

Myna Simmons
TA: Rebeca Martinez
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How COVID-19 Affected My Life

COVID-19! If you have not heard that word, then you are living under a rock. It has become one of the deadliest diseases to have spread across the world in the history of our Earth. Currently, it is all we hear about when we turn on the TV, scroll through our social media accounts, and is the topic of all of our conversations. It consumes us in the worst ways possible, and it has uprooted our lives in countless ways. Like everyone, I have faced the sudden impact of this unexpected virus in a painful way. The state government has imposed certain rules and regulations on all of us to abide by during the time of this deadly disease. While the changes have not all been bad, COVID-19 has affected my physical fitness, social life, and mental health.

I had a very physical life before self-quarantine started. I am a member of the division one women's water polo team at UCLA. Water polo is a very active sport with roughly twenty-five hours of training in a single week. The training schedule changes day-to-day. In a typical week without traveling I would have three hours of training in the pool on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I had four and a half hours of training in the pool, two hours in the morning and two and a half in the evening. For weeks with tournaments, I would have roughly four to five games spanning from Friday to Sunday, totaling about seven hours of play. This was my life. Training, finding time to eat and go to class in between practice, then sleeping. It was a constant repeat of this cycle until my life was turned upside-down.

It seemed like COVID-19 came out of nowhere. One day I got to practice and my coach pulled me and my team into the office. He told us that the Arizona State women's water polo team cancelled their games with us that upcoming weekend. That was Tuesday, March 10th 2020. In my mind this was strange because things were not yet that bad. Little did I know things would rapidly get much worse. By Wednesday we were not allowed to practice, and by Thursday our season was over entirely.

It is hard to describe the feeling of the moment when my teammates and I found out that all of our hard work towards a NCAA title was no longer going to be put towards a championship for a reason completely out of our control. When my team and I got the news it was devastating. It was like someone had ripped a tiny piece out of my heart out, stepped on it, and then threw it away. I had been practicing for twenty-five hours a week, if not more, and here someone was telling me that it was all for *nothing*. An entire year of training and injuries, for *nothing*. Needless to say, the next few days were a blur of crying, not knowing what to do, and eventually deciding to go home the following Tuesday, March 16th.

Since that moment I have been trying to keep active as best as I can. It is hard to stay in shape as a water polo player when there is no pool nor anyone to practice with because of social distancing. Luckily, I have a lap-pool in my backyard but it is solar heated, so I could not use it until the end of April when the weather started to warm up again. During the time when I was not able to swim, I was trying to keep in shape through dry land cardio circuits. This also had some challenges, since I do not have an at-home gym. I had to improvise and would use towels in place of sliders, and any heavy objects I could find instead of dumbbells. The most pressing problem I continue to have with staying in shape is the aspect of motivation. It is one thing when you have a whole team behind you, suffering from the same awful swim set and lifting sessions.

It is a totally different experience trying to motivate yourself to do the hard work alone.

Oftentimes, I would fail in motivating myself and take the easy way out.

While this has been one of the worst times in my life, there has been some good that has come from it. Once I realized I was not accomplishing much by working out on my own I started joining my sister in her workouts. We do cardio workouts with her boyfriend over FaceTime, which works quite well. We are able to motivate each other when exercises get hard or we do not want to do them. It has created a team-like feeling, even though there are only three of us, which allows me to keep a little piece of what I lost.

The second aspect of my life that has been disrupted due to COVID-19 is my social life. Before this virus unsettled my life I was more often than not always surrounded by friends. Being on a team is like having twenty-four built in sisters. While some people get along better than others, we always had each other's backs no matter what. My best friends were on the team, since I did not have much time to spend with anyone else, so I do not have many friends outside of the water polo area. This caused some trouble once we were all split apart. After we got the heartbreaking news, some of us decided to stay in Westwood for a couple of days. We all thought, at the time, that we were going to be able to come back in two weeks or so. Boy, were we wrong. We did not treat that few days as "goodbye," just as a "I'll see you later!" Now, I have not seen some of them in over two months.

