

Somewhat recently I planned to take a trip up to visit my girlfriend and stay with her for three weeks before heading back home. My whole family and hers was good with this idea and it looked like a good idea. We hadn't seen each other in nine weeks and were really starting to feel the effects of being away from one another. We had talked about the idea many times before but two weeks ago we decided to make it official. I left this last Saturday, however last Friday my mom practically refused to say a word all day. It was clear something was up but it was extremely frustrating because this would be my last day with her for three weeks. At first I was otherizing her and thinking she was ruining our last day together. That she was overreacting and not in control of her emotions. However, a little later into the day I realized she was feeling sad, probably about me leaving as well as some other things. I was able to understand this sadness by thinking about how I like to be treated when I'm sad. What I ended up doing was just helping out as much as possible by making dinner and doing the dishes as well as other, smaller, chores. Finally, I ended the day by giving her a hug and I think the hug really helped. When I'm sad a hug is always very helpful to just comfort me and let me know I'm not alone. I could see this same response in her and it felt good to be able to end the day on that note. That hug helped me and her.

To be empathetic is to not only understand another's emotions in a given exchange, but also to feel them as a reflection of the strength of that particular relationship. It is because of this that it is difficult, albeit not impossible, to be empathetic with someone whom you have never met. On the other hand, in tight-knit relationships, especially ones that are physically close to due environmental factors, it is often a natural response to be empathetic. In observing my personal exchanges over the past week I noticed several fault points of mine, failures if you will, where I should have expressed empathy and seen reality through a greater lens than just that of my own; I should have put myself in the other's shoes and, through this vantage point, been more caring, responsible, and patient. I had one particular day this past week in which I was just not in a good mood; The combined sadness from the loss of my cherished dreams (graduation, farewell parties, my college-life) and the hopelessness due to a rejected job offer had sent me into a dark pit of confusion. In this darkness I was unable to empathetically converse with my Mother who whole-heartedly wanted to offer her help during this time. When I snapped at her, she was most likely confused and frustrated. Why would I reject her help in such an emotional response, why was I refusing to act like a responsible adult, and why am so paralyzed that I cannot feel her pain in this process as well. I imagine that she also felt great pain in this moment because as a mother she wants the best for me, and unfortunately this is a situation in which not much can be done to alleviate the pain.

This past week tensions rose a bit at my house when my roommate invited a distant friend, that not everyone I live with is friends with, to come check in and say hi. As a background, I live in a house of 6 people currently in San Luis Obispo and for the most part we have isolated ourselves outside of our work environments and seeing our significant others, with that we have had the occasional instance in which local friends in SLO we did not live with would join us for a workout or swing by for an afternoon. I

“otherized” Alex, my roommate, when he was adamant that I didn’t want Michael, the distant friend, to come because I didn’t like him rather than my stated reason that I didn’t want exposure to another person in this time, especially a person who has just been traveling from Colorado. Seeing the situation through his eyes, he saw this interaction as being no different from anyone else we had hung out with recently. I put blame on myself for not having voiced my concern and disappointment in myself that I have exposed myself unnecessarily to those I do not live with previously, and I can see how from Alex’s perspective I am creating a double standard. Without expressing that I did not feel fully kosher about seeing people with COVID concerns earlier, when I did express those feelings, it was hard to distinguish what I truly meant. Going through this reflection, I am viewing this situation a lot more calmer than it was in the moment, because I have a better understanding of why Alex was upset and felt that we were being unfair. From his perspective, it was just the same as seeing anyone else we had seen previously and he was just connecting with his friend, similarly to how we had connected earlier in the quarantine with my friend.

