

Stay safe, Center Hill: My experience with COVID-19

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I remember the night in March when I was told the news. I had overheard my parents talking about my dad getting tested for COVID-19 that morning. My parents didn't plainly tell my sister and me that my dad was getting tested, but they didn't hide it from us either. I didn't think about it much until later that night.

I was up on a call with my boyfriend around 10:30 p.m. when my mom called for me and my sister and calmly told us the news. The doctors called; my dad's test was positive. Dad had to stay home for two weeks, isolated in my parents' bedroom, from the first day he showed symptoms. If he continued to show symptoms, he had to go three days without running a fever.

The rest of the family couldn't leave the house until two weeks after Dad was diagnosed. If we started showing symptoms, we would follow the same procedures as him. My mom had to sleep with my sister in her room. I was to stay in my room as much as possible. We were to wash our hands every 30 minutes for 30 seconds.

I was terrified. I had heard about coronavirus on the news, and I was scared I might become another statistic. We know more about the virus now, but back then all you heard about were the numbers of cases and deaths.

The worst part was when I walked into the living room a few minutes after we heard the news to get something from my parents' room. My dad was in the kitchen, leaning against the counter. I wanted to say something, but I didn't know what I could say to make things better.

I went, "Dad?"

He stopped and looked up at me.

"I love you," I said.

I could see he was scared. "I love you too honey," he said, looking and sounding defeated. "I'm sorry, y'all. I really am."

His voice cracked through the words as he tried not to cry. I could tell by his voice, he felt as if he had failed us, like he brought this danger into his family. He couldn't do anything; he couldn't protect us. I can't put into words how hard that hit me. I will never forget that moment. That was the worst part, worse than the fear, the pain, and the uncertainty of the future. While he fought back tears, he still looked as though he was trying to be the strong man of the family.

My family didn't talk about the virus much when it was in our house. But we all knew how everyone else felt: scared.



Snapchat photo used with permission of the Dawson family

When Lily Dawson's father was isolated in the spring with COVID-19, she visited him through the so-called "drive-thru" window of her parents' bedroom. Lily, her sister, and their mother all eventually contracted COVID-19. The family's symptoms were mild, and months later Lily said her sense of smell is still messed up.

Since we couldn't leave the house, groceries were an issue. Luckily, my dad's work bought us some groceries and so did our neighbors. My dad's work also delivered cookies and sweets to help us keep our spirits up. I tried to stay positive, even though it was difficult. I remembered that my parents' room had a window. I walked outside to my backyard, knocked on their window and said, "You up?" I heard a chuckle come from inside and my dad opened the blinds and smiled. I sat there and talked to him. It was one of the only ways I could see him and talk to him. I tried to do this once a day while he was isolated. (This was nicknamed the drive-thru window.)

About three days after Dad's diagnosis, my sister, Sarah, started showing symptoms. My mom had been sleeping in her room, so this meant my mom probably had it too. After a week my mom started showing the same symptoms. After almost two weeks, I showed symptoms. My sister and I didn't even get tested – the test is very uncomfortable – but we knew we had it. There was nothing else it could have been. Out of everyone, my sister had it the longest. Even though I had it last, she wasn't cleared till after me.

Our symptoms included fatigue, headaches, slight nausea, and shortness of breath. Soon after I was cleared, the simple color guard routines I used to be able to breeze through were suddenly difficult for me. I'm still recovering, and my sense of smell is still messed up as of today. Due to my smell being wrong, food tastes wrong. I can taste how the food actually tastes, along with the taste of smells like a mixture of vinegar (almost pickley), peaches, and something stale or spoiled. Things like peanut butter, bread and sodas all have this gross smell, and so do shampoo and deodorant. I've been dealing with it for months. I've grown to tolerate the smell, but it's getting better. I used to have to plug my nose to be able to drink some drinks or eat some foods. Now it has become more mild and I don't have to hold my nose anymore.

Back in the spring, I made jokes about my case in a segment for MTV and laughed about the coronavirus with my friends. Although I believe a strong way of healing is laughter, this is a serious issue. Many people aren't lucky enough to have such a mild case like my family did. I am only one of more than 40 million people who got COVID-19 worldwide. No one should have to go through the fear of having COVID-19. To slow the spread of the disease, which has killed more than a million people, wear a mask, wash your hands, and social distance by staying 6 feet apart when possible. Do this not only for yourself, but for your comrades in this battle against COVID-19.
By ~~Safe~~, Center Hill.