

## **I Hope It's Brighter Over There.**

Fear permeated everything.

When classes were moved online, I remember being excited. I look back now and wish I could shake myself. I wish I could scream in my face that this is serious, and it is going to affect you, too. You aren't invincible. Look at the lives this is taking.

As time went on, everything got a lot more difficult. Having everything moved online caused insurmountable stress. Suddenly my bed was to safe place to sleep, but also to attend class, to work "on-campus," to record presentations, to take notes, to eat dinner, and so on. The divide between school and my personal life was nonexistent and my mental health suffered. As someone already fighting with anxiety on a good day, my worry about the health of those around me soared. I was afraid to go home, but all I wanted to do was see my family again. I was afraid to even go grocery shopping, when all we had left was cans of soup and ramen noodles. The push and pull made me dizzy.

I used to think I was someone who lived in the moment. If you would've asked me before, I would've said that I try to stay in the moment and appreciate what I have while I have it.

Now, a year and a half later, I find myself pausing to appreciate that I'm alive and healthy. I try to be a better friend. I push myself and my anxiety to take small risks because I survived.

I don't want to waste a single opportunity.

It's definitely a cliché, but as someone nearing 22, I never thought I'd have to be so concerned about when my life will end. Now that this grim reminder is seared into my brain, there's no way I'll let time slip out of my fingers again.

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For now, maybe it's enough to cross our fingers, pick up the call to say hello to our loved ones, and to hope with everything we have left that things might get better again.

For me, it's enough to know that maybe one day we can peer deep into this dark tragedy, and if we squint our eyes and focus really hard, we might be able to see through to the other side.

Grace Wojkiewicz-Wielgus