

**Interviewee:** Lissa Ziehr

**Interviewer:** Julia Nelson

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**Abstract:**

**Julia Nelson 0:03**

Yeah, so today is Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The time is 10:03am. And as of today, there have been 49,198,746 cases of COVID in the United States, with 787,064 deaths. Currently, more than 470 million doses of the COVID vaccine have been administered, and 59.9% of the total US population have been fully vaccinated. And then so to start, what is your name? And do you mind sharing some demographic information for the study like race, age, gender?

**Lissa Ziehr 0:43**

My name is Lissa Ziehr. I am 46. I'm a white female. I'm from Eau Claire Wisconsin.

**JN 0:54**

Perfect. Yeah. And then what are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis, like your job, extracurricular activities?

**LZ 1:02**

Um, now I go into work about twice a week, and I work from home three days a week. Um, I usually go on a walk with my friend every day. And that's about it.

**JN 1:14**

Nice. Yeah. And then I'm thinking back to 2020, when you first learned about COVID-19, what were your thoughts about it? And how would they change since then? I guess.

**LZ 1:26**

Um, at first, it seems surreal. Like we've watched it on the news. And it seemed like—it was like Ebola when it came to Texas and it got stopped or SARS it never really made it here. So yeah, first, it seemed surreal. And then, um, we were going to Madison the week before everything shut down. My daughter was going on a service learning trip to Puerto Rico to do some like ecological restoration. And so we went down the week before to go shopping to get her some like summer clothes and things that she needed. And we took her roommate with and her roommate's, parents are from San Francisco—or she's from San Francisco. And so her roommate's mom said, hey, if you go to Target look for some, like Clorox wipes, or toilet paper or hand sanitizer, or Tylenol, and like, oh, yeah, we'll stop thinking nothing of it. And we were shocked that all that stuff was already, like, gone. And there's hardly anything on the shelves. So that was the first time that I kind of realized it was real.

**JN 2:35**

Wow, yeah. And then at the start of that pandemic, like what concerned you most going into it? Or do you remember anything specific?

**LZ 2:46**

I guess just—I don't know, I don't know, what was the most concerning, I think we just followed the rules and tried to hope that nobody we knew got it.

**JN 2:56**

Mm hmm. Yeah. And then you mentioned your job. And then I believe you changed jobs during the COVID. And then, like, what differences have you noticed going into a new job during the pandemic compared to like before?

**LZ 3:11**

That, um, might have been one of the hardest things I've ever done. I'm so glad I did it. But um, so my old job, we were home, you know, everybody got sent home. And then I think in August, we were told to come back. And it was just really our unit. And there are all these rules in place that were supposed to be followed. And so we went back. In August, it was starting to come to Eau Claire, like it was, like more serious here. So it felt strange that we were going back to work at that point. And I just remember at the my old job, it had other rules, like, we're going to have disinfectant by the printers and we won't use any shared like coffee makers or anything. And then when we went into work, none of that was happening. So it felt like a lot of, I guess, lip

service. Um, then, when I went to my job interview, I was just amazed by like, they had like lines on the floor where you could stand to be six feet away from people. They had capacity limits and other rooms like my job interview was for people all spread apart all with masks, there's hand sanitizer, and it just felt so different.

**JN 4:29**

Well, yeah, that probably felt very safe.

**LZ 4:33**

It did feel safe. And then when I started my job, my first day was the day that my new employer shut the doors because of a COVID—somebody there I think had COVID so they like shut it down and they cleaned the whole building really well. So I started completely remote, which I think my job could be remote here and there but it wasn't set up to learn the job remotely. That was a big challenge. I had to, like figure out a way to like connect with all the different people via zoom. And I just learned my job that way, which was hard. But.

**JN 5:13**

Yeah. And then was it like hard like meeting new coworkers, that sort of thing as well?

**LZ 5:19**

Yes, I still, I feel like if there wasn't, if we weren't in a pandemic, I would have seen my old coworkers a lot still, and which I only have a few times and think that I would have connected more with my new coworkers. I am starting to connect with them after a year. So it took quite a while.

**JN 5:41**

And then like it, I'm assuming it still affects your job. Now I'm thinking—I think you mentioned that you work twice a week from home or go in twice a week.

**LZ 5:50**

Yeah, when—when there's still the rules at the building, like we just stayed distant, and we will mask up in the building and it feels pretty safe. Not a lot of people are there anymore. Which I don't know any different. But when I see people at work there, they talk about how different it is. So I go in twice a week, and then part of my job is to go to different school districts. Easier to talk to their administrator and our bookkeeper. And last year we in March, April, we did them all virtually. And then this year, we went to the districts. And that was really different too to see how

like, like, we were always masked and we're always distanced because that's my business' policy. But the how the different districts were coping with COVID It was interesting.

