

## **Transcript of Interview with Briana Quintanilla by Hailey Rodriguez**

**Interviewee:** Briana Quintanilla

**Interviewer:** Hailey Rodriguez

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**Location (Interviewee):** San Antonio, Texas

**Location (Interviewer):** London, England, United Kingdom

### **Abstract:**

In this interview, I, Hailey, interview Briana who is an international student in London, UK. She talks about how her coping mechanisms for dealing with stress, anxiety and sadness have shifted due to COVID and the nature of the virus. She gives some great tips for staying mentally healthy during such a tough time, especially for international students, or student very far from family.

### **Hailey Rodriguez 0:01**

Hi, my name is Hailey Rodriguez, and I'm a student at St. Mary's University. And for this interview, I'm interviewing my friend who's an international student in London.

### **Briana Quintanilla 0:14**

My name is Briana Quintanilla. I am- I was born in Texas, and I'm an international student in the UK and London. I'm at the University of Arts London.

### **Hailey Rodriguez 0:30**

Okay, so, before COVID what were some coping mechanisms that you use to help reduce stress anxiety or sadness?

### **Briana Quintanilla 0:41**

This is before COVID, right? Yes. Oh, before it COVID I- a lot of the times, because COVID kind of broke out right before the second- my last term of my first year of university. And so whenever I would feel stressed, I was just always resort to my friends. Um, I was lucky to find really supportive friends who just like really got me out of my head when I was just really stressed. So yeah, I was just hanging out with them. And- and yeah, and maybe going out sometimes, but it was a lot of just like, chilling and hanging out with friends that would get my mind off from stress, which usually just came from, like schoolwork.

### **Hailey Rodriguez 1:33**

Mm hmm. Yeah. That's great. How has this changed with COVID? Like, have you had to make any adjustments to these coping mechanisms?

### **Briana Quintanilla 1:45**

Um, I think so right after I- COVID lockdown happened, I went back home. And I wouldn't really say I- I dealt with a lot of other stress that wasn't like school related before. And then when I got home during lockdown in Texas, I found that I think I would just cope with being in lockdown, I resorted to like exercising, because I wanted to- I wanted my day to have structure since we weren't going anywhere or being able to do anything. I made it a habit to like workout every day, which was really nice, because it's almost a habit that's not like, engraved in me like I don't find it super unpleasant to exercise anymore after like six months of lockdown and stuff. So

there was that. And then since I was home, I mean, I had access to the things I have at home. So like my guitar and like, I would destress with some music. And then being with my family, I was around my family so much like we would play card games every day. So yeah, that was how I dealt with COVID stresses during the six months of pandemic. But like once I got here, I mean, it's also been a really big change, because I came back and to start my first second year of university, and I moved out of my accommodation halls like the student halls, and I decided to move in with a friend. So it's been a different experience, especially with COVID. Because as I said, before, I would to cope with stress before I would hang out with my friends and distress that way, but now, I'm like stuck in an apartment with a person that, you know, was the one who would always help me deal with stress. So it's great. But it's different because we can't go out anywhere. It's like I'm stuck with these walls all the time. So I felt that I've kind of resorted to I also haven't been keeping up with extra isn't on lunch, but it's more so because I started schoolwork and I'm just trying to find a balance with that. But I've really resorted to journaling, like, just like about my day and stuff like that. And also just meditation, because sometimes I do get overwhelmed. Um, but yeah.

**Hailey Rodriguez 4:38**

That sounds really healthy. So being an international student and being so far away from your family, has this made the stress or anxiety surrounding COVID worse and how would you say if it has or not?

**Briana Quintanilla 4:58**

I think being away from my family during COVID. It hasn't necessarily made it more difficult for me. I do feel like I feel the need to communicate with my parents more. Just for my like, for myself to like, know that they're okay and feeling fine. And also to let them know that I'm okay. But it's just to begin with like my- I didn't usually call my parents that much last year, for example, without the pandemic. So now I do by myself, like keeping each other like updated more on each other. And it's been pretty nice because it's kind of like I do a daily- I- we keep up through like WhatsApp and Snapchat. So every day, I'll like, post what I'm doing and I'll post it with them. So it's kind of nice, but I do feel like we've been communicating more. Um, but yeah, I don't think it's necessarily been more difficult during the COVID times like being away with them from them.

**Hailey Rodriguez 6:09**

Thank you. And then lastly, do you have any advice for other international students on staying safe or mentally healthy doing COVID?

**Briana Quintanilla 6:20**

Um, I would just say, I find that like, since you're... as a student during like, in lockdown, you are trapped in walls for long periods of the day, and I'm still trying to figure it out myself like... Yeah, it's tough. But I found that if you just have those moments in the day that you can detach yourself from the work, and like, literally just open a window or get out and like, get some fresh air for like, a couple minutes and detach yourself from work. Like that helps or just going on a walk, which is really all you can do. But But yeah, going on a walk and taking, taking in some fresh air. And then like I said, like, maybe make it a habit to do some self-reflection and meditation helps.

**Hailey Rodriguez 7:23**

So yeah, so specific to like being an international student, like, you know how most international students are far away from their family, do you have anything- any advice for them specifically?

**Briana Quintanilla 7:38**

Keep them updated. Keep your parents updated. It also is- I think I realized that it has become a form of distress because it's like, communicating with them and telling them everything that's happened to you, whether it's like you call them once a week, or even if you call them every day, that's great. But you know, it's their- communicating with their parents, really helps you, you know, kind of process your feelings and stuff, I would say.

**Hailey Rodriguez 8:10**

Well, thank you so much. It was nice hearing from you.

**Briana Quintanilla 8:15**

Thank you.