

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 was a Friday I won't forget. It was the day I was laid off. The world was shutting down. The weeks leading up to that, we were starting to hear about this Coronavirus "thing". People were getting sick, and some were being hospitalized and a few, a very few died. At the time, it wasn't "here" where I am, it was far away and not affecting us. We were told not to panic, it would go away, we could contain it just start washing our hands more and not stand so close to each other. Then that Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. My bosses walked into the office where I was working and said that I would be laid off. Should only last a couple of weeks. More people were getting sick, but we thought it would still just stay away from us. I was one of the first to be laid off. Within a week, almost all of us were laid off, with the hope some of us would be back by the April. Then May. After that, I knew it was going to be all summer. I was scared. I had never filed for unemployment before. I was getting ready to graduate from one college and would be starting at ASU in the summer. My work was paying for ASU. What would happen there? My college at the time went to online. Not a problem for me as I had started that way. Then my graduation was put on hold that soon turned into an online celebration that wasn't really much. But I was assured that I would be taken care of. My unemployment kicked in along with the additional help. I was still able to keep my health insurance through my company and start my classes at ASU in the fall. I started to do things that kept me active and healthy. Walking, meditation, arts and crafts. The biggest heartbreak of all was not getting to see my daughter graduate from high school. She was my last one to graduate. I'm glad they had a graduation for the seniors, but even now a year later, I still hurt from not being there to yell and scream when she walked across the stage.

I am thankful that even though [REDACTED] got sick from the virus, [PRONOUN REDACTED] is okay. My parents and other two kids are all okay and stayed safe. I know so many that have gotten sick. I know many that have lost someone they loved. I lost a friend.

I'm thankful for social media (for the most part) and being able to stay in contact with other humans, even though it wasn't really the same. My church went online soon after my lay-off, but I was grateful to still have that connection. We are still online to this day, but we are slowly coming back together.

A year later, the effects of this is still here. Still wearing masks, still social distancing (I'm a hugger, this is hard!) and there is still a chance that even though I am back to work now and have been since August, I could still be laid off for a while. I'm vaccinated and ready to get back to "normal", whatever that is now. I don't think I will be the same even if we do.

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