

Interview Transcription Camille Yancey

Hi! My name is Camille Yancey and I'm a Health Sciences Major. It's 2025, the spring semester at Butler University, and I'm a freshman. I consent to being recorded.

1. How did your daily life change when the pandemic began?

- a. I had recently gone through an intensive neck surgery right before the pandemic that left me with lots of health issues. A week before the pandemic, I had just started going to school for a few hours with a neck brace on. I often had to come home early from passing out. I didn't realize the magnitude of the pandemic when it first began. I discovered that school was canceled from an Instagram post, posted by my school district. It was being advertised as an extra two-week spring break. At the pandemic's beginning, I was under doctor's orders to take things slow. The pandemic did give me a good chance to heal, so it was beneficial in that aspect. With that said, I don't remember doing much with my life when the pandemic began. My daily life was filled with lots of Netflix and online assignments. I felt restless yet weak, and most of my time was spent just recovering. It still feels like that chapter of my life was lost. I regret not making more out of it.

2. What did you miss out on due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- a. I remember just getting to the point where I was loving eighth grade. Seventh grade was tough for me socially, but by the time COVID-19 happened, I finally felt like I was liking middle school! My best friend Charley and I hung out all the time. I liked my teachers. I was in my school's jazz band and was having so much

fun with it. Our band just started going to competitions, and Charley and I always had a blast at them. I guess what I feel I missed out on most was the potential that year had for me. Before my injury and the pandemic, I was looking forward to all the memories I would make in the Jazz band and with Charley. The pandemic put a halt to all of that, and I still think about all that could've been if it never happened. After eighth grade, I switched school districts and started high school somewhere completely new. I never had the opportunity to be with that community or with my band again. I missed out on making the most out of my last months there. I can't imagine how much laughter and memories I missed out on.

3. Did you feel connected to or isolated from others during the pandemic, and how did you cope with that?

- a. I felt disconnected, especially from people my age. I only had my parents and pets at home, since my brother is way older than me. I was used to feeling connected to others by having fun and hanging out with my friends. It was hard not having that. I felt isolated, especially being virtually an only child. I remember spending time with my mom and taking my dogs on walks. But a teenager needs to be around other teenagers sometimes! It felt like I'd never be around kids my age again, especially since my surgery had kept me away from school even before the pandemic happened. There were times when I felt like I was gonna lose it.

4. What were the biggest challenges you faced?

- a. My biggest challenge was switching schools after the pandemic. I remember shrugging it off at the time, thinking my family was just implying I may switch

schools. I didn't think anything was set in stone. Suddenly, after months of isolation and surgery recovery, I was in a completely different environment, completely alone. I think the pandemic made me even shyer somehow, and my social anxiety was through the roof. Being extremely quiet and shy, a freshman, and a new kid all at once was an atrocious combination. It was hard to find my place. But I ended up enjoying high school and finding my friends and community there. It all worked out. I just wonder if freshman year would've been easier if the pandemic never happened.

5. Can you share an experience or moment that made you realize the gravity of the pandemic?

- a. I remember the transition from a break from school to online coursework. This made me realize this break wasn't going away any time soon. At first, the pandemic was just a two-week break from school. After transitioning to online coursework, school was now completely at home. I realized this wasn't a "break" but a drastic change in every aspect. I wasn't going to see my teachers and many of my classmates ever again. I remember as I did the work, I quickly realized it didn't matter. The work I was doing was canvas quizzes and something like an article or a video. I wasn't learning anything anymore, even though I tried my best to take the work seriously. This wasn't anything close to school, and I knew then that the pandemic wasn't just a temporary break.

6. Did the pandemic shift your perspective on health care?

- a. During my time in the hospital right before the pandemic, the hospital had strict rules on visitation. I didn't realize this at the time, but this regulation was put in

place because a flu-like disease was spreading through the hospital, and they didn't want the disease to spread any further. This was COVID-19 ravaging just weeks before we would publicly know what COVID-19 was. Looking back, I was so fortunate to be able to come home and eventually, after the pandemic slowed down, see my friends and family again. Many patients in the hospital, whether it was from COVID-19 or other illnesses, spent their last moments isolated due to pandemic regulations. I can't imagine how it felt to be unable to see your loved ones during your last moments. This made me realize the importance of empathetic healthcare providers. When I couldn't see my friends, the nurses provided me with company. During COVID-19 isolation policies, healthcare staff were some of the only people patients could have by their side. Providers are more than just people to fix our health. They are often the last support and kindness people receive, especially in times like the pandemic.