

Transcript

Interviewee: Emma Court

Interviewer: Katie Johnson

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Abstract

Emma Court was born in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin and now attends the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. As a third year Healthcare Administration major, Emma has been working in a nursing home since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this interview, Emma discusses how the pandemic has affected her family, her job, and her academics. She explains how hybrid and online college courses have impacted her experience in the last year of classes before her internship. Emma talks about her initial worries about COVID-19, how her personal relationships have changed, and the broad impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health. Emma also describes her experience with masks and vaccines in both Eau Claire and Oconomowoc.

Katie Johnson 0:02

Hello, my name is Katie Johnson. The date is April 22, 2021. And it is 10:33am, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. There has been 31,602,676 confirmed COVID cases in the US as of today. There has also been 565,613 deaths in the US. In Wisconsin, there have been 592,262 confirmed cases and a total of 6,721 deaths. In the US today 216 million vaccines have been administered with 87,592,646 people fully vaccinated, which is 26.4 of the total population. 40.5% of the US population has had at least one dose. In Wisconsin, 30% of the population has been vaccinated.

Emma Court 0:55

Wow.

KJ 0:57

So what is your name? And can you share some demographic information about yourself?

EC 1:02

Alright, my name is Emma Court. I'm 20 years old, about to be 21. I'm from originally from Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. I go here at school at UW Eau Claire.

KJ 1:18

Awesome. So what are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis?

EC 1:23

Day to day, I go to class, go to work. That's pretty much it.

KJ 1:31

Do you want to explain what your job is.?

EC 1:34

Yeah, so I work at in assisted living homes which they also have independent living in memory. And there's a Memory Care Center. So I'm a dining assistant. We recently opened up our kitchen again. So now we can actually see the residents instead of just delivering their food.

KJ 1:54

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

EC 2:01

My initial reaction was that it wasn't serious. It was kind of just this thing in China and hearing some news stories about it. But I think no one in the US knew what was going to be as big as it was going to be. Like when the school, you know, sent everyone home and everything went online. It was kind of like, Oh, we get an extra spring break? I think it wasn't till the summer when, you know, things kind of gets more serious, and the death rose.

KJ 2:34

Yeah, yeah. What are your thoughts about it now, a year in?

EC 2:40

I think now- You know, it was- No, it was pretty traumatic for a lot of people. I think I think there's a lot of loss. And now, now, I feel like we're almost nearing the end, it seems like it seems like things are slowly getting better, you know, restaurants are opening. You know, at my work, residents can see each other again. And so now I feel like we're just recovering from that past year and trying to figure it out.

KJ 3:18

Yeah, absolutely. What issues have most concerned you about COVID-19?

EC 3:25

I think everyone's mental health. I think it's really taken a toll. You know, especially, you know, in the industry I work in, or I'm going to be working in senior care. I think it's important to, you know, their precautions were necessary because we didn't know much about it. And now we're slowly learning more. And now just, yeah, just the mental health aspect, being alone in isolation. I think that has a big toll on people.

KJ 3:58

Do you think school has positively or negatively impacted people's mental health?

EC 4:05

I think, I think in a way, like for me, it gave me structure. Like, I know, like, last semester, we were fully online. And I think if I didn't have my classes in the morning, and so, but then also the flip side of that, you know, it's stressful. And we key in- it almost seems like we're just trying to get through it. So I think there's pros and cons, I think, you know, the university is, you know, opening up pretty much now. And, you know, without a- we didn't have a spring break this semester. And that took a big mental toll on everyone. So, I think there has to be a balance like I think it's personally helped me with some structure in my life, but it's definitely stressful.

KJ 5:01

How has COVID affected your job?

EC 5:04

My job? Definitely a lot. You know, at the start of the pandemic, I was working at a different assisted living home near my parents. And that was my first experience working in an assisted living home. And there is so much like uncertainty about what COVID was. And so now we had to wear masks, but there wasn't really, you know, like, we don't, we still don't know too much

about how to spread and that kind of thing. But yeah, my job changed a ton, like where I work now. We were pretty much just delivering meals to the residents room every single day. And now like, within the past month, my job has completely changed. We're so our dining room is like restaurant style. So I'm pretty much just a waitress. And so that's changed my job completely. Because, you know, I don't have any experience being a waitress. I can deliver it to the rooms.

KJ 6:04

Yeah. Thrown in at the deep end. How has COVID impacted the employment of people that you know?

EC 6:13

Oh, I know my parents. They they're still working from home. My mom has always worked from home majority, but my dad has been working at home. I don't- I know you lost your job.