For this intervention, I decided to empathize with my friend who is in a less than perfect relationship. I’ve known about the situation for a while, but never really thought too much about it because it’s just not my business I guess. For the past two weeks I’ve been hanging out with them more because we’re all sort of quarantining together and I’ve gotten to know the boyfriend a little bit more. I actually really like him as a person and there’s nothing wrong with him at all. The only issue is that my friend really doesn’t like him that much and she knows she wants to break up with him. So up until this intervention, I’ve constantly told her, “dude, just break up with him now.” In my mind it makes more sense to end things sooner rather than later, but I failed to see things from her point of view, and even from his point of view. I guess my mind was really just thinking about the big picture instead of the smaller issues at hand. I also have never been in a relationship and therefore never gone through a breakup so what do I really know anyways. This week I have definitely stopped telling her to break up with him because that’s not really fair of me to do. Instead, I’ve just asked her about how things are going and listened to her. Her answer hasn’t changed much from what she’s said before, but now I’m just focused more on why she’s putting it off. I understand it’s a hard situation for both people involved, especially because the boyfriend doesn’t know any of this. So my job is to be more supportive and to not push her in any direction. Ultimately, I really do feel for her in this situation. I can tell that it really bothers her. Even if we don’t talk about it, I know she’s thinking about it. It makes me feel really icky inside and anxious because it reminds me of times when I have been in situations where something just won’t leave my brain and I know confrontation is on the rise. That feeling is literally the worst. I have learned from this that I need to be there for my friend. I also need to leave my opinion out of it when it’s not being asked for. I think sometimes I demonize the boyfriend unnecessarily because of how I think my friend feels about him, but he’s seriously a really good guy. They just aren’t going to get married and that’s ok. I need to be the friend that doesn’t talk negatively about him and the situation all the time.

Recently my girlfriend has said that I have been doubting her as well as many other people that I come into contact with on a regular basis. I have been attempting to keep myself in check. I never truly doubted people for any good reason, rather I was questioning just how accurate many of their statements were. I somewhat did not believe in the authenticity of people, and

the statements that I chose to question really carried no meaning. As my intervention proceeded I began to ask myself why I really care to even question others. I began to feel how meaningless the questioning and doubting became and how it must annoy the people around me. I have worked on improving myself and I believe I am making progress.

My parents and I have different definitions of "social distancing." So when I went to have a socially distant Mother's Day lunch with my family a couple weeks ago, I was very frustrated with them. They didn't stay the appropriate 6 feet away, rolled their eyes at me when I told them to back up, and made fun of people who took the 6 feet rule so seriously. On top of that, I found out they had been seeing some of their friends on "socially distant" hikes and barbecues (but the photos I saw of the experience looked far from socially distant). They had excuses for all of their endeavors, which made it even more frustrating. I didn't bother putting myself in their shoes.

This weekend I went back up to see them for dinner, hoping that they learned from our last encounter that our values were different. With my "empathy hat" on, I had dinner with them from the trunks of our cars. As I sat there listening to more stories of their adventures, I made the conscious effort to push away the blinding feeling of frustration and to instead put myself in their shoes. They've been in quarantine with just my sister, and things have been quiet around the house without my brother and I there. They must be feeling the emptiness of the house they cannot escape, so it makes sense that they've been seeing some of their friends. The friends they've seen haven't been out with other groups, and are part of their isolation circle. Plus, there are barely any cases in the town, so the likelihood of anyone in the group having the virus are very low. My parents must be prioritizing their mental health above the necessity to isolate for a virus.

With this new perspective, I feel less frustrated with them. They're just lonely and making up for it in the only way they know how. I may not agree with what they've been doing, but I feel less anger towards them for their decisions.

During these times of Covid-19 I have found myself othering people, a lot. The thing I have certainly been most judgemental about is people leaving their house for unnecessary reasons. I still do think that leaving and being close to lots of people for completely unnecessary reasons is not good and should be avoided. However, during these past couple of months I personally have found no issue with not leaving my house for any reason and find comfort in staying completely at home. I understand that this is unusual, but because of this, early on I was very harsh toward people who were leaving their house at all for things like running in the park. I have since tried very hard to put myself in their shoes in order to understand this. I see now that for many people it is a matter of mental health and a need to go do something outside in order to be happy. I am starting to understand better how difficult it can be for people to not have to face to face interactions with others. I have been fortunate to stay with my family who I love dearly as well as have enough space on my own property to feel no need to leave. Many others are not so fortunate. They may fight with their family or feel very anxious about being confined to their limited space. I am now trying hard to sympathize with people who feel this way and as

long as they are still trying to stay safe while going outside I respect their decision and believe I have a better understanding of why it is necessary.

