

Dear Future Me,

Today is July 15, 2020. It is 10:01 PM, and I'm sitting by an open window. The cool but somewhat irritating night breeze keeps sweeping my papers off my desk.

Thinking about writing this, I have realized you will probably hate me—this version of me. You are probably annoyed that this ignorant, younger version of you would write a letter that is frankly useless to you. Whatever happened has happened. What role can I possibly serve? Time has perished me, replaced me with you: a me but with new experiences, perspectives, and goals—for better or for worse.

Nevertheless, I want to write to you about this version of me, or you, and my current experience and feelings. This pandemic is quickly tiring all of us. There are moments that I see where people pause in their work or stroll as the realization settles in again, crashing like a wave: this is our new normal. The other day, for instance, when I stood in line for the cash register—physically distancing, of course—I spotted a middle-aged woman with her mask drift her eyes throughout the store with some bewilderment. Her eyes' glazed movement stopped when they connected with a staff worker's. They both then lightly chuckled as they discussed how simply crazy the situation is.

All businesses require masks now. Some people stubbornly remain in their cave of denial and selfishness like a stronger and very real version of Plato's Cave, and refuse to wear a mask. It has quickly become twisted into a political issue, which is just further proof of humanity's deterioration. Some states are now mandating its use and punishing those who refuse with fines; this includes Michigan. I'm glad for that, even though I barely step outside.

The quarantine life brings many bouts of emptiness, loneliness, anxiety, and—unfortunately—self-reflection. I've come to realize the self-indulgence of the BC (Before COVID) era and how much we have taken simple things for granted. I've actually made a list of what I want to do after this is all over, though, I don't really know how it can be “over.” I guess it lies with the vaccine. I do hope you have managed to check off that list in your time.

Besides the self-reflection, these days, my anxiety has reached new heights. I never really had a problem with anxiety before, but I've become more aware of its bruising nagging. Though there are some people living their lives mostly unchanged, I have a big family. To be honest with you, I don't particularly greatly mind if I somehow caught the virus. My anxiety isn't for me. However, if my mother were to catch it from me, or from anywhere else, guilt will pull me down to the darkest place. We are both aware she wouldn't handle it. Therefore—and I know this is useless—I hope my mother and the rest of my family are safe in the time you are living in.

Another aspect of quarantine worth mentioning is the media in general. I used to be quite aware and knowledgeable of current local and world news, but I can now barely glance at my news notifications. Everything in the news is hectic and borderline chaotic. It has only induced sadness and a great sense of helplessness in me that magnified my pessimism. I'm staying off Twitter and Facebook as much as possible. It's daunting, in a way, how much importance the phrase "ignorance is bliss" has taken in my life. Having Trump in the White House taking an inactive and stingy approach to dealing with the pandemic has been an absolute horrifying joke. The United States, in general, has become a lowly and incompetent nation tipping its heels on the edge of a cliff in the eyes of other nations. Even the so-called American Dream now induces laughter. We've fallen quite far and have started digging. I can't watch anymore of it. With the current heated political election, I don't know what will happen. I just hope your world is more comprehensible and slightly more peaceful.

Finally, I want to conclude this letter by reminding you of a few things, in case it continues to not be over in your time. You should try to find joy in the smallest things that happen. Big joys are proving to be rare and frankly not worth the wait. So, embrace the small joys to the brim. Also, I hope that you have found a way to surpass the barriers your anxiety keeps stubbornly building. I am keeping it my motto for now that "all things shall pass." In the past, this was somewhat depressing to me, since it means nothing good will last. In bad times, it is the only comfort. I hope you are looking back at this as some mere bad moments that were and not life itself.

Your younger self,
Zeena Whayeb