

VOIC E



Quarantine Issue
2020



Editor's Letter

Kenopsia (noun)

The eerie, forlorn atmosphere of a place that's usually bustling with people but is now abandoned and quiet.

When the days of the year unfolded, we collectively experienced various and unique feelings; feelings of despondency, instability, and uncertainty. The shift of normality, for some more than others, was difficult to cope with. Just as a pull of thread, the days and months unraveled, and we suddenly found ourselves in a different state. As difficult as it was to stitch the seams and make sense of what has occurred, we have managed to pull through these months and are now entering a new semester.

However, these times, which we have spent in our homes facing obstacles that once were swept under the rug, should not be left disregarded. This Quarantine Issue hopes to reflect the distorted feelings that we individually experienced, but most importantly it is meant to express the hardships and coping mechanisms we used to adapt and overcome. It stands now as a reminder of the surreal moments we lived—but also as a reminder that we have, more or less, overcame those obstacles.

We experienced kenopsia when we looked out of our windows and found the crowded roads and highways suddenly deserted. This feeling was intensified when we witnessed footage in the news of the city abandoned and quiet. While online waiting rooms are filled with students to be admitted, our campus is empty, waiting for ambitious students to fill the halls with life once again. Alas, we are slowly figuring out a way to coexist with this change. Hopefully, we can once again fill the campus with bustling students, eager to reconnect with one another in a place we call our second home.

Rafah Al-Shohaty
Editor-in-Chief

Meet the Team

Yasmin Ibrahim (Reporter)

During our monthly discussions concerning the Voice's content, I had realized this was one of the tougher times for the magazine. Not because there was a shortage of topics, but that there were so many things to cover within one issue and not enough time or space. These past four months have been a mixture of sadness and happiness for everyone, so it was important for us to relate to the AUK community and their experience within these tough times. But how could this be done? There were too many personal experiences and stories to tell, too much for there to be one way to relate to everyone. Personally, the most difficult aspect of this year was one thing: change.

Not only has this quarantine affected my social life as it has for everyone else, but it's also made my and many other students' senior year something unexpected and unwanted. But, to reflect on these situations means bringing an unwanted level of negativity and pessimism, something we all need to recover from as a community, especially after such a rough patch. Therefore, it was important for me to write about our experience without making things sad. That is why in this issue, I've started with a farewell long overdue for our beloved Shokry Garada, then a light-hearted rant about the troubles of 2020 and finally ending on a slightly sad but deserved goodbye note for AUK and the love I have built for it along the way.

Dania Ghassan (Graphic Designer)

Being a Graphic Designer for VOICE gave me wonderful opportunities to have my work exposed to the AUK community and beyond. Designing a magazine is challenging and fun at the same time. The real challenge I faced as a designer was to read the topics and "design the words." Expressing what is written behind written columns is not an easy task it requires intensive research. My method for designing a certain article is to skim through the written piece and extract from it one idea then Google search this idea and look for inspirations to come up with unique design. This process takes time so bear in mind that the earlier you start on the magazine the better the quality you will achieve.

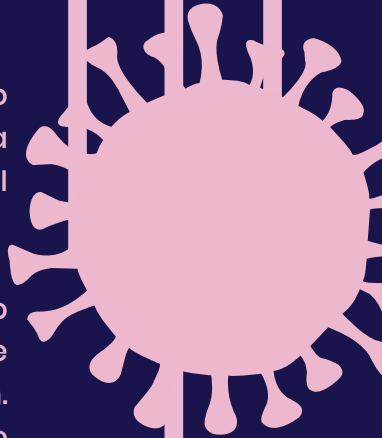


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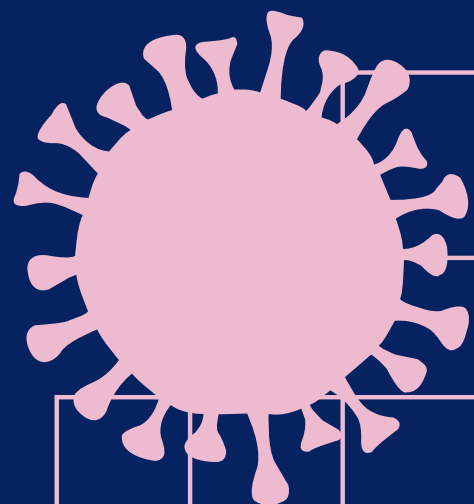
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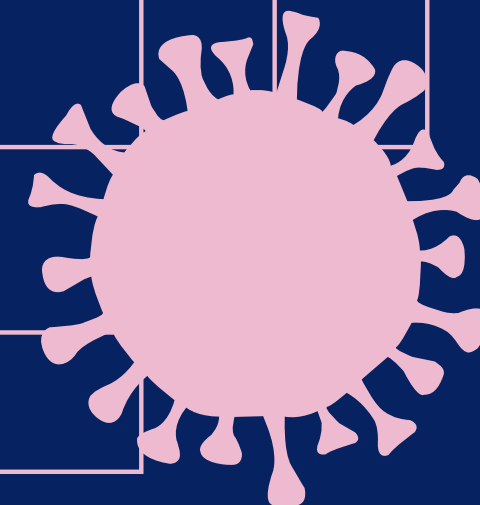
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UNIVERSITY





Shokry Hani Garada, a name and face the AUK community has grown to recognize and treasure. Within the span of four years, Shokry has organized and participated in more than 40 AUK events, enlivened matches, concerts, talent shows and much more with his bright and bubbly personality. Any person lucky enough to come across his extroverted self is always greeted with a big smile and endless jokes.

After growing accustomed to such a joyful presence in AUK, it is hard for us to admit that his journey with us has come to an end and that he has transitioned from student to alumnus. But, before parting ways with this inspirational personality, we managed to ask him a couple of questions in hopes of reminiscing about his AUK journey and the memories he's made along the way.

Q: How did you feel when you first came to AUK?

A: I felt motivated and that encouraged me to be more outgoing and unleash my maximum potential. From the first day, I could see the love and tolerance in the community. Regardless of your cultural or religious background, people always greet you with such acceptance and it was this non-judgmental environment that instantly made me comfortable.

Q: What is an AUK event that you miss?

A: Oh, so many. I would say the talent shows and sports events where I would be hyping up the crowd or cheering for the teams. Truly such fun experiences. But, it would be fair to say that each year had its treasured moments. For example, there were the 2017-2018 influential events with Fouzan Al-Qahtani and the flash mob event, but there was also the Daffy event I organized in 2020. What mattered most to me was the fun people had and how we were always overbooked by students.

Q: What is your most cherished memory at AUK?

A: Probably receiving my awards, like the Wolfpack award for outstanding performance in extracurricular activities or the Program of the Year award. It's nice to feel recognized for being active on campus.

Q: Who do you think you'll miss the most?

A: They would definitely be Rawaa Mohammed, Mishari Al-Ruwaished, and Sherifa Al-Majed. I started my journey at University with these people and they've always supported me and motivated me to do better. Fouzan Al-Qahtani is also a great friend whom I'll miss dearly. Whenever I had an idea for an event, I would first pitch it to these four to hear their opinions, and not once have they refused to listen to me or lost interest. Their advice was always something I genuinely considered and took to heart.

Q: Do you have any regrets?

A: Absolutely not. Thankfully, I feel like I've done everything that I could have. I was an active student and learned a lot along the way.



Q: What is something you wish you would've done before graduating?

A: I wish I had traveled with the AUK sports team. I was the assistant coach and was going to go with them to Turkey but had unfortunately missed out on that. If I'm going to be honest, I also really wanted to have proper goodbyes with my friends, but this pandemic has prevented that from happening.

Q: What about AUK will you miss the most?

A: I will miss the AUK community; the people, the friendliness. The love I received during my awards and the student council votes were the most heartwarming aspect. It felt amazing getting the highest votes in my first year of University.

Q: Which classes and professors were your favorite?

A: My favorite professors are Mohsen Bagnied, Abdulrahman Al-Farhan, and Shihana Al-Mutairy. These amazing professors changed Marketing for me and made it so much more interesting. Professor Shihana truly made me love my major and work harder for it. As for Professor Mohsen, he always encouraged me to be comfortable with being myself and was like a father figure to me. Professor Farhan was a mentor throughout my whole AUK journey.

He was not just a teacher, but an inspiration and is someone I always look up to. Many times, the content of the class would be so boring, but it was much more bearable and fun when he taught it. It was different with these three; I remember visiting their offices and chatting with them. They really were like my family and I will miss them as much as I miss my friends. I cannot wait until University opens and I plan on visiting them in their offices the second it does. If I could leave them one message, it would be "thank you for making AUK a better experience".



Q: Are you afraid of what the future holds for you?

A: I wouldn't say afraid, just excited. I believe that I can do just as much work in Kuwait as I did in AUK. I have high hopes in the future and plan on becoming the next largest influencer, hopefully nationally then on a broader level.

Q: A building or B building and why?

A: S building, actually. I was always there, supporting AUK athletes and their matches or just visiting Student Life. I've built many great memories there.

Q: What's some advice you have for freshmen?

A: Be active on campus. Use every minute of your time in this University; there are so many facilities available and you should use them to the best of your abilities. Always remember this is a one-time experience and that sitting around leads nowhere. Opportunities always come to you when you do something you love and work hard for it.

Q: It is sometimes said by others that AUK was not their first choice. What about you?

A: It was definitely my decision to join AUK; I'd visit campus a couple of times before joining and was really inspired by the community. I had a vision of going there, did just that, and loved every minute of it.



Q: Do you have any advice for students who might have wanted to go someplace else? Who didn't consider AUK as their first choice?

A: Sometimes things don't go your way and that's just fate. But, it is up to you to optimize what you are offered and work with what you have. Make the most out of this experience because you don't know what life brings you in the future. Approaching things with optimism will show you all the fun you're missing out on.



Q: Finally, what is your message for AUK?

A: AUK will always be in my heart and it will always be my second home. I miss every detail of it and its campus. I only wish we had more active and more motivated students there because there's so much potential but people need to work on it. Being a student with such an active approach definitely paid off for Shokry; through his work in event organization, he has managed to score a business management job for Sheyaab, Sayood, and Sara Rabea.

Accompanying his charisma, his hard work and flexibility have opened up doors almost impossible to reach for a fresh graduate (mashallah, knock on wood). But it seems as if 'impossible' is a term foreign to the likes of Shokry. Though we hope his optimism continues to spread throughout the country, inspiring others to be more confident and motivated, we know that there will never be two of him. And to that we say, farewell Shokry Garada; your unmatched character will forever be something we cherish. You may be missed, but will never be forgotten by the community you know and love.



STUDENT LIFE RESPONDS TO COVID-19

by Shirley Sullivan

In March, when it was announced that campus would transition to work online, hundreds of questions must have crossed your mind during the declared worldwide pandemic.

The emergence of COVID-19 prompted Student Affairs professionals to act both swiftly and creatively in making this transition as smooth as possible. The staff throughout evolved their roles in a new format and environment promoting a robust virtual cocurricular experience.

In the flurry of the multidimensional pandemic, we addressed the numerous challenges and turned them into opportunities. This involved re-visiting our events calendar and ensuring involvement was meaningful and intentional.

"We know that engaging students outside the eClassroom fosters personal growth, development, and connections to others."

We know that engaging students outside their eClassroom fosters personal growth, development and connections to others.

The transition from Auditorium, Recreation Area or Hallway events was difficult especially for those programs that are defined by in-person interaction or services. Out of the many events that would have materialized in the spring semester, we missed the bustle of life in the Hallway during International Week—the parade of flags and the aroma of ethnic cuisine around campus signifying cultural diversity and unity. We transitioned to a virtual International Week encouraging student participation by creating a 5-day series of events. It started with a cultural cooking day, quizzing the students on different flags, engaging students in a tag and sharing on Instagram in their cultural attire, saying hello in 3 different languages, and lastly with a cultural souvenir engagement on Instagram.

Encouraging students to stay active during the lockdown was one of our utmost priorities when planning virtual engagement activities. Zoom sessions with fitness instructors were introduced, followed by various workout challenges and fitness awareness posts.

We further engaged our students with Instagram 'Post & Tag' challenges. Our athletes were ecstatic with the #ShowYourJersey challenge, where they shared pictures of themselves in their AUK Sport jerseys during their games and some flaunted their entire collection of jerseys over the years of being an athlete.

Similarly, Clubs were overjoyed to participate in the #ShareYourMemories challenge and we received an overwhelming response from very nostalgic club members sharing video clips and pictures from their events.

L.E.A.D. at AUK also made it to the forefront in capturing the attention of a virtual audience in their leadership series of presentations enhancing students' listening skills, verbal /non-verbal communication and lastly effective presentation skills.

Finally, all student engagement and participation were recognized with a series of Wolfpack Spirit videos created to acknowledge the persistence, determination and resilience of our Wolfpack community in the midst of a pandemic. We must also acknowledge that this has not been easy for all of you—some with financial challenges, some that lost their loved ones, and others with multifaceted personal challenges at the times of this crisis. We stand together during these unprecedented times.

As we plan for the upcoming semester, Student Life professionals bear in mind your eagerness to return to your beloved campus but have also placed your safety and well-being as top priority. Student participation in clubs, organizations, L.E.A.D. At AUK, athletic events, workouts and engagement in social gatherings are all going virtual. These programs were created with careful intentionality and to ensure a robust virtual co curricular experience for the new and returning students in the fall 2020 semester.

Wishing you the best and staying safe.

The Recap Rant We All Need

Yasmin Ibrahim

It's almost October and you know what that means. I hope you do, because I definitely don't. I've stopped making expectations after my license got renewed for only one year. Since 2020 has pretty much been the highlight of... fun, I'm more than happy to know it's almost over.

However, three months is a long, long time when you're waiting and some of us are prone to overthinking. So, though it will be impossible to stop you from worrying about future events, I believe reminding you of all that you won't have to go through again can make you count your blessings.



So strap in, stop sulking and get ready to cringe at your most treasured memories of the last seven months.

1. DIY food.

Let's be honest here... we've all done it. You're quarantined and you can't order from McDonalds because they're closed and "I wanted a McChicken" is a dumb excuse to say to a police officer. So you instead do a quick Google search for a recipe, which redirects you to YouTube. From there, you go on to watch a video of a person going way too fast and there commences the most intense two hours of your life—your mom yelling at you to get out of the kitchen, you yelling back because they lost the measuring spoons, the chicken smells like the freezer and they forgot the Keizer bread. After a ten-minute breakdown, you walk out smelling like oil and a weird, greasy chicken sandwich. But hey at least you got the mayo right.

2. Good Whiff.

Though Ramadan was spent at home, the majority of us have fasted after the month for a number of reasons. And, my God, the smell. If you've ever fasted, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You put on that mask, tighten it around your face and leave the house. During your journey to the supermarket, you make the mistake of talking to someone. Before you realize what you've done, that nasty surprise of a Ramadan breath wafts back into your nose and gives you the shock of your life.

Even though you've gargled Listerine five times before Fajr, and have pretty much finished an entire tube of Colgate, you still can't get rid of that delightful fart hanging inside your mask. The next time you think about saying something, type it.

3. Battle of the Co-ops.

Going to get groceries is a hit or miss, some people like it, others don't. But if any person dares to deny that it was a life-threatening experience before lockdown, you're either crazy or lying. You just went to get some flour for your mom, who now apparently is an aspiring chef with a baking talent after all the quarantining, and you know the drill. But, every time, it surprises you.

Just the sight you see when the doors open is...breathtaking. Literally. People are running left and right with shopping carts, their eyes darting up and down as they look for that 15th chicken; some are just standing around in the middle of the aisle waiting for inspiration; two women are fighting through the masks and gloves for the last celery bunch, neither one even hearing the other. And don't even get me started about the people who push in the line. Demons. By the time you've walked out, it's been three hours and some man is fighting with the security guard because he wants to buy diapers for his baby and just cannot understand why he can't go in thirty minutes before they close, or as he puts it "why no? Bleez I want to get bambarz."

4. Maybe Check Now?

When lockdown ended, everyone either went to drive-thrus (nightmare) or delivered food. No more will you have to eat your disgusting, soggy fried sandwich replicas. Now you can order and have it delivered within an hour. Yum. Only problem is, contactless delivery. Of course, it's the best option and the safest in times like these. But, sometimes, they just don't call in advance. At some point, you get so hungry and irritated that you call them up expecting an apology only to hear that the food's been dropped off twenty minutes ago. So now, not only do you have to eat it cold, but the next time you order you'll be checking every twenty seconds outside the door.

Just pray judgmental uncle Mahmood, your neighbor, doesn't walk out and make eye contact while you stand there with your messy hair and embarrassing pajamas.

5. Deep Heaves.

Whenever you check social media, you see these posts flooding the explore page of people objecting to wearing masks (you know in which country, don't act so lost) and fighting for their 'right' to breathe freely. They complain about how masks are suffocating them and making it harder to take deep breaths. Well, I say they're ungrateful. Because if you've left the house for these four months you would understand; the humidity of it all.

It's been especially nasty this past month and sometimes it gets so bad, you don't even need to take off your mask to breathe because it won't make a difference; there's simply no oxygen. It's so wet outside that you might as well grow gills, pout your lips and start blub-blub-blubbing to the nearest AC. Even though Sebastian says "Unda da sea nobody beat us," we have been beaten.

6. Fear Factor: Corolla Edition

The best part about this whole humidity charade is finding a place to park your car, which is especially fun if you're driving the likes of a Yukon or Suburban. It's already impossible to find a good spot for your sedan, since the entire population of Kuwait is trying to also park near the door of the Co-op. But, driving anything bigger is just physical pain. It is a challenge only fit for the greatest of parallel parkers.

Fail to do so and you'll have to deal with the consequences of driving that massive sasquatch of dad-car around until you find a tight place to back into as you sweat profusely with fear. Maybe that'll teach you to stop buying buses as cars and bragging about their "fool opshan". Because the sunroof definitely didn't help you here.

7. Salmiya Drift

All of the above were things I was glad to not have to go through again.

But, there was especially one nasty experience that I never want to remember—the drive home. It doesn't matter how early you wake up to get things done; by the time they're actually finished, you have exactly ten minutes to get home before curfew begins. Now, in your head, you're thinking "you know what? If I drive at 120 km/h, I'll get there with three minutes to spare". But little do you know, you oblivious walnut, that the entire Middle East also made this plan in their head.

So not only is the traffic unbearable, but the red lights feel especially long. By the time you've reached the highway, you have officially transitioned from the State of Kuwait to the African Savanna; huge Jeeps driving at 160 km/h, cars cutting across four lanes in one swift move, at some point a cheetah will come out of the trees and bite your wheels; it's mayhem. How is it possible to be on the left lane driving above the limit by 5 km/h and still get flashed by an aggressive Hummer?! But there's no time to be angry, because with every minute, your heart pounds more and the fear in the driver's eyes, that you can see behind you in your rearview mirror, is making you more nervous.

Probably the most stress-inducing view is the two cars parked on the side crashed into each other, because at that point neither one cares about the car, they just need to get home before curfew. Just seeing them step out and talk at the rate of 200 words per second makes you sympathize with them.

See? Now October isn't that bad. The weather will be better, the restaurants are open and you can at least not live in fear. Just take care, wear your mask for the love of God, distance yourself from others and you should be able to live through these terrifying three months in no time. On second thought, I did hear there's another wave of Corona coming, though... Oh God.



Synth Kuwait

Anas Al Rasheed

After classes are done, I used to take a short drive on the Gulf road before heading back home and I wanted to recreate that virtual trip. However, I later realized that I wanted to virtually visit the fine segments of Kuwait. I took a couple of architects that always stood out to me whenever I go for a drive:

–**Kuwait Towers:** No matter how old I get, sitting right below the tower is always mesmerizing

–**Hamra Tower:** Being the tallest building in Kuwait, it has helped me for bookmarking several spots in the city

–**Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre:** One of the most unique designs you will ever find while going for a drive opera house in the Middle East

–**Gulf Road Semi-Domes:** These small domes are found all around the Gulf road and resemble the one just next to our university. I often find myself relaxing there because it is just quiet and calm



EXPERIENCE

Unfortunate Events

The hoax visited
We rushed back home
We can't go out now?
No, it will have to be done over the
phone
I miss my home country
My friends and relatives, too
I don't know what happened
But in a second, we were all doomed
I now stare at the sky
But from the car's window seat
This can't be happening....
We can't get beat!
My birthday passed
I didn't even celebrate

When humans are now
nature's bait
My memory is destroyed
I can't even remember
School starts when?
Was it September?
Forever together
And never apart
And then what?

...

Never mind, I forgot

- Yasir BiZaroo

Graduation Goodbyes

Yasmin Ibrahim

Well, we all know how this is going to be. Buckle up, it's time for sulking station. Since the spring semester has officially come to a close, it's unfortunately time for me to admit that I'm no longer a student.

On my first day at AUK, I remember thinking four years was so far away. Whenever I'd look at my list of courses, I would try to do the math in my head to understand how on earth I would be able to finish that much within four years. Well, the four years came and went like a breeze, almost like these past four months did for everyone, and I'm still shocked that I'm actually done. Like...I'm done? That's it? What now?

The truth is, graduating is every student's dream. Especially after an awful class or a difficult project, you'd find yourself saying, "I can't wait until I graduate." It's true because graduating brings with it a sense of freedom to do what you want; you can try getting into a dream company, moving to another country, freelancing, etc. The possibilities are endless and you're young enough to feel adventurous.

But I do have to say, graduating sucks. Let's just get something out of the way—am I happy about graduating? Absolutely. Senior year is hell and the workload is impossible to deal with. By the time you're done, you're going to have to physically wash off the stress with a loofah. And, no, not one of those soft blue loofahs, an Egyptian loofah. But senior year also has the most memorable laughs, cries, and stupid arguments with your friends.

Before COVID-19 came and dropped a dookie on our plans, senior year was amazing; I don't think I'll ever have as much fun as I did this year. Realizing the impermanence of everything early enough, I'd decided to hold onto every detail of AUK, the good and the bad, and really appreciate it. That way, I could make memories to get me out of future bad days and never regret the feeling of missing out on anything.

So, in honor of everything that has made leaving AUK impossible without getting emotional, it's time to reminisce on all the little things that make AUK just right, all the habits I now have to grow out of, and all the bad parts that will weirdly also be missed.

Let's start with the obvious—AUK's campus. When you first walk into AUK, the campus is just a blob of grey, grainy walls and glass. There's B building, the Starbucks building, and the student building. But by the time you've grown accustomed to AUK, you know these aren't just stacked bricks and that their true definition can only be learned through experience. "A building" is honestly the most hated and that's obvious.

Everyone hates that building because it's a reminder of compulsory math courses (shudder). Then there's the beloved B building and its diner smell and missing water cooler on the ground floor. Why? Just why? Just put a cooler there. Ridiculous. But even then, these are details you start to miss. I mean sure, A building is the home of science nightmares, but it also has Starbucks.

As a freshman, you might go for that coffee, that freedom of being able to buy a cup of coffee (even if you don't like coffee) for yourself and go to class with it without your teacher being there to give you detention. By the time you're well into your third year, it's not even the coffee anymore, it's the routine.



At any given moment in Starbucks, there's someone stressing out about being late to class. And every time there's someone stressed about missing class, the longest line in Starbucks is sure to greet them. This is something that may go unrecognized at first, but the temporary vibe of the fourth year makes you step back and look around you every now and then, perhaps to prepare yourself for the inevitability of this place no longer becoming your home.

When doing so, you would find it funny how preoccupied everyone is, how familiar they are with the process of stressing about class and getting their coffee. To you, the line might be a bother, because you just want your drink. But if you were to really go to Starbucks every day and not see this crowd, there would be an uncomfortable feeling, an unwelcome change.

Because that's the point; it's meant to be overcrowded and loud, filled with people willing to risk a professor being mad because they need their iced caramel macchiato or some other insane concoction. You can't blame them, though. They can't just go to class without their cup of coffee. Are you crazy? No way.

Besides, when a professor says don't come in after ten minutes, you hold them to it. They made the rules, not you. So if you walk in and the professor gives you trouble for walking into class at the 9:59 minute mark, challenge them to a joust and watch them fear your wrath. Don't suggest that to an English professor, though, because they definitely have experience in the jousting area.

Terrifying historians. Anyway, the same contrasting feelings can be applied to the B building. When you look at the B building, the first thing you'll remember would most likely be the diner curse; during the rush to get to class or get away from the godawful humidity, you take the diner shortcut inside. Well, now you smell like fries and someone's orders that are coming out seriously late for some reason.

Don't even try to wash that smell off when you get home, it's here to stay until you graduate. But the diner is not just a fryer-smelling place, it's also where you go for lunch at least once a week. It's the place you sit outside with your friends when the weather's great or huddle in their warmth when it's too cold.

If none of that applies, then at least there's the comfort of knowing there's great, hot food within reach at any point of the day, which is especially great after a boring class. Even the most frustrating aspects of the B building, such as the hourly elevator traffic is something to be cherished. What is the B building experience if not being shoved to the back of the elevator or hearing everyone hold in their sigh as someone presses for the first floor?

We all know that cast is irrelevant; it's on your arm not your leg. And "tired" is not an excuse we're all sleep-deprived here, it's called the "Uni experience," bud. Take the stairs for the love of God. But even during this rush where everyone is trying to get to the closest elevator to the ground floor, a great level of humor can be seen. Though we're all civilized individuals in a university, the elevator scene brings out the savage within us.

You'd be surprised how rules applied here are not AUK's guidelines, but the rule of the jungle—survival of the fittest. If you're not fast enough or assertive enough, you're most likely going to be late to class.

So, you have to convince yourself to not be shy, roll up those sleeves and use them elbows, because you're not only elbowing your way into an elevator, but into a higher GPA. Living in the wildlife gives such a rush, doesn't it? Assuming you find no humor in being pressured in an electronic box like some freak from the fantastic four, then you must at least admit the auditorium makes the B building unforgettable.

Alongside the awesome Halloween events and talent shows, there's something about going to a play there that's indescribable. You can disagree with me, but there will never be anything funnier than Yasir BiZaroo playing John Travolta in Grease.



That probably made the next two years for me without me even knowing it. Alongside the makeup and outfit, there's something very amusing about seeing a very Arab-looking man play an intensely Caucasian actor. And that's just a fact. It was truly a performance for the kings and queens.

Even though everything previously mentioned factors into making AUK what it is, the professors are the ones who really bring it to life. Throughout my four years, I've realized that building an emotional connection with certain professors is inevitable.



Whether they're friendly, passionate about their job, or just appreciate you as a student, some professors just make it really difficult to be indifferent towards. Yes, they're not exactly your friends, I mean you won't walk up and slap their back and say "hala" or something, but they're not random people, either.

At some point, you might realize you actually really care about their opinions and it especially bothers you when they think your work is not good enough or that you're not interested in their class. Slowly but surely, this morphs into wanting to listen to their personal stories, actually listening to their opinion on things and even taking their advice to heart.

Now, let's be honest here. Not all are great. But that's just the nature of university—there will never be a university where all the professors are amazing. In every. Single. university. There's a specific category of professors that are there just to test your patience on a level unknown to us mortals.

There's the MBA professors, who'll think you're a grad student and thus give you until the end of the week to give in a 15 page research paper with a minimum of 10 credible sources for a 100-level course. Dude... this is compulsory. I didn't choose to take this course. Why am I being blamed here?

Then there's Projector Professors who'll never turn on the lights. I understand it's so that I can see the projector, but I won't be able to see it when my eyes are fully closed and I've sunken into my deepest slumber. And why not add a cherry on top and make the background of the PowerPoint black? That way you can really study my sleeping schedule.

And don't even get me started about the Yep Professors; the ones that take a good look at your assignment, say... "good," then never give you a proper grade. What is it that you want from me? What does "good" mean? It's like being in a relationship with a passive aggressive person; just tell me what you want so I can fix it.

From this branches another category: the Analyzers. A moment of silence for our fellow victims of the Analyzers. The Analyzers are usually very good professors, very nice and understanding. But, there's only one problem: they're detail-oriented. You go to their office to understand why it is they're giving you a C+ and their answer is something like "you didn't add the page number" or "you should've used a comma instead of a semi colon"...

I'm just going to leave it at that. I'm going to refrain from sharing my views. What makes it worse is that they're completely right, you did not use MLA properly. So, you can't go complaining to the chair saying, "they messed with my grade because I didn't follow guidelines. I'd like to appeal my grade to them."

But maybe if a certain professor hasn't sent me to learn about my ancestry and write 6000 words about it I would not have had these issues. Now, right off the bat, yes, these are all some awful, over-exaggerated examples. But that's what we do, don't we? It's normal to blow things out of proportion when you're mad, especially if you feel frustrated about a course.

But it's the difficult professors that make you appreciate the great ones. How else will you feel the importance of hearing funny short stories about Johnny Rockets trips and their resemblance to the class, or the generosity of a really nice chair with ever-changing hairstyles who's always trying to support her students and offer them advice. Maybe if you didn't come across those moments of anger, you'd miss out on noticing that some people, like a friendly, Southern English professor or a super relaxed Sudanese.

Communications professors, are genuine, serious, and understanding no matter the circumstances. You might even come across the right professor who'll open doors for you and help you go to places you'd never thought you would reach. But this impact of theirs will never be truly felt without having a semester be ruined because of one course. Only then, will you admit to yourself that they make you look forward to their classes, look for reasons to stop by their office, and interact in class even if you're not social.

This is not because you want them to like you, but because something in their approach and in them as people inspires you to work harder and be better. And this is something no bad professor can rid you from. As we always leave the best for last, like the curliest fry in the pack, we realize we are left with the most wonderful group there is: the friends. No words can express the importance of a good friend group in university.

The filtering process of the first year or two, where you lose and gain many friends, is a highly likely occurrence for most university students. But, only after going through such a phase will you be able to find the perfect group of people for you. If you're lucky, you'll end up with people who appreciate your differences, understand you, and share your views and emotions. Though there will always be someone to sit with in AUK's friendly campus, they're just different because they're the right fit. They will never judge you or think less of you, but will care enough to intervene when things get out of hand.

Their arguments with you are never-ending, but are usually stupid, minor, and laughable, like fighting with a close sibling. Your relationship with them holds no formalities, no walls, and no drama. They're the people your family loves having over, they trust you're safe when you're around them and actually check up on them every now and then just to see how they're dealing with university.

Nothing coming from them is too weird or uncomfortable, because you both have dirt on each other through embarrassing childhood stories and buried unpopular opinions. The chances of hearing "I know this is weird but..." on a daily basis is highly likely and it's always something that makes you laugh. Though all of this happens in high-school, there is a euphoric sense of belonging during these times in university.

That's because they elevate every possible experience in a manner only felt when you're older.



You stress about being late to class in Starbucks together, get there late together, and then get the shaming look the professor gives you both as you sit down next to each other, something only possible with the assistance of a third friend saving seats for you with her bags. Unlike high school, you spend hours of free time together, occasionally having to drive to Piña Colada and yell at your friend as the man approaches your window and they still haven't decided whether they want Awar Qalb or an Oreo milkshake.

Everything mentioned about AUK can only be truly felt when discussed with your best friend. How else will you be able to laugh off being stuck in the back of the elevator, or rant about the course you hate? Who will tell you, in all honesty, that you smell like you fell in a pot of canola oil and should seriously go home and change because they know based on first-hand experience that the diner's smell sticks like superglue?

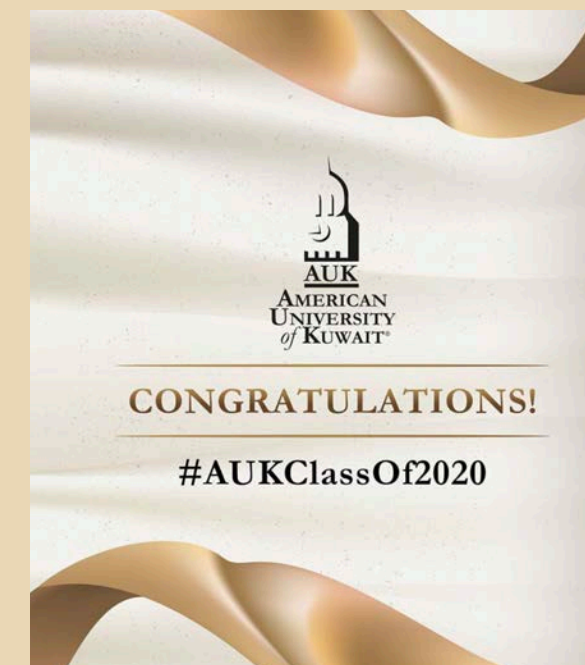
Even in a time of frustration, they will be the only ones to look at things in a better light, the ones to laugh off a professor's over-analysis of your paper. Semester by semester, they become a part of you and grow to know everything about you and you everything about them. The growth these relationships cause is indescribable and you realize, sooner or later, that traces of their personality have remained in you even when they're away. From the minor things, such as the way you drink your coffee or the jokes you make comes an unprecedented bond.

This is exactly what makes graduation so difficult. It is a mixture of the memories, the professors and the best friends that make separation painful. However, this is not meant to depress you about graduation, as I really am happy to move on with life. Nevertheless, it's important to acknowledge it's no easy process and with it comes a great deal of sadness.

Before anything else, before a graduation party, a robe, cape, or a proper job in a well-established company, I have a deep longing to live with at least one memory of mine again surrounded by those I love. My heart yearns to walk through Gate 3 and see them sitting outside Starbucks in winter at 6 a.m., to see everything in place—the blue HP laptop, the cold brew on the table, and the car keys, just how I remember them and how they've been for years. There is an urge to properly say goodbye to everyone I'd met along the way, to actually go into a crowded elevator or sit on the couches on the fourth floor.

Maybe then my friends and I can bombard the usual professor's office and have countless discussions with him, his endless patience for our shenanigans never something to be forgotten. Maybe I'd be able to laugh at the seriousness of a tiny friend walking in at noon always wearing sunglasses and chugging lattes to stay awake.

Or perhaps I would be able to have deep conversations about the future as we sit in my car, technically our car since we use it for everything.



But, the truth is the possibilities are slim and it is unlikely I will be able to live these moments again. It is a strange feeling to understand the saying “دوام الحال من المحال”, the permanence of something is impossible. But, I'll know even through a time like this, I will forever be able to say I've truly lived the university experience and have done everything I could've possibly wanted.

And this lack of regret refreshes me endlessly. As said once in The Office, “I wish there was a way to know you're in the good old days before you've actually left them.”

The Impact of COVID-19 on Freshmen

Maram Ahmad

Almost everybody would agree that going through college is one of the most difficult and stressful times of our lives. It determines our future. It prepares us for the "real-life," where we will be perceived as our developed selves.

We are supposed to figure out a career that we think we'll practice for the rest of our lives, and pursue a degree related to that field. It is an extremely tricky decision to make, especially if you have no idea what your strengths and weaknesses are.

Nevertheless, university is also a time for you to explore those aspects of yourself.

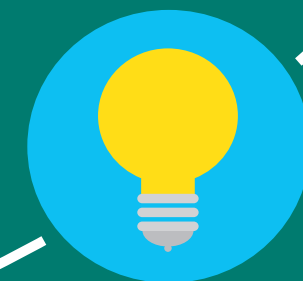
As a freshman, you are stepping into this stage terrified and excited. Usually, you know no one and you have no idea what is coming your way. With all this tension, universities generally provide resources like advising, counseling, workshops and many others in an attempt to ease the complications of being a first-year student.


Personally, my first semester wasn't that great, since it was only my first semester. I went through the typical issues that a new college student goes through; such as trying to fit in and hang out with a crowd for the sake of socializing, regardless of the crystal clear differences between them and I.

However, starting the spring semester, I was way more motivated and excited for my courses and the entire experience. I planned on changing my approach and altered my goals, which helped me sketch a better action plan to reach without allowing irrelevant distractions to get in the way.

I was determined to use the following experience to grow as an individual and a college student as well. But that didn't last long since the government decided to keep the country under lockdown, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

It was an important and thoughtful decision on their end, to prevent the virus from spreading quicker, which would've been a disastrous situation. In the beginning, I was very opposed to the idea of online classes, so I refused to take them when AUK first offered the spring online continuation program. Being quarantined for months was demotivating and uninspiring.





Additionally, being stuck at home with your family is not the most ideal environment to study and attend classes. This caused several mental obstacles for me despite my unlimited online access to AUK's counselors. Several of my friends as well found this challenging, especially those who participated in the online classes. None of them completed any form of formal education online before, so it was so foreign to them.

Challenges regarding communication, class meetings' environment, technical issues and even personal family matters that interfered sometimes, and disrupted their learning process, resulted in a lot of mental strain. Moreover, while battling that, they were expected to submit weekly assignments for their classes.

Despite all of the negative aspects of quarantine, life took a positive turn. I managed to keep myself busy by doing things I loved and learned new skills rather than going through the motions of the boring daily routine. I tried learning how to play the guitar. Although I was not so great with that, I could at least say I gave it a try and discovered it was not my cup of tea.


Moreover, I am a foodie, so I also spent countless hours looking up recipes and coming up with weird concoctions that I call snacks. I would even name my so-called dishes. I wouldn't call myself a chef, but I can definitely make a dish or two that taste good.

On a completely different note, one of my passions is digital marketing so I spent a good chunk of quarantine learning about that and enjoyed every second of it. I also started practicing the habit of journaling almost every day; that really helped me reflect and gain a lot of self-awareness at a time when I needed it most.

After that, almost all of my college peers said that their classes went really well and it just takes time to adjust and adapt, which helped me prepare for the next online block as that was my only chance to complete the spring semester. So far, I am doing great with my class as it comes to an end.

Lastly, this pandemic altered our first-year college experience in a way that we could have never thought of. As freshmen, the university environment is really helpful for us to cope with the barriers that we face on a daily basis. Being on campus is a completely different experience, which is exactly what makes the freshman year so crucial and special.

Overall, quarantine was a blessing in disguise, at least from my perspective. It provided for us collectively a chance to grow. I managed to spend a ton of time working on myself and tried out different things that sparked my interest.



The Pandemic from an Anthropological Perspective

Nora Al-Aati

Is life after this pandemic ever going to be normal as it was before? My answer is no. It may go back to normal in terms of services and facilities in the country, but in terms of humans, I don't think so. I feel like people have become aware of more things during this period of their lives than they ever did before.

Many aspects of life have been tested throughout the pandemic: leadership, the economy, businesses, the medical field, religious decisions, but most importantly, something very personal to yourself—you.



Whether you've been reading, working out, eating right, or pursuing some of your goals in the comfort of your room, you've been trying to make a change in your life and taking initiative during the months under our pandemic. You might disagree with me but think about it.

I don't know about you but my experiences during COVID-19 have definitely changed many aspects about my life: my personality, discovering new things about myself, and taking on activities that, pre-COVID-19, I normally wouldn't have. Since the end of February, during National and Liberation week, my family and I have been taking full precautions on physical distancing (I disagree with the term "social" distancing) and have been gradually getting used to life in quarantine.

We haven't been inviting extended family and friends into our home, we haven't been ordering out, and we barely leave the house unless it's for groceries or something urgent. Now this situation may be similar in your household or somewhat different.

I believe everyone is trying to cope with this life-changing event in their own way. Since the country is going back to "normal," people are gradually starting to cope with this pandemic easily. Many religious holidays, traditional customs, and some national events have taken place in Kuwait throughout the fight against the coronavirus.

National and Liberation day was different for my family because we didn't attend public events; instead, we remained in a secluded area at our family's chalet. Since the virus entered the country at the end of February, my family and I took precautions as early as possible. Similarly, the virus became the center of my family's conversations.

We were very worried about the spread and contamination of COVID-19 in our family; so as a group, we educated ourselves on how to remain safe and healthy during this crisis. My family and I also spent Ramadan, Gergeyan, and both Eids in a similar situation. Ramadan is a special month and its traditions are very similar from family to family, across the Muslim community.

Having iftar with a group of people, whether that be your family, friends, or a group at the mosque, is one of the many beautiful aspects of Ramadan that makes the month special to Muslims. Having Ramadan under quarantine was different as, of course, I wasn't able to see my extended family members and spend time with them. I only had iftar with my nuclear family.

Even then, the center of our conversations was on the coronavirus, but this time we were monitoring the number of cases, deaths, and recoveries. I also began noticing health commercials on Kuwait TV advertising safety practices on physical distancing and the dangers of being a victim to the virus. It was becoming serious and I wasn't sure how people outside of my family were handling life under quarantine.

However, I do know that there were people upset about the curfew and not being able to visit their families during religious holidays. How else is the country supposed to keep its people safe if they're not complying? Not only did we have to adjust our traditional and cultural customs during this pandemic, but we also had to comply with new educational techniques at school.

E-Learning changed many students' outlook on learning and continuing their education. Some students I know preferred online classes but some didn't, saying it was making them lazy and unproductive. I believe that there's something about physically driving to university that mentally prepared some students to learn and they didn't receive that preparedness throughout eLearning because they weren't used to it.

I agree, I did experience some laziness throughout the spring semester but it's normal. I was in the midst of finding a routine that fit my school and work schedule while making time for activities that make me happy. However, I feel like Ramadan made it harder for students to become productive during a time of significant change.

By now, we should be used to eLearning as we don't know whether we'll be continuing to study like this for a while or if we'd be going back to normal. We have to get used to change. Presently, it seems like people have been quick to respond to Kuwait's re-opening of places and services. It makes me think of whether the pandemic has actually changed us collectively or individually. As an anthropology major, I understand how important culture is in shaping an individual.

However, now more than ever, I've witnessed a change in our culture's approach to its own traditions and customs. We've been altering the way we do things to comply with global events, and to me, that will either change the course of our traditions or make people miss them even more which means things will probably stay the same.

I guess we won't know for sure what will happen until the pandemic is over. However, I will leave you with this. Think of yourself and your life before the pandemic. Not just about how you used to go out with your friends, or eat out, or go to the gym. No. Remember the way you used to think or perceive aspects of your life. Now, if things truly go back to how they were pre-coronavirus, will you go back to how you were or is this your new normal?

Escaping a Pandemic

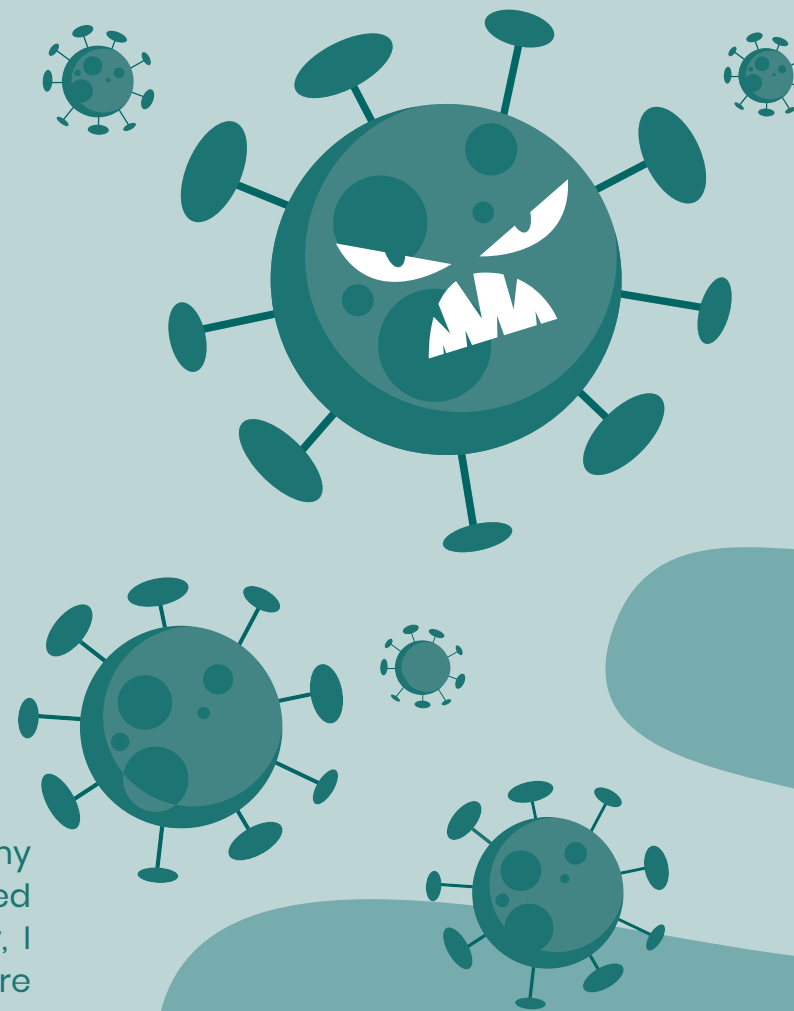
Sarah Nader Al-Hussaini

What is COVID-19? How do I protect myself from it? Will I always live in fear? These are possible questions I'm sure have gone through your mind, they have gone through mine, and it's scary. For the first few months I was incredibly terrified. There was not one type of mask, wipes, gloves, nor sanitizer that I did not have.

My hobbies switched from online shopping at Shein to Royal Pharmacy, Bath and Body Works and every other store that I knew sold any type of sanitization equipment; I needed to be safe. I was scared, as I should've been. Days passed and I thought I'd start to learn to live with it. I will admit, I got a bit careless, reckless, and almost forgot the pandemic still existed among us; until I got infected.

What's even scarier, I had a gathering the very next day—to think that I would've possibly been the reason my friends could've gotten infected gave me the chills! Thankfully, I got my results the night before and immediately began to isolate myself.

I was confused, terrified, and, more than ever, needed a hug that I knew I couldn't get from any of my loved ones. It's insane thinking you're fine one day, and the next you're waking up with a virus the entire world is trying to either escape or heal from. My experience with the virus was not the worst, thankfully. It was still horrible, but I was able to cope.



At times, I felt super tired, and on others I felt like nothing was wrong at all, which was the scariest part. Waking up for two weeks knowing you've been infected with a disease that is still unknown was anxious, stressful, and exhausting. I had difficulty breathing, general body ache, and the worst migraine; thankfully I had no fever. Having COVID-19 felt like the saying, "Expect the unexpected." You really don't know what to expect.

The day after my results, I had a checkup at the closest medical center by me; I was then sent to the isolation space in Khairan two days later. The drive to Khairan was full of tears but ended in laughter at the thought that it would soon be all okay again, and video calls with my family and friends would soon turn to physical hugs and company.

The space there was oddly relaxing, I had a beach view and a doctor a call away. During my 10-day stay, I used the time to reflect on my actions and self, and used all the free time to try new things.

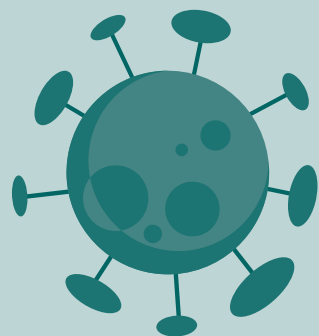
It was lonely at first, but the calls from everyone around me made me feel a ton better! It was tiring and alarming; I felt super unmotivated, sick and in need of company, it really was exhausting. I spent all 10 days of isolation alone. Although the area was filled with people, I still felt very alone without my friends and family. I



I continuously woke up feeling anxious. I began to overthink the first few days, but I learned to cope. It did not happen overnight, but I tried to work with it. I began to conduct breathing exercises, I set an alarm on my apple watch that helped me.

Every hour or so, it would remind me to either get up and go outside for a minute to walk around and breathe in fresh air, or just sit up and inhale and exhale deeply for a whole minute. It was calming and really helped me with my anxiety. I also tried to entertain myself by trying new things—they helped to distract me.

I removed every negative distraction I could possibly think of, more than ever I wanted to stay as positive as I could be. Personally, it's insane how it feels like I have completely changed in a matter of 10 days.



Subconsciously, I think I really needed time for myself, some deep alone time and this was mother nature's odd way of saying that! It's disappointing that it took me to be infected to realize just how real this pandemic is and to be more self-aware, but everything happens for a reason.

Isolation wasn't all bad though, I did discover a lot of new things like new music, new TV-shows, and watched a few movies I've always wanted to watch but didn't have the time for. I took some time off of my phone for the last few days and really focused on myself which was great.

Although it was lonely, it was a somewhat peaceful and eye-opening experience. COVID-19 has helped me more than ever to remember to stay aware and conscious of everything going on at all times; you really never know what happens next, it's important to be prepared and always take precautions whether a pandemic is upon us or not. I also learned a few tips to help protect myself from this virus that I think everyone should start doing as well:

Don't isolate yourself in your room forever, that won't protect you! Get out, breathe, take walks by the beach but make sure to keep some space between you and those around you. Masks are important. Please make sure you have one on and an extra pair in your purse or pocket! Wear gloves! But make sure you avoid touching your face while having the gloves on to avoid the spread of bacteria and the virus.

Keep on washing your hands! It's important. Make sure to eat lots of fruits and vegetables, they contain natural vitamins. Speaking of vitamins, increase your intake of vitamin D, C, E, and Zinc.

Make sure to get enough sleep and most importantly, please stay hydrated. Coming from someone who practically never drinks water, you really need to start drinking more; add rose water if you're like me and hate plain water! But also make sure you're having fun and living your life as you should and normally would but with precautions.

Remember to breathe. I know it's worrisome, but you need to remind yourself it's okay, and it will be okay—this is the most important part of being in a pandemic, it's insanely strange and worrying but you need to remind your subconscious that it will be fine. Read a few positive quotes on the daily, or maybe even just one before you go to bed and another when you wake up.

As cheesy as it sounds, it really does help spiritually, I promise! Try to surround yourself with positivity, the energy around you is so important.

Try new things! Buy a canvas and paint! Try molding with clay! Something new I did was buy a bunch of roses and paint on the petals, it was amazing! Yes, a pandemic is upon us, but remember to breathe and stay calm—it will pass, and it will be okay!



Lost Beauty

Anas Al Rasheed

A scene dedicated to my mother since I have not met her in several months due to travel restrictions.

Life and its Dimensions

Malak Hussein

It's early evening, you're in the middle of a very interesting podcast, you sit up and look over at your window. What do you see? The top of buildings and the skyline? The sea? The sunset? Well in my case I found myself looking at my neighbors' houses, they blocked the entire view of the private roads and the sky. Well let's just say it was there but very minimal. At first, I thought it seemed claustrophobic. But as I gazed intensely at its structure, its shape, texture, lines and color, it spoke to me. And so, I thought to change my perspective a bit and placed a bold solid red box right smack in the middle to create a different dimension. I placed a moon within the sun up above and thought if I can't get to see the sunset then that is fine, I can create an imaginary one in a different dimension. I then proceeded to add subtle details such as the woman seated on the edge between the 2 dimensions gazing upwards. As for the greenery, I felt it added some sort of life and a tone of peace into the image. The whole point of this piece, I believe, was that it had made me pay attention to the details that we often neglect in our daily lives. Sometimes those details allow you to change your perspective.





ACCEPTANCE

The Guide to Accepting COVID-19 into Your Lives.

Lavena Jacob

When the clock struck 12 on January 1st, 2020, there were ruptures of happiness emerging all over the world as it was considered a notable year. I believed 2020 was the year that I would slay my demons, achieve the unachievable, that this would be a glistening year—solemnly as the first two digits are identical to the second two digits.

Right now, being months away from January, I would oppose the pre-notion without a blink as I was being extremely superstitious. While there was a clear jump from being ebullient to feeling despondent, I would like to take you through a journey of 8 stages that I encountered whilst accepting the pandemic into my life.



Stage 1: Happiness

Well, you must be perplexed on why I felt that initially. When the University announced that we were temporarily closing because of COVID-19, I was worried momentarily but had a mindset that it's JUST a virus. The human race has evolved immensely over centuries and can effortlessly kill this pesky virus, right?

I was elated that I did not need to study for finals and the days coming forward would be my hibernation period. I was determined to use this time as my ultimatum to catch up on my missed T.V. shows and movies. Those were days that refuelled my system with ecstasy, and my joy knew no bounds.

Stage 2: Boredom

A few days and weeks went by in this routine as everything seemed nonchalant, even though the cases were slowly picking up. I tried to engage myself in trying out new recipes, improving my physique, brushing out my artistic skills; overall, I aimed for self-improvement. Those days were so soporific that I reached a stagnant stage in watching T.V. shows and was mostly reminiscing on the times I used to go out with my friends.

Whatever I did was in a perfunctory manner; life became so monotonous that I literally had to add banal items to my to-do list to give some purpose to my day.

Stage 3: Confusion

With the cases still staggeringly increasing, I had no idea where things were going. The government announced two weeks of public holiday and work from home. I was relieved with this news because this allowed my parents to spend more quality time with me, and a sense of solace was gained within my family. A new level of happiness and bonding was associated with it while we had meals together. Through this, I focused on my mental well-being and added more value to my life.

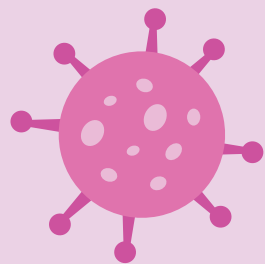
Stage 4: Angst

Adversely, as months proceeded, all I witnessed was the curve surging dangerously fast with no intention to flatten out. When the government announced curfews and lockdown, people started being frantic and began hoarding supplies. This truly brought out the selfish animalistic side to humans, as everyone became egocentric and did not even consider the elderly.

My parents purchased grains and long shelf life items as we were uncertain as to how long the lockdown would carry on, whereas my natural survival instinct was to buy crisps and chocolate for sustenance. With all the new rules imposed, people rushed into their homes and locked themselves inside as it felt like a safe haven in fear of getting the dreaded virus.

The bustling cities became dead as though a zombie apocalypse occurred. The life that we knew then had changed and became stagnant in a blink. The only uttered words were COVID-19, Corona, pandemic, lockdown, and quarantine; and I felt trapped in a never-ending loop.

The reiteration of those words was causing a void within me casually eating away my hopes and dreams of the pandemic ending soon.



Stage 5: Buoyancy

Whilst I was drifting in my vacuum of nothingness just to realize how absurd life has become, as a blessing in disguise, the university decided to continue classes online. I was extremely exultant as I finally, had something to keep me distracted from all the appalling things happening.

The first realization that I had was that I left my gym bag with my favourite shoes in the University locker and felt nostalgic as I never knew when I'd get them back. Due to having a busy schedule, I became systematic and determined that this minor inconvenience would not drag my lucrative spirit.

I was trying to stay afloat! I firmly held on to the glimpses of hope that the University will finally open in August, and everything would go back to how it used to be.

Stage 6: Frustration

Conversely, when the University announced that classes would not be onsite in August, all my hopes were crushed, just like a porcelain figure being scattered into millions of pieces.

I was infuriated that this minuscule virus was able to suck away my sheer happiness into oblivion. All the money I invested in stocks became nugatory as the pandemic had other plans in stock. I felt aggravated when I realized that COVID-19 is a conceited rascal as it wants to reign over the world, and ensure that the whole world would revolve around it; and all we ever would talk about is COVID-19 and its effects.

I wondered how a nano enemy could make me feel belittled so effortlessly, and this further antagonized me as I felt like life became constrained to four walls with barricades.

Stage 7: Freedom?

Despite being engulfed by complete negativity and disdain, a silver lining came forth when the government decided to reopen everything in small increments. I felt euphoric hearing this but simultaneously, I realized that even though there is freedom, people still would be hesitant to go out as the virus is still a factor. So, is this really freedom? It is more like partial freedom with masks, gloves, hand sanitizers— a social distancing that is still embedded with fear.

I became reluctant to expose myself to the outer world as I had to conduct strenuous tasks to ensure that my family and myself are protected when I came back home. Consequently, I naturally preferred staying at home as it was the easier and safer route.

Stage 8: Acceptance

At this point, you may have expected to read how I overcame the aforementioned

Well, the truth is: currently, I am accepting things for how they are. It is impossible to put a deadline on COVID-19 as we do not know when this pandemic will finally be over. The blame-game of whether this virus had a negative or positive impact on our lives is futile. So I believe the best strategy perhaps is to keep an open mind and adjust with things for how they are.

I would like to consider the past six months as a pause in my life. Right now, I have reached a mindset to finally press play; however, I am aware that many others are still struggling to do so, which is alright. Ultimately, we should not procrastinate and wait to do things once this pandemic is eradicated. Instead, we need to alter our mindset to accept this entity as part of our lifestyle and adapt to it with resilience.

Lake Natron

Abdulwahab Al-Qarooni

At one point or another, everyone grows fondly of riddles, but only of course we only like it if we know what the answer of the riddle is. For the most part, however, we love the challenge or actually we like something that juices our brains. The classic battle between the “come on think, it has to be obvious,” and the “it can’t be obvious, think outside the box.”

After that, when the riddle has been solved or the answer has been revealed, you start to discover how your brain approached the riddle and start to realize that everyone’s perception is clearly shaped differently.



So, what is your approach when you read the title “Lake Natron”? Do you think this article will be about the lake? Or is there a hidden meaning since the riddles were mentioned earlier? A lot of questions, possible confusion, and an eagerness for an explanation, which will spare your brain the epic battle of reaching a conclusion.

Take a step back and breathe, didn’t we all experience the same thing when COVID-19 first emerged? Even though we had some of the hints, and surely enough, some answers, we were still raising a lot of questions. Some of us had the answers and some of us didn’t, but the shock still remained intact. Now, what does Lake Natron have to do with all of this? Just like COVID-19, you will have to wait and see the connection.

Relating back to the subject of riddles, riddle me this: Poor people have it, rich people need it; if you eat it you die. What is it? The answer is “nothing.” Sometimes riddles take the life out of our brain, suffocate us, and disappoint us. Just like the virus, we had to do nothing. Do nothing but sit in your house till the universe unveils its next riddle for us to ponder and potentially can’t solve.

In this article, I’m going to talk about my jealousy and how COVID-19 impacted our world. Before you judge this article and say it is negative, just remember that the virus took quite a toll on humanity, affecting many aspects of our lives and changing it. This right here is nothing but a mere personal experience.

This has been my lifestyle for the past 6 months; this is my experience and most importantly, why I’m jealous. Lake Natron exists in Northern Tanzania, Africa; it is known for its extreme saltiness, and how everything that touches it dies. However, the reason I’m mentioning this lake, is that it is the birthplace of flamingos, which is extremely ironic.

How can a place that basically kills any creature be the birthplace of flamingos? Flamingos are beautiful creatures that are pink... Anything that is pink is obviously pretty—yet their birthplace is hideous. Flamingos are naturally adaptive and that is why, despite their beauty, the salt is the main component for their life.

That is the same thing that happened when COVID-19 emerged and decided to stay for a while, some people became flamingos and adapted, others were killed—I was killed when I touched the salt. The reason that I’m jealous is that I was not able to adapt like others. I didn’t pick up new hobbies and try to understand that there is change.

I was in tremendous shock; I didn’t have the appetite for watching movies, nor reading a book, nor even working-out in my room. I was even too gloomy to pick up the PS4 controller and decide to finish *The Witcher*. I never understood why I couldn’t adapt; I never understood how it is possible for a human to waste such incredible amounts of time.

It suffocated me even more. Celebrities were doing celebrity stuff, and parents across the world were surprising their kids with fun activities. Naturally, it raised the everlasting question, “Am I just not motivated? Or do I need someone to push me?” But I never figured out what I was supposed to do, and it made me realize, I just did not naturally adapt. They say time wasted having fun is not wasted time.

It was clear that I was not having fun, so I had to steer clear from the salt and quit being jealous. I decided to move on and be responsible for the sake of my own health. The first step was sacrificing the university life and choosing to take the eLearning option since I had opted out in the beginning.

Turns out it was a positive change, the second we opened our cameras and saw everyone with grown hair and beards, it was clear to me that I wasn’t alone. Despite seeing people on the news and posts from all around the world, seeing the people I personally know face the same experience ignited a positive energy that led me to direct my energy into something useful.

The eLearning experience was extremely helpful as it made me realize that my creativity was in sleep mode. The idea that I was waking up to do something productive cancelled all the distractions that were making me unproductive. It was the same goal before COVID-19 visited: say goodbye to your blanket so you can return to it at night with a rested conscience.

Also, I realized that COVID-19 is possibly the only reason why parents finally acknowledged the importance of social media, and get this, actually praise it. The world had to evolve and redefine its priorities. Social media has finally become a platform where we understood what was going on with businesses failing, witnessing the behind the scenes, and encouraging us to be socially responsible.

It was no longer just memes and resharing famous quotes. It became a place where we look for answers and send prayers across the world. Now my mom finally knows who Tom Hanks is? It was beautiful to see that all that was needed was a word of assurance. It was terrifying to see how the world was collapsing. It was, and still is, a platform that finally opened our eyes to fast news and changing lifestyles.

We are no longer brainwashed by targeted news that takes advantage by exaggerating and instilling fear in the lives of people; everything was exposed, everything was happening to all of us. We all lost jobs, we all lost money, and sadly, most of us lost our loved ones.

No one is superior, no one chooses to be the flamingo. Who knew that “wear a mask” is all that it really takes... Some will argue and say it is easy to adapt and become a flamingo, but no one really chooses to be. No one chooses his ability on how to deal with any crisis that takes place. The idea is not to beat yourself up every day and wonder whether you should have done something different or not.

The idea is looking forward to another day and trying to do something useful that makes you feel comfortable at the end of the day. What is the next step? That is another riddle that we will have to look deep within our souls in order to answer it, only this time, the answer won’t hopefully be “nothing.”





Quarantine Chill

Anas Al Rasheed

When the lockdown lasted a bit longer than I expected, I started cherishing all the liberties and freedom I had before all of this.

I just wanted to go for a brisk walk or at least a small journey but staying away from all the calamities and maintaining safety for myself and everyone in my vicinity. So, this art just fits about everyone, who wanted to chill outside while maintaining the best social distancing ever.

Coronavirus in the Past-Tense

Abdulwahab Al-Othman

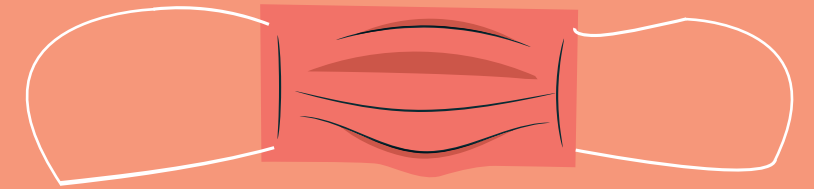
I remember leaving campus in February with an intangible sense of relief along with many of my fellow students. I, like others, looked forward to the national holiday as a brief week-long break from the catharsis of university spadework.

There was, however, a collective anxiety based in the uncertainty that was not fully realized nor understood by the students, the administration, and in a broader sense, even the world.

The dozen-odd days leading up to the break were turbulent; university trips organized by student clubs were placed on hold, but ultimately cancelled. The rhetoric among many was heavy in palpable deniability. How could a force be beyond our control? How could plans, festivities, and our own short-term projections be threatened by an inexplicable virus that came seemingly out of nowhere? It could not be. It was foreign, it was overseas,

It was foreign, it was overseas, distant—something that was rumored, something we read about on our phones; embellished and exaggerated when discussed in its initial stages among friends and family. But then suddenly, it became real—it was at our doorsteps. Six months since I left campus, I and everyone I know, have found ourselves at the cusp of a global pandemic.

It took some people longer than others to fully realize it, but for most, when April rolled in, and we had started taking our courses online, it became clear that this was not going to end anytime soon. Days blended into each other; the sense of time had begun to fade—the animation and idiosyncratic rhythms of our social and work lives had been evacuated. For the first time, we were truly confronted with ourselves—who we really are.



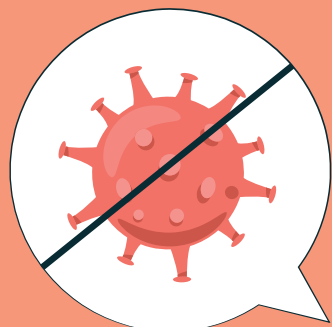
There were no distractions from it, not school, nor weddings, nor dewaniyas. All one had was their own mind ticking and the people they lived with, which to some was an opportunity to bond with those closest to them, but to others, a mind prison. Comparatively, the desire or urge to break away from an environment can develop into a pathology. Speaking candidly as a former smoker, the desire to smoke meant the decrease of cigarettes in my pack; it was the scarcity that created consternation.