The other day I was at Prefumo Canyon enjoying the sunset with a few of my friends trying to take in the peaceful beauty of nature. Then about 10 presumably high school students drive up the canyon with blasting music and very loud voices. The whole group gets out of their cars and walks towards where we were sitting, continuing the loud music and talking. One kid even charged at a cow and flipped it off while all his friends cheered him on. I immediately "otherised" them because they were high school students disturbing the peace. Once I noticed I was doing this, I took a step back and put myself in their shoes. I realized that they are likely unaware of what they are doing because of their lack of experience with life and innate selfishness towards society that many high schoolers have. Not only that but the kid who was charging the cow, still completely unacceptable, was likely feeling the pressure of impressing his friends which is very normal during high school. High school is a hard time in life for many people and can make some do ridiculous things. After taking that time to reflect, my level of anger towards them decreased and I was able to continue enjoying my own experience at Prefumo. This exercise makes me understand that I can do this in any situation and control my level of annoyed/angry emotions better, leading to a better experience and life.

I moved back in with my parents after covid disrupted everything and unfortunately politics is a contentious issue in our house. I consider myself a progressive and my parents are conservative, especially my father. Recently he was getting extremely upset about the mandate of masks in public spaces. He said that it's an infringement on his rights and if you (any person) go out into public you are putting yourself at risk anyways so why should he have to wear a mask? My first instinct is to scream at the top of my lungs "IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU" but instead I probed further. I asked him how this is a violation of his civil rights? I discovered it wasn't about wearing the mask at all, it was about the government mandating an action on his part that he did not have a say in. He believes that government should be small, and mandating people to wear masks is an overreach in government authority. If HE is the one affected in a government mandate then HE should have a say in it. It's not that he does not care about the community, he feels that we are in danger because his belief in government having limited action in our lives is being preached. I don't agree with it, I actually think it's very silly, but his anger made more sense to me once I understood the motivation behind it.

This past week my roommates have really been getting on my nerves. The dishes are never done even though I have asked multiple times, the soap dispensers around the house are always left empty, and my personal belongings are being used without permission. It is possible that quarantine is the main reason I feel this way, but I decided to understand empathy by putting myself in their shoes in a different situation.

I will be moving out of the house in 1 week and I have so much left to do. I haven't been able to see my family and friends for almost a month. There are so many things on my mind that the

small things always seem to slip. I have so much stuff packed up and I really don't want to go out to buy things that I know I already have. I don't think she would mind if I used a little bit of her stuff a couple of times. I would ask her, but she is in her room with the door shut working really hard on her school project. I know that it takes her awhile to get focused, and when she is focused she does not want to be bothered. I normally would not do the things that I have been doing the past couple of weeks, and I just hope that once I move out we can still be friends. I would really hate that the things I have been doing lately ruin the friendship that we have.

From this intervention it is apparent that my first assumption may not be correct. There are hundreds of other situations that could be the correct one, and I should not judge based solely on my thoughts. Since I have not confronted or got angry at my roommates, I think that I have been doing an alright job at being empathetic. For me, I used to be empathetic towards everyone almost all the time, always saying that there is some good in each person and I could help them find it. I feel like this attitude has actually hurt me quite often, as I overlooked what people were saying about me behind my back. As a result, I continually struggle with trusting people and worrying what people say and think about me.

During quarantine, there have been several opportunities to practice more empathy and also self reflect on behaviors that we have developed and consider "normal". Many people are nervous and scared, leading them to act in ways that may seem inappropriate to us, which need to be approached with an open heart and an open mind to understand those people and their actions. One instance in particular has been people who have protested the lock down, or actively oppose the societal restrictions that have been put in place such as wearing a mask or social distancing. One particular family-member of mine (who I'll keep anonymous for the purposes of this reflection) has been going to protests, rallying against the economic shutdown, and I saw that as an opportunity to try and understand him and his motivations a little better. My first reaction to his protesting was anger, "Social distancing is the quickest way to get us out of this mess, and this guy is going to screw it up for everyone else." I jumped to judging his character, intelligence and a myriad of other things. When I saw other family members doing the same, I took the opportunity of this self intervention to ask him about his experience and try to understand what he might be experiencing and why he decided to protest the lockdown, instead of continuing down the path of torment. I was surprised by his answer, which was full of personal history having lived through economic crises before, upping his concern for business owners, workers and the general well being of the people around him. I found this interesting considering that his perspective was largely the same as the people who were judging him for protesting, protecting the well being of people. In his mind, the economic fallout of the shutdown