KJ 6:33

Yeah.

EC 6:34

At the Pablo Center, right? Yeah, I think, I don't know. I don't make personal connections with people who lost, you know, their full time job or anything like that. I know my sister is in a master's program. So she's kind of struggling to get a job.

KJ 6:57

How has COVID affected your family, going off your sister, and your parents?

EC 7:01

My family, yeah. No, I was talking to my sister yesterday. She was saying that her boyfriend's life has not changed at all. He just goes to work and comes back home. But I think it's definitely affected people a lot more than that guy. Yeah, my sister. I think she's- so she's in the master's program at UW Milwaukee. And so she- her- all her classes were online. She had an accounting internship, that was fully online. I think a lot of things are moving to this towards online. And then I know my sister loves to travel. She hasn't been able to do that. And that's a big thing. I think my brother was, you know, he was kind of one of those frontline workers. You know, not really frontline, but he, he works on robot robots or whatever. And like packaging, like hand sanitizer.

KJ 8:05

Oh, wow.

EC 8:05

So that was like one of his jobs, though, you know, he was like, in the middle of pandemic, just helping companies, you know, increase.

KJ 8:17

A lot of hand sanitizer sold in the last year.

EC 8:22

I don't know, my brother's in the middle of planning a wedding. So that's been interesting.

KJ 8:29

Did they have to push it back or change it at all?

EC 8:32

They, they didn't have to push it back. But they like- they knew that you know, everyone's a wedding is getting pushed back. So their wedding, it's like in two years because they're waiting so long.

KJ 8:43

It's a long time.

EC 8:46

Yeah.

KJ 8:49

How has COVID affected your association and communication with your friends and family?

EC 8:58

I think it- Like definitely at the start. It was very isolating, you know, it was hard to make new friends, still struggling with that. So I think that was difficult. I think technology was a huge lifesaver in a way. Like I was able to reconnect with some high school friends because of zoom calls and online games and stuff like that, which I think without that a lot of people would suffered a lot more in isolation.

KJ 9:33

So going off that, how have your thoughts or opinions about social media shaped for better or for worse over the last year?

EC 9:46

Oh.

KJ 9:46

Oh, I think we're being too still. There we go.

EC 9:51

There we go. Okay. What was your question?

KJ 9:55

How have your thoughts or opinions about social media chain are good or bad in the last year?

EC 10:00

Yeah, I think- I think it- Yeah, I have some pros and cons to it. I think if your life is consumed by social media, that's bad. And it was kind of the only the contact some of us have like, if you've lived alone you were using social media to see what's going on in the world. Yeah.

KJ 10:30

What have you done for recreation during COVID-19? To get out of the house and do different things.

EC 10:38

Yeah, this summer, I got pretty into biking. When I moved back to Eau Claire, at the end of the summer, I got into biking. There's a ton of trails in the area. And that was a really good thing just to get out the house. And something you can do you by yourself. Yeah, we made sure- Definitely watching a lot of Netflix shows and yeah.

KJ 11:03

There's a lot on there.

EC 11:04

Yeah.

KJ 11:07

How has the outbreak affected your community either here at school, in Eau Claire, or back home?

EC 11:13

I think- Well I think- Eau Claire I think has taken all the precautions a little more serious than my hometown. You know, like when I went home, like, last semester, you know, I saw people not wearing masks. Just stuff like that. I think it's been hard to just like, get people together. I think that's been difficult.

KJ 11:48

How are those around you responding to the COVID pandemic?

EC 11:53

I think, you know, my friends and coworkers have taken it pretty serious. I think it's just been a hard time on everyone. Everyone's struggling a little bit. And, you know, this past year has been like a blur. Like, we've talked about, like what even happened last year? And so I think that's been hard. Yeah, I think with my coworkers, I think we were lucky enough to get the vaccine. So that was kind of like a bright moment. You know, it's kind of like, Okay, well, things are getting better. Like this is a step forward. Because for a long time, you know, it was just, it was just hard. Yeah.

KJ 12:38

Yeah, absolutely. Um, have you seen those around you change your opinions, day to day activities, or relationships directly due to COVID-19?

EC 12:47

I think a little bit. I think it's definitely divided some people. Yeah. You know, some people take it a little more seriously. Some people don't. And some people are, you know, very opinionated about it. Which has divided people. Um, what was the question?

KJ 13:14

Have you seen those around you change their opinions, day to day activities, or relationships? Due to Covid.

EC 13:19

Yeah, I think yeah. I have seen that. Yeah, I think people are spending a lot more time at home. And just spent... Yeah, I think, like, I have a closer group of friends now, I think, than I did a year ago, just because, you know, can't have those other like acquaintances, and yeah, just being precautions. About that.

