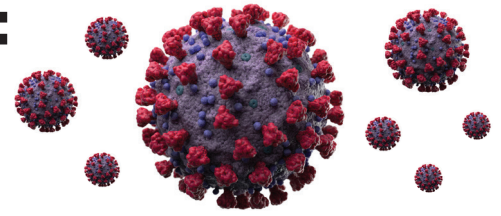


# Fostering Resilience During COVID-19 Epidemic Through Reflection and Writing: Additional 55-Word Stories



## Worrying for Others

by Lia Hoffner, MD

The streets are empty on my way to work. Am I wearing my PPE correctly? Will I bring this virus home? Another day another zoom meeting. The days are exhausting but I will come to work for you every day and make sure you are safe. Another day in the life of an anesthesia resident.

## Never Forget

by Champagne Saavedra, Anesthesia Technician

I still can feel the rush of a concert, the nervousness of a first day, the blessing of baptizing my niece, being able to say goodbye one last time. To think at this time I may never feel any of this again due to the Covid-19. Sad goodbye for now to the life we once knew.

## Challenges of Viral Infection Daily (COVID)

by Ricardo Falcon, MD

Daily, COVID-19 exacts a considerable mental challenge. Questions from every aspect of the perioperative process now have an unspoken attachment; 'What is the best way to provide care for patients, while maintaining the safety of healthcare workers and their families?' Developing answers in a de novo world is the order of the day, every day.

## COVID and My Personal Priorities

by Richard Lock, MD

As a physician I dealt with HIV, H1N1, SARS, and Ebola among others. Covid scared me the most. Vacation policy required me to quarantine. Quarantine isolation made me realize I missed patient care. Quarantine is substantially worse than the above diseases. Despite the personal risk, I preferred caring for patients. My wife understands and agrees.

## Lonely New Normal

by John Sanders, MD

With used masks and untested theories we treat people with real fears: "my child's tumour", "unemployed, rent unpaid". We cloak in shoddy armour – my PPE, his denial and disbelief – fueled by men who know better but wither facts, divide and destroy for selfish gain. Missing loved ones, we lose much but learn nothing.

## Grief Over COVID Care-Giving

by Trine Vik, CAA

I'm a limited resource in a hospital of limited resources. Reusing masks, arguing over unknown COVID status, risks and exposure. We're in this together yet alone in our methodology, empathy, and stress-tolerance silos. System demands and decision fatigue result in dwindling compassion. We're valuing systems and money over people instead of the other way around.

## Corona Passage

by Brandon S. Trujillo, Anesthesia Technician, BS Biochemistry

We are sailing, and blues skies are all we see. There is a cloud let's ignore; how bad can it be. Now it's a storm, we are in too deep. But there's an end, so no time to weep. We must keep fighting so we don't sink. For in the end the clouds will sweep.

## The Virus

by Rebecca D. Baker, RN

Scared of the unknown. Anxious because I don't want my family to get THE VIRUS. Thankful that I don't have ICU experience. Guilty and helpless because I DON'T have ICU experience and I can't help my brothers and sisters in nursing who are mentally and physically exhausted. Dreading the new "normal". I miss my mom.

## 55-Word Story

by Caleb Stalls, MD

A foreign invader on our doorstep long before it was on our radar. Ignorance evolved into nonchalance, hysteria, mass terror – imagining your mother prone, intubated, and alone during her final moments. These loneliest of deaths will haunt us the longest. Home lockdown, parallel isolation, circular media coverage, ugly politics: what awful fever dream is this?

## Our New Map

by Victoria Bradford, MD

It's one of those news infographics. A map of the USA, red dots glowing and swelling to signify new outbreaks. New hotspots. Wondering each day if Lexington, Louisville, or Cincinnati will become another BIG RED DOT. Now Dallas, Houston, Atlanta. Thinking of the people there. Comparing my life to their lives. Hoping it'll be ok.

## Lens of Gratitude

by Anna Reviere, MS

When I consider COVID-19, I fill with uncertainty. As an incoming medical student, I wonder how it will shape medical training... will I be successful in the virtual learning world? ... will I connect with my peers and professors? ...will I feel isolated? While I navigate, I continue to foster daily gratitude as my emotional foundation.



## Life As We Knew It

by Deborah Crandall, RN

The last few months have been hard. My family is struggling, especially my kids and I feel bad for them, this virus can't be seen, is it real? The mental, physical and emotional toll is high, daily life is rough. I wish for the life we once knew, but it will never be the same.

## Lack of "Science" Consensus Leads to Frustration

by Craig Rumbaugh, MD

Science, evidence, facts – irrefutable. Is this still true? Don't wear masks. Wear masks. No masks for exercise, unless on gym treadmills. Social distancing works, but limit indoor dining despite adequate spacing. Medical boards not answering calls because "COVID" – emails only. Viral spread via phone calls? Where is the science? Depends in which state you reside.

