

1. Name, age, pronouns, where you live  
Jaden Fraga, 34, they/them, Eugene, Oregon USA

2. Identity description—disabled, chronically ill, neurodivergent, etc.  
(Please feel free to include any other identifiers you find relevant  
and would like to share)

Disabled (crippled), chronically ill (sick), mentally ill (crazy), chronic pain sufferer, superfat, white with mixed heritage (Brazil and the Azores), Portuguese, wheelchair user, transgender (non-binary and neurogender), second generation immigrant, first generation college student and graduate, have moved back and forth between impoverished and lower middle class

3. When did you first learn about the pandemic? What was your experience with this? Emotions?

I first heard about it right as my partner and I were leaving to go to California. My aunt became suddenly very ill and we had to make the decision to withdraw her life support and allow her to die naturally so we drove down so that I could be present for that. We were there for a couple of days. While there the pandemic was starting to kick up, we were already wearing masks because we use them as needed for chronic illnesses and the stores began to run out of necessities like toilet paper and top ramen. On March 15th we withdrew my aunt's life support, she died on the 16th, and we headed back to Oregon on the 17th. When we got back we rested then did groceries. On March 20th we began to quarantine fully. Only my partner would go out for necessities.

1. Specifically, do you remember where you were? Actually I think I heard about it before March. My friends and I were mostly laughing about how it was just the new swine flu and everything was fine. Then March hit and everything changed. We genuinely thought it wasn't going to be a big deal. How very very wrong we were...
2. What was one of the first conversations you had about the pandemic? At first jokes about swine flu and how this isn't a

big deal. That quickly changed to complete horror and terror. Just so much fear and trying to convince people around me that this is serious. From the moment I understood this was a serious ordeal, my mindset shifted.

4. How has your experience with the pandemic changed over the course of the past nine months or so?

As it's gone on longer and longer it's getting more and more difficult to deal with it all. I'm SO frustrated that so many are not taking it seriously. We've been quarantining and doing very very little out of the house things since March of last year. I'm just so tired and overwhelmed and feeling more and more hopeless the longer this goes on...

5. What has your experience been as a disabled person throughout the pandemic?

It has been incredibly infuriating dealing with this pandemic as a disabled person. I was interviewed for Cuéntame Zine and was asked about seeing accommodations disabled folks have been pleading for solved instantly for ableds in the middle of a global pandemic. I'd like to share what I shared with them about this subject: Oh boy!

Accommodations. I feel like I could talk about this for hours so hopefully I can reign it in a little bit haha! Allow me to share a personal story and how it relates to all of this. I was working on a masters in social work at portland state university after a really intense bout of intensified mental illness symptoms. I made sure to setup accommodations and started my journey. Shortly after beginning I became physically disabled and was diagnosed with several chronic illnesses. This caused me to require more accommodations. I was missing a lot of class and attempting to figure out how to be able to do more work from home for my classes and field placement. We were having a lot of difficulty getting me the accommodations I needed but instead of having a regular meeting about this I was forced to have a remediation meeting. (This is something they call a student for when a student is not performing to their satisfaction.) Then I was required to have a second remediation meeting as a "follow up/check in" to the first meeting. Then, around the time of my dad's death I got a C in a class

and a C in the masters program is a no pass/fail for that class. When a student doesn't pass a class they are required to have a remediation meeting. This would be my third meeting. When a student requires a third meeting, it is escalated to a retention meeting. For this I would have to present my case to an impartial panel and see if they would allow me to remain a student. Had I not been forced to have TWO remediation meetings I wouldn't have ever been escalated to retention. That program was hell and so full of microaggressions and paying thousands of dollars to have to call out classmates and students. Forced to politely educate constantly. What's worse is in one of the remediation meetings I tried to petition the group to allow me to do some at home hours for my field placement. Things like read, follow up on calls and emails, gather information, etc and Julie Kates, the director of field placement, said "We have never in my eight years here had a student ask to do field hours at home, not even a few hours a week." She told me that she would never consider working from home to be "real social work" because "real social work happens in the field." I was so livid. I have friends that work from home as social workers and now every fucking person that can is working from home including social workers. I've been told I should file a formal complaint and even sue. They took from me the ability to complete the program all because of their own ableism. I then learned I'm not the first disabled student to have these sorts of issues. I also learned that many marginalized folks from multiple oppressed identities have been treated similarly. Their acceptance rate of diverse students is quite impressive but their retention rate is horrific. I am so so so beyond pissed that now so many people are working from home. Hell, I'd be willing to bet that Julie Kates is even working from home. And I'm just so very angry about it all. As we watch the world become closer to fully accessible I can't help but be filled with rage and resentment. I'm so angry and hurt over being denied the accommodations I've needed. This is their way of showing us that they've always had the means but only when it benefited them. It's frustrating and heartbreaking to be told no over and over and over. To be told "we can't possibly make that work" just to watch it all open up once the privileged require it.

