

Surviving during a pandemic is a challenge enough in itself. Like so many others, I had a variety of other factors contributing to my heightened anxiety and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first has to do with the fact that I am the primary care giver for my mother who is living with terminal cancer. She is undergoing chemotherapy, which makes her immunocompromised and at high risk should she contract COVID-19. There is a constant worry of her safety during the pandemic. When I see pictures of others disregarding the shelter in place mandates, social distancing protocols, or mask mandates, it enrages me because I cannot begin to understand how these individuals can be so callous and selfish. Their resistance to these protocols put in place to limit transmissions of COVID-19 puts people like my mom at risk, and it feels like they are saying that my mom's life doesn't matter, and the lives of countless frontline workers, grandparents, those with comorbidities, etc. do not matter. I cannot begin to comprehend how people can lack empathy and concern for others when we are all affected and all in this pandemic together.

In addition to caring for my mother, my husband and I are undergoing treatment for infertility, which includes its own bucket of stress and worry. To go through this during a pandemic makes that fear and stress even more intense. Before each cycle of treatment, we are required to get tested for COVID-19. Because of the uncertainty of the effects of COVID-19 on pregnancy and fertility treatment, if one of us ever tests positive, we will no longer be eligible to continue treatment, and our dreams of having children will be indefinitely on hold. Of course, there are alternative approaches to having children, but those processes are more involved and a larger financial commitment that we are not yet ready to take on. Going through infertility in normal conditions are challenging enough, but going through it during a pandemic adds a whole other layer of stress.

Every person has their own burdens and challenges they are living through, but it is so important to recognize that at the end of the day, we are all human beings that are deserving of kindness and empathy. Being isolated during the pandemic shows how much social connection and contact with others means to our well-being, and we should all try to support one another in whatever way possible to keep each other safe, whether that means staying at home or wearing a mask, so that we can get back to some sort of normal life again. COVID-19 doesn't discriminate, and we are all affected by it. So, I just hope that people can start to see this and work together to stop the spread as much as possible.