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No Need to Stress Personal Progress in the Midst of a Pandemic

Emma Jaber, Arts & Entertainment Editor

My screentime report is abysmal right now, and I will attribute that to empty hours at home spent mindlessly scrolling even when I know that's not what I exactly want to do. My phone and my laptop exist as a time vacuum, and in the new reality of quarantine stress and anxiety, I think that is perfectly acceptable. Of course, I'm striving for some semblance of balance, but there are a mix of internal and external pressures encouraging me to keep my routine, try something new, or act in the name of extreme productivity, and that hasn't been sitting quite right with me.

In that extra time I've spent scrolling, I have found two opposing sides of the mega-productive community on Instagram and Twitter. There is this weird pull from one half, best described with the viral text post that goes a little something like: "If you don't come out of quarantine with a side hustle, new passion or hobby, you never lacked time, you lacked discipline."

On the other end, some people seem understanding that, in reality, we are living through a global historical event—a pandemic that is putting individual mental health under stress in ways that most have never experienced before. It is not everyday that a pandemic adds to our emotional stresses, so finding healthy, personalized coping mechanisms is simply up to you.

That is the perspective that I hold in the midst of all the pressure. More than ever, it is important to focus on personal mental health, as opposed to extraneous projects you wouldn't have even thought about on a regular day. Our days are far from regular at the moment, and although there is solace in the idea of downtime, or possibly picking up a new project or two, I don't need anyone telling me to "push myself" or "grow" after a virus has completely upended my life.

If you feel so inclined to use this time as a sign to sit down and create your new business or achieve absolutely shredded abs, more power to you! But there is absolutely no external pressure that should be semi-guiltying you to do so, especially on your third hour of consuming content void of anything but comparison when those words of so-called "encouragement" come flying your way. I have my own motivating forces during this time, but I think the saying "one day at a time" has never been more important than it is right now. Each day brings a different set of interpretations of current events, the news cycle has never been as refreshable and urgent in my lifetime, and the constant new surge of COVID-19 updates is overwhelming to say the least.

Also, I want to add that the privilege and access that a side hustle or sometimes even a hobby requires, is a privilege that many workers deemed essential are not granted at this time. Anything that requires additional materials, in this moment, is even too much to bear for the millions of people that have been laid off in recent weeks. The time that essential personnel have is limited, and any time they do have to debrief on the news, or maybe zone out on their Instagram feeds, is not a time during which need to be inundated with the stress of bettering themselves—particularly at a time where they are responsible for the survival of a nation. I find it tone-deaf for people to use their platforms to encourage these quarantine lifestyle changes because their privilege to do so remains incredibly unchecked. This is no way a shaming of those in positions of privilege; privilege offers protections, but projecting that on other people who don't have those same protections doesn't do much good- especially in times of pandemic.



Faye White

Don't forget to breathe and take care of your mental and physical health!