KJ 13:43

I know, like, at the beginning of last year, there was like, a bunch of hobbies, like sourdough bread and all that stuff. Did you pick up anything like that? Or try any of those, trends or fads or anything?

EC 13:54

I think, I think I did get into the sourdough thing for a little bit when I lived at home.

KJ 14:01

Yeah, there was so much.

EC 14:02

Yeah, like trying like, tik tok recipes. Yeah, stuff like that. Yeah, there's a lot of random activities going on. Yeah.

KJ 14:11

Yeah, just to fill some time.

EC 14:13

Yeah.

KJ 14:15

So what were your thoughts and feelings when I told you that I had contacted or contracted COVID-19 after spending three days in a row hanging out with you and your roommate?

EC 14:27

I definitely was nervous. I feel like it was- I feel like it wasn't like a surprise. I feel like everyone knew someone who had in contact. So I was like, okay, it's kind of bound to happen, no matter how precautious you were, in a way? But yeah, I was definitely nervous. I think, you know- I was, you know, I was worried about my work too.

KJ 14:51

Yeah, yeah, so was I.

EC 14:52

You know, like I was calling my managers like three times to see if I can come into work or not. Because it was just so unclear, like all those regulations. Yeah, so it's definitely nerve wracking. But I didn't get COVID, so.

KJ 15:10

I kind of already asked this, but in what ways do you think COVID is affecting people's mental and physical health?

EC 15:19

I feel, physical health? I think I feel like people are being a little more active outside, you know, you can't do so much things indoors anymore. You know, and as the weather gets nicer, definitely, people are hanging out outside more. I think like, in the middle of winter, when we couldn't go inside, couldn't really be outside without being freezing. I think that definitely impacted people's physical health. Just like, kind of sitting around all day. But- but also on the

other side, like, I know, people were like, I'm gonna start working out every single day till the pandemic is over. I don't, I don't know where those people are now.

KJ 16:08

Yeah, that's a lofty goal. Has COVID impacted your opinions on school in any way, positively or negatively?

EC 16:21

School? I think maybe a little bit negatively, because you definitely don't get as much as you can through computer screen and through all these zoom classes. And so that's definitely been, I don't think, the best way to learn. Now, I think for some people would have been smart to take some time off school, and just focus on yourself, you know, not have to deal with that. I know for like my program next year, I'll be doing an internship at a skilled nursing home. So you know, I was kind of already on that path. So I kind of had to stick with school. But I think Yeah, definitely. I don't think zoom classes are for everyone. I think a lot of people struggled with that.

KJ 17:08

Yeah, absolutely. Being in healthcare administration, do you think that doing classes online has negatively impacted how you're learning what you need to learn for your job?

EC 17:22

I would say yeah, I think definitely don't get as much information. But also, you know, this past year has definitely shaped what I'm learning in my classes, like there's a giant focus on infection control. Now, more than ever since- You know, I think about the current students out on internship right now, you know, their last semester was fully online, and then they kind of just got thrown into a skilled nursing home going through, you know, one of the worst things. But it's also a learning experience, I think. You know, our professors have told us, like, you know, since you've had this experience, like, you'll be so set up in the future, for that. But then, like, just the lectures and stuff, you know, you don't get much out of it.

KJ 18:15

Yeah, absolutely. What have been your personal experiences with your online classes? Like with professors, with technology issues, anything like that?

EC 18:26

Yeah. I think definitely that some professors are better than others at teaching online. I think when I think the best professors are the ones that like use some interactive tools, yeah. Instead of ones like just turn on their webcam and start like, lecturing. Definitely hard to pay attention to. So it's definitely- Yeah, it's hard.

KJ 18:34

Do you think it's- do you think you're doing better- or are you doing better now that everything is hybrid, or when it was like fully online, or when it was only in person? Do you have a preference?

EC 19:04

I don't know. Like, right now, my classes are kind of split, like I have, I have two fully online classes, and then three in person. Well, one is hybrid. And so that- right, like this semester has been kind of hard to manage, because I- because it's so like- my schedule is kind of all over the place with that. And, you know, I'm going to in person classes as well, trying to manage my online classes. So I think that's difficult. I think, like, last semester, when everything was online, I like I was, I kind of had a schedule, and I think that helped me a lot. So I was able to be pretty successful. But I know like other people struggled so much worse. And, yeah, so yeah, I think there's got to be a balance. Like right now. I think it's the hardest because it's like everything's in the gray area and like things are slowly changing. So I'm hoping like, by next time, like this year, maybe like, it'll be all in person which I think would benefit everyone.

