

the mundane horror of the coronavirus

Atticus Barrett // senior

personal essay

I awoke with a splitting headache originating from right behind my nose. "This must be it," I told myself, and I was right.

What I didn't know was the level of suffering I would face following that day in August 2020. I grew weaker in the coming days. Soon after, the taste of salt and sugar blended, and then there was nothing. The headaches increased in both intensity and frequency. It wouldn't be long until both of my parents came back with matching positive tests. I didn't think there was even a point in getting tested, of course, I had it.

Over the passing weeks, my condition improved. I began to be able to get out of bed and move around as much as the restrictions allowed. On the off chance that I thought I would be free of the tumultuous days to come, stepping outside of my house acquainted my nose with the most pungent, indescribable smell to ever grace my olfactory senses. Although I could physically leave my house, my mind would not advise it.

The once simple and gratifying experience of cooking and eating, what was once so simple it slipped the mind, became an increasingly grotesque nightmare, as everything that I once enjoyed became nauseating, or worse, bland.

After a few months, I could no longer remember what my day-to-day experiences felt like before I got it. Reminiscing on it, it feels like an almost unspeakable horror, one that I would not wish upon anyone walking the earth.

I began to grow distant from my closest friends. I had neither the energy nor the

gumption to reach out to them, and on the rare occasion someone reached out to me, I would turn them down.

This cycle first made me aware of the mental health issues that I am still dealing with today. The neglect of myself and responsibilities made me no more than a shape or a concept: completely divorced from the locked-down world going on around me.

But I began to get better.

I started to view the ailments that I was currently suffering from as opportunities to try new things. Most of my accomplishments in the early stages of recovery were exposing myself to the new, old stimuli that repulsed me. Once I could go outside or eat at the dinner table without feeling disgusted, I could finally begin my new life.

Reaching out to friends became easier.

I sought these connections and opportunities and they often found me. I began to go for walks in the woods near my house. Experiencing all of the new sensations that one would when stepping into another country, or world.

My old self died with my old senses.

Although the challenge of overcoming the soul-rending isolation reinforced by the past routine that I made myself for the past year has felt like a Sisyphean task, I know that I will eventually get that boulder to the top.

Although the war with my schedule is seemingly won, a battle on a new front has made itself clear. My anxiety has gone undiagnosed

"The neglect of myself and responsibilities made me no more than a shape or concept..."

wire bonsai

Connor Allen // senior

copper wire

for around the seven or so years that I started having symptoms. I still feel its cold, depressing claws sink into my mind whenever I let a project take too long to turn in, or forget to talk to friends for a few days.

However, these feelings have been seemingly replaced by a fog of the mind. When I used to meditate back when I first got it, my mind was always racing. Now my mind is still, even outside of meditation.

This is merely a new task in the wake of the past, seemingly insurmountable, challenges. I have been able to handle all of the rest, what has this one got that I haven't seen before?

