

## Working from Home and Preparing for College During a Pandemic

At the beginning of this year, no one would have thought something like this would even be possible. In history class at school, the teachers talked about pandemics in the past but it never occurred to me that something like this could happen again or happen in this dimension. All of our lives have been affected by this pandemic. For me this has been a time of reflection and a reality check.

I'm from Germany, a place where economic stability and safety is never questioned probably due to the fact that the country is known for being very well organized and pretty wealthy. I think the government handled the pandemic pretty well so far. During this time many have been reminded about that how we live in Germany is a privilege and many countries do not have that even during normal times.

My family's business has been very fortunate to not be affected by the pandemic, since the disposal of waste and recycling is something that will always be necessary. Since February I've been working at the family business and it took some time to adjust to working from home. When working remotely the work dynamic is far different compared to working at the office. You get to talk to colleagues, ask questions and get more of an insight to what is happening at the company. Every colleague has had a different schedule when working at home due to the fact that you didn't need to drive to the office and could finish your eight hours of work spread out throughout the day. It sometimes was difficult to call someone and ask questions because of this. Additionally, many reported to be less productive at work which I can definitely confirm as technical difficulties like a bad Wi-Fi connection contributed to that. At home there are much more distractions especially when the whole family is working remotely like my parents did.

Although working from home has had many downsides, there were some positive sides to it as well. I finally had the time to take my dog on long walks every day and incorporated practicing yoga every morning. I think in a time of uncertainty it is important to focus on the everyday tasks by creating a new daily routine. I also got to spend a lot more time with my parents, which was nice since I'm starting college in September and won't be living at home anymore.



I definitely imagined the beginning of my studies in the U.S. would have looked differently. Since May I have been uncertain to whether COVID allowed me to enter the United States and attend college or not. I was unable to visit Boston to have a look at the university I was accepted at. The pandemic made it very difficult to get all documents ready in time to meet the universities requirements. For example, I needed to apply for a new passport since mine expired, which was difficult due to the closure of all businesses including my city's citizen center. I think every student was sad when they heard that the Orientation days were moved to an online platform since this plays an important role in meeting fellow students. Everyone adjusted and group chats on different kinds of platforms were made. On July 25<sup>th</sup> the university informed me that I would be able to enter the country and attend classes partly online and face-to-face which made me very happy. The time difference would have made it very difficult to attend my classes online from Germany. The only downside to this was that my parents weren't able to come to the U.S. with me and help with moving in and adjusting to living in a foreign country.



Overall, this time has reminded me of never taking anything for granted. Just at the beginning of 2020 I could have never imagined that visiting my grandparents or going out with friends would be something that I wasn't able to do. But I think everyone tries their best to socialize with people while also remaining safe and trying to stop the spread of the virus. Like for example creating a virtual movie night with friends or singing together on their balconies to feel connected during this time.