

The pandemic is coming up on its second birthday and it took me a minute to count how many years we have spent in this shifted way of life. The pandemic introduced many new concerns to me as well as different facets of life beyond COVID-19. The isolation period of quarantine in the beginning was actually a blessing for my introversion. I fell in love with the space I made for myself and indulged in the time I had to truly discover my passions and become more self-aware. However the uncertainty of our world triggered some anxieties in myself where I questioned so much. My education was not a priority to me and my effort was low. I became discouraged and found myself concerned with everyone else around me but my own future.

Living at home with family had its perks but resentment also grew, I felt like I was stuck. I felt like my college experience was continuing to be robbed from me. Before the pandemic in 2018, I first chose a school close to home. Then my dorm experience fell short my freshman year. I had to rely on others for transportation. Now with COVID, I felt like a child all over again being “stuck” at home. These negative feelings grew and led me on a journey to criticize the choices I made and caused me to wonder why I haven’t done better for myself. These feelings then manifested as disappointment and unnecessary guilt.

I have begun a journey to help myself in these present times, but it is a slow process to recover from the judgment I have listened to for so long. I have grown as a student and I am proud of my efforts this semester and I can recognize the resilience in me and the work I do. I maintain two jobs, one at a public high school and the other hosting at a local Mediterranean restaurant, as well as maintaining a full-time class load. I'm preparing for graduation and continuing to build a professional and personal network.

The concept of time became artificial and many can agree. I continue to remind myself that there is much I have accomplished, especially during a pandemic and the one thing I have learned to offer myself is grace. Working to maintain the life I want to see myself live is not easy when global restrictions are in place and those around you are on differing levels of coping. It should be worth praising that each of us continue to work through each day to see an end goal. This pandemic offered a lesson or two about making time for oneself.

There are untouchable things we are trying to bring into reality and it is an expense of energy. Expense should not be negatively connotated. Expense only indicates where we place input in return for output. We must be knowledgeable of ourselves and how we best react to regeneration. For me, it is an establishment of a self-care routine and a practice of more self-care rituals.

For so long we have experienced this codependent living and this pandemic really forced us to devote time to ourselves. Some see it as isolation and disconnect, but I have found it to be a great gift to better understand the way I lived and learn new ways that align with how I want to live after this pandemic. I still expect to have a career in education or writing but I also am so much more aware of the flexibility and innovation that workforces are willing to comply with, creating expansion of particular career markets. I appreciate the efforts my institution and faculty have made, supporting us to adjust and prepare us through their instruction. We cannot expect

perfection when faced with an unprecedented circumstance and similarly, I cannot expect perfection from myself when I know there is nothing that can be entirely controlled.