May 7th, 2020

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John Doe

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Dear Dad,

I hope you’ve been well. During this period of quarantine, as we have all been dealing with it in our own way, my own experiences with it have been mixed. For example, being unable to socially interact with others has made it a challenge to achieve the gratification desired from my human nature. There’s just so many limitations in trying to talk to friends and family that it feels pointless to even try. Furthermore, being tied down to our house, as you already know, has been putting dent in summer plans. With no signs of quarantine stopping anytime soon, it has made me feel quite a bit more fearful and anxious about what our future has to hold. In addition, having to do workouts alone is pretty demoralizing. The unique circumstances behind quarantine, combined with the general growing apathy I have, have made the willpower needed to conquer them difficult. My Mental Health has also been another aspect of myself that has taken a major blow. The normal avenues of in-person communication with friends and my therapist are no longer available, leaving me heavily restricted and feeling isolated and alone. Finally, the limited freedoms available to me at home in quarantine, due to coursework being intensified, have ensured that any recreation I do get is limited during the day. With the combination of all of these factors, my experiences with the quarantine from COVID-19 all the more bitter and forgettable. However, with you, mom and both of my sisters, you all have given me some hope during these dark times. With your aid and through creating some newly forged connections, I hope to strengthen the bonds between us to help everyone get through quarantine together.

Having to talk to my friends and our family through Facetime, instead of in person, still irks me. Although I can hear their voices, see their faces and have them react to me, it still feels like there’s an element of our interactions with each other that is missing. The human element that makes socialization so joyful and rewarding is missing. The only people I see in person come from a limited group (our family), and with them, I have felt limited satisfaction in talking to them, due to seeing them daily. I am aware it may be a little harsh to think of them this way, especially with some people lacking family during these times, but part of this thought process can be blamed on my mentality. I hope to reverse this mentality with you all, in order to put a positive spin on life, as it is.

For me, I never envisioned I would have to stay cooped up in my house for almost the entire day, having nothing to do or experience other than work, school, and sleeping. For me, I’m used to a more dynamic lifestyle than current times allow. Sitting down at a table, doing computer work for half the day is something that I don’t really quite like, as I am basically tied down to a desk all day. I am unable to move around or get up except for small stretches of time. Furthermore, the monotonous tasks presented to me, as well as the unhanging schedule, have started wearing away at the sharpness of my mind. The lack of change in my schedule has made life predictable and boring, without any of the variables that allow for it.

Adding onto the lack of in person interaction, there is also the matter of no more social activities to look forward to. For example, I was preparing for a wonderful Spring Break road trip with some close friends, intent on going across California to spend time with some lifelong companions. However, when quarantine came, all plans for the immediate future came to an end. I missed the birthdays of several of my friends, as well as several more who had to cancel important events from their own lives (like weddings and family reunions). For us, the repercussions of such an event were immediate and apparent. Missing these milestones has made me feel like most of life’s joys our gone, and we are now back to the basics. There is no easy way to remedy this, but I hope to find mental fortitude and peace in hoping for as many people as possible to survive quarantine. While it is regrettable that people are missing out on these life events, to me I prefer their lives over the fulfillment of events that can be delayed to a later date. After all, you can go bowling or surfing anytime in your life; lifelong friends are a rarity that take with them unique experiences and memories you formed with them to the grave. And one of the main reasons I treasure my friends is because not only do we form memories with each other, but we push and encourage each other to be better.

For me, I always liked working out as a group instead of by myself. I considered the presence of everyone else a motivator, inspiring me to do better and push myself to reach new limits. For me, I appreciate the verbal and non-verbal encouragement my peers give me when it’s my turn to do a set. However, when I do workouts by myself, especially in quarantine, where I’m mostly by myself, it’s a much different story. The unique environments and setting we are in currently factor into my mental thought processes, and have had a negative effect on my ability to conduct exercise. I find it harder to stay motivated for a workout, push myself to do sets, or even feel joy during it. Even when I do complete one, it seems to be lacking in some key characteristics from ones I have completed in the past. Like the issue of socialization being limited, I would say this is due to my troubled mental state, which has become more of a problem in recent times.

My Mental Health, in more recent times, has become something that I have had difficulty taking care of, as well as balancing with my other obligations during my life. Up until recently, my mental facilities were adequate, yet for some reason, I experienced a trigger last year that sent me into a spiral. My grades were fine and I had new experiences I was still learning to deal with, such as going to university for the first time, as well as being in a semi-military training environment. Combined with my job as well as my personal obligations at home, I felt overwhelmed, but still able to manage affairs. I had multiple outlets to talk to in person, people I could rely on, as well as a therapist. However, with the onset of quarantine, those lines of communication were no longer available. In-person communication was the only one I trusted, and that was taken away from me. I had certain sensitive subjects that I now didn’t have an outlet for, and that I wasn’t willing to talk about with my parents. Furthermore, general stressors from lack of sufficient funds, cut job hours, and impending finals have also been occupying my mind, further straining my limited concentration. As a result, my apathy has grown, and I have had negative/ depressed thoughts that have been hard to shake off. Resolving sensitive issues, especially one as complex and mind-twisting as mental health, will never be easy. However, in the back of my head, I know grudgingly that I have to open up and be honest with myself if I don’t want to implode. The last thing I want to do is hurt those I love by damaging myself. I am working towards fixing my mindset by trying to find myself through meditation, finding ways to become productive, and ensuring that I reduce my negative thoughts with positive reinforcement.

There’s a lot of improvement to be done to make myself feel whole, and even more preparation and work to get to the point where I feel self-sufficient. But on the whole, I feel like I have at least a good foundation to work off of. Furthermore, with quarantine, it has given me time for enough self-reflection and meditation to determine several aspects. First, areas of improvement in taking better care of my body, mental health and also my own social weakness. Having been given the time to analyze these issues in depth, I know now the areas I must get better at, as well as how to cope with them. I know the road to completion will be long and hard, but I have faith not only in those around me, but myself. As long as I can start opening myself up to others and trusting them to take care of me, I feel I will be better off. Hopefully you understand this too, Dad. Can’t wait to see you later.

Very Sincerely,

Your son,