

When the pandemic first started, I didn't realize how serious it was. I know people just kept saying it was just the flu, and that it wasn't that dangerous. I don't think anyone realized how wrong we were to think of it like that at the time. A month prior, I had only heard of stories on the news, and my friends and families informing me about it every now and then. So when the lockdown finally came, it felt like it wasn't real at first. I heard a lot of conspiracies and a lot of people panicking at the same time. I remember feeling like I was underwater, and nothing looked very clear anymore. It just felt dismal and confusing. Like I was wading through waves and waiting for an answer, but found nothing waiting for me in return. I already suffer a lot from anxiety and was going to therapy sessions anyway, so I was very grateful to have that one lifeline. I remember telling my therapist that I was tired of staying inside, and that I missed going out in public without feeling worried or tethered down by something. In those moments, I realized I had to build multiple lifelines in order to find something that had a foundation. I found solace in speaking to my friends more and playing games with them over discord when all of us felt pretty rough. But it really helped to not feel so alone, and to be with people you loved. I was always very worried about my family, and all of us were temporarily laid off until we could go back. My parents were stressed, and my sisters were nervous from staying inside so much. But I think the longer we stayed home, and the more we heard of people becoming sick, we realized that this was the best we could do. I think in a way, I became closer to them by being around them so often. Sometimes it was rocky, but we found more good moments in between. We didn't have school or jobs to get in the way anymore, all we really had was each other. And of course, my dogs sat there patiently waiting. But this pandemic has changed me a lot. I'm sure it changed many others too. I didn't realize how political it could be to wear a mask, or for others to riot because they didn't want to stay inside anymore. I think it hurt a lot to see that other people were sick and dying, but there were some who believed it was all a hoax and that the government was

trying to control us. People are dying every day, so please wear a mask. It's not safe, and not everything is known. This virus is new, and there's bound to be new things to learn about along the way. I feel like I've become a lot more level-headed, and it doesn't feel as miserable to stay inside. I think now, I just feel grateful for how far I've come, along with everyone else. I'm sorry to those who have lost loved ones, and I hope you're building lifelines to help you when you need it.