



Telling Our Stories: Western's Response to COVID-19

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Often, I feel like I'm living in the Sims. Toward the beginning of the pandemic, I actually went out and got a job, having just been a student for the year before. While it was stressful to be working in a food service job in an area where not a lot of people wear masks, I think that it kind of protected me from the isolation that set in for everyone else after about month 3 of our 2-week lockdown. I stopped working the day before Christmas eve, almost a year after things got all shut down, and went back to being a full-time student. I try to get outside every day for at least a walk, but I spend most of my time at home now that I'm not working. I sit with my boyfriend and housemate at the table, I sit with my boyfriend and housemate outside, I do my homework, and I watch movies, because everything I experience lately has little tangible effect on my physical environment, sometimes it feels pointless, like the sims (I love the sims, by the way). I have plans for the summer, but they've taken lots of careful thought and are still tentative, considering how Biden's covid plan goes. I had a really bumpy transition to online school, but I think I'm doing as well as anyone with a healthy dose of anxiety would. In my first online quarter, I didn't really know how to keep myself accountable because it feels optional when going to class means walking to the living room. My grades were bad and my mental state was worse. I have good support systems, though, so I've been lucky enough to have help when I've needed it, and I managed to get the hang of online classes too. I've definitely had more success in classes with strict participation policies, probably because I do better when I'm accountable to something or someone. I think accountability to oneself is the key to surviving something like this. Now that I'm not accountable to the physical public all the time, I make myself get up and take care of myself because I want to be a clean, tidy, healthy person for myself. My outlook on my own situation improved a lot once I figured out that the trick for me is making a point of getting ready for every day. If I'm up on time, clean, and have a decent outfit on, I feel like I've done all this to get ready, so my day will have purpose. How could it not? Even if that purpose is to eat some junk food and sit in my garden. I'm also a lot more likely to have a productive day when I'm dressed the part. Another thing that has helped me get through the pandemic has been the A Capella club. Even though we haven't been meeting and singing in person, it's been nice to have a sense of structured meetings and goals with a group just for fun. The leadership has done a really good job of making it inclusive and still fun, even though we can't actually meet up and hang out. I think that the most important thing to take away from our transition to online school and work is awareness of the fleeting nature of things. This was supposed to be two weeks of unease, followed by a return to what we knew. But that didn't happen, because things don't stay the same. Everyone knows how to use Zoom now. Masks are a standard accessory now in most parts of the US. Tons of us have elevated anxiety and depression now. Things aren't going to go back to how they were, so we should focus on enjoying what we can now, and moving into the future. This pandemic and all of the other societal problems it exacerbated should be a wake up call. We didn't see all of these issues in broad daylight until the system was strained, and now we can get to work fixing them. Of course, we're going to walk through this, like humans have walked through all of the struggles we've faced as a species until now, but with some resilience and elbow grease, we can make sure we walk to a better place on the other side.

End of contributed text from Story ID: 53 - Anonymous