How Covid Changed Everyday Life

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, people lived what was thought to be an ordinary life. Travelers moved freely without masks or health checks. Students learned and interacted openly in classrooms. Employees were present in their workplaces, and people attended events such as concerts and festivals. Shopping malls and restaurants busy with families. Before the pandemic, most of us didn't think much about viruses or the need to wash our hands constantly. There were no sudden lockdowns or issues with the supply of goods. Hospitals and other health facilities focused on more normal healthcare issues, not the kind of panic and chaos caused by a global pandemic.

All of this changed when the pandemic hit. Governments around the world asked people to stay home to stop the virus from spreading. This led to many lockdowns, during which schools, offices, restaurants, and shops closed for weeks or even months. When I first moved to Sydney, I had to stay in a small hotel for two weeks straight as part of the quarantine. Everyone in my family felt stressed about not being able to go outside, but we managed to get through it together. I don't know if I would have made it through if I were alone. I soon realized how valuable freedom was. I'm sure everyone in the world felt the same and that we might have taken it for granted. The pandemic woke us up. We need to cherish and appreciate our basic freedom that we enjoy everyday.

COVID-19 also changed our mental health awareness. During lockdowns, individuals spent more time alone, and many felt lonely, worried, or sad. Not being able to see family or friends made life harder for everyone. Some of us lost loved ones, causing deep pain. The fear of getting sick or losing a job also made people feel anxious and uncertain about the future. People realized how important mental health is. Some individuals found new ways to relieve stress indoors, starting hobbies like painting, reading, or exercising at home. Many used phones or computers to stay in touch with friends and family since they couldn't meet in person. We became aware of how a short online greeting can make us feel connected, safe and loved, even with those who live far away.

COVID-19 also caused major changes in how people use technology. When many places closed due to lockdowns, people had to find new ways to work, learn, shop, and connect. Video calls and online meetings became very popular. Apps like Zoom and Microsoft Teams helped people stay in touch with coworkers, teachers, and friends. Schools quickly moved to online classes, and many students learned from home for the first time.

I experienced online learning when I was still in elementary school. At first, it was hard to study from home and get used to using a computer for classes. I missed seeing my friends and teachers. It was very difficult for me at first. But once I got used to it, I realized there

were good aspects too. I could watch recorded lessons again and again until I finally understood them. It was also easier to spend time with my family, which was my favorite part. Sometimes, it was hard to stay focused without the usual school routine. Since teachers weren't watching us in person, I felt freer, and that made a lot of students more relaxed.

Although COVID-19 caused many changes in our lives and our way of thinking, some important things remained unchanged. People continued to care for others. They stayed connected through video calls and messages. Love and support helped families get through difficult times. Even during the pandemic, many stayed positive and tried to help others. Kindness became more visible as we checked on neighbors who we may not have had any relationship with before, called on our family and friends and offered support from a distance. Countries were supporting other countries with medical aids and vaccines, doctors and volunteers flew across borders, risking their lives to help ones in need. People working in the transportation and logistics industry continued to work as usual, and in some cases even harder, so that they could transport food and goods even at the risk of infection. This spirit of caring helped everyone to stay strong and, in many cases, alive.

People's goals and hopes for the future also remained strong. Students continued to focus on their future careers and personal growth. Their motivation to succeed and improve themselves didn't change, even in uncertain times. Students showed great resilience and flexibility. They adapted to new ways of studying and communicating with teachers and classmates. Even when online learning was difficult, many found ways to overcome challenges and kept moving forward. Despite moving from classrooms to online learning, most students remained curious and eager to learn new subjects.

Although people couldn't gather in large groups, traditions like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other holidays were still celebrated at home. When I celebrated Christmas with my family during the COVID pandemic, it felt very lonely because we usually celebrated with many relatives and friends. Although it was unusual, we still cooked traditional food and decorated our house. People kept their traditional values, religion, and rituals, which are deeply rooted in our respective cultures and history. People remembered the importance of passing these values on to their children, and the pandemic didn't break this tradition.

The pandemic transformed many parts of our lives, but love, hope, kindness, creativity, tradition, and curiosity remained the same. This helped people stay united and strong. Life before COVID-19 felt easier and freer, but the pandemic shifted how we live, work, and think. We faced fear and loss, but we also learned important lessons and grew stronger. What didn't change was our ability to care for others, stay strong, and remain hopeful. COVID-19 changed the world, but not the spirit and good-hearted nature of humans. Moving forward, we should remember that we made it through and did it together, across

cultures, race and values.

10th Yutaka Hashimoto