

# COVID-19 Pandemic Poetry Chapbook

By Kirstyn Champion

## So Close, So Far

Family dinners have turned into zoom calls

Even within our own four walls.

We cannot even cross paths

Without wearing our masks.

I can hear her singing in the kitchen

And I hum as I listen,

But I stay tucked away in my room

Missing her and waiting for the next zoom.

## A Lie By Any Other Name

You cannot know truth without lies

But then the lies grow louder

Until the truth is just a whisper.

The deceivers, hiding in the shadows,

Send out foot soldiers to drown out the murmurs

Until the wave of lies washes them away.

It floods every city,

Every street,

Every house.

Some manage to stay afloat,

Some drown in their own lies,

But all who have weathered the storm

Are victims of manipulation.

The largest natural disaster in our history.

# I'll Be Right Here

She looks back, frightened.

The nurse said they won't be long.

I waited outside.

# Peace

There's chaos plastered across the news,

Yet I look around and see everything

Staying exactly the same.

Everyone keeps going

As if time and hardship had not struck us the same.

It is hard to remember the doom outside our bubble,

When everyone here carries on

As if the world weren't ending around us.

I try to remember,

But there is something fantastic in the air.

It makes me forget what is happening

Past my own line of sight,

Allowing me to blissfully exist...

Until it comes for me too.

# Breathless

We can't breathe.

Everyday, surrounded by

The same four walls.

They're caving in

Quickly

And there is

No peaceful end

In sight.

# What Happened to Humanity?

99% of people survive.

Then do we forget the others?

There are not many deaths

But death is still death.

Life was once sacred;

Where did that go?

When did we stop caring

About those most vulnerable?

How will our children

Remember this time?

As a traumatic, scarring event?

Or as the event that sparked change?

## Reflection

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered our social norms and our healthcare system. When it swept through the United States of America in early 2020, we were scrambling to find our footing in the new social terrain, bringing up divisiveness between neighbors while placing immense pressure for our healthcare system to perform. With the explosion of fear it caused when it first appeared on the news and the death toll began its steady rise, the system has yet to address the mental health crisis that sprung up in its wake. After conducting 19 virtual interviews, I wrote six poems to encompass the feelings of those living through the pandemic currently to represent the problems that need to be addressed before we can consider our COVID-19 response a success.

There were two common themes: mental health decline and social conflict stemming from the pandemic. Mental health has been a subject of controversy for decades; a taboo subject that elders urged younger generations to never speak about. Now, with the first major pandemic in living memory looming over us in our daily lives, mental health has become the second biggest topic of discussions among healthcare professionals. In the interviews, those who responded gave some insight into some specific mental health issues that plagued them. Isolation during quarantine was cited most often as the main cause for their mental health decline. During this period of quarantine, they explained that they experienced thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness. Although there were no specific explanations about what made them feel this way, I believe anyone reading this can empathize with their situation.

We are human; our very biology defines us as social creatures and our industrialized culture has instilled a need for routine. Yet, seemingly overnight, it was gone for an indeterminate amount of time and we have been forced to adapt. One way our current healthcare



system can respond to this decline is by making mental health resources more widely known and accessible. In the current landscape, technology has many advantages. Mental health professionals could create platforms to ensure that they are available as resources electronically, eliminating the need to leave your home to seek help. Another potential solution could be the promotion of simple, healthy habits to promote mental health that can be done by yourself without the assistance of a professional. Tutorials on habits to reduce anxiety such as the 5 senses method, a technique in which one relieves anxiety by focusing on what their senses are currently detecting, could go a long way.

It is no secret that this pandemic has done a lot of harm both physically and emotionally. With political values becoming entwined with the fear and confusion caused by the pandemic, we have seen a rise in bipartisan hostility. In the interview responses, there were people from both sides wanting to encourage those of different views to understand and respect the opposite side. As discussed earlier, social support groups are extremely important to the health of human beings. Unfortunately, either due to the death of loved ones or due to the political difference, people are feeling as isolated as ever. A way that the healthcare system can respond to this is to get more involved on a community level. There are many organizations that work within communities to help those most vulnerable receive healthcare. If larger organizations with the resources to help these community level organizations spread COVID-19 information and discuss how to protect themselves and others, we could make some real change. These organizations are members of the community and people widely trusted; even if someone cannot trust the news, they can trust the neighbor they grew up with.

These solutions are riddled with problems. For instance, not every home has technology and wifi to allow them to choose a virtual option. Even simpler, not everyone agrees about the

severity of the pandemic. What we can agree on is that United States citizens are suffering.

People are dying, people are isolated, people are having to adjust to an ever changing situation, people are being lied, etc. In conclusion, people are scared and our healthcare system is adjusting just as we are. Thank you to all the providers diligently working to make our world safe again.

You are the real heroes.