

Community Conversations NJYSA COVID-19 Project

Participant Number 502

Interview conducted by Amani Soto 1/28/2021

*Interviewer Note: Participant is a State Trooper in New Jersey.*

Interviewer: Hello there Steven, I wanted to ask whether or not you would like to participate in a project that I am working on. To give you a little bit of background information, I am working with the YMCA to collect life experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant: Of course I will.

I: Thank you, it is appreciated. To begin this interview, I would like to know how seriously you took the pandemic when the first couple of cases started to pop up?

P: I took the pandemic very seriously due to my constant interaction with the public. We clearly didn't know what we were specifically trying to stay away from or how to protect ourselves and the last thing I wanted to do was bring the virus home to my family.

I: I can see where you're coming from because I work in the medical field. If someone within my home were to get the virus I would immediately put the blame on myself. Do you feel like you have experienced any changes since March of 2020 due to coronavirus?

P: My life has drastically changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. First, my work schedule was changed in order to reduce my chances of exposure. Secondly, I have had to isolate myself from my family for 14 days on two separate occasions due to an exposure. Thirdly, my fiancé and I have recently moved but during the finalization process it kept being pushed back because everything was shut down. Luckily, we were able to move in by the end of May but we had started the process in the beginning of March. Then, after finally moving in, all of our furniture that we had ordered was delayed and we didn't get anything until October, and only pieces of it.

I: I have a similar situation. I recently decided that I would live on my own and wasn't expecting a pandemic to occur. Although I have been able to work on some home projects, I also have gone a little crazy because everyone has been working on home projects which made some things unavailable. Do you think you were able to keep your work and personal life balanced?

P: I believe I am able to balance my work life and personal life by constantly communicating with my peers and family. Everyone has been on edge and communication is paramount to balance my work and personal life. I've always been very good at keeping both separate because of my line of work so it didn't seem as difficult as it was to those close to me to separate the two.

I: Have you or your family faced any challenges resulting from the pandemic?

P: There were a couple challenges that I had to face. I would say the hardest challenge for me was not having contact with my children while quarantined. Then having to basically homeschool my children. They have very different personalities when they are at school and when they are at home. On top of that the way that these kids are learning material is not the same as how I learned it. So we had some complications trying to decipher exactly the task at hand.

I: Did you find anything that helps you relax during these challenges you were facing?

P: Netflix and Hulu's live TV helped me find happiness during this difficult time. I was never one to really watch television unless it was sports. Unfortunately, there really wasn't any live sports going on during the majority of the pandemic, but I did find some great documentaries that had caught my attention.

I: I think a lot of people have definitely given more of their time to watching television, movies, documentaries, anything that gets them away from reality. I've always been a person who enjoys watching documentaries about real life events and now I am able to speak to my friends about it because they have absolutely nothing else to do. Do you think that you will obtain the vaccine when it is available to you?

P: I have chosen not to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. I am not saying that I will never receive it but I would like to observe the progression of the vaccine before committing to the administration of it. There are a lot of unknowns, and I am not willing to take those risks at the moment.

I: I seem to get a lot of mixed emotions about this question. I am skeptical as well. We don't have any clue about any potential long term or short term risks so I am also waiting. Do you feel like you or anyone around you could have dealt with this situation differently?

P: If I could have done anything differently, I would have practiced better hygiene when returning from work to my family. I never really thought about all the bacteria and germs that are carried around on my clothing and my shoes. The way our family practices hygiene now, as a result of the pandemic, I feel my family is much more safe and responsible.

I: I don't think anyone really took into consideration all the bacteria we drag into our homes until now. But its better now than later so we have to just continue to do what we need to do to keep our loved ones safe. I just wanted to thank you for taking that time out of your busy day to sit down and speak with me. You have been a great participant.

P: Thank you for allowing me to share my experience. Hope you stay safe.

I: You as well.