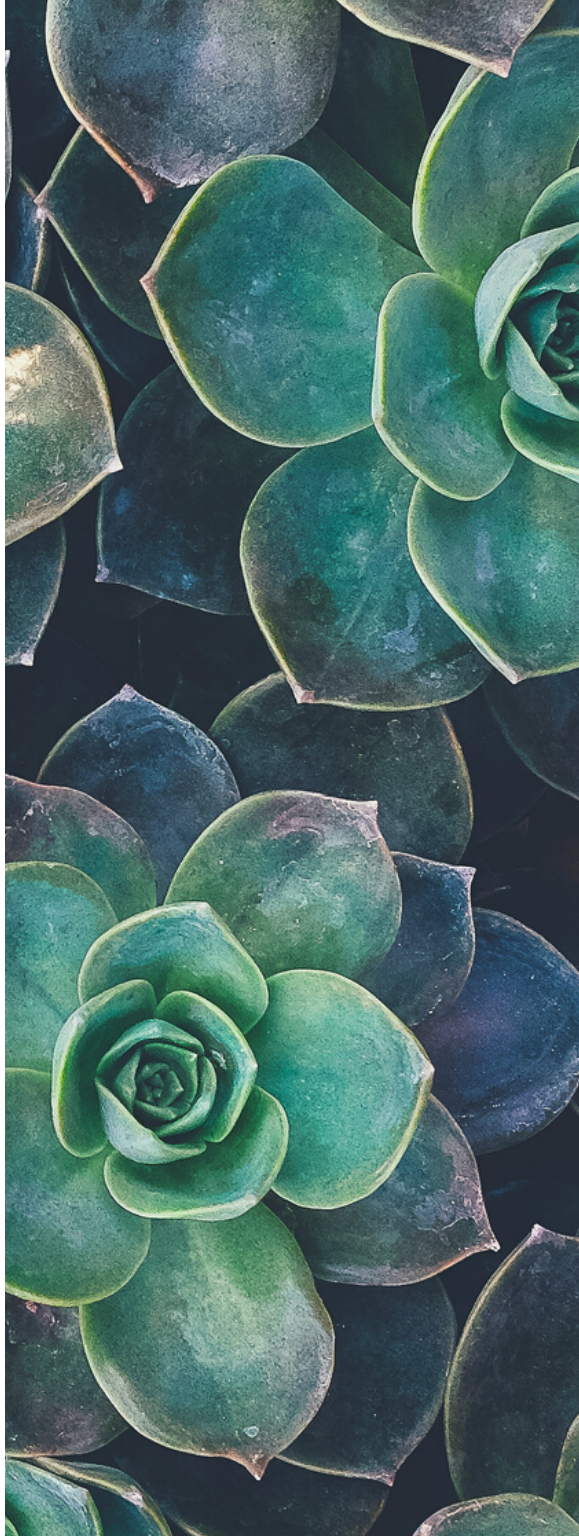


A close-up photograph of several succulent plants, likely Sedum or Echeveria, with thick, fleshy, green leaves arranged in rosette patterns. The plants are set against a dark background, and the lighting highlights the texture and color of the leaves.

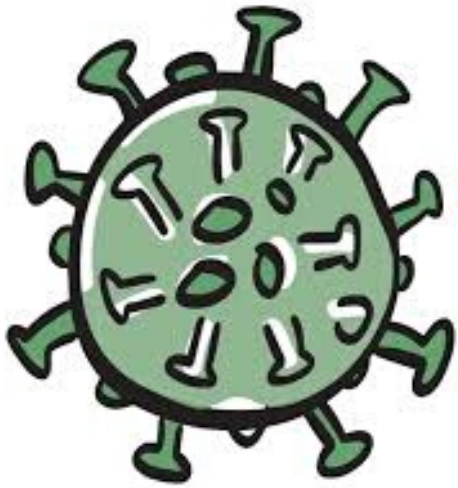
Covid 19 Senior Semester

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C/O Spring 2020
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"What is COVID 19?"

When I first asked my professors at SJSU about COVID 19 I wanted to have a better understanding of what it was. These were Public Health professors who I had grown close to so I felt that they would give me correct information. If I Googled it, I would just scare myself and be haunted by misleading information. When they explained it to me, it felt fake. And when they went on to share that people were not taking it seriously, well that just felt worse. "What do you mean people aren't taking it seriously?" I asked. It felt like a bad dream. Why would people believe that they are immune to this disease? Or worse, how could they not understand that their lack of prevention methods could increase the risk of more community members becoming sick? I was scared, but I had so much more on my plate with being a full time student in my senior semester at SJSU and working. But as a future public health practitioner I took it seriously and I spoke to as many people as I could about taking it seriously. It's hard to fight an enemy you can't see.



