

## COVID-19 Hardships and Hope for the Future

With the global COVID-19 crisis cancelling important events, vacation plans, and summer barbecues, this past year has been absolutely miserable and frustrating. Our everyday struggles changed from unimportant things like traffic, weather ruining our plans, and forgetting keys, to having to remember to take precautions at all times, such as by wearing a mask when in public and social distancing. As if this wasn't enough, the hours dragged on like days. At this point, we are all awaiting the end of this pandemic. COVID-19 was especially detrimental for Americans, with many challenges and obstacles making life difficult. But despite all of these losses and hardships, many milestones and achievements were achieved that made history, such as the COVID-19 vaccine becoming the world's fastest vaccine to ever be developed. I hope that this will spark a new light to help open the possibilities of vaccine research further, and possibly create new vaccines faster.

One of these hardships was that many people lost their jobs as a result of the great recession. According to the Pew Research Center, the unemployment rate during COVID-19 pandemic was 14.7%. It has never been this high since the Great Depression in the 1930s. Food and appliance prices increased, availability was limited, and there was very little stock in some stores, as people were hoarding more than they needed. To give you a perspective of what I mean by hoarding, I will share from my own experience, in which my aunt stored 20 bags of rice during the peak time of the pandemic; one of her entire rooms was stocked with food and other appliances.

In addition, our schools were shut down and we had to continue learning from home. While this was rather exciting, it was also extremely difficult for everyone, as sometimes the internet just wouldn't cooperate with us, and with all of the other distractions at home, not many students really took away anything from the virtual lessons. This learning period was especially difficult for teachers, trying to educate their students despite the many internet problems and most of the students not caring. During the current academic year, being a remote student is also challenging, as you never know what day which teacher will forget to join the Google Meet, or turn on their mics or video. Participating is also quite difficult if the teacher has their sound off or is not near their device. Many other events became virtual, such as birthdays and family or friend meetings, but they just weren't the same.

But, throughout all of this, we must remember our frontline healthcare workers, who deserve much appreciation and respect. With the pandemic, there was a very high risk of getting ill, but our healthcare workers persevered to give people what they needed, not to forget people working in stores and delivery services. Their dedication to their work during the pandemic with the fear of not knowing who could carry the virus was profound.

The amount of time at hand for all of us was endless. From the countless tutorials we must've all tried on our own, people would have thought that we actually bought something away from it,

but I guess for most of us, that just wasn't the case. It always seemed so easy in the instructions, but actually putting them to use was a different story.

This pandemic also showed us that economic activity is in direct conflict with the environment. When the world shut down, our air and water quality improved. In fact, there were more animal sightings, such as the increased whales that were seen in New York City.

Regardless of the many hardships faced this year, there are countless things to look forward to. Socializing with friends and family again, traveling, going back to work, and not missing out on those several summer barbecues. But beyond all of these things we have missed during the pandemic, we have created milestones which can give us new insight and help better our future. From this experience, we all learned the importance of hygiene and we will be prepared if the world sees another pandemic similar to this one. Overall, COVID-19 significantly impacted our lives, posing difficulties, but also setting us up for many achievements that made history.