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Interviewer: Katrina Keller

Zoom on Online

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(After the interview, we talked about another history class that we found out we have together, I also share that my family got COVID-19 as well.)

Katrina Keller: Hello, my name is Katrina Keller. Today is February 23rd, 2021. I am interviewing Eric Warner on zoom due to maintaining COVID reg. (COVID 19 regulations) and also to keeping us both safe. And this is to record his COVID-19 experience. How are you today?

Eric Warren: Doing good. Doing good. How about yourself?

Katrina Keller: Okay. Where were you when you first found out you Unm would be closed?

Eric Warren: I believe I was actually at work when I got the word. I wanna say it was right during spring break or just after spring break. Cause I believe they extended spring break an extra week for us saying, Oh, you know, we're, we're trying to figure out what we're going to do. (1:00) Which part of me was like, yay. I get to spend more time with the wife and kids. And other part of me was like, okay, what, what road is this going to take us down? So I was very thankful. I know my job was cycle. I had more, more hours to devote to them. So really just kinda my, my personal life continued. My student life just kind of got put on pause at that moment.

Katrina Keller: How has your classes online via zoom or learn changed how you live your life?

Eric Warren: I would say it's a blessing and a curse. I really do prefer the in-person class and classes. I prefer the interaction. I like being able to ask professors questions right then and there. You know, obviously some classes are zoom and you can still do that. (2:00) Other classes are completely virtual and most professors have like this 24 hour rule of getting back to you, which is great, you know, to me, 24 hours. I think that's a very, I mean, in the grand scheme of things, it's a short, short turnaround, but if that question leads me to another question, and then that reply gives me another one. I mean, a matter of, you know, five questions could take a week possibly for you to get the answers. And if you're up against a deadline or something that can be overly stressful at that point. I know a lot of professors do have the zoom hours or, you know, meetings and stuff like that too, that you can set up, but sometimes it just, it doesn't jive with my schedule or their schedule doesn't with mine, you know, I mean, kind of is what it is, but yeah, I am. I'm readily missing in person classes.(3:00)

Katrina Keller: Sorry. Did you or anyone, you know, get COVID-19?

Eric Warren: Yes, I actually did. I work with people on the DD waiver. I work with the developmentally disabled. I manage a house down here in Berlin, Rio communities area, and all three of my residents did and four out of my five staff did me being one of the four came down with it. Actually got it just before Christmas. So Merry Christmas to me, luckily for me, the wife and kids had gone, gone back home to Texas for the visit friends and family for the holidays. So I didn't fear giving it to them. But it really was a drag being home by myself. You know, I can't leave to get groceries. Fortunately we have some wonderful friends that, you know, I was able to order some groceries (4:00) on walmart.com. They were nice enough to go pick them up. I open up the garage, they put them in, I closed the garage. But yeah, taking care of myself during that, during that time was, was not fun. Especially the sickness, the headache, I mean, I think the worst part was the headache and the stomach issues that are associated with the virus. And even the, the chest tightness. I mean, there were times that it's just like, okay, I busted out my son's nebulizer and some albuterol it's like, you know, help me breathe, you know, but I didn't feel I was bad enough to go to the hospital at times, but yeah, that was definitely not fun. And then of course, you know, having to quarantine from work even after two weeks and, and, and, and, and, and, you know, and the whole time I'm there, I'm worried about my guys that are at the house, you know, I mean, all three of them are non-verbal. So you kind of just have to read their body language to see how they're feeling. And even when I came back, (5:00) one of the residents was still having issues with breathing. He's he's a very small individual. He's all of like 50 pounds. So he was very, very tiny. He really struggled with it even after I returned, you know, three weeks later to work, but he's, but he's all, he's all better now though. So

Katrina Keller: That's good. Do you feel any, like lingering effects? Like, do you still feel sometimes like that it's hard to breathe or that you get anything from COVID afterwards that like this, you still haven't gotten over, or maybe you had it for a while after you were like fully recovered, but you still had like some symptoms that you just feel like weren't gone.

Eric Warren: I am just now starting to get my sense of smell back. And this is, you know, I basically would I tested positive. It was December 20<sup>th</sup> (6:00) is when I tested positive. And, and know that leading up to it. I just thought I was having allergies by, you know, Oh, you know, seasonal allergies, you know, my allergies are kicking up and then it's like, you get that positive test. It's like, (pauses to move hand in front of mouth in thinking gesture) is it really allergies? You know, your, your, your mind starts playing that game with you. It's like, is it more, is it, is this the COVID is, you know, what is it that's going on? And then all of a sudden, one day you wake up and you're running 102 fever, and it's like, yeah. Uh I, I got it. You know, there's no doubt in my mind. I would say that the respiratory issues with, you know, just a tight chest, the easily, so easy to get out of breath. I would say that persisted for several weeks afterwards, but yeah. You know, I'm almost two months actually. Yeah. Two months post from getting referred from testing positive. And I can, I can (7:00) smell things now. I mean, I'd be, I'd be cooking in the kitchen. And unless I was like, directly over the pots, I was cooking on that's the only way I could smell them. You know, my wife and kids come out of the bed, bedrooms down the hall. They're like, Oh, I smell so good. I'm like, I'd be sitting in the living room, you know, 15, 20 feet away. And it's like, I'm glad y'all can smell it. Let me know if you smell anything burning.