KJ 20:08

Yeah. Um, do you know anyone who has had questions or concerns about getting a vaccine or anything surrounding the vaccine?

EC 20:17

Yeah, definitely. I think my- some of my co workers, you know, they decided not to get the vaccine, which is, it's hard for me to understand. Because if you're working in long term care at all, that's a vulnerable population. You should want to protect yourself, protect them. But then, you know, it's- you still have to work with them every single day. So you kind of just have to deal with it. Yeah, I know, like, one of the people at my work, she was scared about, you know, she's trying to have a baby. And so she's scared about the effects on that. Which, you know, I don't know how real they are but yeah, you know, I think as long as they're wearing a mask still and like, following all those necessary things, then you know, it's hard to fight them on it. And I know, like, it also depends on culture. I was talking to a friend in the HCAD program at her site, where she has a high Ethiopian population, I believe, and that history of vaccines, you know, it's not good. And so you're gonna have to understand where they're coming from, and like, why they are scared to get the vaccine?

KJ 21:37

Yes, absolutely.

EC 21:39

Yeah, it's- I definitely, you know, it's- I encourage everyone to get the vaccine, obviously. I'm in the middle of trying to convince my brother. Yeah.

KJ 21:51

Yeah. Me too. And then which vaccine did you receive?

EC 21:56

I got the Moderna.

KJ 21:58

Moderna, okay. What sort of side effects did you have? Or what was your experience getting both shots?

EC 22:05

I- The first one- I didn't really have any side effects from like, my arm hurt, like a flu shot or whatever. And the second one I was just exhausted the next day. I could not get out of bed. But then the next, like, the day after I suddenly had so much energy, so it was fine.

KJ 22:25

That's good. Yeah.

EC 22:28

Yeah, I like talking to like, the residents that my work too when they got it. They had similar experiences, some people didn't even experience any.

KJ 22:37

Wow. I'm jealous of them.

EC 22:38

Right?

KJ 22:39

Um, has your outlook on COVID changed since you've been vaccinated and have that little protection?

EC 22:48

Um, I think a little bit. Um, you know, at work, I don't have to wear a mask anymore. Which is weird, it's because that's you have a CDC guidelines say it's okay, so. So that's interesting. But I still, I think- in a way, yeah, maybe I'll have let my guard down, because I've gotten the vaccine, a little bit. But I'm gonna still wear a mask in public. I still follow all those rules. But I definitely feel like we're, I don't know, we're on the right path to COVID not being a thing anymore, hopefully.

KJ 23:26

And I know there's been some talk about certain vaccines needing booster shots in the future. What do you think about that? And if you'll get the booster shots, if they're a thing ever.

EC 23:37

Yeah, I don't know. I haven't heard much about that. I feel like if it's recommended. I probably will. Because I'll be working in you know, a skilled nursing home obviously. Yeah. So I definitely would consider it.

KJ 23:50

Yeah, absolutely. Um, in looking towards the future, has your experience transformed how you think about your friends, your family and your community?

EC 24:01

Yeah, I think so.

KJ 24:07

Here we go again.

EC 24:15

Wait, how it's affected-

KJ 24:17

How it's affected your- Or looking to the future, how has your experience transformed how you think about your friends, your family, and your community?

EC 24:25

Yeah. I feel like technology's really been a lifesaver, obviously. So now, you know, maybe a close friend doesn't have to live in this same town as you which is interesting. What was the question? I can try to answer.

KJ 24:50

It's okay. Um, looking to the future, has your experience transformed how you think about your friends, family, community, like are you gonna like not see certain people as much anymore. It wasn't worded super great, my apologies.

EC 25:05

Yeah, I think it's definitely like, kinda highlighted people's worst, you know. If they're, you know, going out every night and, you know, not following any of the guidelines, I think that's definitely showing people's colors. And yeah, I think I've lost a couple friends because of that, you know, I just don't, you know, if you're gonna go out and party and do whatever, in the middle of a pandemic, then kind of- I lose some respect for you, you know.

KJ 25:36

Yeah, I understand that. And then knowing what you know now, after going through the past year, what do you think individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for future other events like this?

EC 25:52

I feel like this like caught everyone off guard. And now I think, like, looking at skilled nursing homes, and good infection protection, or infection control, has improved so much, where I don't know- like it won't hit as hard because of all the things they've developed and everything going on there. So it's definitely impacted that.

KJ 26:27

Well, that's all the questions I have. So thank you so much for talking to me. It means a lot.

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