

Silence and Isolation

The trouble that COVID-19 brought on the world is most visible within the numbers of dead and sick humans that bore the worst aspects of this disease. However, COVID stretched its far-reaching influence on nearly every aspect of life, and it affected all people in one way or another.

I remember the creaking of the door as I walked through the entry of my new apartment. I had just moved to a new city for work amid this pandemic. I now found myself in a new location with no contacts or people to meet. In a normal year, this can be a difficult situation for some, but during a pandemic, my new home became a place of isolation and solitude.

The most vivid part of this memory was my first month in the new city. July was the most challenging as the summer heat continued to grow in Washington. Silence was the most common experience I had. I am used to the loud movements of a city or the constant voices of friends and acquaintances. However, I could hear no major sounds in my new life. The streets were silent, and there were no people to interact with. My hearing grew heightened to detect every small noise that occurred in the hopes that it would offer a distraction from this new normal. I could hear every single tick of the clock as the minutes gave way to hours. I heard the muffled shuffling of my neighbor's feet as he walked along his floor mere feet above my head. Yet, I dare not go and introduce myself because of the risk of catching the disease. I would go for days without real human contact, and the closest I got to hearing people were the voices on the television. I still remember the loud cries from horror movies, and the fake laughter from sitcoms.

I felt the rough texture of the fabric that covered my sofa. This is where I would spend most of my time during the day. I could feel the old springs in the couch strain under my weight after years of use. I needed something to break up the routine I had found myself in, and alcohol was one answer. I recall the sound of pouring whiskey into a glass. Isolation had led to boredom, and drinking offered some escape from the drudgery of pandemic life. I vividly recall the harsh, almost burning smell of the alcohol in my nostrils. The sharp, biting taste that would later give way to a smokey and almost sweet finish as I drank the potent beverage. As time went on and the days blended together, my life became a routine that lacked any real meaning. I was doing nothing of worth or note to better myself. I was merely trying to get through the days in the hope that it would all soon be over.

COVID is still a part of our world almost a year after the events of this memory. It will most likely be with us well into the future, and the effects of this pandemic will be felt for years to come. While the experiences I encountered are nothing compared to those that lost their lives or those that lost family members, it is important to remember that we all have been changed by this pandemic, and we cannot change that fact. But we can decide how to move forward in the new normal of the world so we can avoid repeating the experiences that we lived through.