
Quarantine Diaries: A Look into Isolation, Self-Hatred, and Acceptance

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Abstract

The following six diary entries and journaling pieces were written in the months after the 2019 Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) hit Canada. They express my attempts to pinpoint causes of my personal unhappiness and how overwhelming expectations of productivity affected my mental health and relationships during quarantine. My diary entries are in chronological order, containing reflections on my birthday in quarantine, notes about racial injustice, and reminders of self-love. I delve into how isolation and social distancing shifted my perspective, creating unexpected goals, and new hobbies. These reflections reveal thoughts of uncertainty about my career and concerns about my friendships. As the entries continue, themes of self-acceptance and confidence emerge. I encourage readers to empathize with these conflicting feelings of what is “normal” or “expected” during adulthood; challenge destructive behaviour, including excessive self-doubt and self-sabotage; and form uplifting habits for a better sense of self. My words have been taken directly from my personal journal and left as they are, no editing, no revising, no polishing. This composition creates an open space that acknowledges how emotions of guilt, anxiety, low self-image, sadness, and hope defined so much of our post-COVID-19 reality.

Keywords

quarantine, isolation, self-love, identity, productivity, adulthood

April 11, 2020.

23rd Birthday Reflections in Isolation

Journal Prompt:

What are you feeling a lot of lately?

I'm feeling a lot of nostalgia. I've been cleaning a lot and throwing out and donating clothes, jewelry, books, toys, and other items. Finding old pictures, birthday cards, things I wrote as a kid, and old clothes makes me reminisce a lot about the past and my childhood. I have been re-reading my childhood books from the *Percy Jackson* books to the *Series of Unfortunate Events* and I realized why I loved reading so much and how I miss reading for fun.

I feel like I'm being left behind in terms of career. I don't have a job and haven't been looking although I feel like I should be...I don't know honestly. I'm frustrated at the whole job process and now it's April. I could cry from joy when I get a job. Also, in terms of friends, most of my friends have a job right now or are guaranteed one and I can't help but compare myself to them. I also feel so lost with where I'm at with my friends – not many have been reaching out and I just feel so lost, so incredibly alone and isolated and even more so during this quarantine time. Are my expectations of friendship too high? I feel just left behind in relationships.

I feel a lot of hurt overall it seems like. I don't know how to move on from baggage of people hurting me and of me feeling hurt. I can't tell if I'm being sensitive but the bitterness, anger, guilt, and confusion is creeping up on me and growing just more and more. I don't know who to tell or what to do at times. I can't help but feel responsible for so many things that's happened whether it's gossip or people drifting apart or getting closer to me. I haven't confronted anyone yet and I think that's what's killing me. Also, the lack of communication where people haven't been quick to notice or quick to message or call... I just feel utterly alone. Alone in my thoughts and feelings. It's funny because last year, I felt quite similar emotions of hurt and betrayal but it had to do with a guy and now it's these same emotions but about friends. I keep dwindling and coming back to do this, this past week this is all I've been thinking about on and off. I know I'm giving power to these thoughts and nobody can mindread, but I've been having such a

shitty few months in terms of friendship, career, and just transitioning to adulthood. I feel like I'm going crazy at times.

Alone and being "okay" with being alone is something I want to achieve. A state I want to achieve is just being content in myself; flaws and all. I want to fight for me and my respect and my character over relationships. I'm tired of feeling like second place. Cleaning my room makes me feel a lot better about my room and myself. I like being creative and doing different things, I want to be surrounded by people who encourage and care for me despite my flaws. People who can uplift but also have difficult conversations with and talk about life and just be my ride or dies. I'm proud and happy about the things that I've done this past year from traveling alone, with friends, family; graduating; doing research; cooking; just having goals; and reconnecting with old friends. I think life is crazy and I'll never be able to fully prepare for it. I want to crush being 23 and feel everything good and bad but I think I deserve to feel as much love for myself as I give to others. I need to prioritize myself. Seeking good habits for me because I want to, because it's healthy, and it'll be good long-term. I wonder what'll happen while I'm 23. I want things to change and I think changes are happening. We'll see. I hope I don't let myself down. I hope I keep my goals of prioritizing me over my friends more now. Keeping productive measures to make time for me, to love myself, and to encourage myself more I want to do these things more in whatever capacity that may look like, I think my dependency on friendships has been a habit but now I want to be confident in myself and in being alone.

June 6, 2020.

To be honest... I don't even know what to say or how to react. Racism is a powerful tool, a destructive one. I feel so much sadness for George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, and so many more unfortunate, tragic, and horrific murders of [B]lack people. I initially didn't know what to even say or do. Of course, I was angry, I felt so much frustration towards the police, the government, Trump, ignorant people, even white people. It was like the balloon had burst, a 100-year old balloon that just kept growing and growing. I feel so much sadness and shame, for not speaking up sooner.

