

## A New Routine for COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic is an incredible event in time because it has a broad effect on everyone, but it also affects everyone in different ways. COVID-19, to me, is a lot like a power outage. When the power goes out all you can think about is all the things you could be doing if you had power. I experienced a prolonged power outage recently at Hampden-Sydney College. In only about three hours I realized just how much I had taken things such as light and heat for granted on a day-to-day basis. I also thought back to the short time ago when I had power and wasn't freezing my buns off. A lot of these same feelings arise when discussing COVID-19 and all the wonderful things that came with it. A year ago I didn't realize how much I valued seeing live music. I didn't realize how much I valued being able to be in public and not socially distancing with a mask. I did not realize how much I valued being able to see live sports. COVID-19, like with so many other people, tore these things away from me and left a big hole in my life. It is especially frustrating that this pandemic had to occur while I am in college. College students and large social gatherings go together like white on rice but obviously, the CDC is not a big fan of large social events with COVID-19 around. I viewed COVID-19 and the resulting quarantine as a time for me to examine myself and work on becoming the best version of myself. Through this process of introspection, I learned a lot about myself. One of the biggest takeaways that I walked away from this was that I need to always be pushing for a goal and that I can never be satisfied with what I achieved because this will cause me to plateau. This realization helped propel me through quarantine and become much better at many different aspects of my life. At first, I absolutely hated COVID-19 but without COVID-19 I would not have grown in the ways that I have over the past year.

First, I believe that quarantine was actually beneficial to my life. That's not to say I would want to do it again because I most certainly do not. I just enjoyed the time with myself and being able to take a crack at working on some of my goals. Although I did have a job during quarantine I did have a decent bit more free time that I could use at my disposal. During the first part of the pandemic, back in early April, I often wasted a lot of time just fooling around playing video games and things of that nature. I realized pretty quickly that not only was this lifestyle boring, but I also was not getting anything out of it. I thought to myself instead of doing all this useless stuff I should work for something worthwhile. I then came up with a plan and made some goals for myself. The first of the goals I made was to just get in better shape and eat better. For me, this was an easy goal to set because we can all use more exercise and we can all stand to eat healthier too. I didn't think this was going to be a very difficult task because I was at home rather than at Hampden Sydney. It's much easier to eat healthier at home because my mom usually cooks and she cooks pretty healthy meals for the most part. I also have a much better gym at home than I do at Hampden Sydney. It is pretty hard to get motivated to exercise when the only gym that is available is the tiger rec. It's probably one of the worst gyms I have ever been to. The second goal I had was to play more guitar. This was a relatively straightforward goal as well. My thought process behind this was that I would be better off playing guitar in my spare time rather than watching tv. The third and final big goal I had was to

just have a more positive mindset. This goal was relatively vague but I felt like this one was going to be the most difficult. The reasoning behind this was that this goal requires much more discipline as well as effort than the others. Well, at least it does in my opinion.

Furthermore, I started to gain some momentum on these goals towards the start of the summer. I was going to the gym six days a week consistently. This was a difficult task to do when I first committed to my goals but as time went on it got easier and easier. My work schedule also gave me plenty of time to get to the gym. Lucky for me COVID-19 did not affect the closing of my gym in the summer. I didn't even have to wear a mask in there which was awesome. I can confidently say that if I had to wear a mask on the treadmill I would not have run as much as I did. The second goal for my guitar playing was also going well. I was learning all sorts of new songs as well as starting to play with my friends. One of my friends that I play guitar with was pretty concerned with COVID-19 at first so we didn't play much until the summer. I was also doing well with staying positive as well. It was really hard to stay this way though, with the pandemic and everything going on. I found it challenging to find the positive side of all the restrictions put in place for COVID. I would oftentimes sit at home upset that there weren't a ton of social engagements to go to but I soon realized what I had to gain from this. Instead of going out and partying with my friends I could work harder on my goals as well as spend more time with my family. It was really easy for me to get lost in all of the COVID-19 mess but these concrete goals helped me stay the course and block out the negative parts of COVID-19.

Moving forward, I noticed sometimes I would get bogged down in the routine of my life with the exercise and whatnot. This was especially amplified because of COVID-19 because quarantine made life seem like it was moving at only seventy-five percent rather than at full speed. In all of this, it got challenging to motivate myself. The only real motivation I had to do stuff for a while was that I just didn't want to be bored anymore. The more I played guitar the more I would get stuck in a rut and play the same stuff over and over again. I also wasn't challenging myself enough in the gym and I would just do the same workouts over and over again. I was staying positive most of the time but it was hard at times. During this lull I had in my motivation I realized something. I realized that I have to always set new challenges for myself. Even if I felt good about a goal I was reaching, I still need extra challenges to push me either further towards that goal. For guitar, it would be learning at least one new song or lick every day. For my fitness goal, it would be running for an extra minute or two every day. It would be eating veggies instead of eating fries for my eating habits. I needed an extra sort of push to stay sharp. You don't sharpen a knife once and all of the sudden it's good forever. It takes constantly sharpening the knife and maintaining it properly to get the full potential out of the knife. I feel that this is the same for me in my life. I need to be constantly pushing the boundary and seeing just how far I can take things or otherwise I will just be stagnant and get bored. I also would miss out on potential gains and merits if I don't continue to push myself to work harder and harder on my goals. I don't think that I would have been able to make this realization without quarantine and COVID-19. I think I still would have set some of the same goals I had during quarantine but they probably wouldn't have gone into effect until summer. I think the big difference that COVID-19 and quarantine made in my life was the silence it made. The hustle and bustle of everyday life

pre-COVID-19 made a lot of noise and it became harder to see what parts in my life need improvement. It also is harder to change a lifestyle pre-COVID-19 because life was just so much busier for me and I didn't have a ton of time to work on myself. The quiet time I had alone with myself and my family gave me space to think about what I wanted to accomplish in the short term. I think quarantine also limited the distractions I had that could pull me away from these goals. Without COVID-19 it would have been so much harder to implement a big change in my life. The silence of COVID-19 at first seemed awful but there turned out to be a lot of good that came out of it.

Finally, at the end of the summer, I was able to see real results of all the hard work I had done that summer. I had lost nearly forty pounds and had put on a lot of muscle. I could play songs and techniques on my guitar that I couldn't even get close to playing before. I was also just generally happier with my life and I felt this was due to the positive attitude I had been trying to implement. I felt like I came out the other end of quarantine a completely different person and was motivated to tackle the school year at Hampden Sydney. I have a lot to thank COVID-19 for. I know it fundamentally changed me as a person and helped my work ethic tremendously. I learned how to push myself properly and how to chase big goals. I have a lot of gripes about COVID-19 and I disliked the way it changed society but I am thrilled with how it changed me.