

## **Transcript of Interview with Arina Konovalova, Melissa Amante, and Elisabeth Knott by Each Other**

**Interviewee/Interviewer:** Arina Konovalova

**Interviewee/Interviewer:** Melissa Amante

**Interviewee/Interviewer:** Elisabeth Knott

**Date:** 09/16/2021

**Abstract:** We described the social and emotional challenges that we faced when the lockdown first began. This included the topics of education, social media, and mental health.

**Arina Konovalova 0:00**

Hi, welcome to our interview. My name is Arina, and I consent to this interview.

**Melissa Amante 0:05**

I'm Melissa and I also consent to this interview.

**Elisabeth Knott 0:07**

Hi, I'm Lily and I also consent to this interview.

**Arina Konovalova 0:10**

So to start off, I'd like to ask Melissa a couple of questions. The first question being, what were some ways you were able to keep up your social life during the lockdown?

**Melissa Amante 0:19**

So I definitely struggled a little bit to maintain some of my friendships during quarantine. But some of the things I did was just have my friends on the phone while I went on living my own life, which sounds a little weird. But what I mean by this is I'd FaceTime a group of friends, and then do my day's homework online. And whatever else I had to get done that day with just having them on in the background. So sometimes we didn't talk to each other at all during these phone calls, but it was always nice to have the company. And then every once in a while, I'd set up outdoor socially distanced activities with my friends, we'd go on picnics, or just walks around the neighborhood, which was also nice.

**Arina Konovalova 0:53**

I think, honestly, it's so good that you were able to keep up your social life, especially with like social distancing, I would assume that a lot of friend groups fell apart, or just because there was no like physical touch and physical contact. I feel like a lot of people were not able to, like keep that up. Because it's such a big part of like, our human lives is to be present and like, be able to, I guess, feel a person and just understand their energy and all of that. And personally, I had a completely different experience that first wave where it was, I, my social life kind of fell apart, but then of course it got back together. So, and also another question I have for you is in what positive ways has the pandemic and the lockdown affected you?

**Melissa Amante 1:34**

So this is a really important question for me, because honestly, going into quarantine, I was not in the greatest space mentally with SAT prep and just the stress of being a junior, I was definitely on the brink of burning out academically. And going into quarantine definitely brought me back from that. I think that because of quarantine, I can now identify when I need to take a step back for my schoolwork and not just push myself until I drop. And I've gotten a lot better at building in free time, and just time of doing like activities that take my mind off school, whether it's going outside or just hanging out with friends, or anything not academically related, and if quarantine didn't happen, I don't think I would have got this perspective. And I might not have been able to maintain my academic standing.

**Elisabeth Knott** 2:17

Yeah, I feel like that perspective you gain on prioritizing yourself before your schoolwork before your work is something that a lot of people learned. I feel like, as you know, at least in America, I feel like the transition to like working online instead of being in the office from nine to five, like people learned to make space for themselves. And I think it's, I think it's really nice that you were able to find things that you liked, and take a step back and realize what was important in your life.

**Melissa Amante** 2:46

Yeah, I think that was definitely a shared experience among a lot of people during quarantine. So I now have some questions for Lily. My first question is, where were you when your community shut down because of the pandemic? And how did you and others around you feel about it?

**Elisabeth Knott** 3:00

Yeah, my school, I feel like a lot of schools went straight into lockdown. Like one day you were in class and then the next day you weren't, but my school kind of transitioned into it. So we officially shut down on Friday the 13th. But that Wednesday, we had class, Thursday, we had off school, and then the Friday we shut down, they let us back into school to get our belongings and stuff but we didn't have class. So it was a weird transition, those two days where we had off school, and then we were there but we didn't have classes it kind of felt almost dystopian, like we were walking the halls and people were like, I'm never gonna see you again. It was, it was really, really weird. But it was kind of nice to feel a little more prepared. I thought we would be back in two weeks, my parents thought we would be back in six months. So it was also strange. In my community, I'm from a pretty small town in New Jersey, where everyone was talking and everyone had mixed opinions because no one really knew what they were talking about. So I feel like as a community, there were mixed opinions. Some people weren't worried at all and some people thought it was the end of days.

**Melissa Amante** 4:07

I was definitely with you. I was 100% convinced I was going back to school in two weeks and no one could tell me otherwise.

**Arina Konovalova** 4:14

No. Yeah, honestly. Same thing I was, I remember making like summer plans and like not even considering that COVID would still exist and I'm like yeah, like this is all jokes so I completely, I'm in the same boat as you guys.

**Melissa Amante 4:27**

Yet here we are a year and a half. Okay, so my second question for Lily is how do you think the lockdown affected your attitude towards school?

**Elisabeth Knott 4:37**

Kind of like Melissa said, there were there were good and bad aspects. So I also, you know, amongst a lot of other people like learned to prioritize myself so it was nice to, you know, junior year stress with SAT and AP tests. It was nice to have a break and be able to step back and focus on what made me happy rather than what, I don't know, rather than focus on school, honestly. It was, so junior year was nice. It was nice to be able to kind of like take a step back and not worry about it. But then going into senior year college applications, learning new classes, AP tests weren't normal that year, it was really difficult in the beginning to be fully online and have to learn materials without even having met my teachers. And also living in a loud house. I have a lot of siblings. It was hard to focus on class and stuff when people were cooking stuff in the kitchen. And my sister was like, on the phone with her friend in the next room. So there were good and bad aspects. But we got through it.