SJSU closes and remote learning starts

Things started becoming a lot more intense due to COVID 19. People were flooding to the grocery stores and buying everything in sight. Toilet paper was sold out everywhere. The worst of it all was when SJSU announced that they were closing the campus and all classes would continue as remote learning. I didn't even know how to react. I was distraught. I can't learn online. I am not good at staring at a screen and learning this way. This is not for me. I refuse. No. This is not what I signed up for. This is not what I paid for. Frustration, anger, and depression are just a few words to describe how I felt. How am I suppose to keep my GPA up and graduate when I feel like SJSU is not supporting me and my learning? I felt very ignored and very disrespected. I felt silenced and forced to agree to these terms. But this was the most that SJSU could do at the moment to support the students. It felt like a slap in the face. Going from an incredibly supportive and encouraging environment to being stuck at home without professors, friends, colleagues, and on campus resources. How could I do this?



Graduation is "postponed"

The situation only worsened. On March 18, 2020 an announcement was sent out that graduation has been "postponed". Postponed? Are you serious? Don't lie to us. Call it what it is. Graduation is cancelled. I cried immediately. All that I have worked for. All that I have been through in order to cross that stage has been crushed. To me, graduation is cultural. My parents, as many student's parents, crossed the boarder to give their children greater opportunities. My parents did that. My father came to this country at 13 years old, under a car. He rode under a car for days to get to the United States. When he got here he took any job that he could, found shelter with people he didn't even know and missed his family greatly. My mother came a few years later. She got caught the first time, but her resiliency motivated her to try again. She found the same struggles as my father. For me, crossing the stage at graduation is the greatest salute and tribute to my parents for enduring the greatest struggle in their lives. Because of them I am here today. Having graduation taken away from me has caused me so much psychological pain. How will I ever show my parents what their struggles have meant to me? The one thing that they have been waiting for me to do has been cancelled. How will I ever repay them for their sacrifices?



Depression sets in

I couldn't take it anymore. I felt empty. I felt like what should have been the happiest, most exciting, most memorable time in my life has been taken away from me. I felt sad, lonely, miserable, isolated, and deserted to say the least. I have tried to fight these feelings since the beginning, but what's the point? What is the point of trying? What is the point of putting myself out there when time and time again all my encouragers were being taken from me. I had fallen into the hands of depression. And I did not care. I did not care that I was sad. I did not care about eating, talking to people or even getting out of bed. I didn't care about being online for class and I sure as heck did not care about completing and submitting my assignments. What did you expect? My senior semester was taken away from me. My last physical day of school was in March and I didn't even know it. It was the last time I'd physically see my professors, friends, colleagues, and the SJSU campus. So why try. What is the point. I have nothing to look forward to. No graduation, no thriving job market, no friends to see, no professors to engage with. Nothing, I have nothing.



Spending more time with Olivia

With an increase in mental health issues, my family began noticing something was wrong. Instead of asking me what was wrong, they would ask my brother if I could babysit my niece Olivia. She is eleven months old and she's so happy and curious about everything. When I was in school and working 30 hours a week, I would see her for a few hours a month, and that very rare. Now that I was home all the time, I had the opportunity to spend more time with her but I was so caught up in my own sorrows, that I didn't realize that I had this opportunity. I really thank her for bringing me out of my dark place. I praise her for being the sunshine that I needed. She made me realize that there was still a lot left to smile about and be grateful about. While COVID 19 took a lot away from me, it has also given me this unique opportunity to spend time with my first niece Olivia. She made me want to continue trying. What kind of a role model would I be for her if I let go of who I was because a few things in my life had been changed due to this pandemic. No, I wanted to be more for her. And in return, I gained back my motivation and will to finish school.



HAPPINESS IS



...a little niece's
tight hug.