## A Bit of Blue Sky

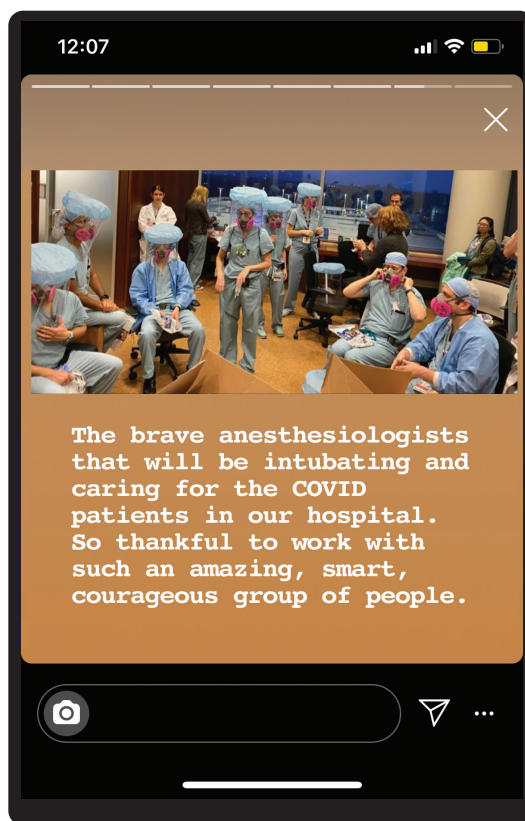
by Cindy Crittenden, BSN

Perhaps CoVid has come in silence to tell the world to STOP and look around you. Subsequently, silver linings have occurred. Many daycare centers shut down which led to a decrease in children's hospitalizations. We have learned better hygiene, helped strangers, and gained gratitude. Reduced pollution has given Mother Earth a breath of fresh air.

## Let Them Be Safe

by Tony Yen, MD

She is 6. She is 4. He is 2. Will I be able to protect them from this? Do I have what it takes to do what's right? I am a teacher, a doctor, a guide. Can I protect those who count on me, and lead them through these times? Please let them be safe.



## Impact

by Codruta N. Soneru, MD

People in India can see the Himalayas for the first time in decades, as the lockdown eases air pollution. A four-year-old child found home alone, her mother, a mammogram technician, dead. Lost hope of containment. People dying horrible deaths, alone. COVID parties. A comforting touch can bring death. The world has changed. Is it forever?

## The Dark Ages

by Lydia Jorge, MD

What is this virus? All these questions, no answers. How to protect myself, my family, my elderly parents. It took every ounce of strength to build the courage to head to work every morning which felt like walking into a battlefield. Wearing this new armor, shields for protection. Completely surreal. And then ... I was positive.

## Powerful Awakening

by Ivette Perez, MD

The halls are quiet, no visitors. The hospital seems asleep, yet I am awake. Awake to things I wasn't before; like that I really miss my parents, that I'm afraid for them, that I am afraid to never again feel their embrace. I think I'm afraid for me, for all of us, for the future.

## An Anesthesia Provider Grappling With the Unknown

by Kate Novinc, CAA, EdS

COVID-19, unknown. How do anesthesia providers approach something we don't fully understand? I choose methodically questioning, learning what is possible to control, not live in fear, thus realistic expectations. How do I protect my family, friends, patients and colleagues? As the usual rock, can I withstand this stress or will I reach my yield point?

## Dr. Radu's Story

by his daughter

Alone in the hospital yard. Cold, rainy, dark night. His 83-year-old sister in critical condition. New law does not allow family in the emergency room. The stretcher-bearers carrying news of her. Retired internal medicine physician. He's been on call in the hospital 3,600 days of his life. Now he cannot care for his sister.

## I Was Freer Then

by Tatiana Radu, MD

Lived half of my life under a communist dictatorship. No freedom of speech, or travel outside the country. But there was freedom to see your family and friends. To walk out of your house. I was a physician in a resource-limited system. But I could freely breathe and move. N95, hazmat suits, not needed.





## Our Writers' Final Thoughts

In addition to the stories, we asked our writers to reflect on the process itself. Here are their thoughts on this approach to self-expression.

**Tara Maple, RN:** Writing a 55-word story was oddly therapeutic. I wrote for 10 minutes spilling all of my BIG thoughts and feelings into the story. Processing all of the extra words, weeding out what was not as important helped me to truly focus on MY intentions. I really felt that my 55 words became my affirmation for this time of turmoil.

**Daniel Soneru, 4th grade student:** I feel good because I helped others worry less.

**Huynh (Wendy) Nguyen, MS:** In the hustle and bustle of life, there isn't much time to reflect. Writing forced me to recognize my own feelings. The process of narrowing it to 55 words allowed me to process them.

**Lia Hoffner, MD:** It gave me an avenue to express the impact of COVID on my life.

**Champagne Saavedra, Anesthesia Technician:** We survive, stand, and thrive as one.

**Ricardo Falcon, MD:** It reinforces a focus that is necessary during this difficult time, to keep perspective on what is most important to me.

**Richard Lock, MD:** I learned a valuable lesson as to what makes me tick.

**John Sanders, MD:** Wavering between bargaining, anger and depression, I am short of healing. This has been time and opportunity lost forever. Although I saw my colleagues rise with creativity and resolve to give their all, I had seen that before and knew they could. Until I discover something new gained from this tragedy, the wound is open.

