

Glass Heads and Computer Screens

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It was exposing at first.

I remember I had this glass head (that's literally what it was—a head made out of glass) at the beginning of last year. It was a Bat Mitzvah present from my dad's college friend. I refused to go on a Zoom call unless that thing was tucked away, completely out of sight for anyone on my computer screen. I was late to class a few times because I was trying to figure out a place to hide it. It's not that I didn't like the glass head, just that it wasn't the type of thing I needed on display for my classmates and teachers to see.

In the beginning, I put a lot of effort into making sure my room looked presentable. I think we all did. The backgrounds were a distraction. It was hard to pay attention to my physics teacher when there was always a life-size cutout of Harry Styles peering over my classmate's shoulder. As time went on and school assumed its usual, midyear *"I don't even care anymore"* mood, I stopped trying to make my room aesthetically pleasing. I think people stopped looking too.

I kept hiding the glass head, though.

If there is one word to describe my at-home school experience, it would be loud. I have a family of four. For a while, we were all at home all the time. My mom is a teacher, and my dad is a college professor. They were both taught at home while my brother and I were had Zoom school. There were always multiple classes going on at one time. If anything, it made it super hard to focus, but it did give me an excuse not to unmute sometimes, which I always appreciated.

I know I've had a pessimistic mood so far, but I didn't mind virtual school. Of course, I missed my friends, teachers, and leaving my house. School online actually proved to be pretty convenient. I like to have a strict schedule, especially when I can make it myself, and that's exactly what virtual school was. Because classes were shorter and I wasn't spending time going to and from school, I had more time. I had more time to get ready in the mornings, more time to make lunch, and more time to ride my Peloton after school. I liked being completely in control of what I did during the day.

Of course, my favorite part of virtual school had to be those magical two words: Asynchronous Wednesdays. Every Wednesday, we'd have no actual classes. Instead, our teachers would give us work for the day to do independently. I guess I'm weird because I don't mind sitting at my desk

all day working. In some cases, I even find it to be fun. So Asynchronous Wednesdays were my favorite day of the week. They were my savior from endless computer screens and Wi-fi failures, my rescuer from the *“your frozen”s* and the *“we can’t hear you”s*. “Thank God it’s Friday” turned into “thank God it’s Asynchronous Wednesday.” It was a day for us all, even the teachers, to catch our breath, collect our thoughts, and organize ourselves for the rest of the week. It was a well-needed, well-deserved break.

I love school. I love to learn. So, of course, I wouldn’t choose virtual school over in-person school, but I also can’t just sign off virtual school as a worthless experience. I learned my curriculum over Zoom, like Physics and US History and Trig, but I also learned how to have a good work ethic and connect with people even when we’re apart. I learned how to stick to a schedule and how to accept change and stay positive in times of great uncertainty. As we emerge from the pandemic, I’m happy to leave things behind, like the Zoom glitches, breakout rooms, and loneliness. But I’m also glad to carry things with me, like how to stay motivated and connected even when we are apart. Online school was full of experiences that informed who I am as a person and a learner. That sounds cheesy, but life is cheesy sometimes, like, for example, when you get a glass head as a Bat Mitzvah present from your dad’s college friend.