

# REFLECTION ON ISOLATION

The final weekend before school began, I went camping with my sister. To be honest, I'm not really the type of person to eagerly march off into the woods, away from modern technology and luxuries. While I love nature, I also love not checking my legs every five seconds to see if they're covered in ants and mosquitoes. Despite this, I decided I needed a chance to relax before classes began again.

We had originally planned to only stay for one night, but upon arriving, it became clear we wouldn't have time after setting up to actually enjoy nature unless we stayed a second night. But, other than the occasional bug nipping at my leg, it was going surprisingly well.

Admittedly, I am not exactly up for "roughing it". I had a waterproof tent and an inflatable mattress, so I wasn't just sleeping outside on the ground. Despite the modern accommodations, lying in the tent that night, I heard something I hadn't heard in a very long time: silence. Which is ironic, considering I hear less than half of everything.

But this was a different kind of silence. It wasn't pure, but instead echoed by cicadas and rustling leaves in the background. It was genuine. There was no traffic, no worrisome thoughts to trouble me during the night. For once, I felt calm.

Taking time to relax and enjoy some peace and quiet is usually difficult. It is seen as being lazy, especially now. With people spending more and more time home by themselves, the idea of personal time has become almost a joke. Regardless, the importance of taking some time for yourself has not diminished.

This year has been hell for everyone, some more than others. Despite this, we are still human. We still get stressed and tired, and if we overwork ourselves, we will still burn out. I have written many times before on the importance of taking care of yourself; perhaps too many times, but that is how important it is.

Being home alone is not the same as taking a moment for some peace and quiet. Admittedly, even I thought it was

before that night. But as I laid there, looking up at the stars, I realized it just wasn't. I had grown so attached to constantly being on my devices these last few months, just for some form of connection to others, I hardly shut them off long enough to think.

I'm definitely not someone who feels technology is a bad thing, nor do I think it is bad to be on your devices a lot. But everything is online now: social, school, work. Many of us have found ourselves online far more than usual. That's when technology becomes an issue.

Even when alone, we don't allow our minds to be quiet. I struggled to keep my phone down as I kept checking if I needed to make any edits on my article. Eventually, my sister had to take it from me so I could focus on my surroundings instead.

Taking time for yourself is just as important now as it was before, if not more. This is a stressful time. There's nothing wrong with taking time to relax.

# LIVING WITH A COVID-19 NURSE DURING A PANDEMIC

When I first read about the coronavirus quickly ambushing several nations across the world, it really didn't faze me. In my opinion, it was no different than Ebola, Zika or any other foreign virus with a previous history of making its way to the US and then eventually getting resolved. I'll be honest: I didn't think it would remotely affect my life in any way, shape or form. I had a misleading faith of this all blowing over in a few months. I assumed it would go away as quickly as it had arrived.

But I think for many of us at YSU, the severity of this situation didn't quite hit us when instruction was initially moved completely online; this was just a thrilling time for us to enjoy an extra week of spring break. Consequently, I saw further spontaneous spring break pictures on social media.

I wasn't quite sure how to perceive it when the first case hit Cleveland, but before I knew it, Mahoning County fell victim too. Yet this news alone wasn't what exactly shook me to my core.

I quickly found myself in a unique situation: my sister was assigned to be a COVID-19 nurse.

We didn't know where her position would leave her, or any

of our family, standing as we all lived under the same roof. While I didn't get to see the ugly, I got to see how the ugly had personally affected her.

I remember her choked up as she explained how the virus really did affect her patients. I remember the blatant concern written over all of our faces during such a discussion. There was a new level of desperation reached by all parties involved.

No matter what the nurses and doctors did, fevers didn't break, the hospital was filling up, patients were routinely intubated, personal protective equipment was running out and some patients never got to make it home. Some nurses around the world even made the tough decision to find alternative housing in order to avoid the risk of infecting their children.

The weight of the world was on healthcare workers' shoulders, which they were bearing without a real sense of direction.

Her carrying home the virus was a possibility I came to accept. Nurses all over the country were coming down with COVID-19. For most people, they simply knew to stay home and follow precautions, but I was in the position where staying home was not my safe haven. It very well could've been my

source of the virus.

My parents knew this. My mom disinfected the house top to bottom every single day. My sister's uniform was left in the garage in a garbage bag. We routinely took our temperatures, did what the governor asked of his fellow Ohioans and hoped for the best.

After several months of trial and error, it somehow worked out.

It may be an inconvenience to wear my mask all the time, to avoid social gatherings and to attend almost all of my classes online most of the time. But I'm okay. My family is okay. And I'm fine with the little inconveniences if it means avoiding the big ones.

All in all, my sister never contracted COVID-19. In fact, the number of cases locally dropped to the point where she was no longer assigned to treat it.

While the virus is still very prevalent today in the U.S., I think it's important to reflect and look back at what the start of the pandemic used to look like. Although we are living in a historic time, we are in a better place, even if the number of cases continue to fluctuate.

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"Last year, we had 475 [international students]," associate provost for international and global initiatives Nathan Myers said. "My hunch is it's going to be a little less than 400 [this semester] due to the pandemic."

Myers said some previously-enrolled students took a gap year, contributing to the decline. However, many expected freshmen and transfer students couldn't get visas, meaning they couldn't enroll.

"We were anticipating, looking at the numbers in early March, about 200 incoming [international] students this fall," he said. "When the dust settled, it turned into 30 new students. Of the 30, I think we had one incoming freshman that had never been to college before that was able to obtain a visa."

All students traveling from other countries quarantined for 14 days before returning to campus. The university canceled International Coffee Hour, cultural celebrations and international student organization meetings. These

activities played a role as community bonding for the students.

"It can be a lonely and disorienting experience to travel to a new country and to live in a new country. At this time it's even more dislocating and jarring because you can't get together and you can't interact. I know that international students have a tough time right now," Myers said. "I think that anything that we can do, any measures that we can take on a personal basis, would go a really long way."