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## UA94/6/1 Pandemic Personal Narrative

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### Pandemic Personal Narrative

I never thought life as we knew it would change a year after my high school graduation. I graduated high school in 2019... the last year of what seems like “the old normal.” Looking back, if someone had told me during my senior year that life as we knew it was about to change that following year, I would have laughed, looked at them like an idiot, and went on with my day. I was eighteen when I graduated, so of course, I was dumb, did not realize what I had right in front of me, and certainly did not appreciate small things. That all changed when those small things got taken away during quarantine.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I felt as if the whole illness was a joke, however after hearing about all the sickness and people fighting for their lives in and out of hospitals, I realized Covid-19 was a terrible reality. I was a freshman when the pandemic hit, so I got to experience a little of what college was like “pre-covid.” When the pandemic hit, all classes (including K-12), transitioned from in-person to online, which threw lots of students off academically. For example, students were required to learn with online sources such as “zoom” and/or google classroom, learn without the presence of a teacher and/or peers, etc. Let's also not forget the mentality of students during this time. According to the article “*Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020,*” written by Mark É. Czeisler et al., the article states “Symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive

disorder increased considerably in the United States during April–June of 2020... (Czeisler et al., 2020).” Like many others, the pandemic caused me lots of anxiety and depression. Everything was closed, human interaction was limited, and life as we once knew it no longer existed. I was terrified. I refused to think of the current events as the “new normal,” however it seemed like that’s all it was to individuals.

According to the article listed above, I feel this increase in mental disorder(s) resulted in more substance abuse. I feel this is so, because “what else were we supposed to do?” Everything was shut down... we couldn’t just go out with friends, go to the mall, and might I add... schools were shut down. In other words, no one went to work during this time, and we were encouraged to stay at home. As a result, this made life seem as if we had nothing, and we were just living day by day. If someone had come up to me during this time and asked how I was feeling, I would have told that person I felt like a literal zombie. During this time, my younger brother was a sophomore in high school. I think quarantine hit him harder than it did me, simply because he already had a harder time with school in general. Like every other teenage boy or girl, he looked at “quarantine” as a vacation instead of a shutdown. He was excited to be able to finally sleep in, play his video games more, the usual after school activities... then I began to see the shutdown take its toll on him. He missed his friends, missed being able to attend his sports meetings and practices, etc.

While this was a time of gloom and doom, I tried my best to look at the positive side of things. For example, because there was absolutely nothing open or errands to run, I spent much of my time at the local nature park. There, I reflected on the current events taking place, and decided this would be a good time to connect with nature! I taught myself how to fish, kayak, etc., and looking back, I feel like I would have never had the time or would have been able to have those new experiences if life as we knew it continued. With schools transitioning to online learning, I also learned more about how to work technology and to keep myself motivated. For example, I had never

heard of “zoom” until post-pandemic. I learned how to adapt to sudden changes taking place as they occurred and learned better time management with my assignments.

As an education major during this time, I looked to this to strengthen my classroom for the future. I feel as if living during a pandemic boosted my confidence and made me realize that I, as an individual, can adapt to change and will be okay. Because of this, I am more confident in my teaching abilities, simply because of how much I learned during what I thought was a traumatic experience. I know and am prepared for what lies ahead in the future, and as a teacher, this pandemic has prepared me to provide better quality education for all students. If I had to list one big thing, I got out of living through a pandemic, mine would be appreciate the little things... you never know when they may be taken from you.

Czeisler, Mark É, et al. “Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation during the COVID-19 Pandemic - United States, June 24-30, 2020.” *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 Aug. 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7440121/>.