

Two Weeks Off

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Two weeks off of school. *Just two weeks off school 'til this thing passes over*, they said. I remember almost jumping up and down with excitement. An early, extra long spring break, what's better than that? And then, another two weeks were added to the ones we already had. Ok, that's a little weird, but I wasn't stressing out—yet. Then, the rest of the school year at home started to become a reality. That's when it hit. *Woah, this thing is serious*. Even then, I couldn't understand how big this thing was. It still hasn't fully registered with me. I can't fully wrap my head around it. How did an extra two weeks off school change the rest of my life and all other seven billion humans living on this spinning rock? One universal thing affected every person on this planet in one way or another.

The last two years blend. At the moment, months felt like whole years. Even August 2020 feels like it could have been just a few months ago. In reality, it was double that, a full twenty months. COVID completely scrambled my sense of time. Even up until very recently, when asked my age, my first response was to say 15. I've been 17 for over eight months now. It feels like the full one and a half years I spent confined to my room didn't really happen, even though it just dragged on and on at the moment. It's like I pressed fast forward on life in 2020.

Coming back to in-person school in August 2021 for the first time since March 2020 was freaky. In 2020 I was a little 5'4 freshman with hair like a tumbleweed and acne. I came back pretty much the same, just two inches taller and a junior. It took me at least a solid two months to adjust to being back in school. It felt weird to be around all these people again. It felt especially weird to skip from being a freshman to now a junior. Skipping from being one of the youngest kids in school to being the second oldest. We hadn't seen each other since we were all little freshmen, still children. Suddenly, we were back in school as juniors, almost adults. It felt unnatural. It felt like we all forgot how to interact with each other. The first few weeks back were awkward, especially with the masks on. We were so close to fully interacting normally again, but then there was this barrier of not being able to see each other's faces.

The boredom was, without a doubt, the worst part. That was the real killer—laying around my house all day, every day. Eventually, I ran out of shows to watch. I got sick of playing video games for seven hours a day too. I would walk up and down the stairs of my house out of pure boredom. I couldn't even motivate myself to do hobbies. Before COVID, I would consistently practice guitar every day after school. Being stuck inside all day, I lost my motivation to do basic tasks. Homework went from taking fifteen minutes to taking a whole hour to complete. It still affects me. COVID burnt me out so much mentally that I'm still recovering. After spending

almost two years inside, you'd think I would have caught up on sleep and stored up enough energy to tear through the rest of high school, but no. I burnt out faster this school year than any other school year before. By the end of just the second quarter, getting out of bed in the morning to go to school was hard. I was just thrown back into real life, where I should have been slowly eased in. Instead, it was game on, suddenly. Not just for me, but for everyone.

I could have never foreseen what started as a two-week break from school turning into the life-altering two years that it became. From the endless weeks I spent bored out of my mind, confined to my own room, to the awkward start of my junior year of high school. The worst part was, without a doubt, the time warp that I lived. The feeling that I pressed fast forward on life. The feeling that I skipped two whole years of my life. The realization that everyone on Earth also lost two years doesn't even soften the blow. It makes it worse knowing that everyone went through the same dreadfully soul-crushing event that I did. Two years is a lot of time, especially for a teenager. We are all now more or less back at it somehow or another, but all of us are forever different.