

**Interviewee:** Nic Zakrzewski

**Interviewer:** Sarah Phelps

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**Abstract:**

Nic Zakrzewski is from Eau Claire, WI and is a UW Eau Claire student. He also works part time as student custodian at the university. In this interview, he discusses the topics of mental health and his difficulties maintaining family and friend relationships. He also discusses how the transition to online classes has affected his day to day activities. The role of local and federal government in his pandemic experience is also touched upon.

**Sarah Phelps 0:01**

The date is April 24, and the time is 2:47. The total US Coronavirus cases are 31,795,248. The total Wisconsin cases is 594,283. Wisconsin is 31.7% fully vaccinated and 43.9% half vaccinated. Could you please state your name?

**Nic Zakrzewski**

My name is Nic Zakrzewski.

**SP**

Could you give me your race and your gender?

**NZ**

I am white and I am male.

**SP**

Okay, how old are you?

**NZ**

I am 22 years old.

**SP 0:43**

Great. So what are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis like work and school and extracurricular?

**NZ 1:03**

Typically during the week, I work at the university for roughly four hours and followed by coming home and working on schoolwork and attending classes as they come up. I'm pretty much just staying home most of the time.

**SP**

Okay. What is your job?

**NZ**

I am a student custodian.

**SP**

Okay. How long have you been doing that?

**NZ**

Roughly three years.

**SP 1:21**

Okay. Where do you live?

**NZ**

I live in Eau Claire.

**SP**

Okay, so not on campus?

**NZ**

Correct.

**SP**

Okay. Do you live near the campus? Or far away from campus?

**NZ 1:34**

Yes. I live about three blocks from campus.

**SP**

Okay. What is it like to live there?

**NZ**

It's fine. I don't know. Yeah.

**SP**

Okay. Yeah. So you like, like the location?

**NZ 1:51**

Yeah, it's really nice, because I can just walk - walk to campus, walk to school.

**SP**

So when you first learned about COVID, what were your thoughts?

**NZ**

I was really scared,

**SP**

Really?

**NZ**

And yeah, I was - I was panicking. Because my girlfriend at the time I remember, we were supposed to go to a play. And I was like, I don't know. We shouldn't go because like, you know, what if this thing gets really bad, we don't know enough information about it yet. So I really didn't want to go. She really wanted to. So we went anyway, to find out once we were there that it was canceled. Yep. So we just got some food. And she showed me to her town and then we left.

**SP**

Oh, wait. So what month was this in?

**NZ**

This was back in March - back in March.

**SP**

Okay, so what did you think about it in like, January, like when it was starting? Like overseas?

**NZ**

I didn't really think much about it. I was like, oh, we'll probably be fine.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

There's always diseases popping up in other countries. In the US it is mostly fine.

**SP**

So where were you wrong?

**NZ**

Yep.

**SP**

So what issues have concerned you the most about COVID?

**NZ 3:08**

Since then, um, just how rapidly it spreads. I guess. I'm like - I'm really scared to do that. Like, I would get it and spread it to like my grandparents or someone and that would affect them.

Yeah, just like how scary it is that people who contract it, like can spread it and like affect other people, even if it doesn't affect them. That's really scary.

**SP**

So have you had to limit contact with your family?

**NZ 3:33**

Oh, yeah, for sure. I haven't seen my family and like we see each other every so often now because we've been vaccinated.

**SP**

Yay.

**NZ**

But yeah, we-when I first started, I didn't see my parents for probably like three months. So yeah, it was pretty crazy. Yeah.

**SP**

Do you think that affected your relationship with them?

**NZ 3:51**

Um, a little bit? Yeah, we definitely - I would say we're not as close as we used to be. But that's also part of just because I'm not living at home anymore. I'm a full adult now.

**SP 4:02**

So now that everyone's vaccinated, do you plan to see them more often?

**NZ**

I think so. Yeah, yeah.

**SP 4:09**

Yeah, that's good. Let's backpedal to your job.

**NZ**

Sure.

**SP**

So how has COVID affected your - your job?

**NZ**

Um, well, as a custodian, I have to go around the dorm building that I work in, and I have to sand like sanitize surfaces and stuff a lot more now. Because of COVID. And so it's just been a lot of like, wiping down tables and wiping down door handles and and the staircases.

**SP**

Is that even inclusion to your normal tasks? Or is that like, what is that the only thing that you do?

**NZ 5:00**

That is a part of my normal tasks, but we definitely do it a lot more than we used to. Because before it was just for wiping down messes and getting dust off of things, but now it's like disinfecting everything. Yeah. And I know the university has hired more people specifically for disinfecting, like tables and stuff. So I'll see some people sometimes in the building just going on and wiping things. And so that's been good. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. So have you, you say you only work like four hours at a time? Do you work? Like longer? Or would you normally work the same amount?

**NZ**

Um, I think the normal amount of hours was 25. Last year for students. But now that's been cut down to 2020 hours a week. So yeah, I work roughly four hours a day four and a half, and then less on Fridays, but yeah.

**SP 5:41**

Has it changed your employment status at all?

**NZ**

Um, I don't think so. I, when it first started, I wasn't working at all for like the first two months of COVID. I think, Well, no, it was longer than that. It was, I didn't work at all. And then during the - towards the end of summer, I was able to come back and start working again.

**SP**

So you were like, laid off? Or did you just like choose to not -?

**NZ 6:10**

Um, actually, it wasn't that I was laid off. It was like - there was like - yeah, we're not having student workers right now.

