When My Parents Tested Positive
The Most Stressful Phone Call of My Life

Sravanthi Kona

BEFORE YOU READ: Do you know someone who had Covid? If so, did it add stress to your life? Explain.

Although I have faced a lot of stress in my life, this time, a phone call caused the most stress I have ever experienced. My father said that both he and my mother were suffering from a fever, vomiting, and muscle pain. They had tested positive for Covid-19. Their age and pre-existing conditions put them at a higher risk, so I felt more stressed than ever.

At first, they tried to take care of themselves. I kept saying they should go to the hospital so that they could get more help. But they waited until their symptoms worsened, and then they finally went to the hospital.

I felt terrible. Travel restrictions stopped me from visiting them when they were sick. I was unable to eat or sleep, and I was always thinking about them, talking to them on the phone, or calling the hospital to inquire about them. I felt so sad and didn't know what to do.

Taking Steps to Reduce Stress

When I shared my pain with my friends, they asked me to read articles about people who recovered from Covid-19. I shared those positive stories with my parents to boost their faith in recovery. Doing something concrete to keep my parents mentally strong reduced my stress, and I felt confident they would recover. I also distracted myself by spending time gardening and going for walks.

Did It Have to Be Like This?

However, I have a question: Did it have to be like this? I don't think so. If our public health system had prepared us to deal with this kind of pandemic, we wouldn't have lost so many lives. For example, we could have had clear instructions from the beginning to wear masks and to keep social distance. Furthermore, to prevent the spread of the disease, we could have used technology to detect fevers and trace sick people. These measures could have prevented my parents from getting the virus.

Also, when they did get the virus, a better public health system could have helped my parents manage their symptoms, deliver food and medicine, and provide checkups by phone or in-person. Undoubtedly, this could have saved the hospital's resources for those who needed them more. And it would have saved my parents money and saved me a lot of stress.

Suffering in isolation not only hurts the Covid patients, but it also hurts the families. I felt miserable watching from far away while my parents went through this. When we are dealing with a pandemic, positive thoughts help, but a better public health system would make a bigger difference. It would help not just the people who have Covid-19, but it also everyone experiencing the stress of supporting their sick relatives during a pandemic.

AFTER YOU READ: What advice did the writer get? Was it helpful? What else does she say would have been helpful?

Sravanthi Kona is an ESOL student at Portland Community College in Portland, OR. She was born in India and immigrated to the United States in 2002. Her goal is to improve her English skills. She loves cooking, gardening, and taking care of her two daughters. It took months for her parents to recover from Covid, but thankfully they are doing better now.