

Vickey Young

Nov. 16, 2020 • 43:57

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

pandemic, people, disabled, rent, home, roommate, disability, landlord, life, masks, vicki, ohio, apartment, anxiety attack, friends, point, symptoms, beginning, closed, wuhan

SPEAKERS

Vickey Young, Hannah Soyer

Hannah Soyer 00:00

Today is November 16 2020. My name is Hannah Soyer. And I will be interviewing Vickey Young for the COVID disability archive. These oral histories are being recorded as a way to document the lived experiences of disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent individuals during the COVID 19 pandemic across the world. Alright, so thank you so much for joining me today, Vickey. The first thing I'm going to ask you, is just to identify yourself with your name, age, pronouns and where you live. And you're also completely, or I'm also asking you to, to identify how you identify, so if you identify as disabled or having a disability or chronically ill, any of those things just so I know.

Vickey Young 01:03

Awesome. So I'm Vickey Young, I'm 24. I live in Ohio in the US, my pronouns are she and her, and I do identify as disabled.

Hannah Soyer 01:13

Thank you. Yes. So the first question is really, when did you first learn about the pandemic and what was your experience with this?

Vickey Young 01:25

So, back in, I think, the middle of February, we hosted an event at my workplace. And there was somebody at the event who was like, so I just got back from Wuhan, China, guys, there's a pandemic there. And we were all like, ah, that's cool. Uh, have you been exposed? And he's like, I don't know. But here I am. I got home yesterday. And I'm at this event. And I looked at my boss, and I was like, Should we be concerned about this right now, and he literally googled it and goes, nah, shouldn't be a problem. And then like, a month later, we were closing down for, you know, the stay at home orders in Ohio. And I was like, Well, here's hoping that, you know, no one at our event got COVID like back in February or anything. I honestly don't know if anyone ever did, because we didn't have testing up and running in Ohio until like, somewhere in the summer for like available testing when you don't have any symptoms. So it was a very, like, abrupt entrance to it. And then kind of from the rest of February, you know, we're seeing the CNN stories rolling out of Wuhan is going into lockdown. And it's coming to America. And

you know, the president of the US started calling it a hoax, all that kind of stuff. And then in March, we just got hit with the stay at home orders. And every single day, it was just watching all the new infection rates come in and you know, 3000 people affected 20,000 50,000, watching the death toll go up, while kind of just sitting in the apartment going, Well, here's hoping our government has a solution. And like, you know, we have some financial relief, small businesses get relief. So it was definitely an interesting experience at the beginning of it.

Hannah Soyer 03:19

Yeah, thank you for that. Yeah, I would agree. How would you say that your sort of experience with all of this has changed over time?

Vickey Young 03:34

Um, I definitely feel like I'm not as deathly terrified as I was, like, you know, back at the beginning, because we just didn't have a lot of answers to what COVID was, how it affects you, we didn't really know a lot. And so I'm one of those people that when I don't have answers, I get really anxious, I get nervous, you know, you have the fear of the unknown. And so at the beginning, there was a lot of that going on, but now I'm definitely a lot more calm about it. I'm not like panicking I'm gonna get it. I also have completely isolated myself to prevent that from happening. So and I know you know what to do, if I get it, what the like symptoms are. So I think knowing a lot more information about it now than I did back in like, March that's helped a lot kind of change my, I guess, outlook on the pandemic.

Hannah Soyer 04:29

So could you perhaps speak a bit more to those emotions that you felt when the pandemic was sort of first hitting here in the United States?

Vickey Young 04:39

Yeah so I was definitely nervous. Like my, like, biggest thing was, how am I paying my rent? Because, you know, didn't all of a sudden my job was just gone. We went on break for spring break. I work at a university. We went on break for spring break, and came back on Monday. And my boss goes, What are you doing here? And I was like, I was told I had to work and she like, pulled me into the office and started talking. I was like, I am losing my job. Oh, shoot. And there was that moment of panic of like, the first thing was like, how am I paying my rent? The first like, this was the second week of March, I think, March 16. Ish. So I was like, rent is due April 1, I was extremely nervous that I wasn't going to make rent, I talked to my landlord. And she's like, well, if you guys can't pay rent, well, you're not going to have a place to live anymore. And I was like, okay, so how do I how do I do this? Went on indeed was like scrolling through just hoping for something did the unemployment filing. And there was the first like, two weeks of being off, I basically just slept a lot, watched a lot of Netflix, and literally just tried to, you know, not focus on the impending possible eviction, the possible bankruptcy, you know, not being able to pay my student loans yet. And just really like, hoping for the best but also not knowing when that was going to happen. I really stalked like the US Congress Bill tracker to see like, is something coming through yet is is relief coming and really tried to like, as much as it sounds horrible, like, dive into all of the hell that was going on in the world and try to see Alright, where are we at? When can I expect it? Because if there was a date saying like, alright, well, the COVID package will come out on April 5, then I could be like, hey, landlord, I will have the money for you. The Cares Act is going to be in, you know,