**SP**

Really?

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP**

Do you know why that was? Just because they didn't -

**NZ**

I think it was just because they weren't really sure yet. Like the scope of everything.

**SP 6:28**

And so they just want to get everything figured out first, before they had students, like, back on campus working? Was this when people were getting moved out of campus? Like, classes were shutting down?

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP 6:41**

So like, economically, it probably made sense.

**NZ**

Yeah, for sure.

**SP**

Dang. That kind of sucks. So how has the pandemic affected other people's employment, do you know?

**NZ 6:55**

Well I know a lot of people have been, like, laid off. A lot of people who lost their jobs permanently had to find new things. A lot of people were like, put on - remember the term?

**SP**

Like, like, leave like leave?

**NZ**

Yeah, they still had it.

**SP**

Oh, furlough.

**NZ 7:25**

Yeah, for a lot. That's the word. And, or, like, some people still got paid, even though they weren't working, or a lot of people moved to work at home. So, yeah.

**SP 7:28**

So people at, like, at the university working with you - is that generally what happened? Do you know, like, know, a lot of other people that also got laid off?

**NZ**

I know - I know. In the custodial staff, there was a lot of people that, like, were told to leave because they could only have so many people working at a time. And I think that was a financial thing.

**SP 7:50**

Are there a certain amount of people that work for each dorm building? Or is it for the entire staff?

**NZ 7:57**

Typically, it's one custodian per dorm building.

**SP**

Really? That seems like -

**NZ 8:08**

Yeah, yeah some some of the bigger ones like towers have a few or like governors, I think had to at one time. But yeah.

**SP 8:19**

So how has COVID affected you and your family's daily activities? We talked about that a little bit like with your - your mom and dad. So how did - was your parents' employment affected at all?

**NZ:**

Um, yeah, my mom is a music teacher -

**SP**

Nice

**NZ**

At Longfellow Elementary. And she's had to - she's had to adapt to like teaching online and like putting videos online for her students. My stepdad is retired, so he hasn't really been affected too much other than having extra time for his hobbies and stuff.

**SP**

What about your dad?

**NZ**

My dad and my stepmom and my dad is also a custodian. So he was on leave for a while, but then he had to come back. And so yeah, it's just similar to me like being extra cost cautious when I'm working and stuff. My stepmom was retired but then she started working at a store. Yeah.

**SP 9:24**

Did you find that to be more cautious when you come home to try and not spread things from your work?

**NZ**

Yes. At first before, like, all of us were vaccinated, I would see her occasionally like my mom, because she lives in Eau Claire. So we would, like, wear masks when we saw each other and we would always be outside whenever she wanted to bring me some food or like some goodies or something. And we are always really careful. I was really sad that like we couldn't like hug or like be near each other for - for the longest time,

**SP 10:03**

So you have roommates?



**NZ**

Yes. Yes. I have two roommates.

**SP**

Do you worry about how they're doing with their job and bringing things back to the house?

**NZ**

I'm a little bit. Yeah, one of my roommates doesn't work right now but the other one does. And I know that because they work at UPS, which is, you know, they're shipping boxes and packages out, like everywhere. So obviously, they have to have some pretty big precautions in place. So I'm not too worried about that. But yeah.

**SP 10:38**

Do you have to limit like friend contact at all?

**NZ**

Yeah, for sure. We have like a select couple of people that, like, my friends will invite over every so often. But like, for the most part, I think we definitely like - I try to restrict, like, who I'm hanging out with.

**SP 10:58**

And you trust the people that your roommates have over?

**NZ**

Yeah, yeah, I think so.

**SP**

They vet everyone about, like, cleanliness, everything?

**NZ**

Yeah. Yeah.

**SP**

So when you go over to hang out with other friends, do you do that very often?

**NZ 11:25**

Um, I, for the longest time? No, I wouldn't, I would just like my - my best friend, Sam, we would, we would just hang out online, like play video games together. But more recently,

because of, like, the vaccine, and the numbers have been getting better. So we've hung out twice, two or three times now in person and being really safe with that. But yeah, it's been - it's been hard because I haven't been able to see, like, any of my friends. And like, hang out for like a year.

**SP**

So do you worry about who your friends hang out with? And, like, travel?

**NZ 12:00**

Yes, I definitely do. Because my friend Sam is definitely more more conservative, and he doesn't have really any interest in getting the vaccine. And he, like, goes to the skate park a lot and is hanging out with random people. Doesn't like to wear a mask a lot. But, like, I've known him for like most of my life, and he's been a really cool guy. Really good friend. So it's not like I want to just end the friendship or anything. But that's been kind of difficult because we kind of butt heads when it comes to that.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you talk about politics with him like how the government has handled things?

**NZ**

We definitely did. More so when Trump was in office, because he was a Trump supporter, and I was not. But yeah.

**SP**

So how do you think that the government handled it when Trump was in office? How did you feel?

**NZ**

Um, well, when it first started, I think Trump did kind of the bare minimum. And he didn't really care about anything. [Noise in the background] I think that was the fireplace. Okay.

**SP**

I've never heard that sound.

**NZ**

Sorry about that.

**SP**

It's okay. Okay, continue?

**NZ**

Um, yeah, I don't think - I think Trump definitely could have done more. And I think he was much more focused on, like, the media aspect of it. Like he wanted to look good, but he didn't want to do anything about it.

**SP**

Do you remember what you wanted him to do more of?

