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In Sickness and in Health in South Texas: Narratives of COVID's Impact

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Impact of the Pandemic on a Collegiate Student Athlete

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When the pandemic began, I was a junior in college right in the middle of track season. I had gone home for spring break right after the indoor track season ended, and was excited to start outdoor season as a thrower when I returned. Unfortunately, I found out during my break that I was going to have to quickly move all of my stuff out of my dorm and move back home for the rest of the semester. This meant no longer seeing my roommates and friends, my boyfriend who lived 2 hours away from me, and my teammates as well as no longer being able to compete. My world was turned upside down and I had to figure out how to live in my parents house again while still trying to pass difficult classes, like Chemistry and Physics, and attempt to keep up my throwing skills and strength with minimal resources and without a coach.

Academically and physically, I did not have too much deficit from the pandemic. I passed all of my classes and maintained the grades I had when I left for spring break, but I do not think I learned the information as well due to the nature of open note exams becoming the norm. I was also able to keep up with my track workouts in my parents in house gym and I borrowed some implements from my coach when I had gone back to school to move out, so I could go to nearby schools and practice. I was able to have someone record me throwing to send to my coach to critique. None of this was ideal, but I found ways to make it work.

The area that impacted me the most was my emotional well being. I became very sad and mopey because all I could do was FaceTime, call or text my friends. I was so used to seeing them all of the time and it just wasn't the same over the phone. It was also extremely difficult not being able to be with my boyfriend in person. I realized the importance of physical touch in a relationship, and how just getting a hug could've helped me immensely. At my lowest point during the pandemic, my mom noticed how I was either really sad and mopey or really irritable and she had one of my friends come over a sit in the driveway with me (of course being 6 feet apart), and this was really helpful for me. We continued to do this and my mood definitely increased.

This experience was eye opening for me because I began to understand what individuals suffering from depression and anxiety may feel. I still would never say I understand how others feel, because I know it is different for everyone. I also would not say I was suffering from depression, but I was having a hard time.