

If there's one thing I've learned from the 2020 pandemic, it's that the world can take us by storm and break us down or build us up; that's up to us to decide. In these tragic times, we question our emotions and feel as though the whole world is against us. So, I wondered if this pandemic really could bring out the best in me, and in a broad sense, bring out the best in others as well.

It all began one hot summer afternoon when I was waiting on the back porch for my grandma to arrive. I was sick of the pandemic and I had not seen my her over six months. So, I was overjoyed to see her hop out of her car with her purse over her shoulder. Over these past six months I spent a lot of time cooped up focusing on the things that didn't matter. So, I was excited to have someone to talk to. We settled down on the porch after I gave her a huge hug.

"How has everything been?" Grandma asked. "Quarantine has been really hard; I wish everything would just be back to normal," I replied. "Honey, quarantine has been hard on everyone. However, let's think about all the time you got to spent with family and the memories you created. Those you will cherish forever. " Grandma explained. I smiled. It was true; I had really enjoyed having mom and dad home which allowed us to bond even stronger and made me feel loved.

"I'm hungry," I exclaimed. We went to the kitchen and Grandma made us a snack. We sat on the counter and took a bite. "I've been thinking," I said suddenly "It took me a while to realize this, but what if this pandemic really was here for a reason? I was at my lowest lows before the pandemic. I was really stressed and had too much on my plate. Through this time, I was able to focus on my schoolwork and didn't have to worry about activities. It gave me the pause I needed to enjoy everything I did and made me mentally stronger."

“Oh honey, sorry you felt that way!” Grandma remarked. She grabbed a napkin for each of us. “The pandemic is a very stressful time, but mental health is very important. No matter what, it’s also important to take time to think about yourself. When people are at their low, having support to make one feel loved is essential. I am sure many of your friends and even people around the world may have gone through this.” I nodded and wiped my mouth clean. We disposed our napkins and headed back out to the porch.

While walking outside, Grandma asked “Do you know about the work that the scientists are doing to find a cure for the virus?” I replied, “Well, I know that they are working very hard to produce a medicine and vaccine. I know it is not easy, and heard that they tried, and failed many times, but they keep trying”. This interesting question made me think about resilience. I realized how hard people try every day and even with failure, keep going to make the best out of it. “This is a valuable lesson that I will carry forever with myself”. “Yes” Grandma said. “Just remember, never give up! .”

I opened the door and walked over to my favorite rocking chair and Grandma sat on the sofa. I spotted two kids playing with their kites. I realized that this pandemic has forced me to go outside a lot and appreciate nature. I looked at the long meadow and the swaying trees. I glanced at all the flowers on the grass and smiled. “Also, Grandma, isn’t there less pollution since people didn’t use cars as much? Since everyone was quarantining, isn’t it better for the environment and our world?” I stated.

Grandma smiled and had that proud look on her face of how grown up I was. She chimed in, “Our community also owes a huge thanks to our First Responders, and the creativity of technology that protects them. They risk their lives every day to help others, and they couldn’t do it without the help of the technology that people have created. This technology allows them to

treat their patients where they don't have an actual medicine to fix it.” “Yes, you are right. We built a stronger relationship with each other and it made us grow stronger as a team. It made me understand the true value of people” I said.

It was starting to get late. The beautiful colors of the sunset were showing lavender purple, cotton candy pink and blue raspberry. We started to wrap up our conversation and sat in silence for a little while, feeling the cooler breeze. We decided to go inside and prepare dinner.

“I have one more question,” I stated. Grandma looked up towards me from the stove and said, “Yes?”. “What did this pandemic teach us about our country and world?”. Grandma walked over and said “Well, truthfully I think this pandemic also put us in our place. It showed us that we depended a lot on other countries, for their supplies, food, and other essentials that we didn't even realize until now. This opened our eyes to the limits on our capabilities and how we depend on the world. Remember the shortage of toilet paper and hand sanitizer?” Grandma and I chuckled as we sat on the dinner table.

As the whole family gathered for dinner, I felt this was the beginning of a whole new way to look at life and I was feeling thankful. You see, this pandemic really brought the best out of our economy, community, relationships, and ourselves. It has united us together as a team, so that we can all fight against it as one. As a family, community, country and world, we have learned to “never give up!”