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SCU In Quarantine: Our Pandemic Stories

5-7-2021

48 Hours

Nadia Nasr

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48 Hours

Nadia Nasr
Head of Archives & Special Collections

Why, you may ask, is my daughter sticking a cotton swab up her father's nose? Is this some weird science experiment?

No, but at the time I wished it was just a weird science experiment.

On May 29, 2020, my life contracted around a 48-hour window of acute uncertainty. My now husband and I drove our then 6-year-old daughter through a COVID-19 test center. The weekend before, she had inexplicably begun running a fever and exhibiting other symptoms consistent with past standard viral infections. Out of an abundance of caution, her pediatrician recommended that we take her to be tested for COVID-19.

I was a little surprised, shocked even. We'd been socially distancing and taking precautions. I had been working from home (my husband already worked from home). But she still got sick.

I was horrified by the thought that after a stranger invaded our daughter's throat and nasal cavities with a cotton swab we would drive away as if we had just blithely picked up french fries at the drive-thru. I called my doctor to see if she would be willing to order a COVID-19 test for me, because we knew it would ease my daughter's anxiety to have someone else go first. After asking me a series of questions (do you have these symptoms, do you work in an essential service and interact with the public) she regretfully informed me that, though sympathetic, she could not order a test because of the lack of a ready availability of swab kits.

Outraged, to myself I thought, I have a right to be tested, don't I? After all, it's just one measly little test, right?

Rationally, I knew there were hundreds of thousands of health care providers, first responders, grocery store workers, retail workers, food industry workers, caregivers, and other workers in essential services who daily were at high risk of contracting coronavirus. There were hundreds of thousands of people in age groups or with health conditions or other circumstances who had a higher risk than I did of contracting coronavirus. They needed those tests more than I did.

With heavy hearts, my husband and I sat down and broke the news to our daughter. We talked about how scary it might be, to be in the car and not in a doctor's office; to see masked testing staff in full-body germ-repelling suits. We were honest as we could be about the procedure and reassured her that we wouldn't ask her to do this if it wasn't absolutely necessary. We let her stick cotton swabs up our noses so that she knew without a doubt we would know what she was going through.

She was so brave.

After 48 excruciating hours waiting for her test results, we were enormously relieved to learn her test was negative. A year later, we're immensely grateful that has been the worst conversation we've had to have with our daughter during this extraordinarily challenging pandemic year.

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