in by April 5, I can pay you as soon as that comes in. And for her, that was perfectly fine. If we just gave her a date, when we'd have the rent. She was like, I totally get it like you guys won't know. But if you can't pay it, you're gone. But being able to tell her a specific date was a little bit easier. We were able to like figure that out after I talked to her about it. So the the fears at the beginning of not being able to pay rent very much went away. As soon as this Cares Act was passed, and I was sitting there going, well, rent is secure for a few months, like we're good can still pay all my utilities we were able to keep up on on internet and electric. Even though our providers were like, hey, guys don't have to pay it right now. We're not going to charge we're not going to shut yourself off. You won't have to pay if you if you can't just let us know. So we were able to least get all of our like bills taken care of still have the electric on have internet have food on the table and keep a roof over our heads.

Hannah Soyer 07:47

So did you end up losing your job at the university?

Vickey Young 07:51

Yep. So I'm fully they we opened back up in August. And given that I'm immunocompromised I, we were asked if we wanted to return. And my position was also completely cut due to the budget. So I worked in media and marketing for our food service company. And because that's not an essential position our parent company was like, Yeah, we're not having those this semester. And I was like, Cool. My workplace did offer me like a position as like a cashier and I was like, I'm immunocompromised. So I'm not doing that. So I still I can reapply like at the end of the pandemic and still come back to work. But that's, you know, some eon in the future when this goes away. Yeah.

Hannah Soyer 08:42

Right. Okay, that makes a lot of sense. So, we're going to move now into talking about how, or I guess, what has your experience been, specifically as a disabled person? You mentioned you're immunocompromised? Yeah. How has that really impacted I guess, your experience with the pandemic? And what has that experience been like?

Vickey Young 09:09

So it's been kind of a whirlwind experience for me, I didn't when we first got into the pandemic I was still very much in that I'm not disabled mindset. I wouldn't like call myself disabled. I didn't really like necessarily want to identify with that because I thought it was so bad. And what kind of ended up happening is I went through this journey of like, it's okay to be to call yourself disabled. It's okay. Like, it's not a bad word. And once I kind of got to that moment where I was like, no, no, I am one of these high risk people, but I'm high risk because I'm disabled. after that. It just all went downhill because I was like, these aren't just strangers anymore. These are the people dying are people like me. They're people like my grandparents, they're people like my other friends who are disabled. And so once I kind of got to that point that, you know, it's not strangers dying anymore, I might not know them, but I share something in common with them. And that ended up just kind of putting me through a nice anxiety attack in the middle of a football field. So that was, that was a moment. And I was like, these are my brothers and sisters in the disabled community, we might not know each other, but like, they still don't deserve to die. And seeing the fact that we're doing everything, you know. We're wearing masks, we're social distancing, all with the idea of protecting the high risk people, you know. So we're not killing off

all of our grandparents and killing off all the disabled people like some awkward eugenics movement that no one wants to deal with. People can't even do that there's people who are arguing that they don't want to wear masks, because it's oppressive. And it really makes me realize how much that I am not wanted in this world. Because if it were up to the mass majority of people, I would be dead. Because, you know, my disabled life isn't worth living, or, you know, because I'm disabled, I'm putting other people in a position where they can't live their lives, even though like, you can still get COVID and die, even if you're not high risk. So there's that, but I've seen a lot of friends, a lot of people that I thought cared about me going off to bars and you know, participating in the spread of COVID, that's killed over 250,000 Americans right now. And then when that CDC study came out that only it was, like 6% of people who died didn't have any pre-existing conditions. And once that study came out, there was just a wave of, well, why are we doing this? Like, it's just disabled people dying. So who gives a hoot about that, and it's definitely an interesting experience to kind of live in a moment where we're doing, we're protesting for human rights, we went through the Black Lives Matter movement and went through that whole time of you know, our human rights belong, we matter, while the disabled communities sitting back going. Okay, but you guys are all trying to kill us right now. While you know you're not wearing masks, you're still going to bars. Like you're doing all of these things. Like those are things that are harming us, but people just didn't see it as that. And same to like watching, we know minorities are vastly affected by the pandemic and disproportionately affected. And to kind of see people going to Black Lives Matter protests to advocate for black lives, and then not wearing masks, as if, oh, well, we don't care if you get COVID, you might not have resources, or anything to kind of help you. But hey, Black Lives Matter, go COVID. That was kind of the like perception, like kind of what was going on in the world. And it was just a moment of, you know, do our lives really matter to the general public? And there's two sides of that in the country, there's the side where everyone's life matters, we are trying to protect each other from COVID. We're trying to reduce, to flatten the curve, reduce the spread. And then there's the other side, that's like, we want to spread COVID. And you can't really get in the middle enough to kind of get a solution and get back on that flattening the curve.

