

Out of a Job during a Pandemic

Zoe Romo

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read the title and the headings. What do you think this article will be about?
2. What groups of people are at a higher risk of serious illness if they get Covid?

Covid Is a High Risk for Me

Before the pandemic hit, I had a job working at a department store. It was one of my favorite jobs. At the time, I was going through a lot with my family. We were constantly fighting, so going to work and being out of the house was a good way for me to escape the madness at home. I was

scared that if I lost my job, I would have to deal with my problems.

The store closed in March, and I was furloughed shortly after that. My

mom and my doctors were scared that the store would open again, and I would have to go back to work. I have a condition that puts me at high risk for Covid. I was born with a congenital heart condition, which has required multiple surgeries. I also have one and a half lungs. Covid is a high-risk disease for me.

Searching for Safe Work

I started looking for a new job, but it was hard. I couldn't just walk into a store and apply. I looked for work I could do from home. I made an account on Indeed.com and started my search.

As time went on, it got more frustrating. I couldn't find a job that fit my schedule. Some of



the jobs looked like sketchy pyramid schemes. Once, I applied for a job that they said was remote, but in the interview, they told me it wasn't.

Another thing you have to worry about is whether or not the employer has your health and safety in mind. While most did, some did not, which is why working in-person was out of the question for me.

My hope was to get a job as a call service representative. I figured it wouldn't be hard. I have work experience and a working phone and computer. It turns out, I was very wrong! I would get so close to getting the job, and something always happened. The hours didn't work, or I needed a certain type of laptop. A lot of companies did not put the equipment requirements in their initial posting, and they waited until the interview to tell you. Some companies said I needed two monitors to be considered for the job. One time, a company emailed me the link to a typing test, but I didn't have right software to run the test.

Watch Out for Cons and False Advertising

When you apply for online jobs, you have to be careful about being conned or being locked into something you did not consent to. For example,

last summer, I came across a flyer for a sales company that was offering good pay and flexible hours, so I decided to apply. I got the job and was able to move onto the training, which was an eight-hour session over zoom. Not only was the training time-consuming, but it was hard to keep up with, and the people conducting it offered little

My burning question was, “What if no one wants to buy this stuff that we will be selling?”

“What if no one wants to buy this stuff that we will be selling? Then what?” Since that was a “negative” question, I could not ask it. Instead, they encouraged us to come up with the list of our first clients. They pressured us to reach out to our family and friends. I didn’t even bother. I said my

to no help. They went too fast, and they did not allow people to ask questions, especially if the question sounded “negative.”

My burning question was,

goodbyes, and I left because I knew it would be a mess if I stayed.

At a certain point, I asked my previous employer if they could possibly accommodate me. I hoped they could give me a job that did not require me to be around people. They said no.

What Are the Options for People Like Me?

The CDC classifies older adults and people with certain health conditions as high risk. People (like me) who are in these groups have to figure out how to stay safe *and* make a living. We need to make sure our employers have our best interests in mind. If we don’t have a job, how else can we make money? Some might try to apply for disability, but it’s a complicated process and you have to practically be on your deathbed to qualify. I applied for disability in December, and I got rejected.

Overall, the job search was hard enough to begin with, but it is especially challenging when you have underlying health issues and there’s a pandemic going on. Meanwhile, government aid is hard to come by. If you are older or have a health problem that puts you at high risk for Covid, what options do you have?

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Re-tell Zoe’s story in your own words. Use sequencing words, like *first*, *after that*, and *subsequently*.
2. What is the main idea of this article?
3. What does Zoe say you have to watch out for when applying for online jobs? Share a story of when you have had a “sketchy” job offer. What happened?

Zoe Romo is a sophomore at Northwest Vista College in San Antonio, Texas, where she was born and raised. She is majoring in biology. She loves to read, draw, work out, and go to museums. She was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas.

Find Out More about Disability

1. If you or someone you know needed to apply for disability, what would you do? How would you get more information?
2. Scan the information on this website to learn more about how to apply:
www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/.

Is the information helpful? What questions do you have? If you want to apply, who could you ask for support?