**NZ**

I remember one thing specifically, I think it was the USPS wanted to send everyone masks. And, like, everyone in the United States, they wanted to send everyone like five masks. And he like, shut that down.

**SP**

Really?

**NZ 13:50**

Yeah. And it was like, wow, that seems like really not good thing to do. Because masks have been known to help with this. And I'm not sure why you would want to shut that down when obviously that's going to help bring more jobs. So yeah, but now that - now that Biden is in office, I think it's definitely getting better. With - with what the government's doing.

**SP**

And do you think anything has, like, changed locally at all? Or like, how do you feel about how Eau Claire has been handling it specifically?

**NZ**

I think Eau Claire has been doing pretty good. As far as I know, because we get weekly updates from the university as far as like, numbers and stuff has been staying pretty steady, hasn't increased much. So that's - that's good. I remember - I guess - I kind of wish that they were doing more as far as enforcing the laws that were put into place and like the restrictions, because I remember I went to a restaurant with my friend during COVID, which obviously probably wasn't very smart. But I went anyway, because I wanted - I wanted wings. [laughter] Yeah, you know, I wanted wings and cheese curds. And so I went to Dooleys. And we got a -

**SP**

Is that a bar?

**NZ 15:00**

Yeah, it's a - it's an Irish pub on Water Street and I ordered some wings and we were sitting down on the second floor. And I remember it started to kind of fill up with people and I'm like, - I'm -I'm not really feeling safe right now, because they were supposed to be operating at like 25% capacity. And they were clearly not like it was almost full. Almost every table up on the second floor was taken. And I was like, this doesn't really feel safe. Because no one was wearing masks and everyone was just talking really loudly and shouting and having a good time. And I'm like - so I just - I was like, "Hey, can I get the check? This isn't safe." I told the waiter. How, like, this is not good.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

And - and then we just left. Yeah.

**SP**

How did they - how did the waiter respond?

**NZ**

He was like, "ah, I don't really know." And then he was like, "I can go talk to the, like, the manager for you." And I'm like, "that's fine. Just give me the check. I'm gonna leave." Yeah, cuz I don't like this.

**SP**

Yeah, that's good that you - that you left though. So do you notice a lot of other bars still staying open?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Like most of the bars on Water Street are like, no restrictions, just partying. And like, I know, like The Pickle has been shut down a couple times because of like, not following restrictions and stuff. But like, they - they say they are and like they're 'Oh, yeah, get a free mask or whatever.' I don't - I've never been there.

**SP**

Right.

**NZ**

Not my kind of place.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

But yeah, it's just - it's kind of sad.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you notice a lot of other like parties happening?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. For sure. Yeah, like, whenever I'm out walking around. I'll see, like, people outside in like, huge groups just partying just playing like beer darts. Or like, just having a good time. And I'm like, that's not - that's not good. No masks,

**SP**

No masks

**NZ**

No, not, not six feet apart that's for sure. Yeah, they might have started off that way. But then as more people come, you know, they fill in the circle and just -

**SP**

Breeding ground for COVID. Yeah. And that would probably affect you at university if everyone - because we can assume that since you live so close to the campus, those people are college students?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. For sure. Yeah. Yeah.

**SP**

It must be really frustrating.

**NZ**

It's very frustrating. And very scary. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. We talked about how some of your friends are more conservative.

**NZ**

Yeah

**SP 17:11**

You buttheads politically a little bit. Like, what do you think your primary sources of news are? And do you think they're different from your friends?

**NZ**

Yeah, I definitely think my friends follow, like, the more conservative news, like Fox, and like, stuff like that. And I'm obviously more liberal, I would say, and I get most of my news from, like, Twitter, just from whatever is trending. And so I just kind of keep it that way. So it's kind of, like unbiased, I would say, more so than just getting it directly from, like, following news people. And because I don't - I don't follow like specific news people. I just go on what's - whatever's trending. And then I look at everything. So I get the kind of the whole. Yeah.

**SP**

So it's like, where do you sit? What's the primary one that you think would - would trend the most for you?

**NZ 18:00**

I'm not sure. Because it kind of depends on what's happening. And who's covering it for us. And that's kind of just what pops up.

**SP**

So it's just like news, like news organizations like, or like CNN or like Time Magazine, things like that?

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP 18:16**

Okay. So, before the pandemic, where did you get most of your news then?

**NZ**

Still Twitter. Pretty much. That's the main place I went to get all of my news and just to see what's going on in the world.

**SP**

Yeah, would you say that's the trend with a lot of your friends that they don't really, like, watch the news?

**NZ 18:36**

Well, I know my - my friend Sam, he doesn't they don't have, like, TV. So they don't watch the news. But he I'm sure he goes to like news sites and just to see or like he, I guess he probably gets most of his information from like Facebook.

**SP**

Oh, yeah?

**NZ 18:56**

I think so. Because he's, he's always on Facebook. And yeah, just not the best place I think for - for news.

**SP**

Yeah. Why not?

**NZ**

Because there's been a lot of controversy about just, like, questionable sources on Facebook and questionable motives behind certain news organizations and leaning different ways and stuff like that.

**SP 19:23**

Yeah. Do you think Facebook does a good job of handling, like, fake news?

**NZ**

I think they do an okay job. I think there could be more done. But there's always going to be those crazy people out there that are just sharing propaganda.

**SP 19:40**

Do you think there's, like, certain things the media is not showing you?