Hannah Soyer 13:53

Yes. Thank you, Vickey. Um, so are there ways in which your disability has impacted like, how you have dealt with the pandemic or informed how you have dealt with it?

Vickey Young 14:08

So the pandemic has actually made my disabilities a little bit worse. When I'm really stressed out, I have a swollen vein in my left prefrontal cortex and left frontal temporal lobe area, which causes a lot more symptoms when you're stressed out. So living in a pandemic, where you know, you sometimes don't know, Hey, am I going to be able to make rent? When is this going to go away? Am I going to get COVID and die like you're, it you know, stresses me out and then that causes symptoms. So I would definitely say that my disabilities have definitely gotten worse. Normally, I'm like, super active, always walking around and I've walked to work, walk around at work all day, walk back to the gym, you know, so much more active versus now. Like, the biggest commute I have is if I get up and go do laundry at our like on site laundromat in my apartment complex. So having two physical disabilities that require you to be super mobile to keep the symptoms at bay hasn't really gone. During the summer, I was able to obviously, you know, go out for long walks every day. It's now November in Ohio and it is very, very cold. So that's, that kind of kills the ability to like, go out for a few, like a nice little like, half an hour walk

and whatnot, I definitely try to manage my time on social media, and reading news outlets to kind of lower the stress down a bit. So I'm not triggering myself into more anxiety attacks, or even just having symptoms of my brain stuff.

Hannah Soyer 15:46

So what have your relationships with people been like throughout this, I know you mentioned this a bit earlier, but have your relationships with people changed throughout the pandemic?

Vickey Young 16:01

So, some of it is I've definitely pulled myself back from some people who clearly don't want to do anything to protect other people and stop the harm. I originally had a roommate all through the beginning of this. And once Ohio started opening back up, we got in several different arguments about why he felt the need to go get himself exposed to COVID, knowing he had an immunocompromised roommate. We obviously no longer live together. He is gone, for great safety reasons. I haven't been able to really go home to see my family as much. When I do go home, I obviously like I can't stay overnight at my mom's. So I really just rent cars and drive home to see her when I have doctor's appointments. But other than that, like I will sometimes FaceTime into like family dinners and just be like, Hey, how's it going? I call my grandma every once in awhile, like, Hey, how are you and Papa doing like. Because I can't just, you know, go visit them. I'll pretty much miss like, every holiday up until there's a vaccine or something like that. I'm definitely not as social as I used to be. You know every weekend I'd be out at a bar. You know, hanging out with friends at the park or something like that. In the summer, we still did that, you know, social distance picnicking was a great thing. But obviously in the Fall/Winter, like you can't sit out when it's snowing and you know, have a nice little picnic. So I definitely don't socialize a lot. There are people that I considered to be friends at the beginning of the pandemic. And then I watched them completely, not care about it. And I was like, I want nothing to do with you. There were a couple people that even like, have people in their families like that they live with or they work around that are high risk, and they still do the whole, like going out to bars, traveling out of state, going to restaurants. And I'm like, if you can't even you know, do it, do something to protect the people you work around or have in your own family like I want nothing to do with that. Like, I was really nervous about missing my best friend's wedding during the pandemic. But luckily, we were able to do a really nice, small, socially distanced wedding for her. And we were able to do a social distancing bachelorette party over the summer. So we were at least still able to, you know, do that. It definitely was kind of weird, because, you know, we were so limited in what we could do for her and also making sure that obviously, you know, she didn't get COVID, none of our guests got it or anything like that, which over the summer, like I said, it's so much easier to still be able to socialize. Versus now pretty much everything I do is on video calls, which is, you know, great. It can't replace in person socialization, but it's still an available option. And I think within over over the next few months, it's definitely going to become like my prime way to communicate with people and still, you know, maintain friendships and still be able to see my family.

Hannah Soyer 19:33

So you mentioned that there were some individuals who you've had to distance yourself from because you haven't felt comfortable with, you know, the way that they're going about this. Could you speak a bit more to the decision making of doing that or perhaps the emotion surrounding that decision making?

