

Transcript of Interview with Sofia Soto by Hailey Rodriguez

Interviewee: Sofia Soto

Interviewer: Hailey Rodriguez

Date: 11/20/2020

Location (Interviewee): San Antonio, Texas

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Abstract:

In this interview, I, Hailey, am interviewing Sofia about how she has handled stress before and after COVID. I ask her about how she's made adjustments to her coping mechanisms and how she is handling graduating during COVID and having been abroad during COVID as well. The COVID-19 pandemic uprooted a lot of our lives and our plans we had for the future. It is about making adjustments when necessary and learning to cope and be positive!

Hailey Rodriguez 0:00

Hi, my name is Hailey Rodriguez, and I'm a student at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. And for this interview, I'll be interviewing my friend who's also a student at St. Mary's.

Sofia Soto 0:13

Hi, my name is Sofia Soto, and I'm a communication studies major. And I just minor in St. Mary's University, and I'm a senior this year, graduating in December.

Hailey Rodriguez 0:25

So before COVID, what were some coping mechanisms that you use to help with things like stress, anxiety, or sadness?

Sofia Soto 0:35

Well, I think that they varied a lot depending on my situation, or how stressed I was. I definitely took up art and drawing and doodling, painting. But I felt that with- when in times of deep stress, running, remaining active really helped me.

Hailey Rodriguez 0:55

So how did you have to adjust any of these if you needed to, um, with COVID?

Sofia Soto 1:03

I guess the painting and the artwork, it remained at home. But definitely the fact that like it wasn't safe to maybe go to a gym and run or run around the neighborhood was kind of alarming if a lot of people were running or walking or- at the same time. So definitely, I had to find new ways to just remain active and a positive mindset.

Hailey Rodriguez 1:31

So I know you're in Spain, I'm studying abroad. So how did you handle having to come back when COVID happened and like when they were going to close the borders?

Sofia Soto 1:44

So yeah, I studied in Alcala de Henares, 30 minutes from Madrid in Spain. It was really difficult because we had no idea the way that it would impact our lives. I think then, some people were taking it lightly while some people were being sent home, some students in the same program that I was in, and it was just kind of difficult to decide when it was time to leave. We were getting a lot of different people telling us, "You know what, it'll be fine to stay" until it got so bad that they did have to close universities and schools over there. And that's when I think it was like my breaking point. And I was like, "No, no, no, I'm going to need to come back home, even if that means coming back a month earlier." So I just did all of that, talked to my professors, figured out that I could do it online and basically ended up going home the day before that- the day before that Trump announced he was closing the borders. So if I hadn't changed my flight a day earlier, I probably would have been stuck. I mean, it's crazy to think about now, but I think I made the right decision.

Hailey Rodriguez 2:50

Yeah, that was a close call. So do you have any advice for just other students who are- who may be graduating as well, during COVID, or international students as well, people studying abroad?

Sofia Soto 3:08

I would definitely say, to try to remain positive, um, take it day by day. I know that being away from home is really difficult, especially when you're making such difficult decisions. And my respect to people in that situation is very hard. Um, I guess, just try to make the thing that- trying to make the decision that sounds the most responsible that's going to benefit you. As a graduating senior, it is- it is tough, the economy isn't in the best place right now. But I'm just trying to remain positive and apply to as many jobs and opportunities as I can. And I think that that's the best thing that you can do in this time. And yeah, that's basically it.

Hailey Rodriguez 3:49

Yeah. So as we're on the topic of graduation, I'm actually just curious as to how the graduation is working, or if there's a ceremony or anything this semester.

Sofia Soto 4:01

So the first thing that came out was that for sure, it was going to be virtual. And that was kind of a bummer because I feel like as college students, we really look forward to like walking down the stage. It's something that we dream about and gets us motivated, of course. So I understood that it was for the health of everyone, so that was fine. But what St. Mary's actually did that's different is that we're going to have the virtual ceremony December 5, and then actually be able to pick up our diplomas December 12, where we can walk the stage and take pictures, which I think is really nice to have that memory even though you know the pandemic is hitting us.

Hailey Rodriguez 4:36

Yeah, that's nice that they give you at least another option or some kind of a way to feel like it's like a graduation as much as you can, I guess.

Sofia Soto 4:45

Yes. And the safest way possible, of course.

Hailey Rodriguez 4:47

Well, thank you for sharing. It was nice hearing from you.

Sofia Soto 4:52

Thank you so much.