### **JN 6:51**

Yeah, and then I'm going off of employment still, like how is have you noticed COVID affecting the employment of people, you know, or have you noticed anything like that?

### **LZ 7:04**

Well, I know a lot, because I think we've been really, really fortunate. I have, and I have my new job that allows me to work from home. My husband is in the grocery business. So he's worked through this whole thing, and like, probably more than he ever has. I don't think I know how anybody who lost a job. Even my daughter, her job went all remote at college. And that was Yeah, but I feel very fortunate about that.

### **JN 7:42**

That's good. Yeah. And then just you and your family's day-to-day activities. You mentioned bringing your daughter to school, and your husband working at the grocery store. Have you noticed any big changes, like just in your regular life, day-to-day activities with your family?

### **LZ 8:01**

Oh, I think when COVID first hit we—so I told you that we went down to Madison to take my daughter shopping. And then five days later, we got the call, like come pick her up. So we picked her up from school, but it was only going to be a few weeks. But for some reason we've had the forethought enough to fill the car up. And so we brought a lot of her things back with her. And she ended up being home the rest of the semester. So she was doing her school virtually while I was working virtually. And then she ended up getting an apartment in the summer. Um, and at the beginning, we just my husband and I and sometimes my daughter, we just go on walks every afternoon like we'd work and we go on walks. We cook a lot more I think we've like tried a lot of more like scratch recipes. For a while I was a part of this Facebook group that was doing like baking challenges like the Great British Baking Show. And so like every week, we like bake something different. Um, we had kayaks, which we were actually planning on getting and so we got kayaks and we went kayaking a ton. After like the initial kind of, I guess, we started learning more about COVID My, one of my friends who like leads a similar lifestyle, she's works from home and you know that you're kind of on the same safety precautions that we were, um, we started walking outside because we felt like that was safe and I kayaked with a couple of friends. And now that we're all vaccinated, I have a small bubble of people like I have a few groups of friends that we'll get together with who feel like we kind of share the same risk level and we're vaccinated and now all boosted. Like Christmas, we did a Christmas over zoom. I mean, my daughter came home but with my extended family. And this year we plan to be in person.

**JN 10:12**

Yeah. And then outside of just the Christmas, was it difficult to communicate with your family and friends? I mean, through—you mentioned going on walks with your friends and being able to see your family through the zoom, sort of Christmas. Was there anything like that you had to do more often? Or was that difficult?

**LZ 10:34**

It was a shift for sure. I think I am not a big phone talker. And I think I use the phone more. Yeah, we—we have one, family friends with kids. So we did try to do more zooms with them. Stay connected, and we would like walk over their house and drop off snacks or something and say hi to the kids outside, but one relationship that we haven't fully got back with, because they still have kids and their kids are in school and other kids are the ones that are kind of higher risk.

**JN 11:19**

Yeah, that would be really hard right now. Yeah. And then overall, like the community, what do you think, has affected—how has the COVID 19 pandemic affected the community overall? For example, like schools and businesses, what have you noticed?

**LZ 11:40**

Um, I think there's a lot of polarization. There's, um, it seems like when the mask mandate was, in effect, it was easy, because everybody knew, Okay, we have to wear our masks to go to these places. And I think once they took that off of, once the mask mandate ended, it became a personal choice. And that made it really difficult. Like, I feel very going into some stores and I'll wear a mask and nobody else is or when, like, after I was vaccinated, the first time I felt like, oh, I can go places. And I remember going into a store and everybody was still masking and I wasn't and then I felt weird about that. So my, my husband, and I've had conversations throughout, like, where are we? We're, what's our comfort level? And I know we stopped going to a few stores and businesses that were anti mask. That was irresponsible.

**JN 12:40**

Yeah. Yeah. And then, like restaurants and businesses you frequented prior to everything. Do you know of any like that shutdown, that like really changed how you go about your business? Or?

**LZ 12:57**

All the ones that we frequent are still open. And we tried to order out we would do takeout once a week. We wanted to just Support the businesses that we cared about, like, you get Egg Roles Plus, or Thai Orchid or Tacos Juanita or whatever here and there.

**JN 13:21**

Yeah. And then you talked about the mask mandates and people, when the when the ended people not wearing masks is often how, you know, besides that, or going off of that how people responded, like around you that you've noticed responding to the COVID 19 pandemic?

**LZ 13:40**

I'm—I think most of the people in my circle or like minded, have one friend who's not and we have avoided the topic, but she's been very respectful. And when I've seen her leave, like met outside, And then I have family, friends who are kind of processing all the time. And they're kind of they go back and forth. Like sometimes they're on like, kind of on the same thought processes we are. Sometimes they're more extreme. Sometimes they're like, well, we can--there's no mass mandate, we'll just go out and do what we want. And so it's an they're kind of a roller coaster. So that was interesting to watch. Yeah.