**Melissa Amante 5:38**

Yeah, no, I for sure agree, like, I think, coming from junior to, like, senior year, having no school to being in person, and it was just so strange. Like, for a second I forgot, like, how to study that. I was like, oh, what am I doing now? So I think that honestly, a lot of people had that same experience.

**Elisabeth Knott 5:59**

When we transitioned back into person, like, I never thought I would miss walking around my high school. And I really did. It was nice to go back.

**Arina Konovalova 6:06**

Yeah.

**Melissa Amante 6:07**

I was surprised how much I missed, like, learning in a traditional sense.

**Elisabeth Knott 6:11**

Yeah.

**Arina Konovalova 6:11**

Also true.

**Elisabeth Knott 6:12**

It's so nice to just be able to like, raise your hand and ask your professor a question rather than have to email them after class.

**Melissa Amante 6:19**

It's just so true.

**Elisabeth Knott 6:20**

I never thought I would miss it. But I really did.

**Melissa Amante 6:23**

No, I agree.

**Elisabeth Knott 6:25**

Okay, so now I have some questions for Arina. The first being, did you pick up any hobbies during quarantine? And have you maintained these hobbies as the quarantine was lifted?

**Arina Konovalova 6:33**

I guess you could say that I went back to the hobbies I used to have before like getting busy with schoolwork. And those hobbies are reading and journaling slash writing. I think those two hobbies kind of were the perfect hobbies for the time of a lockdown when you had so much personal time and personal space where you could really just invest all your time into reading rather than trying, like trying to read for 10 minutes one day, another day trying to read for 15 minutes when during the lockdown you had all this time. And I think it was the perfect hobbies that you can invest most of your time in. As they were also, for me, they were at least very therapeutic where I could take off some of the stress while reading and journaling and expressing my thoughts. So yeah, I think I went back to those two hobbies.

**Melissa Amante 7:21**

I also picked up reading again during quarantine and it wasn't immediately that I maintained it but now I definitely have, I read at least every couple of days and it's made my life substantially better. So I'm very happy I picked that one up.

**Elisabeth Knott 7:34**

True. Yeah, I feel like a lot of people went back to like, their old middle school habits like, I re-read Harry Potter.

**Melissa Amante 7:40**

So did I! That's funny.

**Elisabeth Knott 7:43**

Like, I must have felt like a kid again. Like I was like in the house with my parents-

**Arina Konovalova 7:43**

Yeah.

**Elisabeth Knott 7:45**

-My parents made me lunch.

**Arina Konovalova 7:48**

It felt like it was like a happy, like, I don't know, I agree. Like, I felt like I was in kindergarten. It was like, you know, the winter mornings with chocolate. Like that's how I felt like the first and second wave of quarantine.

**Elisabeth Knott** 8:00

And then it got old.

**Arina Konovalova** 8:01

Yeah.

**Elisabeth Knott** 8:03

Okay, also, did you find the presence of social media helpful or harmful during quarantine?

**Arina Konovalova** 8:07

I found the presence of social media very harmful to the point where I felt almost obligated to like delete it, and in fact I did. Except like Snapchat, maybe, and like WhatsApp just in order to like, keep in touch with some like close friends. But yeah, I think it was a very like, I wouldn't say heartbreaking because that's a big word, but very, I guess, like negatively influenced by seeing how everyone might be doing better than me. And since social media is so fake that I think it like deludes people into thinking that other people, I guess, are doing much better than you when in reality, like we're all the same people. We're all in the same situation, especially in the lockdown where a lot of people weren't, weren't able to leave their houses. And I think social media just was not the right place for me.

**Elisabeth Knott** 8:58

Yeah, I agree. I found myself deleting a lot of, I deleted Instagram and Snapchat because a lot of my friends were, you know, with their parents, their parents let them have picnics, but my parents didn't let me have picnics. So it was, I was jealous of them. And it was really bad for me.

**Arina Konovalova** 9:13

Yeah.

**Elisabeth Knott** 9:13

So I deleted it. But there also was the nice aspect of like, FaceTime and Snapchat to be able to keep in touch with your friends so good and, good and bad.

**Arina Konovalova** 9:21

Yeah.

**Melissa Amante** 9:22

I also noticed that social media, I saw this trend very often of people especially on Tik Tok, like emphasizing you have all this free time if you don't achieve your goals now you're never going to do it.

**Arina Konovalova** 9:34

Yeah.

**Melissa Amante** 9:34  
And that mentality was very toxic for me.

**Elisabeth Knott** 9:36  
Yeah.

**Arina Konovalova** 9:36  
For sure.

**Melissa Amante** 9:36  
I was, I felt like I was struggling to maintain my daily tasks during quarantine and to be told I should be achieving my goals and being shamed for not doing that was just a very difficult concept for me to deal with at the time.

**Arina Konovalova** 9:49  
Oh, I completely agree, like.

**Elisabeth Knott** 9:51  
It was junior year, so like everyone on, on Tik Tok was talking about college applications, what schools they got into and like me going through that time in my life.

**Melissa Amante** 9:59  
Yeah.

**Elisabeth Knott** 10:00  
It was really bad.

**Arina Konovalova** 10:00  
Yeah, I think it was one of the like, most toxic times in social media when it was just so new to everyone and people had like different perceptions of it. So, yeah.

**Elisabeth Knott** 10:12  
Okay. Well, thank you very much for listening to our interview,

**Melissa Amante** 10:16  
-And we're looking forward to our follow up interview later in the semester. This interview was recorded on September 16, 2021 at 11:45am.