

Our long distance relationship made even more distant with the pandemic

Since the first time our relationship was made official, my significant other (S.O.) and I have been in a long distance relationship (LDR).

We started our LDR journey being three hours apart. After a few months, I had to switch jobs and move to another major island. We were only 45 minutes apart via plane; but had to spend PhP2,000 to up to even PhP5,000 more just to have a weekend together.

It was challenging, but we still managed. At least we had specific dates to look forward to: a four-day vacation spent at our hometowns, a weekend getaway at a beach we've both never been to, or a food trip + museum + amusement park adventure at adjacent cities.

This pandemic made everything harder for our relationship.

Before the rumors that a lockdown was going to be enforced in Metro Manila, my S.O. and I spent a lovely vacation at my hometown to celebrate my mother's 46th birthday. This was the first to second week of March. It was a happy weekend. We were naïve to what the next weeks had in store. We were indifferent that the next time we'll be spending time with each other again and be able to look directly into each other's eyes without the help of a camera or a cellphone screen would not be until months and months and months.

My S.O. and I returned to the respective places where we worked on March 10. This meant that we were islands apart again. We have yet to plot out the next time we'll see each other.

The "lockdown" was confirmed on March 12. My S.O. insisted I go back to my hometown as soon as possible before things get messier. I freshened up, packed my essentials, booked a Grab to the nearest bus terminal to my hometown, and went back home. This was the best decision I made. My S.O. always gives the best advice.

And then the longest, most excruciating community quarantine happened.

My S.O. and I weren't that much concerned about when we'll see each other again during the first few weeks of the Enhanced Community Quarantine. We were too busy wrapping our heads around what was happening in our country and around the world. We were too worried about the state of our jobs to worry about our relationship. During that time, we knew that things were bad, but we were still quite hopeful that things would magically go back to normal in a few weeks.

But we underestimated the turn of events.

April and May went by so slowly yet so fast at the same time. Now June is almost coming to a close. Things only seem to be getting worse and worse. In two weeks, my S.O. and I will not have seen each other for four months. Being in separate major islands and having hometowns in different regions, it's extremely difficult to find a way to see each other.

I feel like I'm only realizing how long my S.O. and I haven't seen each other in the past weeks. Each month passing by without us being together and each day giving no more clarity as to when and how we'll be able to see each other again makes my heart feel heavier and heavier. These past few days have been especially hard. I've gone from trying to push him away to crying over the pain brought about by my longing for him.

To cope, we try to keep busy as much as possible. We try to minimize our use of social media and intake of daily news. We try to stay optimistic. But my S.O. is much better at that than I am. To bond, we've scheduled regular Zoom calls, watch the same series, or watch movies through the most amazing and relevant app at the moment, Rave.

We try not to think too much about what will happen in the future because it only makes us sad and anxious. But we're trying to hold on to looking directly into each other's eyes without the help of a built-in camera in a cellphone, to watching movies side by side, and to being eased of this heavy weight in our hearts because we never have to worry about not having to see each other for months and months again.

Written by: Patricia Villar

Location: Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines