

The COVID pandemic has been characterized as one of the darkest and most uncertain periods in modern history. What little information we had about this new disease was poorly understood, and the ramifications were initially unfathomable. People became stressed and scared, leading to worldwide panic over what this might mean for humanity. However, I noticed that not all of my friends and family shared this response. Some were passive and, eventually, indifferent to the changes taking place. Others saw it as an opportunity to try new things and to enjoy a break from their typical lives. While my personal experience with COVID was uneventful, I took note on how others around me responded to the change. I noticed that the pandemic had a different effect on everybody who came into contact experienced it, not just physically, but socially as well. The family members of those I knew who sadly died as a result of COVID had significant lifestyle differences from those who survived its contraction. They were the smokers, unhealthy eaters, the compromised and elderly. Both their circumstances and personal choices made them vulnerable to the COVID and led to an unfortunate physical outcome. This directly mirrors the effect of COVID on people socially. My friends who thrived mentally under the isolation were ones who had strong family connections and kept constant contact with friends virtually. These were the opportunists who took the chance to try new things and make the best of their time in quarantine, like exercise, or new hobbies. Conversely, the people I knew who struggled mentally suffered because of their social situation before the pandemic. These were people who were already isolated, had few friends or family, and had submissively accepted the fact that the life they had come to know was changing for the worse. Having good physical and mental health allowed me to have a better outcome than

most in the pandemic, and I would like to inform future generations that keeping our bodies and minds healthy is crucial before we are tested again by something like COVID.