is a far worse problem than the sickness itself, which is an understandable concern. We were able to have a constructive conversation where I understood better why he was fearful of economic collapse, and I was able to explain my perspective as well. The major takeaway from this intervention was not that I had my views changed, or that I changed the mind of the person I was talking to, but that I was able to humanize his perspective, understand his concern and see through his eyes for a bit. I think that's incredibly important, you don't have to agree with the person, but the path forward lies in a mutual respect and understanding of where they're coming from.

For this self-intervention, I decided to put myself in the shoes of the COVID-19 protesters. I see them often on social media, crowded in large areas, marching for their freedom to go back out into the world with big signs and no masks. There was even a lady who was protesting outside of a supermarket who fashioned surgical masks to look like a bikini, while not wearing a mask to cover her face (I've attached a photo below).

COVID-19 protesters feel like their freedom has been taken away from them. They understand that this virus is very serious, but they are willing to take the risk because to them, it's just like any other virus. If they get it, they get it.

I'd also be upset that I can't go out to the market and do normal things without having to wear a mask; it's hard wearing a mask everywhere--sometimes it's hard to breathe. It's not nice having to look in the mirror without having a haircut or polished nails. Family gatherings, sporting events, and the large gatherings we used to enjoy have been taken away from us. Working at home is difficult because of the many distractions. The list goes on. If we open everything back up, businesses would not be going out of business and we would be able to get everything done. I would think that the way that the government has handled this situation feels like they're infringing on my rights. It's my life and my body, so I should be able to do what I want to, even if that means not wearing a mask to the store. I'd feel angry, upset, and frustrated that I feel helpless. I want to see my family, I want to go to the store, I want to go to the beach, I just want life to be back to normal.

From this self-intervention, I learned to be less upset about the people protesting. Looking at life from their perspective makes me understand them a little more. Truthfully, it was difficult for me

to put myself in their shoes because both of my parents are healthcare workers and they put themselves in danger every day that they go to work. I see how tired and stressed they are from having to deal with COVID-19. I'm still upset at everyone protesting, but now I can empathize with the protesters' desires to go back out into the world. I, too, miss being able to go out without a mask and going to the beach. Most importantly, I miss seeing my parents, who won't let me come home because they're afraid of me being sick if I live with them.

Last Tuesday, I went to the post office to drop off a package that I wanted to return. I saw the clerk working at the station. She was not related to me whatsoever, but I will choose her for this assignment. It was a hot day; the sun was burning the shit outta people. She was wearing a t-shirt and a vest that she was required to wear at work. If I were to see things from her perspective, I would feel frustrated because everyone else is home quarantining and relaxing, but I have to work. That's how I would feel. I didn't see any frustration in her eyes; maybe she wanted to work; I don't know. I would also wanna take off that damn vest; it was ugly and looked like the kind that prisoners would wear. I'd feel lonely too because I was the only person working; well I'm not saying that the other dude is not a person, but I didn't seem to get along with him, so I ignored him. When I see customers coming in, I don't greet them, rather, waiting for them to tell me what they need because I'm just too lazy in a hot day, still thinking about what I'm going to eat for dinner and when I can go home and watch TV with my love. Thank God there weren't many people out, probably because they were home making love with their significant other or doing other things. I could just zone out for a bit at work. I know it's not a positive work attitude, but I'm telling the truth.

What I've learned from this assignment is that when we become someone that is not related to us, there are many possibilities to how we feel about things. Those feelings can be so different from how we feel when we are who we are. I found this effect very interesting because each person is different and has different experience. I feel like I was in that clerk's shoes when I became her. I feel like I could feel how she would feel, even though she might have different feelings, but still I could place myself in her position and see things from a different perspective. This experience can be very helpful in becoming more understanding and considerate because we can project how others feel and based on that we can make appropriate decisions.