Katrina Keller: Oh, man. I can't smell anything. There are some days that I can, if it's a very strong scent and I've had this for the end of high school. So I had a hard time knowing if it was COVID for me as well, after an interactive with somebody who was positive that found out later, because they didn't want to get tested until afterwards. So it was like, Oh, no, yeah,

Eric Warren: Yeah. My job mandated, we got tested. (8:00) Somebody a coworker got contacted for the contact tracing. And that's when my job said, okay, everybody goes and that's, that's how I found out. I tested positive. We did a rapid test. I'm just coral.

Katrina Keller: Do you think that helped with like your ability to cope with actually finding out that you were positive with it? Or do you think that like made you a little more scared that more things would change if you did have it?

Ecric Warren: What, what do you mean? Exactly.

Katrina Keller: So like when your your employer was like everyone getting tested, like, what were your thoughts? Were you like, Oh, no. Or were you like, this is good because we should be doing this anyways.

Eric Warren: I, my first concern was, was for the guys in the house. (9:00) Especially given that it was contact traced by an employee, obviously. That was more of my concern was, was the guys, you know, for me, I was just like, okay, you know what, you know, let's, let's all caravan down there. Let's get this done, you know, so we'd get to work at three o'clock whatever. And then of course you sitting there and, you know, one person gets the positive, next thing, you know, another person gets their positive and all of a sudden, you know me and my boss were in the same band together. We're looking at each other like, okay, we've, we've got to figure out who we're going to get to cover these shifts, you know? And then next thing you know, I find out I'm positive, you know, and I'm looking at her and she's sitting in the, in the van with me.

Eric Warren: I mean, we're masked up, but we're nowhere near six feet apart, you know, luckily for her, she got a negative test. But yeah, only one of, one of five employees in the house tested negative. And, you know, my first thing is, is, you know, okay, four out of five caretakers are gone. Where are we going to get into this house? (10:10) You know? And then all of a sudden it's like, okay, well, four out of five test positive. What does that mean for the guys? You know? And obviously we learned later that day, we loaded up, well, other staff loaded up the guys took them to go get tested. Two out of two out of the three actually did test positive. The third one, he was going to harm himself or someone else. If they would've tried to do that Naval swamp, if they could have done like the saliva swab, you know, the oral swab, he might have cooperated with that, but there was just no way he was gonna, he wasn't gonna hurt himself or someone else by doing the nasal. So we just treated him, I wanna say probably five IM employees, the other two guys in the house. We just treated him like he was positive as well.

Eric Warren: But yeah, it was, it was, it was very stressful. You know, me, me being, you know, kind of the, the, the supervisor of the house (11:00) and everything else, it's, you know, my first concern is the guys, their wellbeing and how are they going? How are they going to get their care? And then afterwards, after I'm sitting at home, it's like, hold on, wait, I'm alone. My wife and kids are gone. You know, thankfully I don't, you know, I don't have to worry about them getting what I got, but yeah, it's kind of lonesome at that point, it's like, I'm all alone. So...

Katrina Keller: When you were alone, did you, like, what did you do? Like, like, did you do anything new or did you work on old stuff in the house or just watch TV?

Eric Warren: Yeah, I would say the first couple of days were where my symptoms were mild. Oh, I enjoyed it. I played on my PlayStation, you know, played with my dogs. Of course we stayed inside or, you know, I would just (12:00) go out to the back patio with them. Yeah, it's kind like, all right, cool. You know, a couple extra days off of work wooho, you know, look at me and then finally the fever and the headache and the stomach issues and the breathing and all of that. I got them. I didn't really notice the lack of smell for several days, just cause, you know, I would, I'm eating ramen noodles and chef Boyardee. I mean, it's not like I was really cooking, cooking. But yeah, when it, when it, when it finally hit and it's just like, you know, I didn't want to get up. It's like, you know, my dogs would jump on my chest. Like, Hey, we got to go outside, let us outside. Okay. Let's go outside. Let them out. And they're sketching out the back door, you know, five minutes later, let us, it's like hold a minute I just sat down. Yeah. but at least I did it on my two dogs to keep me company and I think they know I'm talking about him. Cause they're right here. I was like, Oh, daddy's talking about us. (13:00)

Katrina Keller: Dogs are nice. How are you---Sorry.

Eric Warren: It, it just seemed like every time I'd fall asleep in the living room, my little dog Dixie, I don't know if it was because I would start snoring or stop snoring, but she would jump on my chest and start looking at like, Hey, wake up alive and free time. And it's just like, I just, I felt like I was like getting like starting to get some good rest that would always happen. So..

Katrina Keller: Aw, man. I dote on my, my family's dogs. I will see if I get a dog. That is nice that you didn't feel as lonely. Something.

