

Being in Love During a Pandemic

I don't know who's going to see this. Who's going to read what I am going through, but it's important. Being in love during a pandemic is not easy, it has been one of the most trying times of my relationship. My boyfriend and I have been together for a little over two years and five months. We started dating in highschool as juniors and we have just finished our first year of college.

Now I will admit that my relationship has not always been perfect. No relationship is, but I cherish my love for my boyfriend with my entire being. The joy I feel when I'm with him, the butterflies I get when I know he is about to arrive at my house, the way that every kiss feels as magical as the first one is indescribable. I fell for him the first day that I met him and nothing has been the same since.

During February 2020, COVID-19 made its way to America. In the beginning I wasn't sure what to think about it. Of course I knew it was bad in China, but Ebola never got bad in America so I wasn't too stressed out. That was until it started spreading. Slowly but surely, Covid-19 spread throughout the country and eventually made its way to my city. I have always been a bit of a germaphobe; I tend to get scared of real life things pretty easily, whether it be rusty nails or raw eggs. My boyfriend on the other hand, wasn't that worried. He knew that it was serious, but he wasn't scared.

I live with my grandma and as we started to learn more about the virus, we learned that she was very high risk for COVID. She has no spleen, so her body isn't able to produce antibodies the way other people are able to. On top of that, she also has diabetes and is about to be 65, so she checks off many of the qualifications for being at high risk. Once we saw how quickly the virus was spreading, we knew that we had to start taking this seriously, so we stocked up on toilet paper, water, nonperishables, and a few medications for fevers, coughs, and general pain management.

The last time I saw my boyfriend was on March 15. It is now June 1. Let me not over exaggerate. I have seen him, but touching, kissing, and being within 6 ft of each other is off limits. So really, I've seen him about 3 times where he drops off food and we have some face to face conversation while I stand on the sidewalk and he sits in the car. We did have one day where he came over, we both wore masks, and we played ping pong and got to hold hands while wearing gloves (I know, how romantic). Unfortunately, that isn't always enough to keep the romance going sometimes.

Now, let me be honest with you, I totally forgot to finish whatever this is. Today is November 30, 2020. It's been a good 5 months or so since I first started whatever you'd call this, so let me get back to it!

In total, I spent 5 months inside my house quarantining in order to keep my family safe. Spending quality time with my boyfriend during that time was limited. It felt like a cycle that was never going to end. We would try to figure out safe ways to see each other, or even see how

we could go about actually getting to hug each other, but it would always end up in fights. I am very blessed that my grandmother was able to work from home and be able to support my sister and I without having to put herself at risk, but unfortunately my boyfriend and his family couldn't just hunker down inside until this thing ended. There was no way we would be able to see each other without it being from 6 ft apart. I would continue to get frustrated as I watched him go out with his friends when I knew him and I couldn't do the same.

I worried about him because I didn't know if he was safe with them. I didn't know how seriously his friends were taking everything or even his family. As time went on, things continued to get tougher. After nights of crying and fighting, we eventually came to the conclusion that we needed to take a break. We needed to figure out why we were constantly fighting. Was it because we didn't have the same understanding of the virus? Was it my jealousy? Was he not trying hard enough? So many questions that we had to figure out the answers to, and eventually we did.

Things were pretty smooth after that. We came to the conclusion that we wouldn't really be able to see each other until I moved out of my house in August. Waiting for that day felt like forever, but eventually it came. Being in his arms again felt like jumping into a cloud, warm, fuzzy, safe, and calm. In that moment everything felt right, everything felt worth it.

Now, you'd think (or at least I did), that once we were able to see each other again, everything would be smooth sailing (aside from the occasional bickering that every couple faces). What we didn't know was that there were another set of challenges waiting for us now that we could see each other. Finding out what made me feel safe was the hardest part. I had no idea what I was comfortable with yet. COVID-19 is an invisible monster. You can't see it, you can't smell it, you can't hear it, but when it gets you, you have to fight with everything in you to overcome it.

Being in love during a pandemic is so incredibly challenging. Relationships alone can be hard enough to navigate, especially at our age when you're transitioning into adulthood and figuring out what you want to do with your life. Now throw a deadly virus in the mix, that's something you can never truly be prepared for. Two completely different people, who come from different backgrounds and have different perspectives on the virus and what precautions are necessary, coming together and hanging on by one of the most beautiful things in life. You have to put in work, you have to want it, you have to be able to take a step back and look at things from someone else's perspective.

Although this has been one of the most trying tests in our relationship, I wouldn't change a thing. It brought us closer in ways that wouldn't have been possible without it. It forced us to look at things from a different point of view. We learned about each other's pasts and upbringings. From that, our relationship became stronger, our love for one another grew, and we know that we can get through the toughest challenges if we work together. I want to finish this off with a quote I came across a few years ago. I'm not sure who said it or where it's from, but it

has stuck in my mind since: “When facing challenges in a relationship, it isn’t one against the other. Instead, it’s both of you against the world.”