This week I spent a lot of time running through San Luis Obispo. I go on daily runs and I noticed the significant amount of homeless people in this city. For me, I definitely have thought of the homeless population as a "them" because I do not feel connected to them. I recognize my

privilege and see that they see the world in a completely different way. Because of this assignment I tried to see the world through their eyes and by doing this, it truly humbled me. My mother is a nurse for a hospital in Seattle that only takes on homeless patients, so I called her and asked for some insight on the lives of the people that she has interacted with. She told me that it is honestly heartbreaking to hear some of the stories of the people that she cares for everyday. She says that most of her patients are struggling with drug abuse and have no one in their lives to be there for them. When taking a jog I saw a homeless man on the street on Santa Rosa St., I sat down next to him and had a conversation. He said his name was Mark and that he didn't really want to talk about how he got into his situation; however, he told me that he is always hungry and sad. After a while, I gave him \$5 for some food and wished him well. He was very nice and it made me really upset that someone doesn't have a safe place to call home and struggles to eat everyday. I realize that it is difficult to put myself in his shoes, although when I was sitting down next to Mark I imagined the sadness that he had to carry everyday. It was hard to imagine that no one in my life would be there for me and that I would have to result in sleeping on a park bench. While some people view homeless people as just lazy, I learned that it is so much more complicated than that and that they deserve everyone's empathy. I feel like people are so quick to judge before they put themselves in someone else's shoes.

What I realized throughout this situation is that the biggest things in life are most often the things we look over. Whether it be having a meal on the table, having friends and family around you to support you through all your endeavors, or just having a roof over your head, we take these things for granted. When seeing someone who doesn't have all the luxuries that we do, and is fighting everyday to make ends meet, it puts everything into perspective and has helped me be thankful for what I have. At the end of the day, seeing the world through someone else's eyes and helping out those in need whenever I can is what empathy is about.

This week I went surfing on a late Saturday morning. I knew that, given it was Memorial Day weekend, there was going to be quite the crowd. In an effort to remain as socially isolated as possible while still getting my surfing fix, I had planned on going earlier in the morning to beat the crowd. These plans of course fell through, and as I eagerly drove to Pismo, I exited the freeway and to my amazement, the streets were backed up with traffic and flooded with beachgoers. As I wove around traffic and pedestrians for 30 minutes looking for a parking spot, my patience grew thin, and my resentment progressively shifted towards “them”: the “tourists”, the “weekend warriors”, the “inlanders”, basically anyone there that does not surf there on a regular basis. “The nerve of “them” to crowd “my” place of surf and social isolation; as if I had some special privilege or local entitlement to the place bestowed upon me by the council of beach and surf. Only in hindsight do I clearly realize that my frustration and sense of entitlement was totally out of line. But if I put myself in their shoes with the mindset I had at that time, I would say they were acting irrational and selfish. Crowding the beach all at once as soon as there is a holiday. I would never do such a thing. I was there to surf not because it was a holiday, but because I routinely do; I was not there to play grab ass on the beach, unlike “them”. They made a poor decision by coming to the beach during a holiday and should have chosen a different activity, like hiking or bbq’n.

As I look back and cast the world through the eyes of all those people there on that day in Pismo, celebrating Memorial weekend by going to the beach, they are experiencing the release of a bunch of pent up isolation anxiety. They have been quarantined for weeks and haven't experienced a healthy amount of negative ions. They are excited to be with loved ones and friends while experiencing the joy of laying on the warm sand, swimming in the crisp cold saltwater, and replenishing a deficit of vitamin D. They wanted to be at the beach just as much as I did, if not more. Are they risking a spike in covid-19 cases by surrounding themselves with strangers in public? Sure they are, but so was I; I was also one of them.

