

You Are Not Alone

Martina L. Beattie



BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Make a list of words that describe the way the pandemic is making people feel.
2. Consider the following vocabulary: standstill, vulnerable, burden, essential, numb, impact

The Pandemic and Mental Health

Because of the pandemic, you might be feeling annoyed by the current stay-at-home orders. With school and job closures, and not being able to see your friends or family, your life could possibly feel like it's at a *standstill*. You may be feeling useless and powerless over your own life. Losing control makes us feel *vulnerable* and lost. However, you should know that you are NOT alone.

Katie's way of coping was to get out of the house and socialize with people.

A new report by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that the mental health *burden* is increasing for many. In mid-March, 32% of people polled said that worry and stress about the coronavirus have had a negative impact on their mental health. Two weeks later, this number rose

to 45%, and it is still increasing.¹ Current studies show that women appear to be more affected than men.² Women are more likely to experience domestic violence and feel the stress of not being able to access health care (including contraceptives).

Katie Got Depressed

One woman who knows this more than anyone is 17-year-old Katie. Katie has bipolar depression, and she often feels harassed for it in her own home. Katie's way of coping was to get out of the house and socialize with people. It helped distract her from her thoughts and avoid the people in her household. This worked well for her until the Covid-19 outbreak sparked a mass lockdown. Now she has no choice but to do the one thing she hates the most, isolate. After the lockdown, Katie fell into a deep depression. She felt like nobody understood her and that she was all alone. That is, until she met Niki.

Niki Felt Alone

Niki is a 20-year-old woman who suffers from a genetic disorder called Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (POS). POS affects hormone levels, which can result in mood swings, depression, and pain

in the abdomen. The only known treatment for POS is hormonal birth control, but because of Covid-19, Niki could not get her prescription. Without treatment, Niki’s depression and anxiety got worse. Throughout all of this, Niki had felt alone, until one day she reached out to a support group online and met Kyle.

Kyle Wished He Was Never Born

Kyle, a 15-year-old boy, grew up in a strict household with an alcoholic father. Kyle was a sensitive boy, and school was his getaway. He loved to read in the library and participate in the school’s musical arts club. Kyle’s father had been athletic, and he wanted Kyle to join a sports team and be just like him. But Kyle wanted to follow a different path.

School was his escape, until Covid-19 forced him to be home alone with his father. Unfortunately for Kyle, the liquor stores are considered *essential* businesses. Kyle’s dad drank more. He called Kyle names and started hitting him, saying how he wished he was never born. Kyle became *numb* to the punches, but the words tore him down. Eventually, he began to believe his dad’s

words. He felt he didn’t deserve to live.

As he began to consider taking his own life, a group chat from Niki and Katie appeared on his phone. It said, “You are NOT alone.” Those four short words may not seem like they could have such a big *impact*, but they did. Kyle took this as a sign that he deserves to live.

Connection Makes the Difference

These three people saved each other that day, just by being there for one another. In the midst of them feeling alone and in pain, they reached out and made a connection, saving each other and saving themselves.

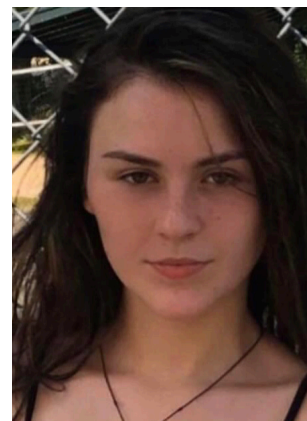
Quarantine is not easy for anyone, but it is more difficult for those struggling with mental and physical health. If you or a loved one are feeling alone or just need someone to speak to, reach out! Remember, it doesn’t matter your age, race, gender, sexuality, or religion ...YOU ARE NOT ALONE! Other people are in the same boat, and we can support each other.

Sources: 1. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>. 2. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/men-and-mental-health/index.shtm#part_152633

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Summarize the author’s main point.
2. Are there times during this pandemic when you have felt alone and not-so-alone? Describe those times. Write about what happened.
3. Write several sentences using the vocabulary listed in the second “Before you read” activity.

Martina L. Beattie is a student at Valley Regional Adult Education in Shelton, CT. She says, “I was hesitant to submit my writing to The Change Agent because my confidence was low from being bullied my whole life due to having autism. But my teachers, friends, and family insisted and pushed me past my comfort zone. I’m glad I did! I’m thankful that I’m in an environment that continues to inspire and encourage me! This story is based on real people.”



Need Help?

NATIONAL

SUICIDE

PREVENTION

LIFELINE

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

If you are feeling suicidal,
 call in English: 1-800-273-8255
 en Español: 1-888-628-9454.
[<suicidepreventionlifeline.org>](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).