The same could be said about the curfew—especially in May, during the twenty-two-hour lockdown. Suddenly the desire to go out surged—given only two hours for exercise by the government. Suddenly everyone became an athlete during Ramadan in the middle of summer. A truly surreal sight of entire blocks full of people wearing masks, walking for the sake of leaving home.

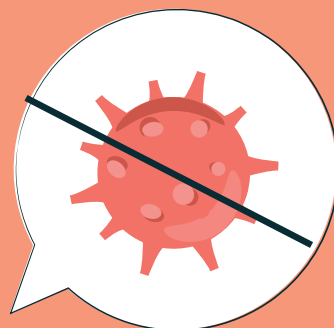


James Baldwin once said, “Home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.” Something that a lot of us are just learning now. In its most superficial sense, which is what it was to me, home was a layover, a place to eat and sleep, a transitional spot, a fugue state; something taken for granted or something that was tolerated before going along with our busy lives. Home was something separate from our professional and academic lives, we only allowed people we trusted, people we were close to into our homes.

Precipitously, and without much alternatives, colleagues, mentors, and co-workers were in our bedrooms, our living rooms, peering in through 960×720 webcams, surrounded by the residue of an adhesive, where a thin piece of tape once was. Home became the all-in-one—the whole and maximal destination where we slept, worked, and communicated with the outside world. It was an uncomfortable transition to hear the voices of people we once only heard in our classes, in our rooms.



The side-effects and consequences of a globalized world has taken a great deal from us, the most relevant being our freedom. Freedom to go where we please, when we please. Freedom devoid of consequence—not understanding what we once had until it was gone, even things that were once seen as a chore, such as going to work or school, now looking back can be seen as a luxury.



It’s that freedom, that we once all shared to varying extents—and to many younger people, me included, is all that we have ever known, a privilege that was once the status quo. Our entire world has been flipped on its head. Bearing that in mind, it can be transformative, a humbling experience—in the same way that people who lived through wars ended up being more beholden to the concept of normalcy, which will come with time.

I would figure that this is a period of introspection, reflection, and understanding of oneself. It’s a mirror and we’re all looking right at it. It could be a time of confinement as much as it could be a time of liberation.

It might just be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, a collective trauma that should not be wasted in vain; learn and grow from it because when normalcy returns it will make you stronger, it will make you more grateful.

Though it’s true that the finish line keeps getting pushed away the more we run, we will eventually cross it and look at this time in the past-tense. Make most of it with what little we have left, which hopefully, is also the remainder of the pandemic.



Moving On

Yasmeen AlHasan

*"What if 2020 isn't cancelled?
What if 2020 is the year we've
been waiting for?"*

- Leslie Dwight

There we all were: happy, celebrating the new year. It started off normally, like any other year. By February we started hearing about COVID-19 and that it's coming to Kuwait. No one took it seriously.

Public places like AUK started to put hand sanitizers all around, but everyone thought it was just a thing that'll pass in a few weeks. One thing led to another and COVID-19 took over the whole world. We had to change our lives in ways we never thought would change. Everything around us changed.

From malls closing, to home deliveries and online shopping. From quarantine and lockdowns, to online classes and Zoom meetings. We had to cope with what's going on, even if we didn't like it.

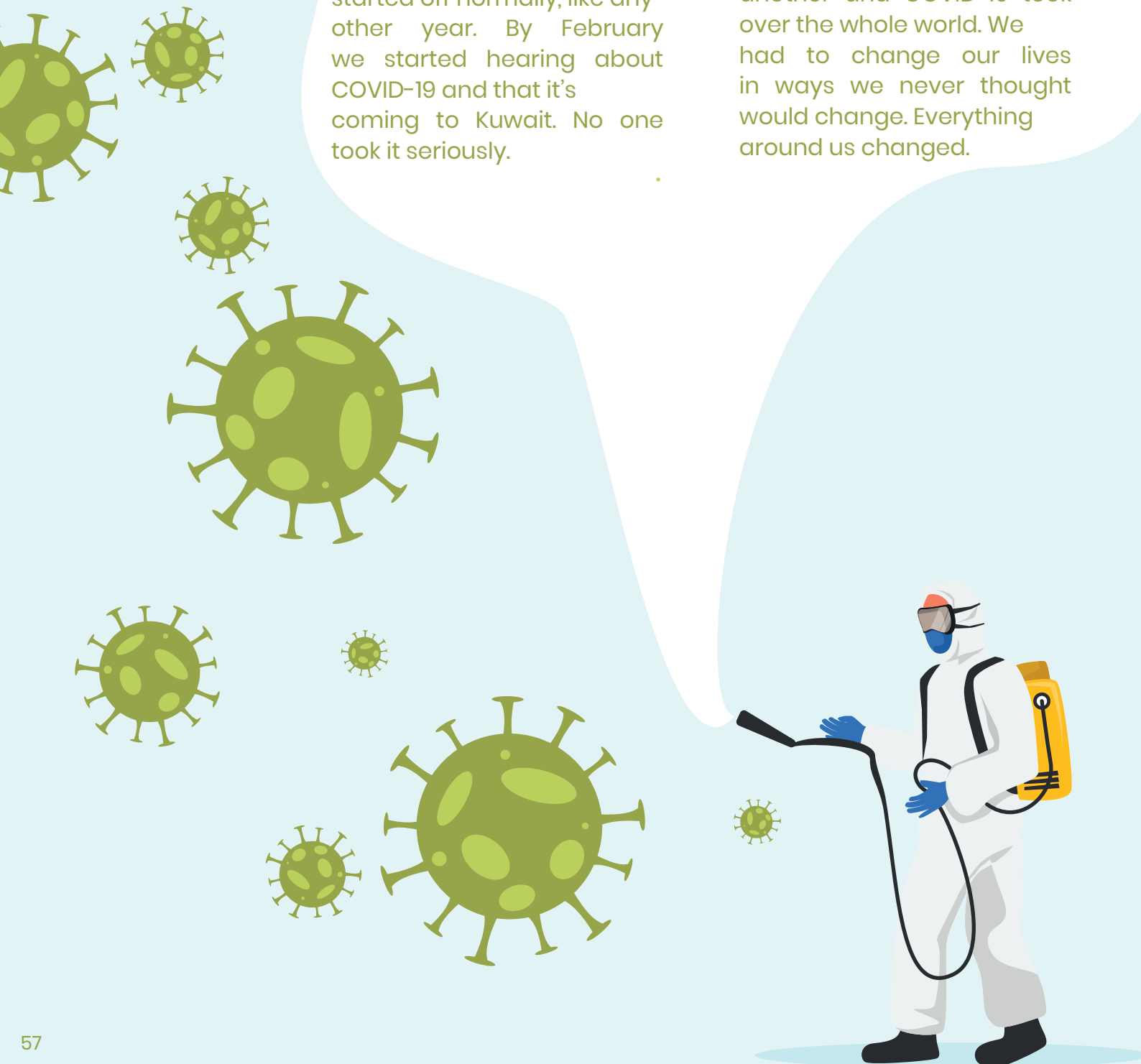
A lot of people saw this as the lowest rock bottom they can hit, but to be honest, the amount of masks that fell off, the amount of people who showed their true colors, the amount of friends who haven't been there for me, the amount of toxicity lifted from the skies, the amount of animals who breathed fresh air for the first time in their short lives, the amount of healing that happened to planet Earth, the amount of healing that happened to our heart didn't just astonish me, but cleared my eyes from the blindness it was in.

Coronavirus truly changed the world inside out. What gets me thinking the most is how a tiny virus did all this to the whole world. Wow, how things can change with a snap of a finger. Coronavirus literally paused the world. Since the world was on pause, I had the opportunity to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. I met myself without insecurities, without anxiety. I found out my strengths and my weaknesses. I saw my heart, and I saw how it was healing and getting stronger.

I saw the people around me. I saw who was oozing poison, and who was shining with light. I saw the ones with coal hearts and the ones with diamond hearts. I saw things in myself and in others that I never thought I could see.

Quarantine wasn't the answer to ending the virus, we simply had to "live with it," and that's what happened. Malls and shops started opening. Life slowly started going back to normal. Masks became the new norm. Gloves were essential. Hand sanitizers were inseparable. This is how we're going to have to live with it. As a good friend once told me, "you don't move on from it, you move on with it." COVID-19 is one thing—a virus invisible to the naked eye. The same concept applies to every other obstacle we come across in our lives.

That obstacle may be significant enough to put a pause on our lives for a while, but we eventually have to live with it and move on, but we don't just move on, we move on with it. We take all the lessons we learn with us. We take all the sadness and sorrow with us. We take all the good and joy with us. That's how we become better people. 2020, we're moving on, and we're taking you with us.

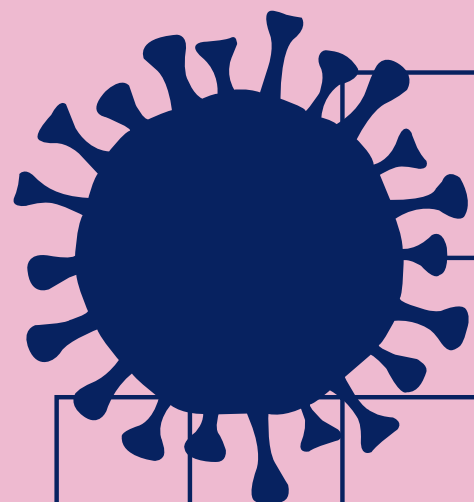


Last Words

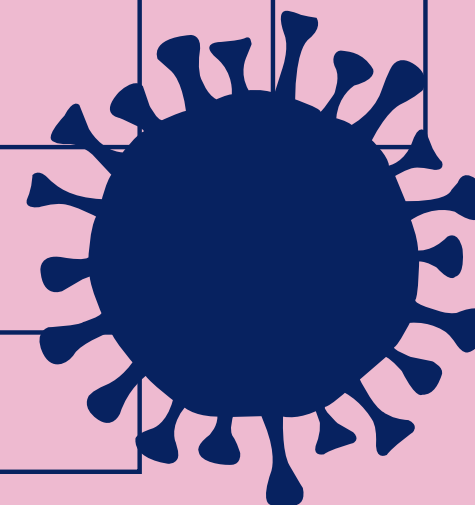
I wonder what my last words will be to you
Maybe we didn't talk for months or years
or days
But remember, my last words don't define us
They don't define who I was to you
I tried so hard to be the perfect person for you
I tried to pick my words carefully
Thinking before speaking
So that my last words won't leave us be
Sometimes I come off as person who doesn't speak a lot
But know that your words are heard by me

I'll cherish the little things that happen to me
Because I know that one day I won't be
I hold on to the bad and good because that's all I have to
hold on to
I don't have that person to hold me when I need to
Knowing that I made you smile, whomever you may be, is
the best mark to leave in the broken state of me
So my last words, may it be kind to your broken heart that is
crying over me
But it's okay. The thought of me is all I want to be.

AbdulAziz Redha



ADVICE



Ode to Memories

Memories flooding through the wind
Some wonder with sweet sublime
While others are tinged with sadness
No matter what, they all make me feel
gladness
As a monkey, I'm climbing trees
In the warm summer breeze
And laying on the grounds
Whilst hearing birds chirp and other
beautiful sounds
Playing as a kid in the park
And going home when it's dark
Getting bruised and crying
But then getting over it
Because it's not like I'm dying
Arguing with my friends
But then remembering
How much they mean to me

So much more
Than ordinary family
At times I wanted to escape
Or hide
From all the pain
You engraved inside
But then I stopped and thought
clearly for a second
In spite of me wanting to cry
I'm incapable of running away from
you
Because I'm unable to tell you
goodbye
So desperately I hold on
Hoping to never forget
These thoughts that hold your story
From the eyes of everyone you met

Shogh Farhanian

COVID-19: A Psychological Pandemic and its Media Repercussions

Malak Hussein

At the beginning of the pandemic, both parents and children have increased their technology and social media use. According to the Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking journal, those who experienced higher levels of anxiety were reported to amplify the usage of mobile phones to access social media and connect with people.

The increase in anxiety and usage of social media was a common factor when it came to many individuals in Kuwait. Almost everyone had some sort of media exposure, whether it be our parents who consumed information from the local news channels and WhatsApp messages or the teenagers/young adults who consumed the same information through various platforms on social media. Many questions prevail when it comes to the dissemination of information amidst the pandemic, one being how truthful and credible it is, in other words, how can we spot fake news?

And mainly, why were some mediums able to evoke fear from its audience? Why did we allow it to manipulate our emotions? Did you know, an overwhelming number of articles related to the pandemic mention the word "fear" or any other keywords related to it?

In an article written by professor and director of Research Development and Environment, Karin Jorgensen, the mission was to look into the use of emotional wording used in journalistic writing. Now we all know fear was the main factor that induced anxiety all around the world. Not only was the virus unpredictable, but people were forced to retreat and protect themselves against the "Killer Disease," as some U.S. media outlets chose to name it. One important thing to remember about the media is that it sets the status quo.

The media lets us know what to think of, they direct our attention to events/issues that they think are relevant and important. In this case, COVID-19 is a serious virus that affected some more than others, but wasn't necessarily as life threatening as other diseases. Because of the pandemic being the status quo of most mediums, some chose to expose the virus by using overexaggerated keyword/terms drowning the masses in fear.

Many studies and credible resources such as the NCBI Journal and Jorgensen discoveries revealed COVID-19 is not as dangerous as other diseases such as SARS or the Influenza. Interestingly, I learned when researchers went back to study and analyze the news coverage of these previous diseases, SARS and the Influenza, they concluded that none received an excessive amount of exposure as COVID-19.

Moreover, Jorgensen studied those media outlets for keywords such as 'fear'; anything related to that term was not acquired in these articles or any news mediums. At the beginning of the pandemic, and specifically in the U.S, COVID-19, being not as harmful as other diseases like Ebola, was scarcely spoken of in the media.

Instead, the fear of the outbreak conquered the news outlets and took a hateful turn as the rise of racism against the Chinese was established. As it was reported, the origin or outbreak of the virus was located in the heart of Wuhan, China. Social media blew up against the Chinese for that reason. If you recall, bat soup rumors started surfacing due to the supposed allegation of the Chinese animal market being unhygienic, which was broadcasted at the beginning as the main reason for the spread.

Almost all U.S. media outlets chose this detail as a main means of reporting, unjustly portraying China in a bad light by pointing its fingers towards it. A mass confusion happened later in a game of he-said-she-said as both the Chinese and U.S. media started to point fingers at one another.

China accused the U.S. for the spread of the virus and claimed it was not from an animal market, and vice versa. U.S. media coverage of this virus allowed for hate against Chinese and anyone who looked Chinese in the States to increase, especially on social media. One Chinese homeless man was recorded and posted on Instagram as he demands respectfully for Americans to stop harassing him; he was called names and told to go back to his country because the virus outbreak was "his fault."

That hate was extended worldwide due to its excessive exposure. In Kuwait, several posts on Instagram bashed the Chinese for eating bat soup, when rumors went around that the virus outbreak was allegedly due to this type of cuisine. I've read several comments that expressed disgust and disrespect to the Chinese culture and numerous racist jokes.

Similar use of hate and terminology was also used locally on Kuwaiti social platforms when restrictions of certain areas took place, such as Mahboula, Hawalli, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Farwaniya. It's known that most of the residents who live in these areas come from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, and Egypt. Although the country was pushed to do precautionary plans, the virus was spreading at a fast pace. Unfortunately, the rate of infection was high in these areas due to crowded and tight spaces of accommodation that inherently made social distancing hard.

To limit it from spreading further, full curfews were imposed on those large areas. At a time where uncertainty and fear consumed everyone, and with the rise of ridiculous rumors that may have aided that fear, the people who live in those areas were portrayed unjustly.

Certainly, hate against expats and xenophobia prevailed during these testing times. On Instagram, Indians were labeled 'dirty and smelly' and that's why they got sick. Ridiculous fake news of two Egyptian women running around with no gloves in a store to 'purposely contaminate the surfaces' with the virus, spread like wildfire on WhatsApp adding more fuel or fear to the excessive/oversaturated COVID-19 related media exposure.

