

My personal life hasn't changed much because of the pandemic. In January 2020, before COVID-19 was a national concern, I began my first semester at Arizona State University as an online undergraduate student. In February, I was hired as an online history tutor for Austin Community College in my hometown of Round Rock, TX. Because of the necessity of our work, me as a tutor and my father as an employee of Samsung Austin Semiconductor, neither of us experienced unemployment nor financial hardship. While my personal life was largely intact, I still have to deal with the overarching cultural changes brought on by the pandemic and the frustrations and negative emotions they cause. I find comfort in a few activities that help decrease the annoyance of Corona.

My primary favorite thing that I do to overcome the depressing qualities of shut-downs, masks, and social distancing is taking pictures of the changes COVID-19 wrought on U.S. society. I took (and still do take) pure delight in taking pictures of empty shelves, pandemic-themed products, and all the cultural oddities related to the pandemic. Some of my favorite pictures are shown below. Readers may think this is bizarre, but since the beginning of COVID-19 in March 2020, I was keenly aware of the monumental historical significance of this (long) event. As a historian, I honestly relish witnessing and partaking of real history unfolding before my eyes.

The second thing that decreases the discomfort and stress of COVID-19 is being able to return to a comfortable home that is the same as it was before the pandemic. While masks, social distancing, business closures, missing products, and a host of other things are the norm in public, at home I can go without a mask, get close to my family, and go about my daily tasks almost forgetting (were it not for the constantly updating COVID-19 news) that there is a national health emergency. Being able to live a normal life at home makes dealing with Corona tolerable.

The third thing that keeps my spirits up is be able to visit small groups of family and friends. The only extended family I have in Texas are my maternal grandparents, and I have one friend that I go out with occasionally. Despite government urgings to rethink how citizens visit friends and relations, my family has agreed that we are safe gathering in our small group in my grandparents' house. Unlike other states or cities, Round Rock Texas does not prohibit all gatherings especially in people's houses. My friend and I have also agreed to do some outside activities together that we enjoyed very much. Being able to visit people I know in a safe manner has helped to retain a sense of normalcy and maintained my sense of well-being.

The fourth thing that has helped me during COVID-19 is to avoid being pulled into using Corona clichés whenever possible. For example, “stay safe”, “social distancing”, “unprecedented”, and “We're in this together” to name a few. While some may be appalled that I would avoid their use because they have well-intended meanings, In my opinion, using these words only heightens the sense of anxiety, fear, defeatism, and fills people with a sense that their lives have been irrevocably altered (which itself produces the former emotions). Since these words drag me (and others I know) down, I choose to use older more positive greetings and goodbyes such as “how are you?”, “I hope you have a good day”. I believe these expressions communicate goodwill and support in a way that doesn't state the unavoidable obvious.

The fifth thing that has improved my attitude toward COVID-19 is the simple hope that it will end. Despite the often-serious condition of almost every aspect of life during the Corona era, I have hope that events will change especially as we get closer to having the whole nation vaccinated. Besides, major events such as the American Civil War, World War II, and of course the Influenza pandemic of 1918 eventually came to their end regardless of the worries of people living at the time. It is again history that helps to give me hope that this is just a phase in our (and the world's) history.