

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## How Grad School Saved My Mental Health During the Pandemic

Ginger · Monday, August 16th, 2021

When the world began to lock down in the spring of 2020, I felt stuck in a busy job that paid the bills. After I started working from home, it was easier without the hectic buzz of workplace distractions to see how my life wasn't fulfilling. So I decided to sign up for a virtual graduate school program to pass the time and got a few great surprises along the way.

This is why attending grad school during the pandemic was the best decision I could have made and why it could be an incredible part of your journey, too.

### 1. It Gave Me Goals

Daily routines are full of deadlines. You have to get to work on time, eat lunch during a specific break period, and even time your grocery shopping. Staying at home made all of that disappear overnight. The endless hours were a bit overwhelming, but grad school gave me goals that occupied my mind in place of scary news stories.

My classes broke down each assignment into **small goals that were easily achievable** because they felt like stepping stones. Time began to fly by again as I checked each responsibility off my daily to-do list. Now I'm looking at life goals in the same way. Breaking them into small pieces really boosted my self-esteem and made anything feel possible.

### 2. It Helped Me Meet People

Even though my classes never happened in a lecture hall, I met so many new people by signing up for the first semester. I got to chat with other students in forums and video meetings, and even bond with professors during their virtual advising sessions. Socializing is a huge part of taking care of your mental health during the pandemic because we aren't supposed to live alone forever.

Seeing other people's faces **triggers neurotransmitters that fight anxiety** and reduce stress. I know I had plenty of both as the pandemic grew worse. The quickest conversations still made me feel better, which I wouldn't have experienced if I didn't attend online classes.

### 3. It Expanded My Perspective

Everything felt like it was falling apart in irreparable ways during the first big wave of COVID-19 cases in my area. Instead of focusing on the problems I couldn't fix, my classes reminded me to

take a deep dive into world history. I studied examples of other periods when humans battled unimaginable forces, like the bubonic plague and the Great Depression.

There have always been tough times when people had to rebuild their world. I found comfort in the reminder that we would do the same thing once it became safe to interact and resume our lives again. It was one of the more surprising things I learned from grad school during the pandemic, but it expanded my perspective in ways that I still use to help take a deep breath when I'm overwhelmed.

## 4. It Encouraged My Personal Growth

People have more personal growth when they face challenges. Some early pandemic days were harder than others, but I still had to attend class and submit projects on time. I found that I could buckle down and focus after reflecting on my motivations, like using grad school to propel my career to a better place.

I also learned about the importance of self-care. Sometimes that meant [asking about student resources](#), like borrowing e-books from the university library I'd never visited. Other times it meant [choosing healthier meals and snacks](#) or going to bed a little earlier so I could have the energy and focus to ace my assignments.

I'll take all of these lessons with me as I head into new adventures when the pandemic ends. Taking care of myself and asking for help were two things I rarely let myself do before lockdown. Now I know that everyone needs to take care of themselves to find the strength to get through life's turbulent chapters.

## 5. It Created a New Future

The future never felt more uncertain than in the early weeks and months of the pandemic. I didn't know when life would return to normal or if it ever would. Grad school gave me a long-term goal of walking across the virtual graduation stage. Afterward, I would have a diploma that would open more doors to an exciting career.

It was so reassuring to lean on that one goal. I knew I could count on it because the power to achieve it was in my hands alone. I gained faith in myself that pushed me through more demanding assignments, and I'll hold on to it to maintain the confidence I'll need throughout life.

## Grad School Saved My Mental Health

Everyone [started talking about mental health](#) during the pandemic, which was great. There are so many ways to boost your self-confidence, take care of yourself, and find peace. Signing up for grad school was one of the best pandemic decisions I ever made. I found all of those things and more, all because I had an inspiring place to focus my time and energy while staying safe at home.

This entry was posted on Monday, August 16th, 2021 at 7:49 am and is filed under [Health](#), [Education](#), [Lifestyle](#)

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