These examples are nothing compared to other numerous and obnoxious amounts of rumors that were circulating the nation. In fact, to lessen the widespread fear, the Kuwaiti government had issued fines to whomever participated in the spread of 'fake news' on all kinds of socials. Psychologically, most people around the world were in a fight-or-flight mode. We were defending ourselves against an unforeseen and unpredictable enemy. Suddenly our lives took a full 180 flip.

Our normal activities and routines paused. Every individual may have dealt with it differently, but we certainly can't deny how it affected everyone both mentally and physically. Being fully quarantined, exposed to several media outlets, and the spread of fake news gave birth to anxiety and depression.

Our immune systems crashed, and the fear of getting sick with the virus pushed some people to fight others on social platforms to point fingers and accuse. In addition, the fact that the usage of different types of media and technology increased during the quarantine, everyone looked at those tools either for entertainment, connection, and/or to receive news.

Triggering the fight-or-flight response in a pandemic filled with uncertainties may have led to various problems. We are not put in an immediate danger where we are defending ourselves against a predator, and we know that, but the fear consumes our brains. When we are guided by fear, our choices and certain decisions we take may not be as rational. An example may be the excessive hoarding of toilet paper in the U.S. or the excessive hoarding of food supplies in other regions.

Fear triggers our survival mode, meaning "me first." Once it's on, usually the outside world and other people won't matter as much as you. In a crisis such as this pandemic, we must all step outside our personal circle and contribute more to the community to overcome it—to help, to connect and to solve problems together.

We need each other to survive. So, how did the local news in Kuwait cover COVID-19? Upon closer analysis, it refrained from using emotional terminology. For example, KTV news remained objective when it came to informing its audience, it didn't use 'fear', but rather reassurance. The anchors gave the objective hard news but then resumed by stating words such as unity, collaboration, and patience to tackle the disease.



Teenagers and adults willingly collaborated and volunteered to help, offering extra hands in the supermarkets. Donation drives of all sorts were available for those who needed it the most, specifically the areas that were on full lockdown; those who had huge platforms 'locally' chose to raise awareness and further shed light on such struggles encouraging people to participate/ volunteer and to send essential packages.

As social media consumers and viewers, we must understand and deconstruct the information being pushed on us and question it. It was drawn that fear was used as the main tactic on some media platforms/news to manipulate emotions and how that manipulation caused individuals to become more anxious. With every struggle or problem there must be a solution.

Lambda Pi Eta held an event to highlight the significance of media and its effects on our mental health. The event established an understanding of how media during a pandemic communicated to its audience and how its repercussions had a significant impact on our mental health.

And in this case, LPE thought it's very important to establish an awareness when it comes to the information being consumed. On the other hand, it is important to openly discuss the emotions one experiences during a challenging period and innately discover ways 'together' to understand and cope with such mental and physical struggles.

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COVID19 & Quarantine

Farah Saad

This was the year I didn't see coming—nor did any of us. 2020 was a year full of surprises and the biggest one was the spread of the global pandemic that we are still facing. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 was identified in December 2019, the world has never been the same again.

This virus has travelled the whole world at the speed of light, posing enormous health, economic, social and environmental changes in every strata of the world. It's been an overwhelming period for all of us. Millions of people got infected and thousands died. Many different businesses were in danger.

Face-to-face meetings were no longer an option and working from home became the new normal. Economic crises appeared raising the rates of unemployment.

People's exposed faces were soon to be covered with masks walking at least six feet apart; not to forget the psychological problems many people faced. And yet, we tried our best to survive and cope with the new lifestyle this virus has brought us. As with everyone else, it was a great challenge for me.

But with time and between the chaos I learned how to deal with the unusual change that happened, the slow-paced phase of life that we encountered. Amidst all of the mess I tried my best to find a place to breathe and I never stopped looking forward.

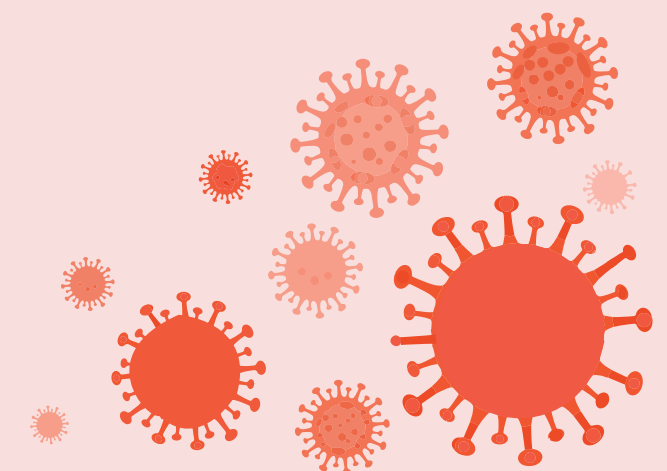
This period made me appreciate the smallest things that weren't clear to me when life was moving fast. I took the journey of self-discovery within quarantine, along with enjoying every minute I spent with my family.

I successfully finished my first year at AUK, read a lot, listened to music, exercised, and practiced yoga. It was nothing very special, which made me realize that maybe this strange stage was meant to let us rest, take a deep breath, and learn that it's totally fine if we stopped being productive for a while.

There were a lot of unstable moments and uncertainty but I kept hoping and I knew deep down that we are going to get it together somehow. This was the year I didn't see coming, but it was an eye-opening experience that taught me something great. Everything happens for a reason.

I discovered that in life, we dream, we plan, we wish, but eventually we cannot control what actually happens as everything is organized by the hands of God. But we should never lose hope, because that is what keeps us going.

Getting back to the pre-COVID-19 life is going to be a long and difficult task, but until then, we should all keep calm and safe. For me, I'm preparing for my third semester with high hopes and big dreams wishing everyone health and safety.





Life as I know It

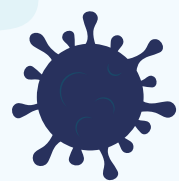
As I lay down in my bed
I look up into the void
Obsidian sky, dark night
As I was thinking about the good
memories Stars began to glow
Illuminating the empty dark place
One by one starts appearing
Filling the sky like polka
dotted dress
Now I lay in between
Not knowing if I should go back
down

Or ascend higher to the heavens
Not barking in this new adventure
because I know me
I know I'm not the person who goes
out of his comfort zone
A zone that has been preserving
me
Yet I know in my bones that I should
let go
Knowing once I cut ties with
earthly things
My soul would be weightless
Flowing midst all this darkness
Knowing that my weightlessness
will set me free



AbdulAziz Redha





Nostalgia Surge

Kawthar Al-Hamer

So, I was having a perfect time on holiday with my family in late February of this year. We have a good time, we get back home, and quarantine is a thing now. We had to stay at home for God knows how long, all in the name of health and safety?

Cool! Seriously, I didn't really mind that much. Instead, I was honestly relieved. I'm a homebody, so really, this whole "stay at home" thing was a piece of cake... for the most part. There were some anxieties that I had to deal with, of course.

There were online classes, a lack of socialization, a bunch of world issues popping up on my feed, and the never-ending demons in my head telling me sweet and mean nothings about myself, resulting in crying myself to sleep almost every night. You know, just the usual. That last part though, was thriving during quarantine.

Before the pandemic took the world by storm, I was always out. Whether it was university, errands, or typical casual outings, I spent more than half of my day outside the house. Most of the time, I didn't like being at home; specifically, I didn't like being in my room. That might sound odd, but it's always been associated with loneliness for me.

I spent my last three years of high school isolating myself from everything and everyone. And for a while, just sitting in my room kind of made me sad. At the beginning of quarantine, I did keep myself distracted. My family members were around, and I had online classes to deal with, so I didn't really reflect on what was going on internally.



But now, with my family working, and me having a lot more time to kill, I started reflecting and it was anxiety-inducing. Sitting in my room, I thought about all of the bad stuff that happened during my last three years of high school. I felt the self-doubt, lack of self-worth, the ever-growing loneliness, and I just wallowed in all of that again for a few days until I realized that I got through them.

I am where I am today because I got through all those terrible and lonely nights. I did that by doing things that I liked back when I was 16. And I'm getting through that again now...by doing those same exact things. I am now going to list many things that my cringey 16-year-old self enjoyed that I am currently enjoying at this very moment: I've been listening to the entirety of the Five Nights at Freddy's songs by Living Tombstone, I am watching a bunch of Adventure Time, which was the absolute peak of my childhood.

I started writing a blog and being ACTUALLY committed to it instead of writing one post saying, "I'm going to be posting more!" and then do the opposite of that. I've started re-watching animes, making me slowly fall into my weeb phase again. I am also listening to the entirety of the Steven Universe soundtrack.

I've been playing those songs on the ukulele, which I haven't picked up in a long, long time. This is the most embarrassing of them all, but this is the thing that I am obsessed with the most... I have been playing a lot of Mystic Messenger! That game basically got me through my senior year of high school.

It never fails to make me feel giddy or fluttery in the inside whenever I hear that ding at around three in the morning, telling me that a new chatroom has opened. Never fails to get me. So, those are some of the things that have been getting me through quarantine. They may be cringey, and I know they are, but I don't care? The only difference between past me and current me is that I would care so much about what someone thought of me.

I felt like I had to stop liking some of my interests to fit with someone else's. I know that's not the case, and I'm super duper glad I got over that type of thinking. Realizing that has made me less anxious and stressed about everything going on right now. And for the first time in forever, I'm finally chillin'.





REarth Birth

Malak Hussein

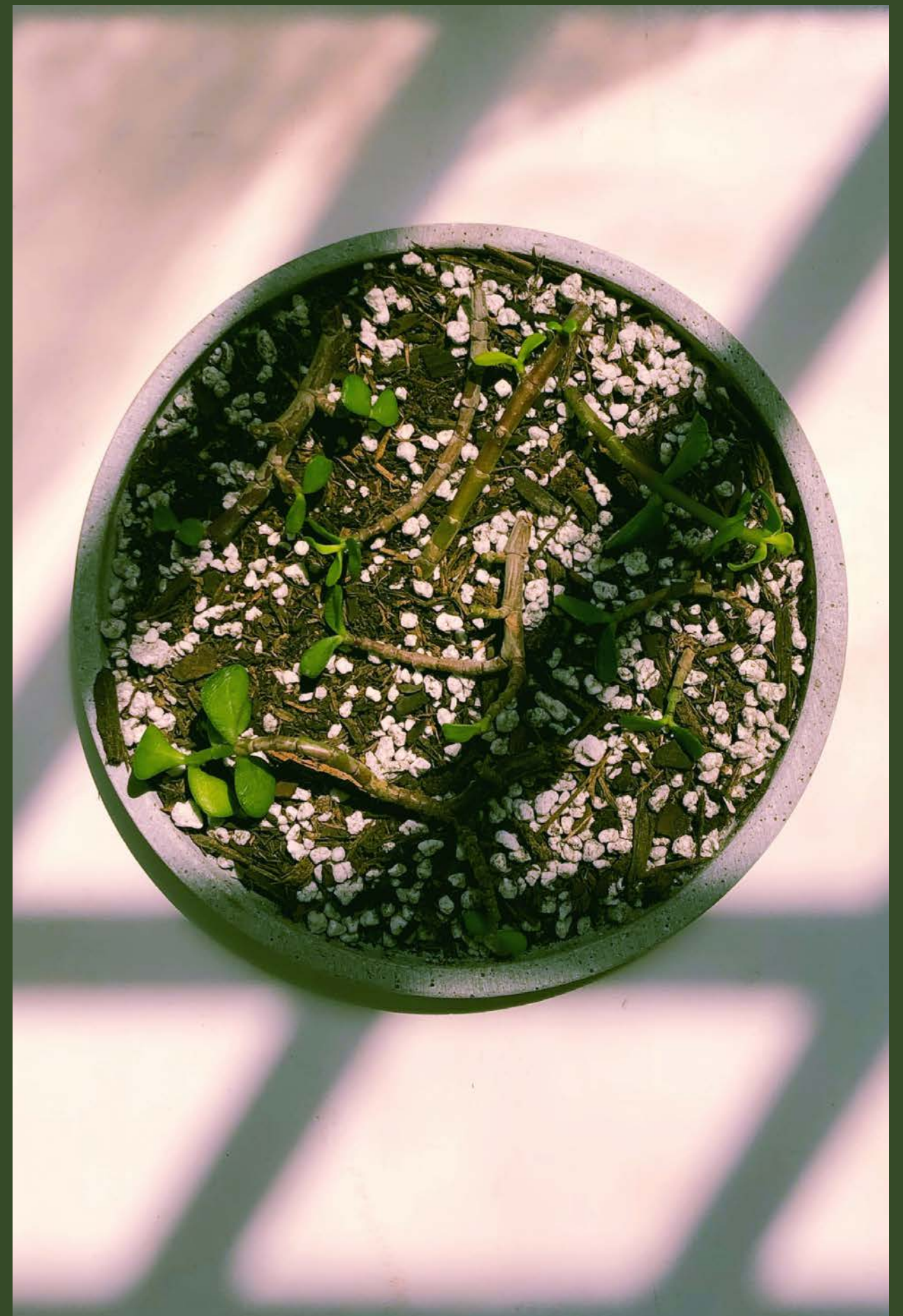
What do you see? Fire destroying a spherical object or fire igniting the energy of that object? You see, fire can be interpreted in many different ways. In the realm of dreams, fire is seen as a symbol of passion, destruction, purification, or transformation. Now, my mind chose to see that fire as a sign of transformation not of destruction. The spherical object in the middle is in fact our mother Earth. Given the current circumstances and the possible readings of dystopian themes, my mind decided to paint a positive result. In other words, despite the negative outcomes of such situations, Earth underwent or is still undergoing a rebirth process, just as how a phoenix would rise from the ashes anew. Now I would like to point out that I'm no artist and that my painting skills are that of an amateur, but I truly find art to be therapeutic.

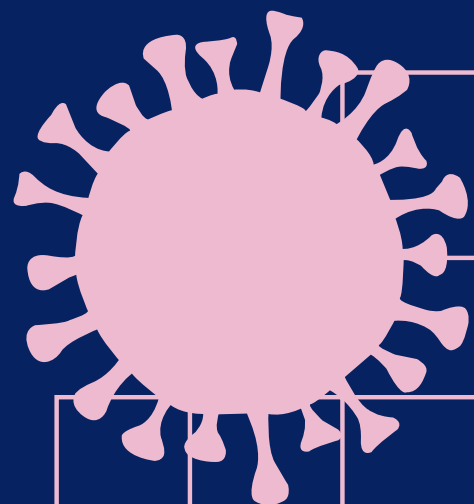


Snapseed

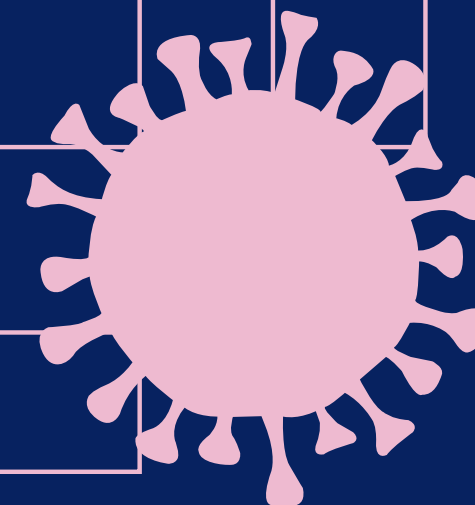
Fatemah Al Hashemi

Since the early days of quarantine, I had some of the most unexpected friends contact me through calls or social media checking up on me and my mental health, all assumed I must've been taking the confinement the hardest being an extreme extrovert with an extremely busy and fast-paced lifestyle in the urban outdoors. Like everyone else, my daily routine has come to a halt, yes, and as much as I missed my weekends' 8AM coffee downtown, my favorite café noises and strangers' voices and the slight discomfort of working in a public space, I was slightly happy with the calm of being home. I quickly found myself adapting and compromising and turning different corners of the house into my own cafe/office. What I struggled with was at first the severity of the uncertainty, but after the ministry I work at announced a new plan for the school year and AUK announcing eLearning, I felt like I regained some ground to stand on. The lack of real structure and routines my personality thrived on, and the days melting into each other still made me feel like a fish out of water. So, I did what I do best given the situation and looked for that feeling of routine and structure in something else. I attempted calendar-blocking every hour of the day and giving myself small projects to occupy my time. Nevertheless, I still needed something that required urgency and worry that carried much responsibility and accountability to keep things from falling apart. Eventually, I ended up investing in my own urban jungle to keep, grow, and take care of, refreshing my education on botany, and turning what I have believed to be all black thumbs into velvet green. Fingers crossed I don't end up killing all of them as my life slowly moves back to being packed and busy.





