but there was a lot of ways that like, collaborative projects worked really well. So I did two special issues during the pandemic, which are now out. So one was a special issue of a journal 19th century context, which is on 2020. It's, it's called unprecedented disruptions, about 19th Century Scholars, reflecting on 2020 and the other one is a special issue for the journal medical humanities on global health humanities, so both of them were actually kind of related to the moment and that made it really great that we you know, I worked with CO editors on that we wrote the introductions together, we did all of that through zoom, and, you know, using Google Docs. And, you know, I published an article during that period, like doing those kinds of things were good. And I felt productive about that good about that. But then my relationship to kind of thinking about work and productivity definitely shifted, and the actual process of working was very difficult, you know, in terms of that, like longer term focus.

Kit Heintzman 1:25:35

What are some of the things you want for a longer term future?

Narin Hassan 1:25:39

In terms of my work, or otherwise?

Kit Heintzman 1:25:43

Both

Narin Hassan 1:25:43

Yes [laugh]. I'm... well, in terms of my work, getting my next book done, which is kind of my Yoga Book. And like, there's been a, there's a real theory and practice component to that. So, it also kind of combines what I do with the yoga part of my life with my academic life. So I mean, that's, that's sort of a priority for this coming year. And then sort of, yeah, thinking to the future in ways where we can feel like we're past at least, the more traumatic phase of COVID, and of the pandemic and kind of moving towards something that's more quote unquote, normal but better or right, like, how do we sort of take this moment and shift the way that we do things and integrate them? Like, for yoga? I mean, it's, it's really cool that now we have these hybrid options, like I have students who love coming to the studio, but then also love that they can get online. Like, how do we move towards integrating things a little bit better? And coming back to a place of boundaries a little bit, you know, in terms of work in life, but then, yeah, coming to a place where we actually can feel a little bit more at rest, because I don't feel that yet, you know, and a little bit more like we're moving into something that's better. And that's something that's a little bit beyond where we are now.

Kit Heintzman 1:27:13

Who are some of the people that have been supporting you in the last year, and what's that support look like?

Narin Hassan 1:27:20

Oh, my gosh, so I would say, my immediate family, for sure, my husband and son, and just kind of all of us being in a space of home together, and just supporting each other through the various phases of the last two and a half years, my parents are part of that. And just sort of, even though they're far away, and you know, have their own difficulties, just kind of knowing that my parents are there, and that there's this sort of daily phone calls or FaceTime, and that sort of sense of continuity with family and connection. So I would say what's really start with family, I think that my yoga students have been a source of support to because I mean, when we're all in a yoga space, whether it's in a physical space, or in an online space, just having that space to talk about how we are actually feeling in that moment on that day, and what we're going to work on, you know, and that process of a pattern of having my schedule and routine with that has been really good. Like, that's been a supportive thing. You know, even though there's a sort of energy that goes out when you teach, you know, and to prepare for that takes some time, the actual interactions are really supportive. And then knowing that that's a community that's evolving, and building is really, really great. And I also feel that with my, my Georgia Tech students, like, there's something about that sort of process of like, we're all doing check ins, like things changed with my classes over the pandemic, where, you know, I, I will ask in the chat, how is everybody what's going on, like, there's more of a sort of a contact and community building that's also happening in the academic classroom, and I feel like that supportive, you know, for me, as well. And then I've been lucky to have some really fantastic colleagues who, you know, we started an online sort of little writing group in the last few months, and just having those check ins. And sometimes we're actually writing together virtually, or sometimes it's just, you know, how the week has been. So having some of those patterns and routines with friends has also been really good. And in the beginning of the pandemic, it was just the family zooms, you know, or the zoom with friends and sort of having those ways to be in touch with people were really helpful.

Kit Heintzman 1:29:53

And what are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself?

Narin Hassan 1:29:58

Oh, my gosh, it's really changed. So, I guess over the course of the pandemic, and it's kind of also gone in different phases. At the beginning of the pandemic, I was in the middle of this, this year long yoga teacher training. And so I was doing a lot of practice myself, but also a lot of studying. And so the virtual space was really great, we finished our training that way. And then I was able to take classes with my teachers in different cities online. so that was a really nice thing to be able to do at the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of cooking at home. So I feel like we eat really well when we are home and cooking. And I've been trying to be, you know, really good about the meals that we have, and the kind of food that we eat. You know, doing things like taking walks, and being outside more like that has been a really big shift in the pandemic that I think has been really good in terms of my own well-being. And then yeah, being a little bit, just being able to be home and being a little bit more informal, about my teaching, and about my workspace, like, I know, we've all felt this, but like being able to be on a zoom and have pajamas on underneath, or I haven't think through the first, I guess, almost a year of the pandemic where I was, like, I'm just not wearing buttons and zippers, like it's going to be comfortable clothes. Now, there's a shift, obviously back to having to wear some of those clothes, but you know, just doing things to be comfortable, like in the spaces that we were in, you know, in that phase. And so those are things that for me have been important in terms of taking care of myself. You know, like food, Yoga, walking outdoor time, you know, time with people. And, you know, there's, there's things that I, you know, do to take care of myself in terms of things that I eat and drink and things like that, but that those are the main things.