**NZ**

Um, I think maybe on Facebook, they're kind of restricting more. So what's going on but like on Twitter, it's mostly like, people will, they'll see something and if it's trying to be hidden by different, like people, they're going to, like, screenshot it, and they're going to share it and that they're going to try and spread what's going on.

**SP 20:08**

Yeah, like what types of topics?

**NZ**

I'm really happy with, I would say that like, anytime there's, like, a shooting, or police violence or anything like that, like there's been a lot, a lot of that recently. And that's just totally being like, shared and openly like, like, Hey, this is happening, we need to do something about this, which I think is really good.

**SP**

Do you think you're seeing those things more now? Because you have time? Because you're just like, at home more often?

**NZ**

Um, yeah, I'm definitely on Twitter more like seeing what's going on, because I don't have anything to do really, kind of just sitting around waiting for things to not get back to normal, but you know, just kind of mellow out, I guess.

**SP**

Do you see a lot of information like about COVID? On Twitter? Like, I know, on Facebook, sometimes they have those pop ups about like, Oh, this is what the CDC says -

**NZ**

Yeah, um, I think not as much. But definitely, anytime there's like a big event. Like, I got a notification from Twitter the other day that like, most Americans are not eligible to get the vaccine. And that was like a thing that was like, sent straight to me from Twitter. And I thought that was really good. And they - they're, like, offering links about different, like, information on COVID, which is good. And I've seen that too on Facebook, of like, popping up like, Oh, this is like the numbers right now. If you need to get vaccinated. Here's the information for that. Which is good. I think that's - they're doing a good job with that.

**SP**

So do you trust a lot of the information about COVID that you're seeing?

**NZ**

Um, I think so. Yeah. Yeah. Anything that's from the CDC, I trust more so than, like, directly from news people.

**SP**

Yeah. So you don't doubt a lot of what the media says about, like, rates of the virus or things like that?

**NZ**

No, I don't think so.



**SP**

Yeah, that's good. Have you known anybody that's gotten sick?

**NZ**

Yes. My aunt really has gotten COVID. Um, let's see what else my step dad's brother has gotten it. No one in my immediate family.

**SP**

That's good.

**NZ 22:15**

I think my brother's girlfriend had it. So I know people that have - have had it. But I haven't been around anyone that has, which is good.

**SP**

So you haven't had to, like, respond to them being sick as often? Like, you don't have to quarantine?

**NZ**

Right. I haven't. I haven't had a quarantine.

**SP 22:36**

Do you know how they, like, handled it?

**NZ**

Um, I think pretty well. I'm not sure exactly. I haven't really asked my family too much about their situations. But yeah.

**SP**

Is your family pretty like liberal when it comes to the virus when it comes to the virus?

**NZ**

Yeah, yeah. They believe what they're hearing on the news and stuff.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you know any people that had to change their opinions? Because of people they know getting COVID?

**NZ 23:10**

Can you rephrase the question?

**SP**

Like, because some of your family members have gotten sick, were they more, like, conservative leaning? And do you think the virus has affected them personally, that would make them change how they view it?

**NZ**

I don't think so. Yeah, yeah. I mean, they've stayed with their, what they've been thinking, are they taking it more seriously than maybe they were before? I think so. Yeah.

**SP**

Are you taking more seriously now that you know, people that have gotten it?

**NZ**

Yeah, yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Okay. Self isolation. And flattening the curve have been two ideas that have been really big. So how have your like family and friends had to deal with that with, like, self isolation?

**NZ**

Um, well, I know, I try to, like, stay home as much as possible. A lot of my friends are always asking like, hey, let's go bowling. And I'm like, hey, there's a pandemic. Yeah. Let's not, how about. And like, they'll send me videos of them like bowling and like, they won't be wearing masks. And they'll just be having a good time. I'm like, maybe like a year? Maybe. Maybe then.

**SP**

But so they just go without you.

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP**

Wow.

**NZ**

Um, I don't know. I - it's -it's not good. But I can't do anything to stop them. Like I can. I can say "Hey, guys, it's not good," but they're still gonna do it.

**SP**

Yeah. So even if you, like, sent them news articles, they probably wouldn't listen to you.

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Cuz they'd be like, "Oh, well, that's just, you know, that, that's just fake news."

**SP 24:43**

So you've had the vaccine. Have you roommates had the vaccine?

**NZ**

Yes, we are and all now. One's had at least one shot of the vaccine, I think. Yep. My one of my roommates has had two and the other one has gotten the first one now. I had the the one that only requires one

**SP 25:00**

Johnson Johnson.

**NZ**

Yeah, so I've got the Johnson Johnson, which I just found out today is actually being - they stopped the [ ], because it was paused for a while. Yeah, cuz they - there was like, six cases, I think, of women who were getting blood clots. So they just have issued a warning, like, hey, very, very rare chance of women under 50 giving them a blood clot. But now that they've they've resumed using that one today, so, yeah, so that's good.

**SP**

So it doesn't worry you that that's the one that you got?

**NZ**

Not really.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you know any other people that have gotten the Johnson and Johnson?

**NZ**

Um, yes, my ex got it. And as far as I know, she's been fine with it. Um, I - it's been almost a month now. Since I've gotten it, which is it's - I feel fine. So I'm not really worried about that. Yeah.

**SP**

So you didn't have any, like side effects or anything?

**NZ**

No. Yeah. No, just besides sore arm the next two days after it was I was fine. Yeah.

**SP**

Um, do you know which one your parents got?