Hobbies & Interests



Combatting Hopelessness in the Midst of a Pandemic

Fadeela AlSabah

Feeling burnt out and unmotivated have been prominent emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As staying at home has been mandatory for months, this pandemic left many people confused and in a state of hopelessness. The shift from normal life to social distancing happened rapidly, and it made a major impact on the whole world.

Life since March has not been an easy feat. In the first few months of quarantine, I had this notion that my personal creative outlets were somewhat limited due to staying at home, which was not true at all. I had let myself stray away from the hobbies I enjoyed participating in, such as playing the piano, reading, studying film, and creating music.

However, I rediscovered what brought me joy and began taking up the aforementioned hobbies once again. Rediscovering my true self and what I enjoy doing has been the main factor in eliminating occurring feelings of hopelessness during this pandemic. As a communication and media major, the COVID-19 pandemic brought forth new perspectives of what I have studied.

Since this pandemic is fairly unprecedented in recent times, we are seeing a wide array of companies dealing with this crisis and managing to combat it with advertisements and powerful media messages that inform, persuade, and entertain consumers to stay hopeful, all the while trying to survive this calamity.

Although this time is quite dispiriting, it also allows me to study and learn how communications and media can change in an instant to cater to people's needs. As life is slowly getting back to normal, it is vital to comprehend that feeling hopeless is only a matter of time since difficult matters tend to always come to an end sooner or later.

Nevertheless, it is safe to say that this pandemic has taught us how to cope with our surroundings in difficult situations, and it opened our eyes in rediscovering our true selves in times of desperation and vulnerability.





Cooking & COVID-19

Nawaf Al-Mahdi

Restaurants and cafes are an important aspect in Kuwait's lifestyle before the COVID-19 pandemic of February 2020. The pandemic caused a panic amongst busy families who do not have time to cook homemade meals.

From my side of the story, I used to cook as a hobby when I was in both middle and high school, but did not have time to enjoy it because of university. Now that I am a fresh graduate, I have had more than enough time to practice cooking again as a hobby.

1. What did you start with first?

I love baked goods and pastries because it is my weak spot when I visit new cafes and restaurants. I first started with savory goods from the North American cuisine, starting from butter garlic biscuits, pizzas, calzones, cinnamon rolls, to German Bundt cakes. The reason why I started with baked goods is that it is an easy route for beginners.

2. What recipes from other cuisines have you tried cooking?

My favorite cuisines are South African, Chinese, and Greek. The recipes that I have tried from these cuisines are the following dishes:-

South African:-

A. *Jollof rice*: a spiced red rice made from a blend of spicy peppers and aromatic herbs, as well as onions and garlic.

B. *Chakalaka*: baked beans with julienned bell peppers and curry.

Chinese:-

A. *Orange Chicken*: cutlets of chicken thighs/breasts marinated in a batter of starch and egg yolks, fried and mixed with a sweet and sour orange-flavored sauce.

B. *Chow Mein*: a chicken noodle dish full of different spices—very popular in the Chinese American cuisine

C. *Lo Mein*: a basic noodle dish with soy sauce and oyster sauce.

D. *Pilaf Rice*: a dish from the North Western regions of China. It can have chicken, beef, or vegetarian. Very delicious with a side of Greek shepherd's salad.

E. *Egg drop soup*: a basic soup dish full of protein—and you guessed it, it has silky shreds of egg batter poured into the soup on a very high heat so it cooks fast.

Greek:-

A. *Chicken Gyros*

B. *Spanakopita*: a tasty pie made of filo pastry and filled with feta cheese and spinach.

C. *Tzatziki*: a thick creamy yogurt mixed with squeezed shreds of cucumber, cilantro, parsley, and extra virgin olive oil.

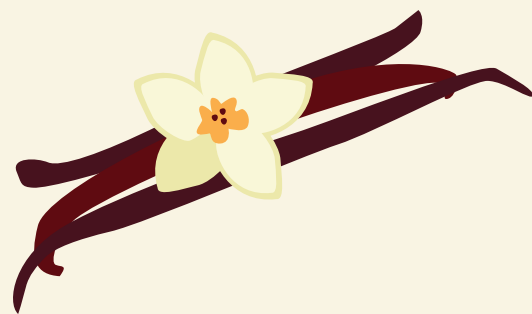
D. *Mousaka*: a dish made from thinly sliced egg plants, potatoes, and minced meat topped with thick bechamel sauce and mozzarella cheese. It is oily, but worth every calorie.

4. What sources do you recommend for beginners who want to start cooking?

There are many channels on YouTube that can help with learning how to cook basic dishes, but the channels I specifically like visiting for recipes are the following:-

A. *Souped Up Recipes*: the owner of the channel has different playlists on cooking different Chinese dishes from basic to advanced, and even has a playlist for those who are in a gluten-free diet, keto, or vegetarian.

B. *Xiao Ying Cuisine*: Xiao Ying Cuisine is a Chinese channel with different closed captions (subtitles) and offers fascinating dishes from different regions of China, usually cooked by steaming, making broths, noodles based dishes, and breakfast dishes as well. Highly recommend for health nuts!



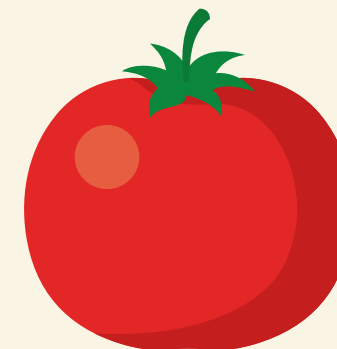
C. *Osama Al-Qassar*: Osama Al-Qassar is a Kuwaiti chef who has his own YouTube channel and Instagram account (@osama_alqassar4), and his videos are in Arabic. He cooks both Kuwaiti/Middle Eastern dishes and recreates foreign dishes from different cuisine that fits the Halal requirements (since the Middle-East forbids using alcohol and pork).

His description of the ingredients and steps of the recipes are very straightforward yet professional, I highly recommend you fellow readers to look him up if you want to learn about cooking as a hobby.

In conclusion, cooking does require patience, and you should not be a stickler about it. Have fun doing it with your siblings and friends because it's a life-long skill that will keep your stomach happy.

Tomato

A tomato ponders
Contemplating – fruit or not?
A vegetable perhaps?



Fishy Article

Isehaq Al Shamel

Introduction:

Fish-keeping is a challenging and time-consuming hobby that requires serious commitment to sustain healthy fish. Yet, it is a rewarding and thrilling experience that provides some kind of satisfaction after a long day of running around.



I haven't been keeping fish for a long time to be able to call myself an expert, and I still have a lot to learn as I'm still new to the hobby; however, I can confidently say that I started off with one fish tank and as of the writing of this article, I ended up having 12 fish tanks and 2 more on the way.

Again, I am not an expert but I have learned the basics of fish-keeping that I would like to share and give you an idea of, hoping to encourage you to enter this thrilling hobby. When I Started Fishkeeping The way I started fishkeeping was....well actually unintentional. You see, it was back sometime in July 2020, while I was working on my capstone graduation paper.

One day my mother shared her desire to have fish again. Back then, we used to have fish, with the longest fish to survive with us only dying less than a year ago—it lasted 2-3 years with us. I, back then, never had any interest in raising fish.

At the time when my mother proposed the idea to me, I was too focused on graduating, daydreaming on how I would react on campus once I received my final grade, that good feeling of finally finishing my studies after 7 years of kicking and screaming. Anyway, my mother wanted to have fish; so to reduce the stress, I thought to myself that I could cool down by distracting myself from the anxiety caused by the capstone paper.

But with sweet COVID-19, which contributed to my graduating funny enough, plaguing the world and shutting down literally everything, going to the pigeon market isn't wasn't an option.

Thankfully not everything closed, and with the help of PetZone I was able to run an aquarium and get everything I needed, but not the fish. Thanks to social media, especially Instagram and its trend in online businesses, I was able to get in contact with this amazing man who owns a farm in Wafra.

In addition to growing vegetables, he also raises Malawi Cichlids (a type of fish from lake Malawi, duh). In other words, while pet stores import fish from abroad, mainly from South East Asia (which I have come to find out as I researched this hobby more), this man managed to have a fish farm for pet-keeping and become a supplier to the pigeon market.

How do I know? When the pigeon market reopened again, I saw that they were selling cichlids that were the same kind of fish I bought from that man, and slightly priced higher than what our fish-farmer friend was selling. Though originally the fish were meant to be for my mother, I personally started to get attached to them.



Again, one reason was to reduce stress of the workload during the day, but another reason was the sense of commitment that got me attached to the fish.

My main goal was simple: I wanted to provide a dignified and healthy life for the fish. Though they are easily replaced fish as they are cheap, the real challenge is to keep them alive and watch them grow from a tiny spec into something that is as big as my hand.

I have tried to raise pets previously, a green iguana and before that 4 turtles. We also tried keeping a parrot, but it also ended up dying. That's where I got my sense of commitment; I really didn't want the fish to get wasted like my previous attempts of keeping pets.

The Ups and Downs to Fishkeeping :

Unlike cats or dogs, there is little to no interaction between you and the fish; but in the long run the fish will get excited every time you approach them. Mainly, this is because they think you will feed them, but it's still fun to watch them swim towards you.

It is essential for you to keep an eye on your fish if you intend to learn anything. Fish tend to behave in a particular way; if something is wrong or if they are having a blast, you will be able to observe that, which is one of the reasons why it's entertaining to have them in your living room.

You need to observe the fish tank for any symptoms of something wrong. For instance, one of the issues I observed is swim bladder disease, and how did I know? The fish was swimming upside down.

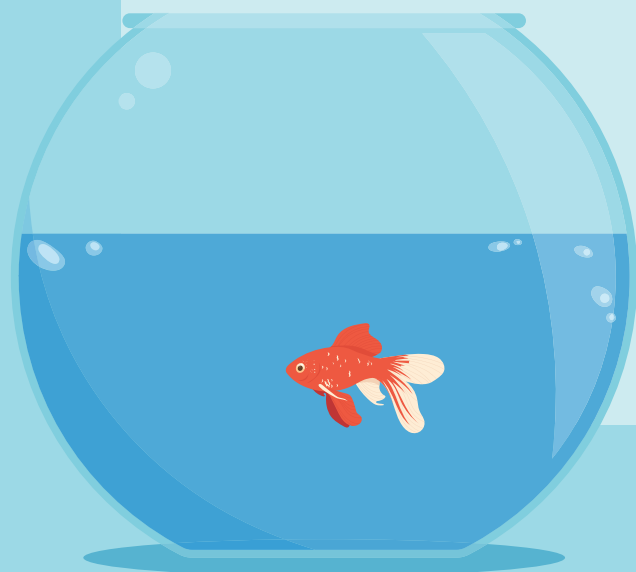
So, a quick Google search about what exactly is happening inside your fish tank will help you learn the cues and symptoms of unusual behavior and save your fish.

For example, symptoms of a pregnant cichlid are:

1) Mouth is mostly closed, that is because cichlids are what they call "mouth breeders," they host their eggs inside their mouths for protection.

2) A pregnant cichlid will not eat, for the previously mentioned reason.

3) They are always in hiding. Learning these symptoms before they gave birth made me move fast and separate them from the rest of the pack, since the fry (baby fish) will be at risk of getting eaten by the elder cichlids.



By the time of writing this article, three cichlids have given birth.

Of course, as mentioned before, fishkeeping can be time-consuming, as you will need to prepare the tank, set up the equipment to sustain life, have essential weekly maintenance and so on. Moreover, this is subjective, but you may fall into an obsession and expand your aquariums which can get overwhelming, so stick with one fish tank.

Another flaw about fishkeeping is that there isn't a vet in Kuwait that is specialized in fish, though you can find medicines for particular diseases. Consequently, sometimes illnesses or injuries can be fatal.

On the other hand, fish do not require a lot of attention; after you establish the tank, and provide the weekly maintenance, you do not need to spend any further time with the fish unless you want to.

You can simply feed them in the morning and forget about them for the rest of the day until dinner time. Another perk of fishkeeping that is related to religion, as unlike cats and dogs, fish do not have the najasa penalty.



Final Thoughts

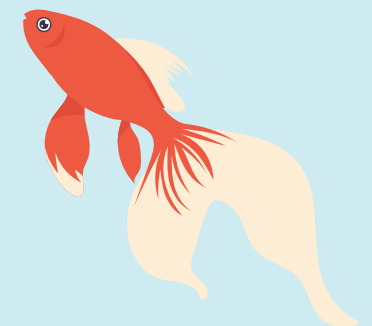
Fishkeeping is fun; honestly, I've made attempts to keep pets before, but by far fish are the easiest (or maybe because I'm bad at keeping pets, I don't know). Yet, like a dog, cat, or bird you name it, it requires constant care. However, unlike other pets, it is sometimes difficult to figure out fish problems before it's too late.

This is why when you keep fish as a pet, you require patience; fish are fragile to sudden changes. I've tried saving a goldfish from an illness, but I ended up killing it. Fish can also die from recklessness of the owner if not careful. Mistakes are bound to happen, but the most important thing is that you learn from them.

This does sound cliché, but it is the cumulative experience that actually determines a successful fish tank. Right now, I have over 40 fry in a fish tank of their own in addition to the cichlids I initially had; about an estimation of 20 fry will increase once the pregnant cichlid gives birth.



Other than that, I really hope that I did justice to the hobby. Like I mentioned before, I am not an expert and I've only been doing this for less than a year. Hopefully my experience gave you an insight on fishkeeping in general and I hope that it encourages you to try it out.





TRASHTAG KUWAIT & COVID-19

Retaj Ashkanani

“TrashTag” started off as an Internet challenge and hashtag where people would gather up to clean the most littered areas in their country. TrashTag Kuwait is a non-profit organization started by co-founders, Carina Maceira and Yousif Al-Shatti. Their goal is to “Fight the negative environmental impacts of marine litter and waste pollution in Kuwait.”

TrashTag Kuwait hosts weekly clean-ups, usually on Saturdays, where people can volunteer to clean beaches or even parks. They have also hosted volunteer work when it comes to distributing food to people in need before and during the pandemic, working with kids, visiting NBK’s Children Hospital, and educational meetups.

Clean-up details are usually posted on their Instagram page @Trashtagkuwait. Although the pandemic is still going on, TrashTag Kuwait still continued their weekly beach clean-ups, but with precautions. People usually ask, “How do I sign-up? Do I have to bring my own equipment?”

Well, when going to an event, TrashTag members provide all essentials for you. All you need to do is bring yourself and your reusable water bottles. The members set up a table where you can grab reusable bags and gloves, even ‘trash pickers’, and water to refill your bottles. Currently, due to COVID-19, they also provide masks, sanitizers, and urge to keep distance from one another.

I have been a member of TrashTag Kuwait for almost a year and had the best experience. On Saturday, 5th of September 2020, I was able to join their clean-up at Abu AlHasaniya Beach. It was 6:30AM and on my way there, the roads were empty and quiet. To be honest, I was hesitant to go due to how hot Kuwait can get during the summer and was afraid of suffering a heatstroke, but the weather was just perfect that morning.



I felt happy. Once I arrived at Abu AlHasaniya beach, a beach I had never visited before, I was shocked how people can so easily trash such a beautiful and peaceful area. I instantly spotted members already working on picking up trash and started to walk through the beach towards them. I reached the table where all the equipment was provided to us.



I was greeted by my good friends from the team, whilst keeping distance. I grabbed a reusable bag, and gloves and got started. As I was picking up trash, I found glass bottles, kids toys, A LOT of cigarette butts, plastic forks, spoons, bags, juice boxes, chips bags, soda cans, and many other things that shouldn’t be on the beach.