Kit Heintzman 1:32:08

What do you think scholars and nurses in the social sciences in the humanities should be doing right now to help us understand the human side of this moment?

Narin Hassan 1:32:16

I think that it's already starting to happen. I think sort of thinking the way, about the ways that our research can be impactful, the ways that it actually can align and collaborate with the sciences and the ways that you know, like, I'm teaching a class right now, that's a literature and medicine class, and a lot of it is about that, you know, and how the different practices in these different areas and fields can coexist and merge, you know, and the different ways that there's connections between them. So, I think, being more upfront about the relevance of our work, and why it's so important at this time, and why, you know, reading a book about illness can really help us think through some of the questions of this moment or reading about, you know, previous pandemics matters, like how those histories can really help us understand where we are now. So, I think, I think it's a really important moment for the for the Humanities, and the Social Sciences, even though we're also sort of under attack in a lot of ways, I think it's an important moment for us to, you know, be upfront about what we do, but also shift our research to really address the moment, right. So, I mean, I'm seeing more and more scholarly work now that, you know, takes into account personal experience, that there's more and more critical work that also looks at personal practices, or looks at, you know, who we are and how that matters in terms of how we do our scholarship. So, you know, there's more and more work that's starting to do that the special issue that I did for 19 century contexts, I mean, we actually asked the contributors to make sure they actually talk about that, what what was the pandemic about for you? How did that impact your work? How does that help you think about the 19th century? So I think, you know, drawing those connections and thinking about those connections between theory and practice, are the personal and the critical, are things that you know, we can keep doing with our work. And I think for us in the Humanities and Social Sciences, like bringing back the relevance of History, the relevance of Literature, you know, of narrative of different media forms, I feel like that's something that we are doing and can do even more of, and I think projects like yours are really great because it's sort of showing, right, how stories matter and how you know, personal experiences that are part of an archive, you know, can really matter to so. So, yeah, I think that there's, there's a lot of work we need to do to continue to build that and to continue to kind of research. the relevance of the past and to kind of think about how the work we do is so important in this moment, particularly as we think about questions of empathy, and understanding and critical thinking and communication. So, yeah, I think all of that is very, very important.

Kit Heintzman 1:35:29

I'd like you to imagine speaking to a historian and the future. One far enough away that they have no lived experience of this moment. What would you ask them to remember about this moment? What would you tell them couldn't be forgotten?

Narin Hassan 1:35:43

isolation, I'd want them to be able to really sort of research the different stories of isolation and also stories of experience in terms of, you know, the different ways that the pandemic affected different communities. Because I think what often happens when you look to the Past from the Future is there's a kind of like, the 19th century was about this, you know, but having a historian really look at how this pandemic impacted different communities in radically different ways. So, you know, I think for people who are in communities of privilege, like having technology and being able to create little pods, and all of that meant that there were some moments where things actually felt pretty, okay, right. But what it meant for people who didn't have jobs that could just, you know, easily transfer to being online, people who actually were driving the buses are still doing the things, you know, that needed to keep going, or communities that didn't have the same access to technology, like to really dig into, you know, what that meant, like, what the diverse experiences were, and even in terms of how the illness impacted different communities. Like what that meant. And yeah, I mean, I started with isolation, but for some people, it wasn't isolated. Right? For me, that's like my first thing I think about, but for so many other people, it was like, they didn't have the privilege of isolation, right? So, so really kind of thinking about, yeah, how it impacted different people in different ways. And then I'd also want historians to really think about how it shifted the meaning of time, I think it really shifted time for all of us. And what that meant that, you know, in some cases, time just felt like it was standing still. And then other ways time was just going by. So those would be some of the things.

Kit Heintzman 1:37:55

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time, and the beauty of your answers. Those are all of the questions I sort of know how to ask at this moment. But I'd like to open up some space. If there's anything you want to say that I haven't made room for, please say so.

Narin Hassan 1:38:12

Thank you know, I think you asked so many great questions and gave me a lot of time. So, I appreciate that. And I'm sure I'll get off of this and think of all the things I wished I had said but I do feel like, we covered a lot, so I really appreciate your time as well. And thank you for inviting me to be part of the project.

Kit Heintzman 1:38:34

Thank you so much.

Narin Hassan 1:38:36

Thank you.