

Transcript of Interview with Joey Attalah by Cameron Burke

Interviewee: Joey Attalah

Interviewer: Cameron Burke

Date: 09/20/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: This interview shows the life of a high school graduate in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Joey graduated from Cambridge Rindge & Latin School in 2020, missing out on his final season of lacrosse brought sadness, although not the same sadness that people took pity on him for. He found joy in being with his family, especially during his virtual graduation.

Cameron Burke 0:01

Hi, this is Cameron Burke interviewing Joey Atallah, a Northeastern University student. First Joey, I'm going to ask you to give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 Archive Project. Do you consent to this?

Joey Attalah 0:15

Yes, yes, I do.

Cameron Burke 0:18

And if you don't mind just stating the time and date.

Joey Attalah 0:22

It is 4:14pm on Sunday, September 20, 2020.

Cameron Burke 0:29

All right. So what were your initial thoughts to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Joey Attalah 0:36

Well, I had heard rumors, early March. And I wasn't thinking too much of it. Until it was a couple weeks into March where I saw the cases start to exponentially grow. And at that point, I kind of convinced myself that this was going to be a real issue. But I didn't know exactly the

scale of like how much it would take away. Yeah, I'd say like early March was when I first realized.

Cameron Burke 1:08

And so how would you say that this pandemic has impacted your life?

Joey Attalah 1:14

Well, there are a couple of things on a personal level one, I had some family visiting, around the time when it-, when the cases started to get like really bad, and they ended up having to stay for four or five months. And I'd say the house was pretty hectic, I'd say there are some pros and cons to it. The pros being you just have more people to talk to you more people to interact with, when there's already such like, minimal interactions. But the cons would also be sometimes you just want to, like have the house to yourself, like have like the normal schedule that you were on pre COVID. So things definitely got a little bit hectic. But say, I say it was better for the most part. And then I also miss out, of course, a lot on my like senior year - graduation, sports seasons was a big thing for me. I was really looking forward to playing lacrosse that spring season. And even after like school got canceled, we had the opportunity to play in a tournament. And I was feeling pretty optimistic about that, but then that got canceled. And that's when it kind of settled in, like, I guess like everything is kind of being taken away from us. But yeah, I think what I disliked the most was like the pity I got from older people.

Cameron Burke 2:48

Um, if you don't mind just elaborating on that if you feel personal-, I if you feel comfortable doing that.

Joey Attalah 2:53

Yeah, of course. Um, because I think a lot of seniors knew like, yes, this was a time to move on. But you'd always have like your elders saying, "Oh, I feel so bad for you. I feel so bad that you didn't have your graduation and this," but at some point, you have to put it past you and when people keep reminding you, it just kind of makes the situation a lot worse. It was something that really annoyed me. Yeah.

Cameron Burke 3:21

And how did you feel like, how did you feel about not having graduation? Like did it-

Joey Attalah 3:24

Of course, I felt like pretty crappy about it. But the sports season was a little more like a deeper sadness for me. But all of it was like obviously, pretty like disheartening. But at some point, I just moved past it. I lost a lot of hope, and I know it sounds pessimistic but yeah.

Cameron Burke 3:49

Um in, what, what was your... so you didn't have like, you said you didn't have a graduation but did it, what did, what did it look like? Did you have a virtual graduation, did it, did it happened like semi in person?

Joey Attalah 4:03

We had a virtual graduation. We, we tried to, we tried a lot to get some in person graduation, but that never went forward. So we had a completely virtual one where the school set up this presentation on one of the local TV channels, and it all felt very like, forced and not authentic. So I didn't really think too much of it. I mean, I appreciated the effort. But that like even some sort of in person would have meant a lot but of course, I guess that like, you have to weigh your, to weigh your options. And I guess the school decided to be best for that virtual one.

Cameron Burke 4:47

And were you able to celebrate with your family? I know you said that you had a lot of family in your house. Were you able to do that with this virtual graduation?

Joey Attalah 4:54

Yeah. Yeah, we all watched it together. And it was, it was a, it was a nice moment I'd say.

Cameron Burke 5:00

Um, what is one thing that you that you miss most from, from like, previous life before, before March before this all impacted us?

Joey Attalah 5:11

Yeah, I mean, it's a pretty generic answer, but just like, not having to be conscious when you go outside and just like social gatherings. And also, I'd say I didn't follow all the quarantine rules exactly the entire time, which I think a lot of people did as well. But when I did kind of break the rules a little bit, there was always this burden and guilt that like, if something does go wrong, and I do bring it back to my family, it's just something that's always on your mind that obviously wasn't there pre COVID. So yeah, I guess that's what I miss most, just not having to be conscious.

Cameron Burke 5:52

Yeah. And that constant guilt there.

Joey Attalah 5:54

Yeah, exactly.

Cameron Burke 5:56

All right, Joey. I think that is all we have for today. Thank you so much for consenting to this interview. And I hope everything goes well in the future.

Joey Attalah 6:08

Thank you.