

My Corona Experience

For me, the pandemic really got into full swing on March 16th, the day my school abruptly canceled in-person classes because of Covid-19. I thought this was great; I would get a much-needed break from my studies. We all assumed that this would last for a few weeks at most. What none of us realized was that this situation would play a significant role in the next 7 months of all our lives. To rewind, the year 2020 *already* wasn't going very well: first, there were the Australian wildfires, our president getting impeached, tensions with Iran and fears of a world war III, and Kobe Bryant dying in a helicopter crash. And to top it off, we began hearing rumblings of a new type of virus emerging from Wuhan, China. All of these historic (and awful) events happened in just one month of the new year. Now fast forward two months; we heard that this new, deadly virus, now named the CoronaVirus, had spread to Italy. Americans laughed it off. *Italy is smart, they can control this virus*, we all thought to ourselves, even as we began to see images on TV of overflowing hospitals and an increasing death count. As things were looking increasingly more dire, we still never thought the same thing could happen in our country, even as states started reporting their first cases, and deaths. We were given all the warnings, and every opportunity to slow down this crisis, yet we didn't do anything to prevent it or help the other countries around us.

As my school transitioned to online learning, we were always told to think of ways to be positive and overcome the situation we are in now, but what could a sophomore in high school like me do to help stop the spread? If the adults, who we looked up to, couldn't stay at home and stay safe then, how could I do it? This whole situation felt like an apocalypse. First stores were shutting down; then there was a shortage of everything, from toilet paper to hand sanitizer to ventilators. Millions of people were dying because of reckless people's decisions. First

responders who were helping others get better were succumbing to the virus themselves. Slowly, when we finally fully comprehend the full extent of this pandemic, that it was not some dream or movie, we started to fight back against the virus.

While before I felt helpless to do anything, seeing people rallying together to donate supplies, money, and protective gear inspired me. I realized that I could do my part to help those affected by this virus. My friends and I helped make baked goods and handmade masks to support those in hospitals, senior centers, and homes of friends that needed help. On social media, there were posts, likes, and shares to help spread awareness of protecting oneself and others during this time. Whether we knew it or not COVID did bring a lot of positivity in the world. It has shown us how small things can make such a big difference. We started to understand how fast the virus spreads and how one simple mask or just staying home can rapidly slow it's spread.

When the stay at home order was placed, families were forced to stay inside, work from home, and spend more time with each other. However, in many ways, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Before the Coronavirus, my family was not as close as we are now. We have been through so many different situations that one year ago would not have existed. We have bonded through the good and bad. All four of our birthdays happened during the pandemic and after each one, we learned how to make cakes, presents, and decorations at home. These new situations have allowed our brains to think outside of the box not inside the parallel lines going to our end goal. When we made mistakes we learned how to overcome the situation together instead of getting mad or having a breakdown.

As awful as this year has been, it is far from over. Since May alone, the country has erupted into protests over racial injustice, the US stock market has suffered a major plummet,

and the west coast has experienced some of the most devastating wildfires in its history. Even though 2020 isn't an easy year, America knows that we are strong. This virus cannot drag us down. We are stronger together.