HAP4701
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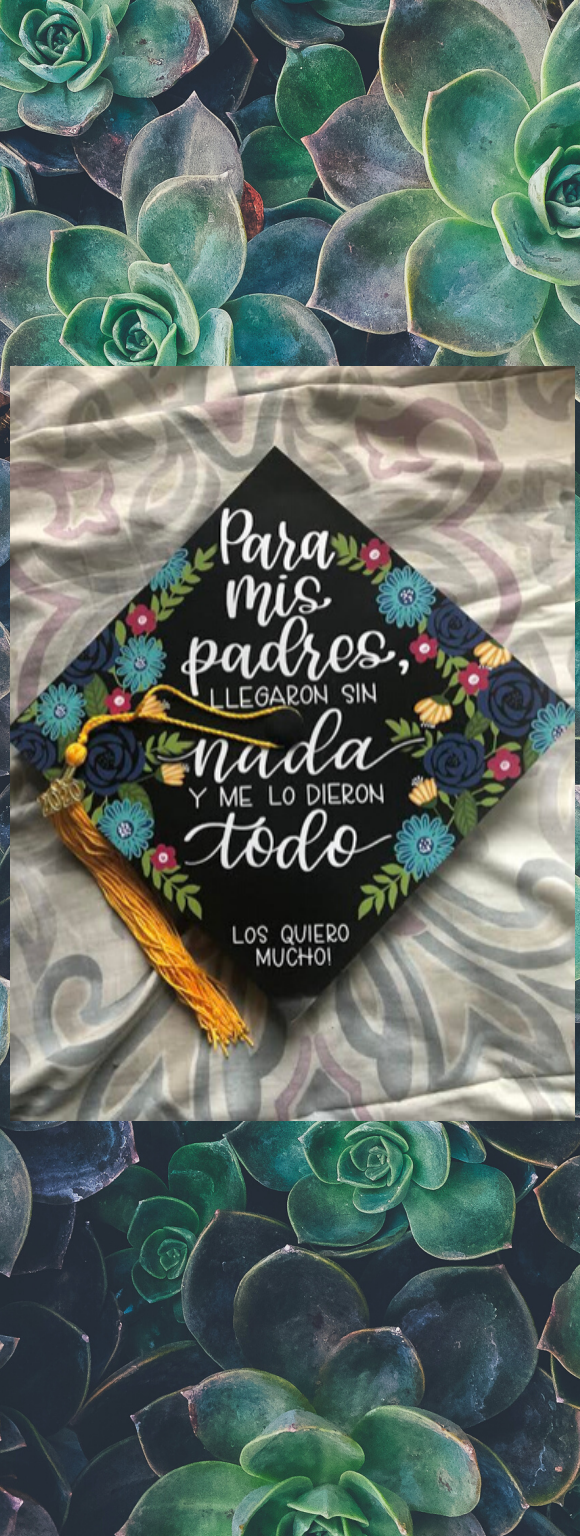
Finding more time for self care

Through my beautiful niece Olivia, I had a new sense of what was important in my life and worth my energy. I realized that I needed to take care of myself a lot more in order to continue to overcome greater challenges that I may face. With that being said I devoted myself to a daily routine of self care. Self care is something that is gaining greater awareness, but I still think that it is a health concept that is not taken seriously. Self care is the basis of human functioning. How are we expected to be our best self if proper care is not being practiced? There is a big stigma that self care is selfish and this is not true. Self care allows you to care for yourself. It is as simple as that. There are many different ways to practice self care. For myself I practice meditation, daily exercise which includes cardio and stretching, and lastly journaling. Journaling has been my greatest self care practice because it allows me to write down everything that I am feeling and look back to see how far I have come. To look back at my past journal entries allows me to realize my growth and development of strengths. When I was working and physically going to school, I never practiced self care. But now I am able to, and it is yet another opportunity that has been brought to me by COVID 19.



Taking graduation into my own hands

I never thought that I would be able to do this. But I needed to for myself. I wasn't going to let COVID 19 ruin what will be the greatest day of my life. All my hard work will get celebrated. All my accomplishments will be recognized. Because if I couldn't physically attend graduation, why couldn't I celebrate on my own terms? Those terms included purchasing my cap, gown, and SJSU stole. Although COVID 19 did cancel in person Grad Fest, there was one online graduation store. Having only one store was unfair, because it only sold one style of stole and tassel. This was not fit to properly express the uniqueness of every Spartan graduate. But you work with what you have. Instead, COVID 19 has again provided me with another opportunity which is to purchase my graduation outfit and accessories from small business owners on Etsy. By doing so it not only support them during these difficult times, but allowed me to purchase the unique pieces that would help me celebrate my graduation. I was able to purchase all that I needed, from my cap design to my culturally expressive stole that read "SJSU Class of 2020". I was taking graduation into my own hands and it felt so liberating!





Why succulents?

So why did I select succulents as my creative display for my journal entries? Because succulents are resilient. They grow into beautiful plants amid dangerous environments that lack resources and tools. These environments that are unpredictable and unforeseen. Because succulents try to blossom no matter what the circumstances are. Because they are low maintenance and only need minimal things to thrive. Because succulents are one of the rarest forms of nature. Thanks to COVID 19 I realized that I was a succulent this entire time. Although I felt that this entire situation was negative and caused me so much pain, it challenged me to thrive under the circumstances. When I felt that there was nothing else to look forward to, I was wrong. It challenged me to be a better version of myself. To be resilient through it all. To fight back! To blossom! Because that's what succulents do. They don't give up. And that's exactly what I will do.

*Remember to find your inner
succulent.*

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