

Day 1

September 11, 2020

Last night while I was doing my night routine, I was thinking of all the productive things that I would accomplish today. I was going to deep clean my bathroom, wash my sheets, mop my kitchen, and finish all my assignments due next week. I planned to do all of this today so that I could enjoy an extremely lazy weekend.

This morning started off like any other, I woke up around 8:30, read a little bit, and then decided to go downstairs and make some breakfast. My usual two scrambled eggs, an apple, and some raisin bread. I had finished my eggs and my apple and was about to start eating my toast (I always save this for last because it's my favorite part of breakfast) when my roommate walked in looking extremely upset. The conversation went something like this:

Me: Hey

Roommate: ...

Me: What's wrong, are you okay?

Roommate: I tested positive

Me: *immediately covers my nose and mouth with my shirt* what.

Roommate: I tested positive this morning, I just came back from my test.

Me: fuck

And that is the story of how my planned productive day flew out the window and instead I waited in my car for three hours so I could get some rapid testing done. By 10:15 I had arrived at Denton Minor Emergency and walked into a small waiting room with probably fifteen other people. I promptly added my name to the list and then left and sat in my car. While in my car it occurred to me what a judgemental person I am. I was actually grossed out by the amount of people in the waiting room, and silently judging their life choices because I knew that they were likely getting tested for COVID. The irony is not lost on me that I also was there to get tested for COVID.

While waiting in the car my parents and I came up with a plan. If I tested negative, I would go home while my roommate recovered. If I tested positive I would stay in Denton and wait it out. Originally my parents wanted me to come home even if I tested positive (I'm the youngest and the only daughter, which leads to some parental hovering), but I nixed the idea because my dad is a diabetic and I don't think I could function if I ended up passing it to him or my mom.

By 12:45 I decided that I was over waiting in my car and it was time to move to the waiting room. Thankfully the original fifteen people had dwindled down to more like eight and I felt a bit more comfortable there. About five minutes into waiting inside a woman was standing toward the entrance of the waiting room filling out some forms on a table. She started making a really weird noise, it could have been a cough or it could have been crying but her back was facing me and she had a mask on so it was hard to tell. This sound continuously progressed and it became clear that she was in fact crying, yell sobbing almost. It was extremely loud and everyone else in

the waiting room was making eye contact with each other trying to figure out what to do, this went on for several minutes. It is at times like these when you realize how much COVID has affected you in just a few short months. Normally I would actually try and offer this woman some empathy, a tissue at least, instead I stayed right in my chair because I was afraid of getting too close to her. I just waited anxiously for someone in the office to take notice and do something about it. Finally a nurse escorted her to an exam room to finish filling out her forms.

After she left all I could think about was how I know that kind of crying, that is not a normal cry that is a grief cry. And then of course you think about why she might be crying like that, what upset her so much. Did someone she know die of COVID? Is she in here to get tested or is it for another reason? Will this be me in three weeks if I go home and expose my parents to COVID and one of them dies? I am not being dramatic when I say these are the literal thoughts running through my head until a nurse finally calls me to an exam room to be tested.

I liked my nurse, she was very no nonsense. Except for the fact that perhaps the worst part of my day was when I got on the scale for the first time in several months. I make a conscious effort to avoid scales, I know I've gained weight, my general comfort is food, and even worse than that, carbs. The COVID20 is a real thing and I am a testament to that. Which I know is super rapid, I literally am in this waiting room with the possibility of having a life threatening virus and instead I am worried about the fact that I weigh the most I ever had in my life and I've gained ten pounds since March. She finishes gathering the rest of my vitals and takes me into the exam room. I expect her to ask me several questions instead; she just asked why I was there and proceeded to stick a long q-tip up my nose. I'm glad she did it this way, she didn't give me much time to think of the extremely uncomfortable feeling I was about to experience. I was actually tested once before in July (for not near as scary a reason, my extended family was coming together for our annual vacation and we wanted to make sure none of us had the virus before we met). So I knew what to expect and it was still terrible.

The next few minutes until the results almost felt longer than the two and a half hours I waited to get the test, made worse by the fact that I really had to pee. But finally the doctor comes in to give me the news that I was negative! But he ended up telling me it basically meant nothing and I could still get the virus because of how close and extended my exposure was so I need to quarantine for fourteen days. He also advised me not to go to my parents house if I was worried about exposing them. Thus, puncturing the only bright side to this plan that I had.

