

I was one of the fortunate souls in New York Who did not have any loved ones pass away. I do not know how I would have reacted otherwise. Many people lost their jobs, lives, loved ones, their sanity, and homes and I luckily had the privilege of living with my family pre pandemic and being supported by them and my college's financial aid. I will never take my circumstances for granted again after this extremely pivotal event and I now understand the importance of social connection and community. I am also far more appreciative of those who work in the health emergency fields and I would like to follow a career path in this area.

Covid-19 has left a permanent mark on the world, its politics, health awareness, and will change the way people see life, whether positively or negatively. I became more motivated to pursue a career in the health and field because I have always been a health-conscious person and I am regularly concerned about the general health of the public, physically and mentally. I hope to use my major to help other people with debilitating disease and food and shelter insecurities across the country. This confusing virus not only left a strain on people's physical health, but also their mental health. The rates of depression, anxiety skyrocketed due to social isolation, loss of loved ones, physical disconnect, and fear. We must not disregard those who are mentally ill in these still dangerous times. I always admired those who put the needs of others above their own and thus have an immense amount of respect for the health workers and first responders since they worked extremely hard and at a backbreaking pace for the safety of the public. Not only were the first responders important to us, but so were the sanitation workers such as garbagemen and janitors, the construction workers, electricians, and minimum wage essential workers who were once invisible to society.

I miss Brooklyn College and its vibrant community, which includes fun clubs, social events, academic support, and wonderful people. The immediate disconnect from society had a greater effect on me than I realized because I had enough time to contemplate and self reflect but also lack of social connection and confinement temporarily leading me to have more anxiety and negative emotions. I got over these problems quickly with family guidance and support and by maintaining online connections with people of shared interests with me. I also practiced regular gratitude by being more appreciative of the food, clothing, heat, air conditioning, technology, and education that others lack. By adding more structure in my day and trying new activities, I was able to maintain a sense of purpose and general direction which is important in holding on to one's mental health. I also had more time to exercise which was extremely important to maintaining great mental clarity and protection against the virus. I feel elated and optimistic every time I finish a tough workout. Because of this, I regularly start my day with about an hour of exercise ranging from home workouts on Youtube, jogging in the park, or jumping rope. The body should not be neglected with the immune threat Covid-19 presents.

Before, I used to spend much of my free time playing videogames and browsing the internet. While these activities are useful and engaging, they are unfulfilling overall when done in excess. I replaced much of the time I spent on computer games with reading and writing and instead of mindlessly surfing Youtube for entertainment alone, I now limit my time spent on the website and now use it to supplement the development of knowledge and new skills. I also read more scientific and medical articles because the bewilderment, panic, and dissolution the virus

caused taught me the importance of knowledge. I also discovered my love for art, animation, game development, and cooking. These are hobbies I collected to give me new forms of stimulation. They are much harder and provide less immediate gratification than playing videogames or browsing social media but are rewarding and self-fulfilling eventually. I used to have a much more fixed mindset that I do now because I would often quit certain activities when they became too boring or difficult but now that I see the improvement consistent effort gives me, I realize that I simply needed to put in more time and work in my passions and responsibilities. I once believed that I lacked the intelligence or talent for activities like drawing, programming, or mathematics but the reality was that I was just lackadaisical and disorganized. An important lesson videogames taught me was how greatly one can improve if they put enough time and effort into doing what they love. I was able to see great improvements in my gaming ability due to the countless hour I invested in the activity so I asked myself why I could not develop other skills I wanted to acquire. I consciously limit the amount of time I spend playing videogames lately to no more than an hour a day. I do this because I want to invest more time in other activities and eventually, make my own games instead of only playing what was made by other people. This is harder and a more boring process but is far more rewarding than simply leveling up in a virtual world.

The Coronavirus taught me a lot about myself and improved my outlook on life and my future. I heavily sympathize with those who received a worsened mental state because my circumstances were easy compared to what many other people had to go through. I will never take my opportunities for granted again and will always be grateful for my family, the technology I have, the education I have access to, and the food put on my table daily. I am motivated to help others just like the brave and hard-working essential workers and first responders during the peak of the virus incidence.