Not a lot of people were at the beach that morning other than a few fishermen, men on kayaks, and us. It was peaceful; picking trash up while listening to music with a breathtaking view, and being surrounded by great people who made the whole event fun.

That day, we picked up 18 bags of trash in total. These bags then got taken by the municipality team of Abu AlHasaniya. Not only do I take part in cleaning my own country, that I love so much—I get to meet amazing people who eventually become good friends. On top of that, I get to visit beaches with breathtaking views that I never knew existed my whole 19 years of living in Kuwait.



As much as I get lovely and motivational messages about my contribution and TTK's initiative, I get many discouraging messages and comments such as, "What is the point of cleaning when it's just going to get dirty again?" They're not wrong, it's not uncommon for us to walk by a beach that we recently had a clean-up for, and see it trashed again.

But that's the type of mentality that's making us go backwards, rather than forward. If we do not take these baby steps towards creating a better and cleaner world, how will we ever get there? We should not let the trash pile up just because "it's going to get dirty again anyway." It is more frustrating hearing it come from a Kuwaiti and makes me question, "Do you not want what's best for your own country?"

The beach is a great place to relax by yourself, with friends or family. Next time you visit a beach, be more mindful with items you choose to bring with you. Invest in reusable bottles, which can be used for many activities and Tupperware to hold your food.

Try to avoid bringing and using plastic when going to the beach. Remember to properly dispose of waste. And of course, have fun!



I hope people do realize this soon, and feel the need to do something about it, even if it's as little as picking up a bottle you see on the side of a pavement and throwing it into a trashcan, switching to reusable bottles rather than plastic ones, or participating in a clean-up once in a while.





TRASHTAG KUWAIT

Food Boxes

Muhannad Al-Shohaty

It was not long until volunteer groups sprouted during the pandemic. I can still remember my friend telling me to join a group who sanitize public areas and I can still remember contemplating it. "I want to volunteer," I declared to my parents. "What would happen if you get infected? Where will you have to go?" Were their replies.

I understood the reasons; they were concerned as they should be. I finally decided against it. I was then disappointed in not taking this opportunity, then never gave a thought to it. Fortunately, another opportunity presented itself. "Muhannad, TrashTag is delivering food boxes for people in need. Come and join!" A friend of mine called and told me. "I need to think about it," was all I could say.



Again, I contemplated about whether I should join. This time, my parents (mostly my mother) gave me their support and I took the opportunity! Then came the days when it became my usual shift: to deliver food boxes. I would first drop my father to work to take his car, then I would drive to the destination to pick up the boxes, which was in Salwa or Salmiya where we await for the lorry filled with food boxes.

We then had to unload the lorry and fill up our cars with the boxes based on the number of deliveries we each had that day. Unloading boxes seems like little work, but each weighed about 40kg. During the humid days, after the last box has been unloaded, we would be drenched in sweat, I could've squeezed a cup full of sweat out of my jeans. It was mostly the hustle that got us through.

After filling the food boxes, we would each look at our lists and start contacting the people, then be on our way. With each car locked and loaded, we went our separate ways, whether into Jleeb, Jahra, Fahaheel or Mangaf. It became our job and we did it as a routine.

It sometimes was even enjoyable to watch our progress as a team and mostly the people's appreciation. The boxes mostly consisted of rice, oil, wheat, and other essentials. There were also boxes which were altered for Filipino or Indian cuisines. Not only did we deliver food, but we also delivered baby essentials such as diapers for families in need.

We also managed to send toys to children during Eid! All of this would not have been possible without the organizers, volunteers, and most importantly the donators. People in need were met with helping hands and I am glad to have been a part of it.



ENTERTAINMENT



Nebula Chase

Anas Al Rasheed

I am pretty sure every kid had a dream of going to space one day. But for me, it was more of an escape to hopefully spend time with numerous cosmic beauties.

I wanted something to keep me happy and engaged, hence my first project was a grown man who finds himself stuck in an endless loop, chasing behind his old cosmic dream.

After Hours:

The Review

With his latest album, *After Hours*, having been released on the 20th of March, The Weeknd decided to change his style and approach the album from a new point of view. In his previous two albums *Starboy* and *My Dear Melancholy*, there was a focus on past relationships and his previous use of medication and drugs.

Although he does talk about these two points in his newest album, he instead chose to focus on himself in an attempt to break himself down. He also made sure to give the album its own style which is very reminiscent to the musical style primarily used in the 80's.

In my humble opinion, this album was absolutely fantastic. Instead of talking about certain aspects of failed relationships that were out of his control, he talks about how some relationships failed because of him. On the song "Scared to Live", The Weeknd sings "When I saw the signs, I shoulda let you go. But I kept you beside me. And if I held you back, at least I held you close.



"Should have known you were lonely. I know things will never be the same. Time we lost will never be replaced. I'm the reason you forgot to love." Looking back at his past relationships, in particular the on-and-off relationship he had with Bella Hadid, he regrets not having let her go which in turn changed the way she saw him. The Weeknd also references celebrities like Jay-Z, Eminem and Patrick Swayze, to name a few.

On "Snowchild", The Weeknd sings "Stack a couple M's like I was Shady. Now I'm in Tribeca like I'm Jay-Z. Rockin'; Sorayama like he pay me. I just signed a new deal with Mercedes. Got me movin'; dirty like I'm Swayze." It is always enjoyable to hear references and shout-outs in songs, especially when the song makes sense and sounds good with the references made.

Other notable tracks on the album include "Blinding Lights", "Escape from LA" and "Faith" to name a few. In conclusion, the album was very well designed and executed properly. I enjoyed the sadder songs just as much as I enjoyed the upbeat songs.

I thought stylistically speaking the album was superb. The lack of features on this album is a high point as it allows The Weeknd to carry his work by himself. The album also showed how The Weeknd's music changes from album to album, showing just how original he can be. Overall, I give this album a 9 out of 10. The reason it misses out on getting that perfect ten score is the replay value of some tracks like "Alone Again", "Too Late" and "Heartless" to name a few.



لن تموت

المحاولة :

كانت موسيقانا تُعزف في كل مكان، بعثت الأنس لشوارع المدينة، تغنى بها الجميع وسكنت ذاكرة العرسان والأحبة بـ "هب السعد". خففت آلام السفر بـ "أو يا مال" فتعرفت عليها موانئ لا تعلم من أين أتت سفننا.

الآن لا تتواجد سوى في مقاطع فيديو على الإنترنت وتسجيلات تُبث على قناة راديو لا يسمعها أحد. أطفأت المذياع واقشعر بدني الضعيف من هذه الملاحظة، كان لدي الكثير لأشاركه، لكن ماذا يفعل المرء في هذه السنة الموبوءة؟ هاجمني النوم وأنا جالس على سرير المريح، لكنه ليس النوم المعتاد، عيناى كانتا مفتوحتين كأنهما موجهتان إلى إضاءة التلفاز الصامت، لكنهما كانتا تريان الماضي وتتخيلان القادم.

بعد وقت طويل أفقت من عاصفة الأحلام بفكرة لأعيش بها الحاضر: "نورا! نورا! نورا!" كررت اسم حفيدتي ذات التسعة عشر عاما كالمجنون حتى دخلت الغرفة : "ما الأمر؟!" قالتها بقلق وهي تلتقط أنفاسها.

ابتسمت: "أذهبي يا حبيبتى إلى المخزن وعلى الرف المتوسط مقابل الباب ستجدين أكياس، أزيحها وسترين صندوق هدايا كبير بنفسجي اللون إيتيني به لو سمحت". نظرت إلي باستغراب : "كل هذا الصراخ في هذه الساعة المتأخرة من أجل صندوق؟"

مبتسما هزرت رأسي بنعم. عادت بعد خمس دقائق، ناولتني الصندوق وهي تتذمر: "جدي لا ترسلني أبدا للمخزن مرة!! أخرى لأنه مليء بالغبار والصراصير!" ضحكت وعوضتها بخمسة دنانير فقبلتني على رأسي وقبل أن تخرج قلت لها:

"أنت لم تقبليني صباح اليوم كعادتك، أين كنت؟"

سألتها بفضول.

"خرجت لأخذ جولة في السيارة مع صديقاتي"

"لكن الوبا...؟"

لكنها بسرعة قطعت حديثي: "لا تخف يا جدي فلم نخرج من السيارة قط."

"حسنا.. عليك أخذ الحذر، فمهما..."

قطعت حديثي مرة أخرى: "جدي لا داعي لأن تصنع من الحبة قبة فالناس في الخارج آمنون طالما التزموا بلبس قناع الوجه وإبقاء..."

ظلت تعطيني وكأنني طفل في السادسة من عمري. "وهذا أهم شيء." أنهت حديثها.

"حسنا .. لا أريدك أن تفوتي وجبة الفطور صباح الغد."

قلت بابتسامة مبطنة بالاستياء.

أومأت بالإيجاب، وختمت ابتسامتها اللطيفة بـ "تصبح على

خير!"، خارجة من غرفتي بشكل فوري، ناكرةً وجودي

للذهاب لمشاهدة مسلسلاتها المفضلة في غرفتها، أثار هذا التصرف المشمئز شعوري بالعجز ولا أعلم إن كنت حزينا أم غاضبا، لكن في كلا الحالتين أنا أسامحك يا ابنتي المدللة.

نسيت كل الهموم عند فتحي صندوق البنفسجي العزيز المكتظ بأشرطة الكاسيت ومسجل الصوت الذي وثّق حفلاتنا المنزلية. شغلت إحداها ثم زارتنى ذكريات لأيام كانت ثرية بالحب والمرح، ذكريات لأشخاص على العود والطبل قد لعبوا، فنانون هم وفي موسيقاهم تفتنوا، بها أحيوا المدائن والضامير.

تغيرت الأزمان والناس تغيروا، فهل كان لغذاء الروح سبب؟ نعم! فموسيقانا كانت بالناس تسمو! سأحافظ عليها ما دمت حيا أرزق! وضعت (كاسيتاً) فارغاً داخل المسجل وضغطت الزر الأحمر، شاركت الجماد أسرار فنونا، تكلمت أياما حتى أصبح مسجل الصوت صديقي المفضل الجديد حتى لم يعد هناك شيء للحديث عنه، أعدت كل شيء داخل الصندوق ثم أتانى شعور النوم غير المعتاد الذي لم يسبق لي أن شعرت به في نفس وقت سماعي ألحان أجراس المنزل الهادئة.

الحصاد:

لم أكن أهتم لأي شيء بقدر اهتمامي بالخروج مع أصدقائي لقضاء وقت ممتع في المطاعم ودور السينما، وهل ألام؟ كان الوقت يمضي بسرعة البرق بصحبتهم، وكنت متعطشاً لها لأنها زودتنى بسكرات المرح وجرعات من المتعة اللحظية، لكن في ليلة كمثل أي ليلة خرجنا في ساعة متأخرة من ملجئنا الذي يصد الملل، مقهى يملأه الدخان يطل على أظهر المباني.. قدت سيارتي وأشعلت الوميض الساطع لأودع رفاقي الذين لا زالوا يدخلون سجاثرهم ويتحدثون أمام المقهى.

"سحقاً!" انزعجت لملاحظتي أن هاتفي كان فارغ البطارية لأنني كنت أبعد أربعين دقيقة عن منزلي ودون موسيقي المفضلة كانت ستمر كأربعين سنة! بدأت بالقفز بين قنوات مذياع السيارة الذي لم أستخدمه قط، وفجأة، أسرّتنى موسيقى معقدة ببساطتها، هادئة جميلة وبريئة، تائهة بين موسيقات سريعة متوحشة وديئة! موسيقى ألحانها حركت قلبي الصلب اللامبالي، موسيقى مزينة بكلمات كانت لأجدادي... موسيقى أصبحت جزءاً من هويتي. موسيقى سأبقىها حية وهذه هي قضيتي! وصلت إلى منزلي وأنا مذهول ونمت في فراشي على ألحان تلك الموسيقى العالقة في ذهني.

في اليوم التالي جاءتنى فكرة بالاتصال على خالي الذي أعرف أنه أحد المعجبين بهذا الفن الساحر لكنني كنت أخجل من سؤاله خوفاً من السخرية، نظرت إلى الهاتف، أخذت نفساً عميقاً، واتصلت. بدأ هاتفه بالرنين ولعشر ثواني تنفست بصعوبة حتى سمعت:

"من الجيد أن سمعنا صوتك أيها الحمار!"

"أهلاً خالي." قلت بخجل.

"أين كنت؟ لا تسأل عن خالك؟"

"كنت في الجامعة يا خالي! أعمل على واجباتي!" قلت مبرراً.

انتهدت المكالمه. رددت في ذهني "لن يكن ذلك صعباً!"
انتظرت خالي حتى ظننت أنني أنتظر غودو!
جاء خالي أخيراً! ركبت معه وفي السيارة كنت أرتب أفكاري
بتوتر، وصلنا أمام البيت المتواضع فنزلت وحدي، ووصلت إلى
الباب، أخذت نفساً عميقاً. ضغطت الجرس وسمعت أليحانه
الهائيه.
"من؟" سألتني فتاة.
"أنا هنا لمقابله الأستاذ محمد." قلت بأدب شديد.
مرت دقائق ثم فُتح الباب، رأيت فتاة تحمل صندوقاً بنفسجي
اللون، ناولتني إياه برفق. قالت بصوت
جريح: "رحل ولم يكن له تلاميذ". ومن هنا بدأت يا عزيزي
المستمع.

حسن حاجيه

تقبل خالي كعادته الطيبة، تحمست : "خالي أتعلم من
أستطيع أن أقابله ليحدثني عن موسيقى أجدادنا؟
ضحك، وسأل: "ومن أين جاء هذا الاهتمام؟"
"لا أعلم، الكون مليء بالعجائب" قلت بصدق.
فقال: "عجيب، أنا أعرف موقع بيت أحد الفنانين، لأنني
حضرت إحدى جلساته وهو أفضل شخص تستطيع
أن تكلمه، سأدلك عليه"
"أنستطيع الذهاب غداً؟" سألت بحماس.
"لو أنك تسأل عن خالك لعلمت أنني لست في البلد
ولن أرجع حتى الشهر القادم."

Horoscopes

(Zoom school year edition)



Aries: A big part of the university experience for you was the exploring and socialising you did in between classes and Zoom might have ruined that for you but here's a piece of advice, try to make the best of it and don't spend too much time on the private chat with the one friend you have in class.

Taurus: I know you love the fact that other people are muted and it looks like you have the professor's undivided attention but please can you give other people the chance to answer?? It might not seem like it but they all want to learn just as much as you do.

Gemini: Just...stop posting videos of the class meeting on your Instagram story. It is funny but also invasive. Don't do it.

Cancer: You made a Whatsapp support group for your class and you give them an unlimited supply of the notes you worked on in class while everyone was sleeping. God bless you. Next time demand to be paid.

Leo: Listen, the first joke was funny. It is a math class after all, people want to alleviate the tension. The second joke was okay, it incited some laughs. The third joke is the limit though. Keep it at that before you get reported. It might not be very pretty.

Virgo: INTERNET CONNECTIONS LAG SOMETIMES, IT IS OKAY. there is no need to get a mini breakdown every time your professor's voice starts cutting. Chances are you are still going to pass. Take a deep breath and maybe go sit closer to your router.

Libra: Multiple choice questions are terrible, right? Especially now that you are doing them on your laptop. However, you studied well, there is no reason to linger on one question for 20 minutes. The answer is almost always B.

Scorpio: No, the professor doesn't have a personal vendett against you because it took them an extra second to let you in the class. There are 25 other students demanding to enter at the same exact second as you. Give the professor the benefit of the doubt.

Sagittarius: Make sure you are muted before you call out for your mum to ask what she's making for dinner. I beg you. Please.

Capricorn: You hate attending classes on your laptop but you know what else is hard? Unemployment. Attend your classes and thank me later.

Aquarius: Yes capitalism is unfair but you don't need to yell that out in the middle of biology class. Focus on your mitochondria and leave the politics for twitter.

Pisces: how do you already have a crush on someone? HOW? Its a bi-weekly 1 hour meeting and your crush's camera is turned off 90% of the time. How do you do it, Pisces? Answer me.