I love my parents and am grateful that they are worried I would be lonely for the next two weeks since I would essentially be having no human interaction whatsoever. But the conversation in which I told them that I could not come home without the risk of exposing them was an extremely hard sell. My dad tried to convince me to only come home the first week instead of the whole fourteen days, which totally defeats the purpose. But I finally convinced them that I would not be coming home.

The next couple hours I actually ended up accomplishing my goals that I made last night in relation to what I would get done today. I had to deep clean and sanitize my room and all the common areas, so that was nice. By the time I was done my roommate told me to expect a call from UNT telling me what I would have to do. Sure enough shortly after this text, Katie from UNT COVID tracing called me. She told me someone I was in contact with and had long exposure to had tested positive for COVID, I'm sure for HIPPA reasons or something she couldn't tell me the name, but I let her know that I knew who she was referring too and had already gotten tested and was negative and also planning on quarantining for the next fourteen days. Poor, sweet Katie then had the unfortunate job of telling me that this wasn't quite the case. If I was to continue living at my apartment I would have to spend ten days in isolation, and then another fourteen days in quarantine, so 24 days total. At this point I burst out in tears. I had had a stressful day and I had continuously told my roommate, who I know felt bad, that I was fine. In reality I was angry with her for going to frat houses and putting us all in danger. I was angry that I had done everything right and yet still would likely end up getting this virus because of her. So Katie, who was just doing her job had to listen to me cry, while telling her I know it's not her fault and I know she was just doing her job. After telling me that it would be okay and that my feelings were valid (thanks Katie), she said that if I were to go quarantine at my parents house it would cut down my quarantine to fourteen days instead of 24 since I would no longer be around someone who was contagious.

So now I was in between a rock and a hard place. I could either be alone for 24 days (which even for me, a proud introvert, is a lot) or I could potentially risk exposing my parents but have those dates cut down in half. I had come to the conclusion that there was probably a 50/50 chance that I would end up developing COVID. I had figured out that despite us living together I actually hadn't seen or been around my roommate since Monday. However, she started feeling some symptoms on Monday, but assumed they were allergies so didn't get tested (another reason I was frustrated with her, we're in a pandemic it's okay to assume the worst case scenario). Despite all of this, I decided that I would go back to my parents house, and be very strict about my quarantine in my room. So tomorrow I will be driving back home.

Day 2

September 12, 2020

Last night I think I had a minor panic attack. I was trying to fall asleep and my body kept doing these weird convulsions. I think the closest thing I can compare it to is what I imagine a defibrillator feels like. It was a strange experience but I was eventually able to fall asleep.

This morning I woke up at 7:30 and was unable to make myself go back to sleep, so I packed up all of my things and was on the road by 10:00. I made good time and was at my parents house around 1:30. When I got home neither of my parents were there. So I was able to unpack my car and put everything away without the fear of coming in contact with them. Before they got home I sanitized everything that I touched. It feels weird to have to keep track of everything that you've touched so you can make sure you clean it properly later.

It was touching to see the work that my parents put into my area of the house that I would be in so that I could be comfortable. My dad put hand sanitizer and clorox wipes by my bed and also mounted one of our older TV's to my room so that I would be able to watch netflix in my room. My parents house is nice but it is small and for this reason from my bedroom door I can clearly see into the living room where my parents sit. So this is how I spent about thirty minutes talking to them about what we needed from the grocery store.

Eventually we did go sit out in my backyard with me on one end and my parents on the other where we could talk more comfortably. Then I went back to my room and my parents watched football.

Reflecting on the day it just felt really sad. When I come home it is usually a fun experience, because I do go to school at a distance in which it is not possible for me to see my family regularly. Instead it felt very clinical. In a lot of ways I am grateful that my parents are taking this seriously but in other ways I miss life before COVID, when if it was suspected I might have the flu or something I wasn't quarantined to a very small area of the house. I have been tracking symptoms and so far I have no symptoms.

Author's note: I had meant to make this a fourteen day journal but ended up not being very successful due to a depressive episode. For anyone who reads this in the future you should know that I got tested two more times after my first test on day one and remained negative.