**Trine Vik, CAA:** These 55 words do not even begin to encompass my feelings and experiences over the last six months. The pandemic has significantly affected my life. It's nice to give my grieving a voice. I grieve over my inability to protect patients, staff, myself, my family and my family from myself. I do what I can every day and try not to carry around my grief too much. I'm hating the system for the first time in my career for preventing me to be a whole person caring for another whole person in the way that we all deserve.

**Brandon S. Trujillo, Anesthesia Technician, BS Biochemistry:** COVID-19 hit us like an unexpected storm. It seems the world is sinking. The only way we can get out is with a fighting spirit.

**Rebecca D. Baker, RN:** It really helped process my thoughts and made me realize that maybe I'm not as ok as I thought I was. It made me recognize that I need to start working through some of these things to move forward.

**Caleb Stalls, MD:** Collecting my thoughts was an exercise in thoughtful, insightful reflection on a challenging and transformative time.

**Victoria Bradford, MD:** It helped me to distill my anxieties and get them out. With COVID it's a very diffuse set of worries that permeates so many aspects of our daily lives now – worrying about friends and family, struggling to decide which activities are 'ok' all while maintaining excellent patient care. It has been helpful to me.

**Anna Reviere, MS:** I really enjoyed the process of reflecting and putting my thoughts into a concise structure. Processing through writing was beneficial for moving forward with a healthy perspective. Finding the words to paint a picture made me dig deeper, to the core of my experience. It felt healing to write freely and explore my constellation of ideas, then crystalize them into 55 words. It helped me see the bigger picture and remold my stress into gratitude.

**Deborah Crandall, RN:** I wrote this on a not-so-great day, the stressors of the past few months had built up once again and were spilling out into my everyday life. It helped gather up my feelings, really lay them out in front of me and accept where we were. I felt better and had a much better day.

**Craig Rumbaugh, MD:** Good exercise exploring my deeper thoughts. I started writing about the tragedies endured by many and my understanding of the pandemic. Editing to 55 words, I was able to concisely express my experience. Trying to find a medical consensus to support changes has proven difficult.

**Cindy Crittenden, BSN:** In March of 2020, when the world shut down, I felt uneasy. I was on the fence of falling in a rabbit hole or moving onto a positive outlook. How could I look at the pandemic in a positive way? In April, I heard the children's wards had fewer patients. Quarantine prevented other germs' spread? We came together as neighbors, friends, and complete strangers. Finally, I saw in the news that murky regions before the pandemic turned crystal clear when all stood still. I must stay positive.

**Tony Yen, MD:** Using only 55 words focused some of my fears and anxiety over the last several months. The pandemic has brought out many of those "what if" questions for attendings and residents alike, and many of us were forced to ask ourselves whether we would be willing to risk the lives of our loved ones for our professional calling. It's a question that I still struggle with every day.

**Codruta N. Soneru, MD:** It helped me distill the most impactful news to me.

**Lydia Jorge, MD:** This pandemic gave me a new perspective on life. Writing about our new "normal" is not really normal. But with Hope, Science, Faith, and Protection we will all get through this.

**Ivette Perez, MD:** My year started off with a rumble, an earthquake kind of rumble. The pandemic became real when it started affecting my life. It turns out things don't seem real when they don't affect you. By now I've experienced all stages of grief. I've spent money I shouldn't have on things I probably didn't need. I learned to appreciate the value of human interactions, of friendships, family. I've washed my hands to a pulp and lost faith in people sometimes. I still show up at work every day, grateful, albeit tired, but honored to care for patients in these troubled times.

**Kate Novinc, CAA, EdS:** This exercise helped take a step back and take a macro lens view of my micro daily struggle with the "covid craziness", our new daily normal. If we stop and think before taking action, the chosen action will have such a greater impact since it's based on logical thought versus knee jerk emotional reactions. The emotional trauma it has taken on wellbeing of healthcare providers.

**Dr. Dan Radu's daughter:** He was the Chair of a 600-bed hospital, and of the Internal Medicine Department. He identified himself as doctor, not chair. For 43 years, he worked six days a week, on call in the hospital every second or third day. Called in the middle of the night, or on Sundays when he was not on call, to go help with difficult cases. Always working ... He slept so little ... but always had a smile on his face. He drove his critically ill sister to the emergency room. To protect staff and patients, families were not allowed in. A doctor everyone looked up to. In the dark, rainy night, alone in the hospital yard.... His daughter didn't see her father much. But she respects him more than she respects anybody. The 55-word story gave an opportunity to express that.

**Tatiana Radu, MD:** The dictatorship fell in 1989. People lived free ... When COVID came ... freedom was gone. Curfews. Unable to travel to see family. The elderly allowed out of the house only a couple of hours. Old people who could barely walk to the food store and back fined if they would be out past curfew ... Medical personnel working 12-hour shifts, to exhaustion, in hazmat suits, without taking them off. Medical personnel dying. Friends dying. The 55-word story gave her a voice.