My heart feels like it's at my throat sometimes. It's a warm summer day in June 2020 and yet I feel like I'm back in grade 11 or summer of my 1st year in university where I felt so lost, so alone, so unaccomplished. Everything fades away eventually, I know having a job isn't the number one thing in life but honestly, it feels like it is. I just want to get away to Hawaii and swim, fish, and surf. These things may sound so trivial but to me, I see life. I see a newness. I am trying to find happiness in the small things again...but it's hard. I feel so small and insignificant. I feel like I can't do anything. I miss my friends...it's funny who I consider my friends now — so much has changed. The people I trusted and cared for have moved on and that's fine. I don't think every relationship is meant to be deep. I'm very secure in who I trust now or I feel a bit more secure. There are times when I realize my "aloneness" but I quite enjoy my time spent with other people who make me feel like my worth is valid, and that I do feel loved. It's a difficult concept — knowing that I'm worthy of love. I am, even though I don't feel like it. It's a struggle to go from complete and utter disgust for who I am as a person to enjoying my quirks. For the first time in over 5 years, I actually felt reminded or triggered about when I used to self-harm. I can't believe there was a time when I hated myself to that extent, where I literally wanted to destroy myself from the inside out. I've come a long way and yet I still feel stuck; I still feel like that little girl who's scared of how she looks, that feels like everyone's watching and judging her. I don't even know how to act sometimes. I'm a complete adult but I feel like a child. I'm trying to dig deeper, to search why I feel like this — to love myself. Exploring self-hatred is hard. I feel so tumbled like my insides are fighting against each other.

July 8, 2020.

I don't have to punish myself for not being on the "same timeline" as my friends or random strangers. I'm changing, I'm growing, I have new goals, different things I'm seeking. I'm not staying stagnant and that's okay, even if it may look different than what I was thinking to begin with. How I feel is valid.

My actions need to be held accountable. I need space and time to focus on my papers and that's okay. I enjoy going on walks in the evenings.

I really like how I incorporate reading into my schedule now. I'm mending, I'm finding things that bring me joy even if it's not what I expected.

July 12, 2020.

The fact that each day we are all growing, learning, and being ourselves is sort of mind-blowing to me. I need to remind myself that I am heard, I have people in my life who listen to me and understand. There are great people in my life who are interested in what I have to say or do. I'm excited to grow with people in my life who are genuinely interested, invested, and want to grow with me. It's good to know that I'm at peace with who my friends are and that they want to stay in my life.

July 13, 2020.

I'm noticing a pattern of my behaviour of feeling overwhelmed with all the things that I have to do. I will make a to-do list and feel so dejected when I can't do them all in one day. And I feel stressed that I can't do everything that I need to do. I constantly feel "behind" whether it's with editing or doing my papers. I feel like there's a lot to do and if I don't do it, I failed at my job. I guess also these new goals are things I'm trying to achieve so if it doesn't happen, it'll feel like this year was somewhat of a waste I suppose. But I know that seeing things in a different light is a lot healthier. This pattern or behaviour reinforces that there's a "timeline" I have to follow. It shows that I'm comparing myself to others in order to fit in. It's okay to not work or to relax. It's fine to take this tie for myself. I want to read more, take healthy breaks, and continue to go on walks to relax and get out of my head more.

July 22, 2020.

It's okay to disappoint people and to let things go. I always feel like I have to please people and do the right thing in their eyes even though I'm compromising my own goals or priorities. Saying "no" is so important and I tend to forget to do that. I think I'm becoming more comfortable but I'm unsure how to navigate areas I'm unsure about. I'm trying to realize that I'm worthy of love — from others but more importantly, from myself. Why do I have such a hard time accepting who I am? I think it really stems from the outside or from physical things whether it's not having the same materialistic items or physical features. I get

frustrated at my knees, my weight, my hair, my lashes, my nose, my beauty marks, my teeth, my lips, my throat, the list is endless – it's exhausting to hate yourself for the day or for days on end. Why did I decide that "the norm" would be my norm? I don't need to earn approval from others. I shouldn't have to fight for acceptance or love. Those who truly see me and love me won't diminish me or make me feel inferior. So why am I doing that to myself? I have such a big heart and so much love to give. I can give some to myself, it's okay to cherish myself. I want to really love and consider myself as precious as I believe I am.

Author biography

Gloria (she/her) is a writer, researcher, and digital and media marketer who is interested in creating content that is innovative and meaningful. Her research interests are in Indigenous rights in Canadian prisons, gender and feminism, and structural violence. Gloria has received a BA in Criminology and a Digital Marketing certificate at York University and is currently a Master of Public Policy in Digital Society candidate at McMaster University. Outside of her academic and professional endeavors, she enjoys cooking, reading, and writing poetry. As a second-generation Korean woman residing in the Greater Toronto Area, she often writes about her lived experiences with identity, racialization, mental health, and femininity, and hopes that her written work will resonate with others.