Our Pandemic - adjusted Lives

Brenda Aguirre
ba155@humboldt.edu

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It was the beginning of spring break. And the last day of school. It was a normal day until my professor, in the final minutes of my final lecture, announced we would be switching to an online format until further notice. What was supposed to be a few weeks turned into a few months, and now we approach the end of the 2020-21 school year. How will history look back on the COVID-19 pandemic? Who knows. Doing my part in documenting some of the pandemic’s effects, I posed a set of questions to a number of my fellow HSU Geography majors.

EDGAR NARANJO

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
Not being able to see friends and family in person has been hard. Also, I have experienced culture shock: Streets are quiet, freeways empty, and there is no nightlife. It really did seem dystopian at first, but after a few weeks, I was just overwhelmed with boredom.

What have you missed most?
The thing I miss the most is eating inside restaurants. Now they seem like a distant luxury.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I have learned that being isolated is a moment that a person can either thrive in or fail. In my experience, having alone time can be very peaceful.

Have you noticed professors giving out more work?
The workload seems intensified. One thing I appreciate is the professors’ ability to adapt and accommodate students.

KOURTNEY BOONE

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
Wearing a mask! Outside of school and work, I barely see people and usually just hang out with my dog in wide open spaces, so wearing a mask has been a big change. That and general feelings of anxiety over being confronted with people’s unsolicited opinions of COVID. Also, the constant burden of wondering what is going to happen to the economy and whether I’m properly prepared.

What have you missed most?
Traveling and going to concerts! Although I trust traveling much more than going to concerts, I am very afraid of the backlash that may come with telling someone that I am “not from here.”

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I am very non-confrontational. Through all the social policing on both ends of the spectrum, I very much like to fly under the radar. Before all this, I thought I was a pretty good mediator and that I was kind of lazy. But it turns out that I like to stay moving and avoid conflict at almost any cost.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
Pure denial. I fell behind in school because I was in denial for a couple weeks going into the fall semester.

Have you noticed professors giving out more work?
Not necessarily more work, but more smaller assignments. Which I will gladly take as substitutions for periodic giant papers. I have also noticed that professors will cut classes shorter to make up for time that is being spent doing an assignment that week.

BELEN BRASHEARS

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
Interacting with people.

What have you missed most?
Hanging with friends, congregating together, meeting new people.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I enjoy staying home and working on my home life.
How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I tried to come up with a schedule and stay on track.

How have you adjusted to the virtual environment?
It hasn’t been terrible. I’m utilizing Zoom and office hours to stay connected.

BRITNEY MARTINEZ

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
I have time to meditate and cook for myself.

What have you missed most?
Traveling abroad.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I have little self-discipline, but I’m working on it.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I set a special space for school work to help me focus.

How have you adjusted to the virtual environment?
Not very well. It has been a challenge.

CODY LEVILOFF

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
The lack of interaction. Every talk became a phone call, every meeting became a video conference, and every meal eaten at home. No smiles from strangers, no opportunities for new friends. Just a general dulling of the outside world.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I can handle loneliness better than anticipated. And I have a bug deep inside of me that keeps me going despite the situation. I have found pride in my mental resilience.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I didn’t. It was mostly waiting to hear what it would look like, then adapting once we were faced with reality.

CHRISTOPHER “JONESY” JONES

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
Direct awareness that I can no longer go through the motions of life as usual. I now have to display situational awareness at all times, remaining cognizant of the reality that we are combatants against COVID-19. I have become methodical and careful in actions and engagements I took for granted before this pandemic.

What have you missed most?
I want to say what I miss most is seeing and physically having contact and spending time with family and friends. But the honest answer is having sex!

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
Just how easily I can be lulled into a false sense of security. If I have an inclination that something might be the slightest bit safe, I try talking myself into rather than out of it. It has been a struggle during a pandemic.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I made sure that my laptop worked and that I could adequately use Zoom or other virtual platforms. I also made peace with the fact that this is not going to justly measure or academically define your academic tenure. I found myself saying, “Don’t be disappointed if you don’t get straight As or compile loads of new information. Just finishing will be an accomplishment.”

Have you noticed professors giving more work?
Yes, I have. Not a great deal more, but noticeable. I can empathize with my professors in that this is unprecedented for them too and how much of a struggle it must be to decide, “Am I giving them too much work for the sake of being obligated to keep them busy and engaged or not enough work to where this term will be void of new knowledge or a waste of energy.” It seems many of my professors have erred on the side of giving us our money’s worth in the form of a larger work load.