**NZ**

Um, I don't know. I don't know, it wasn't the Johnson Johnson one, though. Or only

**SP**

Pfizer?

**NZ**

I guess. Yeah. It's either Pfizer or Moderna.

**SP**

So do you think the pause of the Johnson and Johnson has made people who are already less likely to get the vaccine even more so?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I - yes. Because when I asked my friend Sam to get the vaccine, he - one of the first things he said was, "Oh, well, they - they put the - put a hold on that other one. So. So that means that must mean that the other ones are not good, either."

**SP**

Wow.

**NZ**

Yeah. And I was like, that's totally not the truth. And like, that was so it's such a rare thing. Also, it's for women that got it, you should still get a vaccine. Right?

**SP**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So do you think that the media, like even more conservative media's are gonna latch on to that?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah, for sure. They'll - they'll attack in any way that they can honestly. Yeah.

**SP 27:07**

Um, so what was your experience getting access to the vaccine? Since you are working? When did you get yours?

**NZ**

Um, yeah. So because I was working at the university, I was able to get the vaccine about a month earlier than the other students at the college.

**SP**

Really?

**NZ**

Yep. Yeah, cuz most of the students got it now in April. And I got it back in March. So that was really good. The university made it - made it really clear about sending us emails about hey, it's available, sign up for it. And so I did that as soon as possible. And I was able to get vaccinated pretty quickly, which is good.

**SP**

And you didn't want one with two shots since you want to go Johnson?

**NZ**

Yeah, I had the opportunity to get the one with two shots. But then I got an email pretty quick after that one that said, Oh, this one's only one. One shot. I did some research and found that was it, pretty much. They're both like, really effective. And I decided to get the one shot just because it was easier. And it was also on campus that I can get that shot, versus I would have had to drive to someplace else to get the other one.

**SP 28:23**

So you think it's as easy for you to access as other people?

**NZ**

Yeah, yeah. Yep. And now with the - the vaccine clinic on campus is accepting lock in. So it's definitely much more accessible than it was, which is really good. Yeah.

**SP**

Have you found that the - I don't know what I'm saying, I'm sorry. Like, campus hasn't changed, like the environment of campus. Now that there's vaccines and there's antigen tests going on?

**NZ**

Yeah, I think so. I think it's a little more relaxed than it was. Like, I'll see more people hanging out together, outside. Obviously, more, more and more parties are happening outside as well.

**SP 29:06**

Yeah. Do you think it's a good thing?

**NZ**

I think it's a good thing that people are getting vaccinated. I don't think it's a good thing that people are still hanging out while it's still happening, though. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. So do you have in person classes?

**NZ**

Um, I have one in person class. Just one, just one on Mondays?

**SP**

Does it - do you go, like, multiple times a week? Or is it, like, an every other?

**NZ**

No, it's just like once a week on Mondays. Like 3:30 to 6:15. So it's a pretty big chunk of time, just in there with like, 15 other people.

**SP**

Yeah. So how does in person class work during a pandemic?

**NZ**

Well, we have to sit like six feet apart. We can't hand anything in on paper. It's all electronic. There was a period - of period of time where my laptop had broken and I had to go to class anyway, and just, like, write things down on - in a notebook. And there was one time when my professor had to give a quiz, and it's online. And it was when laptop was broken. And she was like, "Oh, just write it down on a piece of paper, and then turn it into me." And I'm like, that's kind of weird, because we're not supposed to do that. Yeah. So I just didn't.

**SP**

So you just didn't turn in?

**NZ**

And it was also partially because I hadn't done the reading for that. But I just didn't turn it in. And then my professor was like, "Hey, I didn't get that thing from you." I was like, "Yeah, I didn't do it." So she's like, "okay, I'll just mark you down for that, then."

**SP**

So you got a zero on it?

**NZ**

I got a zero on that. But I'm doing okay. In the class, I'm pretty confident.

**SP**

So you couldn't just, like, do it late?

**NZ**

No. Because it's like, it was like a check in like to make sure we're doing the readings-

**SP**

Which you didn't

**NZ**

Which I didn't, for that day. Okay.

**SP**

Do you think she should have let you have - since your laptop is broken - either let you take the class at home? Or do your quiz the next day since you're not supposed to hand in papers?

**NZ**

I think she should have been more aware of that. But I think it's fair to ask like for, because I had to have that reading done. And I didn't so I think that's fair.

**SP**

Yeah, that's fair. Do you find that school's a lot different? Because of the pandemic? Just in general?

**NZ**

Yes, definitely. Um, it's been very interesting, very difficult and very anxiety filled, trying to, like, balance class, being online all the time. And, and being home all the time doing homework, and, and trying to figure out, Okay, I have to do class, and then I can relax a little bit. And then I have to do homework, versus like, just go into class. Don't not even worry about it. Like doing homework on campus, I usually do homework in the library. And I come home when it's like, Okay, it's time to relax. Whereas like, now - it's like there's no set time like to relax or to do homework. It's all mixed together. And that's been really, really hard to get used to.

**SP**

Yeah. So you like the separation of this is my home time? And this is my time?

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP**

So how do you balance the focus of doing your work at home?

**NZ**

I have found that writing things down and making a plan for every day has been really useful.

**SP 32:25**

Yeah. So would you say it's been one of the biggest challenges for balancing school is like, having to do things at home? What do you prefer? A normal like in person semester?

