

Many aspects of our daily lives were thrown into disarray because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even until January 2023, no one knew what true, long-term consequences it would have. It would introduce new customs that many of us had never experienced before, like wearing masks, keeping six feet apart, and not shaking each other's hands to introduce ourselves. We have not seen such an outbreak since the 1980s with HIV and AIDS in the U.S., where there was so much paranoia within our society that we were constantly sanitizing our hands and quarantining when someone was infected with COVID-19.

I remember March 13th, 2020, when they announced over the speaker while I was in high school that my school would be shut down for because of "COVID" for two weeks. Everyone was filled with excitement that we got to have such a long break from school. But I and a few other of my friends were met with dread and fear upon fully understanding what the announcement said. Were we shut down for that long? What is going to happen with school? But we should have known that was the least of our worries. Soon after, the two weeks were up, and the school eventually extended with us staying at home for months, where they eventually turned courses online and we had to "log in" to our classes from home every day. It got to the point where Connecticut's governor announced that large places like malls and government offices would close early in March of that year. It also caused hospitals to be much stricter about allowing visitors to see patients. I recall that in 2021, during the peak of the pandemic, we had to visit my uncle at Yale-New Haven Hospital because he had colon cancer. We had to make sure we wore masks before entering the building; staff members would check our temperature and make sure to ask us how we were feeling before going into any waiting area; we had to make sure that we were vaccinated or COVID-19 negative; and we had to make

sure that our chairs in the waiting area were not too close to each other. Only one person at a time could enter the room, so only immediate family went into family 1 by 1. It was exhausting to stay there knowing that we could not hug each other or be as close to each other as we liked because we wanted to follow the restrictions in place.

Even though these struggles, the pandemic caused me to become closer to my family and my own life because of how much time we had to spend together in our house because of the lockdown we had to endure. It also allowed me to stay close to existing friends because I did not have to reach out to new people; I could talk to them on my phone without ever seeing them in person. Overall, this pandemic had a different effect on everyone and caused many lives to be lost but many others suffered worse than me.