My social life has become strange because all of our interactions are now online. I used to be able to call out my roommate's name and hear her walk down the hall to my room. Now, the only time I see her is through a screen. Before this, I never realized how much I enjoyed spending time with people. I always considered myself an introvert, but now that I am supposed to stay at home all I want to do is leave. I cannot do any of the activities I would normally do

with my friends. We used to cook, go to the mall, or play board games in our free time. Now, we are sending pictures of the things we are making, shopping online, or playing virtual games.

While I cannot physically see my friends, I live with a large family that keeps me company. Including myself, there are eight people living in my household. First, there is Grandma, then my mom and dad. After that, there are five kids, an older sister, and a set of quadruplets. Living with so many people can be considered as both a blessing and a curse. It is nice to have the company of all of my siblings because there is always something to do and something going on in the house. However, this also causes some problems. There is not much quiet space in the house. On a normal day, one of my quadruplet sisters has dance class in the living room, while I am listening to a lecture in the dining room, Grandma is watching television in the family room, and my brother is making breakfast in the kitchen. It can get very loud, so I always have to use headphones because it is the only way I am able to concentrate. While it is nice to have the company of a big family, there are also some struggles that go along with it.

The last aspect of my life that COVID-19 has uprooted is my mental health. It has caused me to have intense feelings of stress, sadness, and loneliness. It feels like the workload I am assigned has doubled since the beginning of online school. This could be because I was spending about eight hours a week using my computer to do schoolwork. Now, I am spending about twenty, if not more, to complete online school. While teachers are trying to help as best they can, it does not alleviate the amount of stress I have had while transitioning to an entirely online platform. Along with this, I also face the stress of the virus itself. Fortunately, no one has contracted the virus in my immediate family, but the threat is still there. My grandmother is ninety-years-old and is at the greatest risk of dying from this disease. Every time I leave the house I have to think of her and if I am being safe enough for her. I would be shattered if she got

it and I found out it was me who gave it to her. This is why it gives me anxiety to leave the house. I have to make sure I am being safe for her and the rest of my family.

While COVID-19 has given me a lot of stress, that is not the only feeling it has caused. It has also created a greater sense of sadness and loneliness. While there are many people living with me, I still feel a sense of loss: for my water polo season, for school life, and for friends. It makes me sad that I cannot get close to my boyfriend or even give him a hug, something I have not done for two and a half months. Even though I am not completely alone, those feelings still come and go. The only good part I can see coming from this is the reconnection between old friends. Because of these feelings of loneliness and isolation, I have reached out to old friends that I have not spoken with in months, if not years. It has allowed me to reconnect with them and broaden my support group through this pandemic.

Diseases of this magnitude are not unheard of. One such disease related to Spanish history was smallpox. When Columbus sailed to the shores of the Caribbean, he brought ships, men, resources, and a deadly disease that wiped out the native people. The people living in the New World were very isolated. They had been living on the islands for the past 1,500 years, which meant that this population had not been exposed to smallpox which caused them to be very vulnerable to the disease since they had not built up any immunity to it (Ruiz, *Lecture*, 2020). This helped the Spaniards in the conquest of the New World since “the native population were dying at an alarming rate” (Ruiz, *Spanish Society*, 28). Along with this, the native population did not know anything about smallpox, so they could not properly defend themselves from the severe epidemic (Castillo, 282). This disease hit the native population by surprise and ultimately cleared a path for colonial authority.

Smallpox has many similarities to what our world is facing today. COVID-19 came to the United States very suddenly, and once it was here, it spread like wildfire. This virus has been transmitted from one part of the world to another through travel by airplane and boat. Just like smallpox, it has killed thousands of people in a matter of months. While COVID is not considered to be the deadliest disease, the numbers of infection and mortality keep climbing. We are lucky that we know how the disease spreads and how to protect ourselves, or else the mortality rate could be much higher at this point in time.

Overall, the unimaginable Corona virus has affected my life in many ways. It has challenged me and caused me to change my entire lifestyle. It has affected my physical fitness, my social life, as well as my mental health. While this disease has had a very negative impact on the world, it has to be stated that there are some silver linings to this pandemic. I have found new support groups and tried new activities that I would not have attempted otherwise unless for the outbreak of COVID-19.

Works Cited

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