**NZ**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting. It's been, it's been interesting, because this is, I'm going to be graduating in May. And it's - this has been very interesting and trying to figure out how to do this. The past two semesters, though, I've done a lot better. Because of, like, I've had to be more attentive in class and had to kind of pick up the slack that has been happening, and, and I had to just, like, really kick it into high gear, and my grades have not suffered because of that, actually, which has been good. Yeah.

**SP**

So other than, like, the self motivation, like how do you deal with just doing all my like, what do you not like about in person classes?

**NZ**

Um, I don't like the fact that we have to, like, attend classes online. I - it's - it's really hard when a professor expects us to attend class, and we have to make sure that we have, like, a good Wi Fi signal. And we have to rely on it. And we have to, like, we're supposed to be attentive the whole time when we're just supposed to like watching a screen. And it's, it's really hard to maintain focus, when like, there's a lot of distractions going on.

**SP 33:51**

So there's a lot of home distractions?

**NZ**

Yeah, I would say there's, like, there's a lot of distractions, and also like temptations, like with, because most of the time in my classes, like we don't have to have our cameras turned on. So I



can easily just like, look at my phone and, and play games, or like, I'll do other things like I'll do other homework for classes. And I know a lot of other students are doing the same thing. I did a project very similar to this one. And I interviewed students and that has been the trend definitely. Students are very distracted and, and doing other things for classes, because they know that, "Oh, this is being recorded. I can always watch the lecture later." Even if they don't do that. It's like the temptation is there to, like, do other things because the teacher isn't there with you, making sure that you're paying attention or making sure that you're engaged.

**SP 34:44**

Yeah. And you said that your laptop broke. Do you think it's harder for students that have financial adversity?

**NZ**

Oh, yeah. To be attentive in, like, online classes? Yeah, definitely. Definitely. It was interesting because last year when this first started, students that were, like, having financial struggle could apply for a grant from the university, which I did, because I was - I wasn't working at the time, and I had found it hard to pay for rent, and hard to pay for, like groceries. And you could apply for, like, if you needed to buy a laptop, you could apply for money from - from the university. And so you can get a laptop, which was really good. But for students that can't have a job right now or are like, like immunocompromised, and can't let go out at all. I think it's really hard for them.

**SP**

Yeah, so there's no, are there library resources now that are available?

**NZ**

Um, as far as I know, there was - we got sent another like - like, grant thing through the university. That was called like, a month ago, I want to say something like that. Which is really nice. But now, not that I know of nothing that you can like, apply for.

**SP**

Yeah. Is that - are the campus things still open? Like all the buildings?

**NZ**

Um, yes, but limitedly? I think, um, I haven't been to the library, but I think it is open. I used to, like, for group projects, we used to get like the little side like, rooms to like, do projects and things, but I don't know if they're open or not? I don't think so. So, yeah.

**SP**

You haven't, like, utilized the library to help you focus?

**NZ**

Yes, that and also, it's like, anytime I would need to, like do homework or anything, I would have to walk to the library. I'm not already on campus because of classes. So I find it easier to just stay here at home and do - do things. And then also, like, if I have class? I could, I would have to, like find a quiet place. And not like because like, obviously, in the library. You can't like attend class there. Because you have to be talking or like, have headphones in at least I guess. And it would be harder to like, attend class. I would usually, like, be on the fifth floor of the library, which is like the quietest one like you're not supposed to talk at all if they're. So obviously I couldn't attend class up there or anything. So yeah, it's been, I just haven't gone to the library at all. As far as other buildings. Most I want to say most of the ones on lower campus are just open. I know the food pantry is still open, because I go to that every week, which has been really nice. That's been helping. I know a lot more students have been using that because of the pandemic, which has been a good resource. The dorm buildings I know are more restrictive with, like, having guests over. But things are definitely getting more relaxed now because of the vaccines and things are getting better.

**SP 37:59**

How do you think your mental health has been because of the virus? This can go all the way back to even March.

**NZ**

Yeah, um, it's definitely been affected. It's been really hard trying to cope with all of this. And really difficult at times, because it's been so scary. And like, I've had nights where I'm worrying about like, oh, "what if my grandparents Get it? And they die?"

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

And I don't I don't get to say goodbye to them. Like, that's really scary.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

Or like my parents even, you know, my dad is - he has like asthma, and he's, like overweight, and he so - he's in that high risk category. And just the fact that I haven't been able to see him in a long time is really scary. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you think that goes for other people in your friend group? Or do you think maybe they're a little more lax, because -

**NZ**

I think they're a little more lax. Definitely. Because they think it's just not a big deal. Yeah. And that's really scary.

**SP**

Is that frustrating?

**NZ**

Yes.

**SP**

Yeah. What about your physical health?

**NZ 39:04**

Yeah, I have definitely put on some weight in the pandemic, because I haven't been going out as much. It's been a little better now because you know, it's starting to warm up. I can - will go for walks now. That's been really fun. But yeah, it definitely has impacted just because I'm home more, I don't have anything to do so I just sit here and munch on snacks. (laughter) And, and, you know, I don't do a lot. I know, work has definitely helped me because I'm always running around at work and walking up flights of stairs, which has been good. That's helped me maintain my physical health and, and things as far as getting sick at all? I've gotten sick one time in the past year. Not COVID because I got tested, but it's - yeah, it's been okay.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

I definitely think the - the wearing a mask everywhere has helped - helped that. Because I've been wearing a mask. I haven't been getting sick as much as I would have, I think.

**SP**

Yeah. So that's the [unintelligible] and stuff. Do you have any other recreational activities that have been stunted because of COVID?