Within this past week, a friend of mine was getting into an argument with his girlfriend. His girlfriend was very upset with him because she wanted him to spend time with her. She wanted him to go with her to a friend's house for the day. He instead wanted to hang out with his other friends and go to the beach to surf. At first, I sided with his girlfriend as I saw that she was very upset. I was quick to make this judgement of the situation. I shouldn't be so quick to pick one side or the other. I put myself into my

friends' shoes. My friend has been with his girlfriend constantly within the past week, so I can understand that he might want to spend some time with his friends. There were times that I wanted to hang out with him, but he instead went with his girlfriend. Especially with the current quarantine, I can understand that my friend would want to go get some exercise at the beach. I learned, that next time I see a situation between others, I won't be so hasty to make judgments on the other people. Putting myself in their shoes can help me recognize someone as "them".

A few days ago I went to buy some groceries at Ralphs on Madonna Rd. Most people wore masks, including myself, but there were also some people who did not wear one. They should be socially responsible for wearing one, but it also doesn't bother me because they are putting themselves in danger more than anyone. Some people even forget that the coronavirus is happening, and I think those are the people who chose not to wear masks. It's their choice, but I don't have a problem with it as long as I can protect myself. This was my self-centered mindset about people wearing masks.

I finished my groceries and lined up for the register. As I was loading the conveyor belt, a man walked up to the office counter demanding to speak to the manager. The manager was working the cash register in the next lane, kept busy with the long lines of customers. The man came into the store to demand the manager to enforce all customers to wear masks. At the moment I thought, "What is this angry man doing here, demanding something from these employees who work under hazard? They're exposing themselves to danger so that the community can have access to food at times of quarantine. He should be more respectful than angrily demanding the manager to enforce masks at their store. The employees probably know the best that people should be wearing masks."

After some thought, I came to think that people have different circumstances. I am young enough to not worry as much about dying from the coronavirus, nor am I living with anyone who might die from the virus either. The man I saw at Ralphs was probably around 50 years old. He probably has family members or parents to take care of during this pandemic. Although my impression of him was that he was inconsiderate and disrespectful, this man really just wants the essential stores to be a safer place for everyone. What he's fighting for is really the right thing, because now I remember how there was actually a good amount of seniors citizens having to shop for themselves. Everyone really should be wearing masks so that everyone can get groceries without being in fear.

Since the SLO city probably won't enforce people to wear masks, private companies should at least be enforcing them (like Costco). I assume that this enforcement doesn't happen because stores don't want to lose potential customers. If all of these grocery stores agree to enforce masks, the city could be a safer place.

Over the weekend I was walking in my town Mill Valley. I wear a mask in the public areas and take it off once I get to the trails on the mountain. Two sweets away from my house, a biker came from behind me, biking closer and closer to me on a wide street, and coughed in my face in an exaggerating, joking yet terrifying way. I felt really violated and so incredibly angry. I began to think that I might hate this person, genuinely hate them, because of how

unnecessary and inconsiderate their actions were. How he put me and my family at risk when I was keeping to myself and I've been diligent about quarantine. I try not to hold onto anger but I justified hating him because he is making a joke out of something that is really hurting so many people. It was also easier to be upset because he came across as pretentious on a bike that cost more than some peoples cars and the complete "Mill Valley biker outfit" which consists of extremely tight shorts and a matching shirt that have advertisements for the bikers law firm on it. As I watched him accelerate away I just began to cry because the last few months have been so overwhelming and I know that we're still in for months of caution, and people can't be treating each other this way during a time when we should be supporting our communities. I then began to think of the biker, and his life, possible family, how quarantine has affected him. And maybe it was because I wanted to feel something other than anger, but I tried to imagine what it was truly like to be him, and I tried to humanize this person that I was so resentful of. I began by thinking how he must be unhappy on this beautiful weekend day to go out of his way to intrude on a stranger's life. Maybe he's growing frustrated with shelter-in-place, perhaps he has been laid off, maybe his family is struggling with all the time at home, maybe homeschooling his kids has been incredible stressful, maybe he's acting out because someone close to him has Covid and he's angry because the quarantine didn't help them. As I pondered the possibilities of his life, I began to think of any unnecessary bad things I've ever done when I was upset. Cutting someone off in my car, tipping less than I should, snubbing someone who wanted to make conversation with me... These terrible acts aren't something I want to be hated for because they represent a very low moment in time for me that unfortunately those affected had to witness. And I need to grow and make sure those don't happen, and I believe that the biker is not someone worth hating. I think we were alone on the street and I caught him at a horrible time. And I hope he's doing better.