6. How has your disability impacted/informed how you have dealt with the pandemic?

My disability has helped me know how to handle this pandemic. In the early days of my disability, when we were still trying to diagnose me, I was entirely bedridden and housebound. I couldn't even get to or use the toilet alone. I also spent a chunk of time with severe agoraphobia that kept me locked in my house except for two monthly grocery shopping trips. That history prepared me very well for the isolation that pandemic quarantining causes. I'm lucky because I live with my partner and now my grandmother too so I am not as isolated as many are. But I'm just so used to isolation. As a disabled person I felt the shift of non-disableds no longer putting forth the effort required to maintain a friendship with a housebound and bedridden person. But it's also hard to see so many anti-maskers, so many people throwing us chronically ill folks under the bus. They expect us to not get to move on with our lives and think we should be the only ones quarantining. It's just another reminder of how much these people hate us. Knowing that as a disabled, severely mentally ill, superfat, transgender person the likelihood that care rationing would effect me personally and even my partner and my grandmother is terrifying. My grandma is 84 with dementia, diabetes, and severe respiratory conditions (COPD and asthma as well as chronic bronchitis) and she is having a difficult time understanding the pandemic. She doesn't think we should have to be so strict with quarantining, she thinks I'm "too scared" of the virus. It's very frustrating and difficult trying to navigate this with her.

7. What have your relationships with people been like throughout this? Have your relationships with people changed?

I don't feel like my relationships have changed too much other than I see folks taking risks I'm not comfortable taking. Some family members don't understand why I'm being so strict or intense about this but they just don't understand what it's like being someone who is disposable to the normative culture. Otherwise most of my friends are online fellow spoonies and we've really bonded more than usual throughout this ordeal.

- A. If you've had to distance yourself from people because you haven't felt comfortable with lack of safety precautions, how has this gone?

It sucks!!!! We used to have a small in person D&D game with some local friends but we don't feel safe taking the risk so we've been playing online. We used to regularly take their kiddo to the library once a week and covid means we've had to cancel these outings. I miss my friends so so so much. And it isn't because my friends aren't taking precautions, I just can't risk exposure because of my illnesses and grandma's. I do have family members that aren't following strict protocols who seem annoyed when I push for more strictness around it all. It's frustrating and incredibly difficult. It's also heartbreakingly upsetting.

- B. Could you speak more towards the decision making that went into this? The emotions that went into this?

It's been really mentally and emotionally difficult. I miss my friends and family. Couldn't have my mom or brother over for Christmas like we normally would. It's just been so sad and hard to deal with but we have to stay alive. I'm trying to make sure we're all alive to be together next Christmas.

8. Where do you currently/who do you currently live with? Has this been impacted by the pandemic?

I live in an apartment in Eugene, Oregon with my partner, my grandmother, and our cat. My grandmother moved in with me and my family when I was a toddler. I moved out at 23, my dad died in March 2015, she moved in with my aunt, then my aunt died March of 2020 (covid likely played a role) and she had to move into assisted living. However she only speaks Brazilian Portuguese and was unable to communicate with anyone in the home. She was very depressed and stressed and miserable. She asked if she could move in with me, something I'd offered in the past, and I said yes. She moved in at the end of September 2020, my mom brought her and we did our best to maintain distance. I think it's for the best but it is also quite difficult.

A. Do you have personal care attendants? If so, has this been impacted by the pandemic?

My partner is my home health care worker. She is also my grandma's home health care worker, the other care worker for her is my cousin. Ideally we'd have a third person who could fill in occasionally but covid makes it too unsafe and scary to pursue.

9. Do you feel like your relationships with different institutions (such as health care, government, or media) has changed during this time? If so, how?

Hm, I don't think so. I'm an anarcho-communist, I don't trust any of the industrial complexes and this pandemic only solidified that for me. They do not care about us and never will.

10. What has been the hardest thing about living during this pandemic?

The hardest thing about living during this pandemic is how hopeless I feel. I cannot imagine a positive future. Between this pandemic and global climate change...I just am finding it so hard to figure out how to keep going, how to build any kind of meaningful future.

11. Have there been any silver linings?

Having more down time with my partner has been the biggest silver lining of this whole ordeal.