



## COVID-19 Through A Student's Eyes

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It is without a doubt that 2020 has been one of the craziest, if not the craziest, year we have had to endure in recent history. From rumours of a World War, bushfires, a global pandemic, and much more, just the first half of 2020 has definitely been one for the history books.

Hi. My name is Dylan Kowlessar, and I'm an Upper Six student at HVC studying Natural Science and Mathematics. This entire covid/quarantine/coronacation period has definitely been one of learning, adjusting, evolving, and surprisingly, growth, for me, and I hope to share some of my thoughts and experiences with you.

For someone who loves planning, order, and just a general sense of safety, this entire situation has made me very uncomfortable, for the most part. From not knowing if/how many cases there are in Trinidad, and even around the world, I wouldn't be lying if I said I struggled to adjust over the last three months.

For many of my friends, and I, we are about to write some of the "most important" exams thus far. Exams which can dictate scholarships, university admissions, and just general 'next steps' in life. Due to coronavirus, however, we've all seen a shift in focus and a blatant reminder that

health (be it physical, mental, emotional, or social) is paramount over academics. COVID-19 completely delayed our exams by two months, and even altered the format of our exams.

I know what many are thinking – an extra two months was probably the best thing students could have asked for, and that we must be ready by now. The answer is simple – no. In unprecedented, ever-changing times, we, too, as students, have had to take time for ourselves to adjust to this new lifestyle. Whether it be through social media, games, or (online) chats with friends, everyone has had to find a way to cope with the unnerving stress and uncertainty that has surrounded our lives since March 13th.

Personally, I thought I was right on track for my [then] exams in May/June, but when coronavirus came along, I totally lost my drive for academics. I thought there was simply too much going on in the world – too much to pay attention to – to keep studying every day. Furthermore, if you know me well, you would know that I don't particularly like studying at home. I prefer to be out – at school, or a café – where somehow a productivity vibe engulfs me. That was, yet again, another obstacle I had to overcome during the last three months.

Academically, it seemed that my plans for university in August in the US were becoming more of a dream, and less of a reality. As a proactive student seeking some sort of plan B, I deferred my admission term to January 2021, and even decided to apply locally at UWI in case things go really downhill.

The final challenge I faced was adjusting to online learning. And I know I speak for both students and teachers, since this has been a learning experience for all of us. To make a long story short, online classes/assignments have been my stronghold for learning and revision over

the past few months, and has really encouraged students like me to become more independent when it comes to studies. So long were the days of physical classrooms where a teacher could encourage you to do an extra exercise or finish that lab you've been putting off. Today, it was your responsibility to ensure you woke up on time, and prepared everything for classes or assignments online.

In all this mess of having to adjust to a new stay-at-home lifestyle, I also adopted some new hobbies/coping strategies to help me get through. Activities such as improving my piano skills, exercising, cooking, and gaming (Minecraft) have all helped me maintain my sanity and learn some new skills. Additionally, I've also become a fan of podcasts (add me on Spotify!) and journaling (to record this crazy year, of course).

Last, but certainly not least, I definitely miss the little joys of life BC (before corona). Seeing my friends every day, going for food after lessons; I've really learnt to appreciate the small things that make a difference. Thankfully, technology has enabled me to have "virtual parties", host online all fours games, and to fuel the social being within me.

In conclusion, even though the past three months have been a wild ride, from university changes, to not-as-effective asynchronous learning, to having to study for my Math IA and celebrate my birthday in only a matter of days, I'm also happy with what I've learnt and how I've grown since then, through cooking, gaming, and keeping up with the world through the news and podcasts.

It is safe to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a huge hiccup in many of our lives, but, at least for me, it has taught me how to make the best of a situation I have no control over. That's COVID-19 from my (a student's) perspective.