**NZ**

Um, yeah, I used to like riding my bike a lot more. And I don't do that as much now, just because I don't want to go out and like, have an interaction with someone. It's not super common when riding a bike i guess, but it's still affected me because I don't wanna go out

**SP**

Would you wear a mask if you rode a bike?

**NK**

Yea? I think so?

**SP**

Does that deter you from wanting to do it because it can be kind of uncomfortable?

**NZ**

Yeah, I think so. I've definitely had - I've gone on my bike a few times and there were times when I didn't wear a mask and there were times when I did. It hasn't been huge deterrent I guess, it's just kind of finding the motivation to go on a bike ride has been hard because "aw i could go on a bike ride or I could stay inside and watch netflix for 3 hours, that'd be really nice too"

**SP**

Is that what the majority of your like home time consists of when you're not doing homework?

**NZ**

Yeah, it's been a lot of, like, staying at home, sitting in bed, sitting at my desk watching Netflix. I've gotten back into reading books, which has been really nice. So that's been a positive I guess of having a lot of time. But yeah, just playing video games and - and doing things online.

**SP**

Yeah. What kind of games do you play?

**NZ**

Well, I have a Nintendo Switch. So I've been playing a lot, a lot of Mario Kart, a lot of Super Smash Bros. I play with my brothers every once in a while, which has been really nice. We've, we have, like, game nights, some weekends. So that's been a good way to, like, keep in touch with them without actually going to see them. So that's been really nice.

**SP**

And do they live far away?

**NZ**

Yeah, one lives down by Madison. So obviously I can't go see him. And then one lives in Chippewa Falls. So not so not not as far away but not close enough to like to go and see. Yeah.

**SP**

Has your relationship with your siblings been impacted?

**NZ**

Yeah, definitely. Because I used to, like, go and see my older brother, Ben. And we'd go, like, see, because he's got three little girls now. Three hours, and we used to like, go and hang out with them. And we just haven't because it's been so scary. And like, we don't want to risk anything. We don't want to spread anything.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

So yeah.

**SP**

Do you think the information of, like, not knowing who COVID can affect affects that too?

**NZ**

Yeah, I think so. I think that, like, combined with the idea of, you can have COVID and you don't even know it. Like you be asymptomatic and you can spread it without you even having any symptoms. That's really scary. And that's affected me, for sure.

**SP**

What has been the biggest challenge for you since COVID? started?

**NZ**

I think just trying to maintain, like, a steady schedule and, like, life has been really hard because every day is just, you wake up, go to work, come back and do the same thing every day. But, like, it's so hard to balance what's going on because I don't have that of like, okay, I go to work. I go to class. I come back and I relax. It's not that. It's - I get to work, I come back, I relax and I do homework and I do class and it's all jumbled together. And it's really hard to maintain everything.

**SP**

Yeah. It's hard to motivate to do all those things.

**NZ**

Definitely. Yeah. It's - sometimes I wake up and I just don't want to do anything for the day. And it's really hard to get out of bed sometimes. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Do you have things that you try and look forward to? Like on weekends? Or like holidays or anything?

**NZ**

Yeah, yeah, I think I'm like, looking forward to the weekend and getting to sleep in and relax and just do whatever I want and not have to worry about my class or work has is really nice. It's a good way to like, help me maintain my - my mental health and keep - keep things happy and, and stuff.

**SP**

I know you had a birthday recently. How did you deal with that versus how you dealt with it last year? Because it has been a year since it started - your birthday still in the quarantine?

**NZ**

Yeah, this is - this was my second birthday in quarantine. So it's been really interesting. I turned 21 last year. So I didn't get to, like go up to the bar with friends and celebrate or anything. And that was I didn't really care too much. But a lot of people were like, oh, wow, it must have been really weird to turn 21 during the pandemic, and it was for a little bit. And this year, it was - it was still fun. Like, you know, I hung out with my girlfriend. (Laughter) Which is you.

**SP**

Yes. (Laughter)

**NZ**

And like my roommates, we just had a good time. But yeah, it was - it's, it's been difficult because like, usually for my birthday, we'll, like, go out to a restaurant and celebrate. But I haven't, like, done that in a long time in a long time.

**SP**

So what did you do last year for your birthday?

**NZ**

Last year, it was very similar. I just stayed home. And we played games with my roommates, and kind of just stayed home and like, celebrated here. So yeah.

**SP**

Where are you most excited to go? When you feel it's safe to do so?

**NZ**

That's a good question. I haven't really thought about it, honestly. Um, I think like being able to just go back to, like, restaurants and the movies, and just places with other people and not having to worry about COVID or like spreading something that can possibly kill someone. I think that will be a burden lifted, for sure. And it'll be great to get back to doing that. Not that I would, you know, go to the movies a lot, but it's definitely something I've missed. Because I haven't gone in such a long time.

**SP**

It's just an option.

**NZ**

Yeah, I want to have - Yeah, definitely having those - those options of like, doing that or like even just seeing my friends and hanging out with them and like other people. I think it'll be really fun. But yeah.

**SP**

Do you find that you're more hyper aware of safety regulations when you? Like if your friends pitch you to, like, go bowling alley? Like, are you like, "Oh, do they have this? And this and this?"

