

Personal Experience of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, I had a lot of plans and important dates to look forward to. 2020 was supposed to be a great year for me because I was finally going to graduate college. I was so excited for my last semester of college and to make the most memories with all of my college friends. I had saved a lot of money for the various plans I had. I had planned to go on a roadtrip to Southern California for my spring break and go to Disneyland and Universal Studios with my boyfriend. I also had planned to go to Coachella during April and to Thailand and Bali after my graduation in June with my best friends. I had just turned 21 so my friends and I were looking forward to going to Vegas during summer. But the most important day I was looking forward to was my graduation commencement. On May 20, 2020 I was supposed to graduate from San Jose State University with a bachelor's degree in Public Health and a minor in Nutrition. I had so many dates to look forward to, the last thing I ever expected was for a pandemic to occur.

Since the beginning of the new year, I also made a new body goal for myself. Since I had so many events to look forward to, I wanted to feel confident in my own body at all times. Therefore, I created a new workout routine and diet so I can reach my goal. That would require me to go to the school gym 5 day per week and meal prep for myself. On top of that, I needed to take my Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) state exam. I planned to work as a CNA after I graduated, while applying to accelerated nursing programs. I knew I had a busy schedule, so I planned to take the exam during my spring break.

During the COVID-19 pandemic

When the first cases of covid-19 occurred in China was around the time my last semester of college began, in February. I was living in a house across campus with 6 other roommates and 3 of them were my best friends. The first couple of weeks back to school were very tiring for me, I had such a busy schedule every day. I was currently working part-time at a physical therapy clinic and I would work every morning on weekdays and go to classes in the afternoons and nights. I would workout at the gym in between classes, before classes, or after classes. I would try to meal prep all on Sundays since I was so busy on weekdays. Although I was very busy, I was enjoying my last semester and having fun in my free time. I remember on the weekend after Valentine's Day, my housemate was going to Seattle and there weren't many cases back then. We were aware of the virus, but because the cases were only in China we were not aware of how much it would spread.

About 2 weeks after my housemate went to Seattle, the amount of cases had spread and there were now cases in California. COVID-19 was on the news a lot more and there was a lot more awareness about it. Some people began to take precautions, but because the virus was so new some people did not believe how severe it can be. I was still working my normal hours at work, going to class, going to the school gym, and going grocery shopping. Due to my office being an essential workplace, I was always aware of all the news and what precautions were recommended. As the number of cases began to increase on the daily, patients began to cancel

their future appointments for physical therapy or just not show up to them. In the middle of March, the number of cases in Santa Clara was very concerning, my work began to take serious precautions and San Jose State University changed all of their classes to be online for the rest of the semester. However, the school gym was still open so I was still able to workout. At my work, there were less patients every day, and my boss would get more worried and stressed because he was losing money.

The last week of March, my boss decided to do telehealth physical therapy, which is physical therapy through video chat. The clinic would still remain open, however we would be open only 5 days per week and only from 9am-4pm. Before we were open 6 days per week 8am-7pm. Due to the clinic being open for less hours, our hours were going to get cut. Due to our hours being cut, our boss also gave us the option of not having to work if we did not feel safe working or if we did not need the hours. Since I was only going to get to work 10 hours per week instead of 20 hours per week and due to the high incident cases in Santa Clara County, my parents recommended for me to go home. My parents preferred me to be at home with them in Riverbank because there were a lot less cases there, they felt like I would be more safe at home, and it would be more convenient for me. By this time, the school gym was also closed, which made me slack off in my workout routine. I would try to go on runs, but since I lived in downtown San Jose there aren't any running trails nearby.

Once California announced a shelter in place, I ended up deciding that I would go home, so I notified my work and have been back at home with my parents since April 1st. The first 2 weeks at home were great, my mom was making some amazing food and I was spending so much time with my family. I was still very busy with school since my classes were online and attendance was mandatory. I still had various assignments to do every week, but I did have more free time since I did not have to work. I still wanted to accomplish my body goal and not slack off, so I began doing at home workouts and going on runs more often. I started doing a lot of research at home workouts and made myself a new routine to keep myself busy and reach all my goals. After 2 weeks of being home, I began to miss my friends and I wanted to go back to San Jose. My parents were being very strict about me staying home, so I was not able to go back to San Jose. I began contacting my friends a lot more often through text messages, facetime, and other video chats. Being at home for so long made me start to feel impatient, and because I did not know anybody affected with COVID-19 it never felt real. However, I still remained taking precautions like wearing facemasks, wearing gloves, being 6 feet away from others, and washing my hands more often.

During the entire month of April, all non-essential jobs closed. Therefore, only essential work places have been open like restaurants, grocery stores, medical offices, and hospitals. Restaurants were only doing take-out, so you had to order ahead of time and pick up your orders. Gas prices began to decrease a lot. So many people become unemployed, including myself. Due to various people being unemployed, there are less people going to work every day and less people driving. There was never traffic in the bay area. Flight tickets began to be super cheap. Many people who did not care about the pandemic going on decided to go on vacations because flight tickets were so cheap. Around this time was when my spring break plans got

cancelled and all of the events of the semester. All festivals and concerts were cancelled or postponed to fall. Amusement parks and parks were closed, and the shelter in place kept on getting extended. SJSU announced that the spring commencement was cancelled and would be virtual.

Present Time

Thankfully, until this day I do not know a single person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, however there still has not been a vaccine or treatment found for this virus. As being a public health major, I have been aware of pandemics and I have tried to remain calm and take precautions. I have still been keeping myself busy, and finishing strong during my last semester. In one week I will be graduating from SJSU and I will be having a virtual graduation. Although this experience won't be the same, I am still looking forward to this day. Having classes online and being at home has been very difficult for me. Being at home has made it very difficult for me to concentrate and stay motivated with school. However, I have managed to push myself and I am almost done with my undergrad.

All of the events I was looking forward to have gotten cancelled: Disneyland, Universal Studios, San Diego, Coachella, Louis the Child concert, TroyBoi concert, my CNA exam, and my college graduation. The shelter in place is still happening, however the amount of cases is slowly decreasing but there is still no vaccine or solution for this severe virus. The cause is still unknown. SJSU and various other universities have announced that the fall semester will be online. Since it has been warmer, more people started going to the beach as they still remain open. I am still keeping myself busy and all I am looking forward to is for life to go back to normal. I can't wait until the day I can walk outside and feel safe.