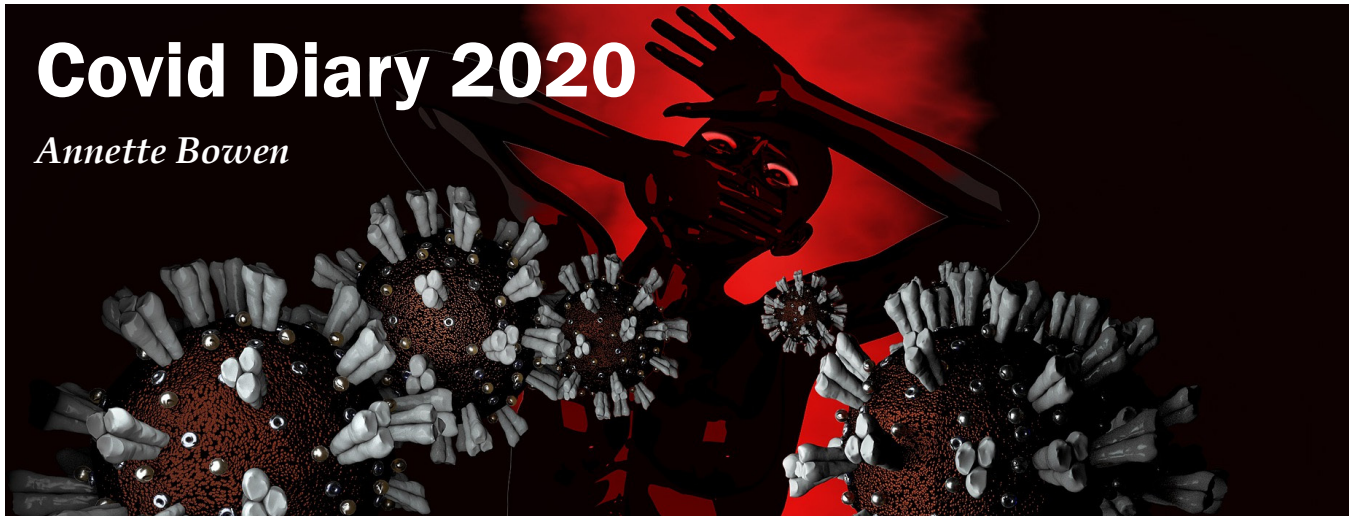


Covid Diary 2020

Annette Bowen



BEFORE YOU READ: Do you know anyone with anxiety or depression? How has the pandemic affected them?

As far as my mental health is concerned, 2020 has been like a never-ending episode of “The Twilight Zone.” Here’s a brief look into the mind of someone with depression and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic.

February 2020: A New Flu

There are whispers of a medical crisis in China. Ever curious, I turn on the news and hear a re-

porter talking about a new flu caused by the coronavirus. A switch flicks on in my head. “Did I hear him correct? This is serious!” Panic settles in my bones like

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a fierce snowstorm. As days pass, the trickle of news speeds up. Everyone is trying to figure out what’s going on with this deadly virus.

March 2020: Panic

New York, California, Washington, Florida and several other states declare a State of Emergency. Covid-19 stomps into every crack and crevice of America, especially hitting the elderly, and Afri-

can American and Latino communities.

During an intense Tele-Med session with my therapist, I allow every ounce of panic to gush from the deepest parts of my mind. I’d never experienced this amount of primal fear.

I quit riding public transportation. Panic evolves into crippling paranoia. I am constantly afraid that I will contract Covid-19. Paper products, Lysol, Clorox, hand-sanitizer are precious commodities.

Thank goodness, my daughter sends a huge care package, loaded with scarce cleaning and paper products. I consult with my therapist twice in one month! After our second session, she urges me to speak with someone at the Georgia Covid-19 Emotional Support Line. It helps a little.

On March 31, 2020, Georgia’s cumulative Covid-19 cases: 4,232.

April 2020: Disinfecting Groceries

The walls close in on me. So does the alcohol. The governor of Georgia issues a Shelter in Place order for the entire state. I feel like I’m locked in a cage. Falling down the rabbit hole, depression welcomes me with open arms. Vodka and I fuse together at the hand. Happy Hour is all day.

I stop going outside except for walking to the mailbox once every two weeks. Grocery orders are disinfected before entering my apartment. White

noise blares through my head. My pre-Covid coping skills are useless. Reading and writing no longer interest me. I develop obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). I spend my days cleaning, drinking, and eating.

On April 30, 2020, Georgia's cumulative Covid-19 cases: 25,214.

July 2020: Anxiety Skyrockets

My psychiatrist increases my medication dosage. The drinking downsizes from liquor to beer. I venture out to the grocery store with my son, but this is a huge mistake. My anxiety skyrockets. I can't maneuver around the store. There are people who refuse to wear a mask. My paranoia awakens. Back in the car, I have labored breathing, profuse sweating, and shaky hands. This has never happened to me. Going forward, I have my groceries delivered.

On July 31, 2020, Georgia's cumulative Covid-19 cases: 184,695.

October 2020: Bracing for Second Wave

We are bracing for a second wave of Covid-19. Over 211,000 Americans have died. How many more are not dead but suffering, as I am? Anxiety and depression still knock on the door of my mind.

On October 31, 2020, Georgia's cumulative Covid-19 cases: 358,615

December 2020: Getting More Help

The second wave is here. ICU beds are full and our governor decided to turn the Georgia World Congress Center into an overflow Covid-19 care facility. I no longer ride public transportation; I continue to have my groceries delivered. Despite the surge in Covid cases, my mental health is more stable. I attribute my turnaround to increased medication and therapy. In therapy, I learned what triggers my drinking. Gone are the days of drinking myself into a stupor.

I have also been updating all the stories I've

written. Writing catapults me to an alternate universe where anxiety and depression are slayed by imagination. Crafting themes and dialogue consumes the darkness, enabling me to shut off negativity.

Another important mental health strategy is I keep up my connections with family and friends by phone. When days are dark, I reach out to my excellent support network.

On December 31, Georgia's cumulative Covid-19 cases: 565,949.

January 2021

There's still work to be done. I have hope that 2021 will usher in some semblance of normality. One difference is that in addition to counting cases, we can now start counting the number of people vaccinated.

On January 31, 2021, Georgia's cumulative vaccinations: 906,186. That's only 1.1 percent of our population, but it's a start. We're going in the right direction.

Sources: dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report; <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/01/28/960901166/how-is-the-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-going-in-your-state>.

AFTER YOU READ: What would your "Covid diary" look like? What were the days and months of 2020 like for you? How many people in your state have been vaccinated? Look up your total population and calculate the percentage.

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