Eric Warren: I had companionship. (14:00) But I got him at, I did still feel, I did still feel alone, you know? I mean, I mean, talking to the wife and the kids, but definitely yeah.

Katrina Keller: Like disconnected from what? Just like the world or everything or just normal life.

Eric Warren: Yeah. I, I, yeah, I felt disconnected from my life, I guess. I mean, you know, I'm used to as used to a busy schedule. I mean, at that point, you know, obviously I got it between semesters, but you know, at that point in time, my life revolved around the family and work and the family was gone and worked was obviously taken away from me. It's like, okay, what what you know, I can't. It would have been very irresponsible of me to go out. So it's like, you know, I, I was shut in between these four walls of this house. You know, I really felt bad for even going and sitting out on the back patio. But, you know, (15:00) at least my neighbor is, you know, 75 feet, one way, a hundred feet, the other way, 150 plus feet the other way. So I didn't have to feel like, Oh, you know, I need a mask and glove and, you know, put on all those PPE, but I did make sure I stayed on my back patio when I would go out there. It's like, but I did, I did even kind of feel guilty for even doing that. And it's like, okay, I'm putting that stuff out in the air, you know, who's who, who am I going to affect just by that little bit, but it's like, you still have to, I don't know. You could kind of go stir crazy when you don't get any sunlight or fresh air for a little while.

Katrina Keller: How did you stay? Like, for you, how did you not like, go stir- crazy? Like, what kept you like stalling? I don't know how to explain that. Like, what was your rock or what, like, did you turn back (16:00) to when you're like, Oh, this sucks.

Eric Warren: Definitely listened to a lot of music that is for sure. Constantly plugged in my phone, turned on Pandora would just turn on the speakers and, you know, listen to some music, played a lot of

PlayStation up until my, I guess my symptoms got severe. Really didn't want, I mean, I wouldn't watch, I would say I watch more movies and I watch like television. Yeah, it was just like, you look at the shows, like seen it, seen it, seen it. It's like, Oh, wait, I haven't seen this movie in forever. But yeah, I mean, I would definitely say at least, I, I think if I didn't have my dogs here with me as I kind of companionship it, I know it definitely would have been a lot worse. And I will say PlayStation just having that, having that social, being able to have that social interaction interaction with, you know, the few friends that you have that I do have on there, (17:00) like, you know, getting on and, you know, having them to talk to you know, besides, you know, calling the life and talking to the kids, stuff like that. But I think that was definitely a huge, huge help for me. Just being able to talk. And even, even if my friends weren't on, you know, you put on a headset and somebody's going to talk eventually.

Katrina Keller: Is there anything you wish you did differently or wish that was done differently during this time?

Eric Warren: I, myself, I definitely wish I took things a lot more seriously. You know, I mean, yes, I wore a mask when I went into Walmart. You know, when I went into the gas station, whatever, but I gotta admit, I kinda, I kinda took things with a grain of salt. I wish I was more, I wish I heeded more of the warnings personally and, and respected. I guess the big thing now is, you know, respect the science, you know, (18:00) listen to the science. I wish I would have done that. Yeah. I tend to blame the ads. It's not like, you know, I know some of the employees that I, that I have, they're just like, Oh, it was so-and-so. It's like, you know what, that blaming someone. Yeah. It might make you feel better here and now, but unfortunately that's not going to help any of our situations. You know, what we need to do now is move forward, figure out how we're going to do this, how we're going to take care of ourselves. How are we going to take care of our guys? You know, pointing fingers, it's it, it's not the way to do it. And that's what everybody wanted to do was just point fingers. It's like, okay,

Katrina Keller: Throughout the closing point, is there anything you'd like to add or advice you'd like to give?

Eric Warren: Um, (19:00) I definitely think through this pandemic, it's certainly made my family stronger. You know, at first it's like, Oh, you know, you get to spend time with the family and the kids, you know, at first it's kinda like, you know, at first the novelty was great, then it kind of worked then, but, you know, being able to have dinner every night and not just be like, okay, where are we going to go grab dinner? You know, we're definitely cooking together more. My son's getting into making cakes and stuff like that. Just the time together has, has definitely strengthened that, that family bond with us. That's definitely a very positive that I'm liking at this point. Because I think there's just too many negatives to focus on about what's going on this and that I would rather try to find what's going right. Which unfortunately is that's the smarter number. But yeah, I think (20:00) just being able to spend all this extra time with a family has, has been good for us. And, and the one, I guess the one downside that actually I'm sad to say for my kids is I know growing up when it would snow, we, we got a snow day. We got a day out of school. And unfortunately I think for a kids moving forward, I, I think those days are gone. I think if it's a snow day, it's going to be, Hey, log into zoom or log in to canvas or, or whatever, and, you know, complete this and that assignment. So that's the one thing I do feel that it's a good thing. The kids will always get through education, but it's a bummer that I don't think they'll have that, that snow day, like I had growing up.

Katrina Keller: Yeah. And that's it. Thank you.

Eric Warren: Thank you.

End of Trascript