**NZ**

I think so. Yeah. I'm like, I've been to a few restaurants since the pandemic. And I always make sure like, we go to someplace that has regulations set in place, like, oh, we're set we're seated and you know, far enough away from other people. And like, all the people are all the way waiters. And waitresses are like wearing masks. And like, everything is safe and sanitized. And - and like, you know, look that up online and make sure places are good. Yeah, definitely is, has made me more aware. It's also very scary, like anytime I go to the store, and I see people that aren't following those regulations, and you just see people like, like - We were in Target the other day, and we saw a family without masks on. And it's like, wow, those people just don't care. And that's really scary.

**SP**

Do you think that awareness will go away once like, if like, the government was like, "okay, we don't have a mask mandate. We don't have these things in place." Do you think that awareness would just go away?

**NZ**

I think part of it will. I think a lot of people just be like, oh, we're back to normal now. Like, we don't have to wear masks. But I think definitely it'll start to be more of the norm to start wearing a mask once if you're, like, sick. Because I know, like, in Japan, I think a lot of people wore masks there if they're, if they have any symptoms or if they're starting to feel sick or anything. It's really common for them to wear masks. I think it will start to be kind of similar here. Just because we've got I'm used to it and it's like, oh, this is the norm now.

**SP**

Would you -Would you take that option to wear masks?

**NZ**

I think so. Yeah, I definitely would just to help not spread things. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Are there benefits to wearing a mask other than sickness for you?

**NZ**

Um, I mean, I guess. I mean, I've got some pretty cool masks. (Laughter) Helps me look pretty cool. Sometimes. Um, there have been a few times when I've gotten things, like, shouted at me because I'm wearing a mask.

**SP**

Really?

**NZ**

Yeah. There have been a few times when I've been walking to work. And some people just lean out the window and just yell at me and literally, like, yell at obscenities because I'm wearing a mask. And like, they're clearly not.

**SP**

Wow.

**NZ**

Which is just crazy.

**SP**

How often does that happen?



**NZ**

That's happened twice. Now. I -

**SP**

Really?

**NZ**

Yeah.

**SP**

Like how long ago or like, since the - since March since lockdown?

**NZ**

Well it happened probably once, maybe two months ago? And once maybe a month and a half ago. So pretty close together. Yeah. But more recently, yeah.

**SP**

Why do you think they would do that at all?

**NZ**

Because probably just because they're like anti maskers. And people that don't believe in any of this stuff that's going on and don't care. And think anyone that is trying to like stop stuff, or like trying to be safe is being really stupid. And they're like, "oh, you're dumb. So I'm gonna yell at you and - and curse you for - for, like, doing that."

**SP**

Does that discourage you from wearing a mask?

**NZ**

No, definitely not. It makes me want to wear a mask more.

**SP**

Yeah.

**NZ**

Because I'm like, why? No, I'm being safe right now. And you're not. So?

**SP**

Yeah, that's good. Has your experience with COVID transformed how you think about your family or your friends?

**NZ**

What do you mean 'think about'?

**SP**

Like, how you think about interactions with your family? Or like, with your friends, like going out in groups?

**NZ**

Yeah, I haven't really gone out as a group with my friends or my family, like really at all. I've had a few times where we'd go over to my family for dinner. Or like, we went in, we celebrated. What was it? I guess it was my birthday. We went and celebrated that with my family at their house. But besides that, I haven't really, I went to my friend's house a couple times, like I mentioned, to hang out. But we haven't really gone anywhere together. Other than like, I mean, me and my friend Sam, we would go for a walk sometimes in Eau Claire. But we would never really go anywhere.

**SP**

Yeah. What about just in the community?

**NZ**

You mean?

**SP**

Like, how do you think about Eau Claire and how its dealt with pandemic, and like how your experiences have related to that,

**NZ**

I think the community is doing pretty well. It's obviously kind of split with people that are like trying to be safe with people that don't care. And they're going to do whatever they want anyways. And it's definitely helped to show what kind of people exist in the world. And like, what kind of people exist even in our like, community thing. It's, oh, it's not a big deal. Like, we don't have any, like crazy people here. But then you see what's going on? It's like, wow, there's a lot more people in the world that are like, against things. And like, COVID, and like wearing a mask, and like people that don't care about other people. And it's like, wow, that's crazy.

**SP**

Yeah. So you think it's really divided?

**NZ**

I think so. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Knowing what you know, now, and - what do you think about individuals or communities or, like what the government needs to keep in mind for the future?

**NZ**

I think it's important to keep in mind that, like, what has happened, and like what we need to do in the future, so this doesn't happen again. I think it's important to remember to wear a mask, if you're feeling sick, and not to leave your house. If you're feeling sick, like, obviously, you need to, but if you don't need to, if you don't need to go somewhere, then don't, at least during a pandemic, or you know. But it's important to remember how this has affected us and how this has been spread out so much more than as needed to be like if we would have shut down the US completely for like, a month or two, when this first started, we'd be fine. Like there are countries that are doing much better than the US, because they did that. They followed protocols, people listened to the government and they followed the ideas that the CDC like put out. And the reports and they've - they've followed everything in there. They're like, just completely fine. No one's wearing a mask like in other countries and they're like out partying because they don't have - their borders are closed so they're - they don't have to worry about COVID coming in. Or like people that do come in obviously have to quarantine for two weeks before they do anything. So yeah, I think if we would have done that in the first place, it would have been much better and a lot less people would have died. Yeah.

**SP**

Yeah. Well, I think that will wrap it up. Thank you for answering all of my questions. You did - You did great. You did wonderful.

**NZ**

Thank you.

**SP**

And that will be it.

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