During this past week, I took the time to try to put myself in the shoes of my family members. Given that we have been in quarantine for the last 2 months, there have been various times when things got a bit dicy or challenging between all of us, I mean staying in a smallish space for a long period of time with little exposure to the outside world will do that. All six of us each exist in our own space, but there are always times where those spaces clash and things spiral a bit out of control. In a way, we've all gotten incredibly used to being around each other and this has often led to us forgetting the others are going through things in their own lives they might not be expressing but are still dealing with, despite us being family. Therefore, I've been working to make a conscious effort to try to step into their perspective and see how they're experiencing this whole quarantine themselves, and I picked my sister to be the person I chose to embody for the week.

My sister and I, despite our many similarities, are actually very different. She and I have separate lives obviously, and often times it is not obvious if she's going through something until I ask her a couple of days later. This week I noticed she seemed to be a lot quieter and a bit more angry than usual, so I began to observe what was going on. She tends to be the one to hold up the household even if she works in the shadows and I even find myself sometimes relying on her more than I need to for basic things. Quarantine has made things especially difficult too as we've all been home together for the last 2 months, so I've noticed her getting more stressed more frequently trying to keep up with everyone in the house, including myself. I wanted to see how I could take her place for a few days to give her a little bit of a break and see how she's experiencing quarantine from her own perspective, and oh boy she's holding it together so well. I learned a lot about the dynamics of my family specifically when we're all together for a long time and how difficult that can be. I learned how strong she is as an individual to keep doing the things she does so so well. While it was a bit more stressful taking

on a few extra tasks a day with the schoolwork I've been trying to keep up with, I do hope to be able to continue trying to look at things from her perspective and do what I can to help.

This week, I noticed myself thinking of the San Diego Police Department as others. Not due to criminal action, a traffic violation, or a delayed response time, but due to their enforcement of rules on various beaches around the city. Recently, police and sheriffs' departments around the world have been tasked with enforcing new 'social distancing' guidelines unlike anything we've seen before. The application of laws to various ways of life are changing rapidly and are not always equally enforced. As a result of this, police officers are called upon to enforce constantly changing laws that often have questionable outcomes. For example, beachgoers at Mission Beach are required to constantly be on the move, near the water line, off of the soft sand and boardwalks. Due to this, especially at high tide, beachgoers are pushed closer together than they would be were they simply required to maintain a six-foot distance from other people while sitting on the beach. I first viewed a police officer as 'they' when I was informed that I was not allowed to sit down at the water line to fasten my swim-fins prior to entering the surf. Later, as I exited the water, I noticed the same officer defeatedly asking another swimmer to not sit down. Upon realizing his mannerisms, I began to empathize with his predicament. Officers, like the rest of us, longingly wish for a return to normal. Chasing people off the surf-line isn't what he signed up for, but is what he is ordered to do, and is what he feels he must do to save as many lives as possible.

The first instance where I was able to recognize someone as their own person with their own experiences and emotions was earlier this weekend when I spoke on the phone with my mother. Currently, I am not staying at home and so I only communicate with her via phone calls every few days. However, on Tuesday she called me early in the morning with very sad news about how a friend of hers had passed away. In this instance, I started feeling very sad because I could hear trying to hold back her tears as she told me the news.

Though initially I did not know how to react, I ended up just listening to her and being there for her by helping her talk about her past memories with that friend. By her telling me about memories that they had shared, I had started to imagine what she was going through. I felt sad and lonely, as if a part of me was aware that I would never see that person again. Soon, the realization that I would no longer see that person in real life hit and then I was filled with the realization that I would only have those memories. What hit me on a deeper level was the notion that those memories shared with that individual were memories that now "I" only had.

At the time being, I was having a difficult day and had been very agitated for what seemed like no reason. I figured that it was mostly due to being tired of being cooped up in the house all week since it had been a while since I had gone on a walk. And, though the moment where I was able to feel empathy towards my mom and her friend who had passed, it taught me that I needed to start putting things into perspective.