Introduction:

Today I will be speaking to a few friends of mine about the pandemic. We were all nearing the end of school in the eighth grade when we were put on lockdown. Everything around us was changing and most of us didn't have time to process. Now we're suddenly in the 11th grade, a few months away from becoming seniors and completing high school. The reason I chose to talk about this topic is because I feel like it is important to think back and acknowledge the things we lost and how we've changed.

Salil (Interviewer):

The first person I will be interviewing today is Mariam, and my first question is what is your earliest memory hearing about COVID while you were in school.

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

So I think I was in math class or science class. I don't quite remember, but I do remember the principal going over the announcements saying that we wouldn't be able to come back to the building in two weeks because of COVID and I just remember that I was very shocked to hear that.

Salil (Interviewer):

So did you think you would ever like get this bad like online school and then...like I know we had the break and stuff or break or whatever like after spring break. Did you think we would have to... It would get?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

So I was like, oh, it's just two weeks. I didn't think it was like a pandemic. I thought it was just a little sickness that was going around the school. But I was in my head. I was like, okay, you know what, if it's going to be a pandemic, it's probably going to take a year. We're going to have vaccines everything will be okay *next year*, but then that following year it worsened and then the next year and I think now, WHO, like the World Health Organization declared that COVID is not a global pandemic anymore, which was really nice to hear, but also very like shocking, you know.

Salil (Interviewer):

Yeah, I remember like I first heard about it and like my whole class, not even my teacher took it seriously. Like there was a few who were like kind of panicking and my teacher was like you guys used to calm down like this is probably like nothing it'll go away in a few days, but like obviously it didn't so. How did you feel about like when you got the news of having to start high school your first like year of high school online?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

It was really, really sad. Like, honestly, I was so excited to meet my friends, new people. I was reconnecting to old people from my elementary school before I moved. So it was really, it was really sad to hear that I wouldn’t physically be able to meet them, but then I believe we were able to come back into the building second semester, so that first semester of online school was very sad.

Salil (Interviewer):

So you chose to come to do in person second semester?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

Yeah, I believe it was like sometime in March. A lot of students decided to come in, and it was really nice to see everybody.

Salil (Interviewer):

And then how was your school productivity when you were online?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

Oh it was terrible. It was terrible I remember. I remember like the first two or three weeks it was fine, you know. I was actually doing my work, I was productive, but then, like overtime, I just lost interest. It didn't even feel like school felt optional. So like, sometimes I would just leave my computer open and do something else, or sometimes I wouldn't even be focusing but overall, I just felt like an option to me, which I didn't like

Salil (Interviewer):

Like yeah, it was kind of like that to me as well, but I definitely. I feel like I did really well online. I know some people really struggled. Like you said, they felt like it was optional, but yeah, I guess. Yeah, it makes sense. A lot of people did feel like that. And how would you compare it to how you were when you came back second semester-- when you came to in person second semester compared to first semester when you were doing online?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

So first semester when I was doing it online. I was isolated, unproductive, but then when I came back second semester and I got to see people see the teachers and actually ask for help. I was way more productive second semester and I just feel like overall I was mentally okay during second semester because I had people surrounded—I was surrounded by people that were going through the same thing as me and it felt really nice.

Salil (Interviewer):

Right that’s good, how would you say if it affected you negatively and positively?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

So negatively COVID obviously isolated me from my friends. I've lost a couple actually. I've lost family members from COVID, so it was really rough on me mentally. I wasn't focusing on school, you know, high school is really important for college. I felt like I was failing in life for a majority of the time, but COVID also positively impacted me because I started doing new things like new hobbies. I started working out more. I'm bike trailing now which is really nice, yeah.

Salil (Interviewer):

I know I always see. That you're doing that, it's like kind of inspiring.

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

I started doing that during COVID. I've been face timing my friends a lot. Back in COVID I was face timing my friends and I still do that now like I am now connecting with people and making sure that I check up on them.

Salil (Interviewer):

Okay and then for my final question, I wanted to ask how you would compare yourself from before in general like your outlook in life from before the pandemic and now?

Mariam (Interviewee 1):

I one thing that I will keep in mind, ever since COVID and I know it's still going on, but never take things for granted because I've lost so many people, friends and family, and I think just now I'm taking things seriously and I'm really grateful for what I have.

Salil (Interviewer):

Okay, thank you so much!

