

Panic, Panic, Panic **By Arnold Montiel**

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The global pandemic known as COVID 19 was upon us. When I first started as an adult learner I was attending class in person. In the classroom we had one instructor and usually a volunteer. Those two months of in-class learning helped me get rid of some jitters I had about returning to the classroom. It had been forty years since I had been in a classroom. It also gave me the chance to learn the basics of my laptop.

I was, as you can say, electronically and digitally illiterate. If not for the help of my nine year old grandson I don't know what I would have done! He assisted me in installing all the learning apps, and showed me how to favorite them on my laptop so I didn't have to keep logging in all the time. For a short time I really believed that the pandemic would be the end of my education. On the contrary! Pima College did not miss a beat. My instructors made the transition to digital learning as smooth as they possibly could, due to the fact that most of these instructors were also learning to teach via zoom. I was fortunate to own a laptop and internet service but I knew that many students didn't. Pima made sure that students could obtain a laptop and also technical training and support. Some internet providers were offering reduced prices for students, but still ... some students simply dropped out.

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The image that shocked me the most were the bonfires in India where they were burning their dead. In the midst of the pandemic when death rates were soaring and hospitals were at max capacity there was an element in society that tried to downplay the seriousness of the situation.

At my job, it became clear that this was not good! I work for a theater company and the vast majority of our customers are fifty five and older. This group happened to be one of the groups that were most at risk. Some of the actors and actresses became infected right at the beginning. So my boss, the owner of the company, decided to close down temporarily. I was furloughed for two weeks which seemed like forever!

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At home. My wife, my son, my grandkids, my daughter in law, my parents, my siblings and all the people I knew. What was going to happen to them? I was not really worried about me, I was worried about all my loved ones. My wife works as a child care worker and we always wondered if she was going to infect anyone at work, or if someone at work would end up infecting her and then she would in turn infect our family. We followed all CDC recommendations because we didn't want to make anybody sick or even cause their death. It was very stressful.

Although this pandemic was bad, I have learned a lot about myself just going through it. It made me see that I was resilient and determined to keep going. Even though it has been a little harder learning this way, I believe that students and instructors alike, should all be proud of ourselves. We did it under some very challenging circumstances. Now the jitters are gone. No matter how dark things can get, the sun will always come out.