**JN 14:31**

Oh, have you noticed any difference—You earlier you talked about the school districts kind of being a little different. Have you noticed differences in people's response to the pandemic, like based on the community they live in, for example, like Eau Claire versus maybe smaller towns or?

**LZ 14:49**

Yeah, yes, yes. A lot of the school districts I work with are rural and there's, there's like a lot of push and pull between the vocal parents who are don't want any mandates don't want their kids in school who don't want any quarantines and then the DPI guidelines that are saying you have to follow the CDC rules. And then I see like kind of superintendents are getting caught in the middle between keeping the kids safe and keeping the parents and the school board's happy. Yeah, it's stressful for them. You can see it.

**JN 15:31**

And then have you or maybe anyone you've known gotten sick with COVID during the outbreak?

**LZ 15:39**

Um, we didn't we, we were not touched by this at all. Until recently, um, it was always like friends of friends that we've heard of. Kind of recently, my good friend's father passed away. He is a contracted COVID He had an autoimmune disease. He, I guess just kind of felt like he had a cold and then he got called, or he oxygen levels super dropped and he went to the hospital away. Wow. Yeah. The and fast. Yeah, now one of my friends had it. One of my friends right now was on a self imposed quarantine for being in close contact because she's vaccinated and I don't think you have to, but she's just working from home to be safe. It feels like it is kind of closing in. Yeah. Or distance before?

**JN 16:40**

Yeah. Especially with things opening up again. Yeah. And then have you noticed—is COVID-19 affecting people's mental health or your own maybe?

**LZ 16:55**

Um, I think so. Yeah, I think I see it. And some people I know my daughter's extrovert. She's a complete extrovert. And she did fine with being home and doing online school. But she's so happy it's back in person. And I could see her she was starting to like she's doing good, but not great. Once open, she's definitely more herself.

**JN 17:25**

Yeah, that's good. And then for the vaccine, you did you got the booster you mentioned? And then have you or maybe anyone you know, had like questions or maybe concerns about the vaccine, when first hearing, or even now maybe?

**LZ 17:44**

Yeah, I have some friends who eventually got it, but we're questioning it along the way. And they, um, I don't think they've gotten the booster, because they're questioning. I think they're in a position where one of their really good friends is the other anti-mask side of things, and the natural approach to fighting COVID But, um, and I guess I understand some of the vaccine hesitancy like, I've often looked into it with my daughter and questioned. Like, why we have to give so many vaccines so much, so early, and we—but when it came to COVID-19, I felt like it was more of a community thing. Like I need to do my part to make this go away. Like if we don't do our part, it's gonna stick around forever, which it will.

**JN 18:43**

Yeah, and then when you got the vaccine with, like, the regular vaccine, and then the booster, did you have any side effects?

**LZ 18:51**

No, um, I got the Pfizer and all I had was a sore arm. And I when we got the booster, we got the Moderna and we got the Moderna booster and my husband and I both kind of felt under the weather. We were just kind of tired and just for a day. Like I could have worked but it was a Saturday so I didn't have to.

**JN 19:28**

Nice Yeah. And then in getting access to the vaccine. Did you understand like—know when it was available. Did you know how to make an appointment like that sort of thing? Was that pretty difficult or pretty easy?

**JN 19:42**

It was pretty simple. It was, it was very simple following I went on to the health department, our local health department and they just had all the details. I follow him on Facebook so they would post like the pop up clinics and things. The only thing I ever found kind of difficult was at the very beginning there were testing sites everywhere. And they seem to kind of disappear. And I was like, Oh, what am I going to do if I feel like I need to get tested? But now they seem to be back again. So I had to use it. I think I got tested one time because I was concerned. But I was like, I don't have anything.

**JN 20:24**

And then, early on in the pandemic, local health department put on like daily live COVID-19 incident updates. Did you ever watch those? And if so, like, what were your thoughts on them? I feel like they went on pretty often. early on.

**LZ 20:40**

Yeah, I feel like so too. I did watch quite a few of those. I watched your local ones. And I watched the national ones. Not all of them, but enough that I felt informed and I stopped watching them because it kind of felt repetitive. Oh, yeah. I just kind of watch the

**JN 20:59**

news. Yeah. So for news, like what have been your primary news sources throughout the pandemic? Oh, god, oh, just for information. That's



**LZ 21:12**

I, we don't watch a lot of TV. So most of my news sources when I drive, I listen to NPR. Or I've got my news on my Facebook site kind of honed in to be just the local stations or some middle of the road station. So I have NPR and PBS. They're probably my most, that's probably my go to.

