

Personally, I feel slightly uncomfortable sharing how Covid-19 has affected me, due to my reality that the pandemic has yielded an ultimately a positive outcome on my life. I understand the ways in which that statement sounds horribly callous and insensitive, and by no means am I disregarding the pain and anguish of those affected negatively by Covid; my heart goes out to each and every one of you, and I hope to be offensive to those who have endured pain and loss throughout this trying time. There have been dark and scary times during the pandemic; I was, and still remain in constant fear for my parents and grandparent's health, especially when it comes to others' disregard for the safety of the elderly. However, overall Covid-19 has ultimately granted the time to work on my personal wellbeing; both mentally and physically.

Through being furloughed from my job as a bar manager in NYC, I was able to, in a sense, restart my brain. For the first time in God-knows how long, I was finally able to maintain a regular "adult" schedule of life; I no longer had to work until 6am and wake up at 4pm; I became a normal person in a very abnormal world. I had become complacent on the plateau of the service industry. After working in the industry for almost sixteen years, it became second nature to work all night and sleep all day, to socialize with people that disgust you in hopes of making your rent, to deal with all of the difficulties that come with working and managing a bar. At times, I have imagined a career outside of the industry, but the thought of leaping off the plateau I was so comfortable positioned, it terrified me. However, because of the ample amount of free time with which I was suddenly presented, I am finally finishing my degree in Cultural Anthropology, after taking an eight year hiatus from education. Through returning to school, I rediscovered my love for learning; I feel the motivation, the passion, and the drive to be a better version of myself, and am finally gaining the courage to take that leap off the comfortable plateau of complacency, which may not have ever occurred if not for the pandemic.

That's not to say that my experience during Covid-19 has been all rainbows and sunshine. The fear for my family's health never left my mind, and a gripping sense of helplessness was perpetuated distance between myself and my family. My mother and her husband, Scott, live in Phoenix, my father is in Minneapolis, and my brother and his family reside in San Diego. Scott has liver cancer and has been undergoing surgeries, treatments, and tests, which began shortly before Covid was in full effect. My mother sanitizes anything and everything that comes into their house, in an attempt to avoid exposing Scott to Covid. My father had surgery in the midst of the pandemic, and I wasn't able to fly to Minneapolis and take care of him, due to his health being considered high-risk for contracting Covid. I felt utterly helpless to his situation, there was nothing I could do other than reach out to the few friends I still have in Minneapolis and ask them to check in on him. The feeling of being completely powerless was gut-wrenching, but because we all were enduring similar emotions, it ultimately brought my family closer together.

During this time, I have become reacquainted with who I am, and the introspective period of quarantine, social distancing and unemployment has enabled me with the confidence to move forward with my aspirations in life. Covid has rekindled my passion for the arts, as well as connected my family in ways we potentially would have never experienced. I finally feel as though I have the close-knit family I had always dreamed of having, and that I have found my long-lost confidence in myself and who I am as a strong, independent, educated woman.