

# Faith and Retraining during the Pandemic

Larissa Despier

**BEFORE YOU READ:** How has faith helped you through the pandemic?

## Hands-On Personal Care

Before the pandemic, I worked as a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) five days a week. I worked with Angelina, an 83-year old mother of eight, who had come here from Portugal around 40 years ago. She suffered from a stroke when she was 79, causing her to feel total numbness on the right half of her body.

Five days a week, my job was to wake up Angelina and guide her through some exercises on both sides of her body while she was still laying in bed. Then I would lift her, put her in a wheelchair, and take her to the bathroom to wash up and get ready for the day. My work days consisted of caring for her in every way. I prepared her breakfast and made sure she ate nutritious meals. I took her blood pressure, gave her medication, helped her use the bathroom, and made sure she felt comfort-

able. I put a lot of love into my job, and the family treated me like one of them.

However, the job was also very draining. Angelina's husband was very difficult. He talked to me all the time while I was working. I never felt any peace. The eight children did not have a good relationship with him. There was a lot of anger. *There was a war inside the house.* When I went home, I felt exhausted.



## The Pandemic Changes Everything

Then Covid-19 hit. At that moment, my fears increased – fear of never again seeing my family in Brazil, fear of dying, fear of leaving my daughter behind with no family. My fears were countless, and I know I wasn't the only one feeling this way.

My first thought was, "How can I protect myself from possible death?" Weighing 290 pounds at that time and being diagnosed with asthma since the age of 2, I decided that to keep myself safe, I needed to stay home and quarantine.

I had no idea what was about to happen. I was scared. I relied on my spiritual beliefs to navigate through this "*valley of the shadow of death*," which is what the pandemic felt like. I had this gut feeling that everything happens for a reason.

My first three months in quarantine were rough. As soon as my only daughter turned 18, she decided she would go live with her father. I was officially alone in my *shoebox apartment* with two small dogs. Since I had nothing else to do, I was stuck watching the news and seeing the chaos on the internet. The fear that was building up inside of me was so strong that I felt paralyzed. I did not have the will to keep going in school, so I dropped out.

## Psalm 23

In her article, Larissa refers to the pandemic using a metaphor from Psalm 23, Verse 4:

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."*

A psalm is a sacred poem or song used in worship. Psalm 23 is in both the Torah and the Bible. These links lead to [Jewish](#) and [Christian](#) hymns based on Psalm 23.



Before the pandemic, Larissa worked as a personal care attendant. Photo from [Pixabay.com](https://www.pixabay.com)



Since the pandemic, Larissa has started retraining to work remotely from home. Photo from [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

## Fear Crept Out of My Body

Eventually, I made a decision to make a shift in my mental state. I started watching content on the internet that would be healthy and encouraging. I began to feel more creative. My mind felt like it was expanding, which sparked something in me. I did not want to leave this pandemic the same person I was when it began. I decided to enroll in summer HiSET classes, I was practicing yoga, and I spent more time in nature with my dogs. I started to see life differently. Fear was slowly creeping out of my body, and I started developing passions.

One of my passions was figuring out how to work remotely. Why? Because I now realize that I am very sensitive. When I worked for Angelina, I took in all the anger and sadness in her home. It is hard for me to be around people, but I still want to be connected with people. Working remotely seems like a way I could both protect myself from people and stay connected to them.

## Finding a Way to Grow

In March 2021, exactly one year after the beginning of the pandemic, I had the opportunity to train to be a licensed financial consultant, all from home. I have done the course, and now I am trying to pass the test to get my license. I have tried several times, but I have not passed the test yet. I

will keep trying until I make it!

Those first three months of the pandemic were tough, but they are the foundation of who I am now. The pandemic as a whole was hard for everyone. We witnessed so many tragedies happen to our own people. Because of discrimination and injustice, millions of people died needlessly. Although it was an awful year in many ways, I learned that *faith moves mountains*. With faith, you can keep trying to find the right job with the right fit and the right circumstances. You find that it is possible to grow.

### AFTER YOU READ:

1. Notice Larissa's use of figurative language. Some of her metaphors are in *bold italics*. How does her use of metaphor help her communicate her message?
2. Write about a time in your life when you have had to make a big shift. What was it like? Be specific. Use metaphors to help you describe what it was like.

*Born in Brazil, Larissa Despier, has lived in Massachusetts since 2000. She is in the HiSET program at Bristol Community College in Fall River, and she is passionate about everything that involves arts, the spiritual world, self-knowledge, and human development. Mother of a 20-year-old daughter and two four-legged children (dogs), Larissa loves to spend time in nature.*