**JN 21:36**

Yeah, and then, like online, do you think social media has been like helpful or hurtful in the relay of COVID news during the outbreak?

**LZ 21:46**

I think it's super hurtful. I think that you can get into the the algorithms of Facebook or like even tic tac, I have a friend who's got into the wrong side of tic tac, and then she would send me kind of posts of what she has seen. And it's so opposite of I never come across any of that information unless I search it. Wow. Yeah.

**JN 22:11**

And then what are like important issues maybe that the media isn't covering or that the media is covering that you're seeing throughout the pandemic?

**LZ 22:27**

That's a hard one. Because I feel like again, I'm like, so sheltered and what I see. And I think just, you know, like the the factual middle of the road news is what everybody needs to see once it gets opinionated, it kind of throws things off.

**JN 22:45**

Mm hmm. Yeah. And then how have municipal leaders and government leaders, government officials in your community respond to the outbreak?

**LZ 22:58**

Um, I think our, our local health department was, um, she seemed to be very active. And I felt really bad for her because she seemed to be getting a lot of flack for just doing her job and relaying the safety guidelines and trying to, I guess, keep her community say,

**JN 23:19**

yeah. And then, much like the different communities may be doing different things. Do you have any thoughts like on how local or state or even federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently?

**LZ 23:34**

I really appreciated when Governor eavers Did the mass mandate. I think I mentioned that that it just kind of took a lot of the pressure off of us, we could just follow the rules and be safe. I think it was unfortunate when he got pushed back for that. And I feel like that's kind of how it is across our state. Probably the whole country. Really.

**JN 24:03**

Yeah. And then do you think your experience throughout the pandemic has transformed how you think about your friends family community? I think you mentioned a few of your friends maybe not completely agreeing with your views on the pandemic and how to respond to it.

**LZ 24:26**

Yeah, I think that's that's a big struggle that's affected a lot and kind of fortunately embarrassed to say it it has impacted my opinion on some people because I and it's hard to say this because I feel like I'm following the guidelines. I'm following the science this is like what's happening and then to watch some people go down these other rabbit holes like my mom's best friend, it's a single woman her husband died and she went on the whole Cunanan thing. My mom and her can't even talk anymore because she's spouting all these things that are just ridiculous. And there's an they can bridge that because it's such a big thing to this other person.

**JN 25:14**

Wow. Yeah. Is that something that was brought about like through maybe social media or like Tik Tok? You mentioned earlier?

**LZ 25:28**

I think for my mom's friend, that was Fox News and being by herself and started to go down a YouTube rabbit hole and started questioning things, and it just got worse and worse.

**JN 25:42**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And then knowing what you know, now, what do you think that individuals and communities government need to keep in mind for maybe the future as this keeps going? For millions?

**LZ 25:58**

Um, I think a lot of transparency and which I think was tried to be done, I think I'm explaining where we're at, like, the understanding of science to how it can change like, maybe today, like, at the beginning, we thought we could get it from touching things. And now we realize this respiratory, like, um, so I think, and also, I think the one thing that could have been better is if it was more of a community, like, like the mandates or whatever went, in effect, be a community spread. Like I think, like Eau Claire, for example, was on lockdown. And we had like five cases. And now we have lots and lots of cases, and we're not it's like, I feel like maybe if there was a threshold that we actually followed as a nation, yeah. Better spot. Your day is like, we could have been going out to eat still and going, seeing our friends. And now we probably should be a little more cautious.

**JN 27:12**

Yeah. And then, what do you imagine the post COVID future to be like? Or how do you think anything will be the same as now? Or the same as before? Or how do you think things will be different than,

**LZ 27:27**

um, I hope things like grocery pickup and the target pickup and those kinds of things stay. Um, I, I'm slightly disappointed because I feel like when this happened, like as we are processing, we're like, wow, this is a moment, like a rare moment in our history where we can really make changes, like, the things that aren't working, we can change right now. We see the problems. But I think so many people are focused on going back to the way it was, I don't think a lot of those changes are probably going to happen.

**JN 28:02**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And then that's all I can think of. Is there anything else you want to bring up about the pandemic that we didn't really touch on?

**LZ 28:16**

That I can think of? No, I am. I'm, like, kind of more introvert. So I don't think it affected us. Like, again, we had stable jobs that were able to make the change to working from home and my husband and I kind of enjoyed staying home and playing games and cooking food and not being a social. So I kind of I think for us, one thing that we gained is we're going to have more boundaries coming out of this. Yeah, but I think we didn't say no, very often and now I think we know where limits are, which is I'm excited for.

**JN 28:57**

Nice. Yeah. Perfect. Well, thank you so much. I'm gonna quick stop the record.