Salil (Interviewer):

And the second person I will be interviewing today is Noor, and the first question I have for you is, what is your earliest memory of hearing about COVID?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

COVID my earliest memory of COVID was in my 8th grade science classroom in Mr. Kelly classroom, and he was basically telling us a story or a true story about the first two high schools in Saint Louis that got shut down. I think they were having a spring dance or something like that and someone had COVID and spread it all around and the schools shut down so yeah.

Salil (Interviewer):

Did you or your peers take any of that seriously? Like before, before your teacher told you about that? After like, what were your reactions to it before and after hearing about the two schools that closed down because of it?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

I honestly I didn't think it was that serious like I thought it was just like any other flu or cold, but obviously that was not the case, but yeah.

Salil (Interviewer):

Okay and then how did you feel when you got the news of having to start high school online?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

I was really excited, to be honest, because I'm a very not social person and I'm very introverted and so when they said that we had to start high school online, I thought it was really, really good for me and good for my mental health too.

Salil (Interviewer):

And how was your school productivity during online?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

It was really good, I felt in like I was in my natural habitat I guess you could say because I was at home on my bed like my favorite place to be. You know, even though that sounds like pretty lazy of me.

Salil (Interviewer):

No, I mean like I understand that like, especially with the schedule change like we didn't even have to wake up that early.

Noor (Interviewee 2):

And I hate waking up early. That's a big part of why I really loved it and why I did really good is because I didn't have to wake up at 5:00 AM and go to class and you get ready or anything. I could just stay in bed and do my and do my work and kind of work on my own pace too.

Salil (Interviewer):

Yeah, that was really nice and how would you compare it now that you're in person?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

Um, now that I'm in person it’s definitely different in person. I feel like I need more motivations and things to do my homework in person, even though I know for most people it was the opposite like they couldn't get anything done online, but I felt like just me as a person that was just the best state I was in if that makes sense. So now that we're in person, I have to, like, you know, socialize more and just do things that I'm not-- not that I'm not used to doing it, but I'm less comfortable with doing it with, you know, like anxiety and stuff.

Salil (Interviewer):

Yeah, I also I was like-- I feel like I also enjoyed online and I was kind of like should I do online instead of going to school? But then, like I also was thinking about like the high school experience and all that but like, even if I don't think online would have been a choice for me anyway but like I thought about it like what if I just did online for the rest of my high school?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

Yeah, I definitely, honestly. I also thought that because I'm the type of person like-- I like to prioritize my mental health, and I think a lot of people should, but at the same time like or like-- If I had to choose high school experience or like you know staying healthy mentally and physically, like I'm going to choose staying healthy like, but I guess the high school experience like, yeah, it does kind of like make me sad that I guess I didn't get like that freshman year of high school or whatever, but I think everything works out and happen-- everything happens for a reason, yeah.

Salil (Interviewer):

And how would you say it affected you negatively and positively?

Noor (Interviewee 2):

So negatively, I didn't really honestly, it really didn't like I wish I could say it did but I think that COVID changed me for the better and I would not be the person I am today without quarantine or COVID or anything like that. So positively I think that it definitely made me more confident with myself, not just like physically, but like emotionally and stuff. So, like, I was more confident, in like personality and just things like that and so when I finally went back to school, I felt like more like myself, you know, than I did when I was like in 8th grade and like middle school, you know, yeah.

Salil (Interviewer):

Yeah, I understand that for sure. Just a lot more like comfortable and for my final question, how would you compare yourself from before? How would you compare yourself from before the pandemic and lockdown and all that, your outlook on life, just anything within that type of…

Noor (Interviewee 2):

I think before I definitely didn't take anything seriously and I was less-- I wouldn't notice anything like my surroundings or anything and like before, I was also like not I wasn't like I don't want to say I was not okay, but like, I wasn't like in a good place, you know and I didn't know how to be in a good place, but I think that COVID really gave me the opportunity to, like, sit down with myself and just reflect on everything and just reflect on my life and my life decisions. Even though I was just in middle school, so I don't know much about life. But the things that I did know, it helped me like it--it gave me perspective, if that makes.

Salil (Interviewer):

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, thank you so much!

Conclusion:

In the end, after speaking with my friends about the pandemic and the different things they went through, I've concluded that most of us feel that there's been a big change in us as people during this event. This makes sense because a lot of time has passed and I found myself agreeing and relating to most of the things being said during these talks. It was really interesting to see how much I was able to relate and connect to two of my friends about this particular topic, and I enjoyed reflecting back on this event even though it was a very difficult thing that happened. And it altered our lives forever but I feel like it was a very important think to talk about and I enjoyed it very much.