

Just a few weeks ago, I had plans to be in Chicago this weekend to attend an old friend's wedding, and at the same time visit my elderly parents. Unable to do that because of COVID-19, I just texted my mom that we should video chat sometime. To my delightful surprise, she video-called me through WhatsApp and we spoke for a few minutes.

While it's not the same as being present with my parents in my old childhood home, it is something. I do not know when I will be able to visit Chicago again. I told my husband that after all this is over, before we even think about vacationing somewhere, I need to visit my parents first.

I think about my parents a lot now. Instead of my dad checking in on me every weekend, the roles have reversed; I now am checking in on them almost daily. But even that doesn't feel like it's enough. Fortunately, my parents do have family close by they can call if they need help, but it's not the same thing as having their child there for them.

My husband and I are both fortunate to be able to work from home. I am also a student. Since IU has made the decision for the rest of the semester to be remote, I along with my classmates and professors will soon find out what that will be like. If the past two weeks of working from home are any indication, I'll be in even more Zoom meetings for the foreseeable future. As of today, I have not been in close physical proximity with anyone other than my husband for 15 days. I drove once during this time. We did the bulk of our shopping before the panic set in, but I know we will have to make our way to the grocery store eventually. I'm not looking forward to that because all the friends and colleagues I've talked to have recounted how empty all the shelves were. I think about all the people who are severely impacted by this virus and how much more difficult making ends meet will be for them.

At this moment, I'm doing the best I can to remain as calm as possible. I understand that I have many privileges many other people don't have, so I remind myself of this frequently when I feel stuck, lonely, or bored. I've started taking long walks almost daily. With the gym being closed, that also means that I'm running more frequently outside. So far, we're still allowed to be outside as long as we're social distancing. It's almost the same routine day in and out, but I'm trying to take each day as it comes.

I'm also drawing on my faith during this time. For me, it seems fortuitous that the holy month of Ramadan, the month in which the Qu'ran was revealed and Muslims around the world fast from all food and drink between dawn and sunset, is less than a month away. I would often hear our scholars talk about how the early Muslims would start preparing for Ramadan six months in advance. I of course never did and don't know any Muslim today who does this. But because of this pandemic, I'm now seeing this month as an opportunity to prepare for Ramadan in a way I had never really done before. I'm more conscious about how I spend my time each day and I limit the amount of distractions and exposure to panic-inducing news. It is hard, but I feel as if I am being primed for when it will really count. I do not imagine the mosques will be open by the start of Ramadan, which is a sad thing. But there are always lessons we can learn, especially from the things that don't go according to plan.

COVID-19 is making apparent that so much is not in our control, and yet how connected we all are with each other and with the environment. While we may not be in control of our circumstances, we do have control over how we respond and react.