Vickey Young 19:59

So I'm a person that is very built on having respect in friendships and relationships. And most of my friends know, I'm immunocompromised, and that this pandemic will kill me and it will kill people like me. And so seeing people that didn't have respect for others who were like me, I was like, there's no way they're gonna be able to respect my disabilities like. If they're around me, or even, like, if I start having a mini seizure when I'm around them, do they respect me enough to get me the care that I need, to advocate for my rights if I can't speak, are they going to be able to help me? And also COVID is a threat to everyone's basic rights to life, we all one of I think like the first three rights on the universal human rights doctrine by the UN. And COVID is a threat to that and seeing that people were okay violating someone else's right to life, or the right to not even get sick not have the possibility of losing their life. For me, that was a pretty easy decision. Some of them kind of sucked, because they were good friends, knew them for a while, they're always that like, rider die friend. But seeing them just not care about other people and seeing how selfish they were being during the pandemic, for me, that was kind of, it's probably an easier decision than it should have been to just immediately go, you don't respect other people's lives, and you don't want to protect others. So I don't respect you, I definitely can't trust you with my medical stuff. And for me, that's something that's really important: that my friends respect others around them, and also that they respect the disabled community enough to be accommodating and make changes in their lives. And not just like, whine and complain about it. Because at some point, they're probably going to have to accommodate me and my disabilities again, whether it's, you know, at their house, we go to a restaurant, movie a bar, whatever. So seeing if they can't do it for a complete stranger makes me think they're not going to be able to do it for me. They're just going to complain about it. And really not here for that level of ableism. Honestly, like, just not, that's, that's not my cup of tea.

Hannah Soyer 22:25

Thank you, Vickey. So this is similarly related to that question about relationships. Do you feel like your relationships with different institutions, so that could include health care, government or the media, have changed throughout this time?

Vickey Young 22:46

I definitely agree. I've kind of so I was a pretty big proponent of always thinking that, you know, the government would do the right thing and help its people out when there's a time of crisis. And unfortunately, that isn't always true right now. I think we did a really good job at the beginning of you know, helping people out. But at some point, we've just kind of lost that America's on a complete spiral right now of cases. And in Ohio, our governor keeps highly recommending that people care about each other and is like, well, if you don't, I'll close the bars. And we're like, okay, so do it. And then he just keeps kind of stalling and business, small businesses are suffering, families are suffering and the fact that federal government hasn't really passed any relief since over the summer, the heroes bill is still stuck in the Senate. So there's kind of a lack of government's response to the pandemic at this point. I know a lot of different places in the world are seeing surges in cases. They're entering their second wave right now. America really never left its first. So we're see there's to me, there's too much suffering going on and not enough government accountability and enough government aid to really like, help the families and help the small business owners that really truly are struggling. And I know so many places

closed down doctor's appointments for regular care, like my rheumatologist, my pulmonologist, you know, all of those were closed down. And for disabled people, that's pretty essential care like you can especially during pandemic with people who have, you know, triggers that are stressful, or maybe they lost someone to COVID at the beginning of this and they really just need some counseling, and all of those options were closed for so long. I've seen some research on an increase in suicide rate, like increased suicide rates over the last few months, more calls to the various hotlines. And right now the response is kind of like, cool, so we're still not shutting down. Like it's still very much, the government is just politely asking you to do something about it. And they're not necessarily helping. With hospitals, I honestly think they're doing the best that they can, with the supplies that they have. It's absurd to me that there were doctors wearing trash bags, while trying to treat patients and they, you know, they get yelled at by people who still think COVID is a hoax. They get yelled at by people who are dying, who just want to see their family, and all they get is an iPad, with their family on it. The media again, I feel like they're doing the best that they can with the resources that they have. I'm sure it has to be incredibly difficult to read and write those articles every single day, as you're watching the death toll rise, knowing that you're reporting on traumatic, traumatic experiences for so many people and you really don't necessarily know how your audience is going to take it, they your audience might yell at you for reporting the truth, or they're gonna yell at you and say, Oh, why aren't you talking about this? Or why are we not focused on this?

Vickey Young 26:37

I've, the very few times I go on Facebook, I'll see people, you know, complaining about why are we still talking about COVID when human trafficking is going on, or some other you know, other thing that they think the media should be talking about. So the media has a very hard job in this time period I feel like. And there's also a lot of different information coming out from various sources all across the world. So I feel like it has to be hard to kind of sort through what's factual, what's not. Obviously, policy has changed too for best practices, you know. Back in March, where like, nobody wear masks, because we don't have enough. And the health care workers need them first. And now we're all very much saying, you know, go wear masks, everybody needs one. And the media gets blamed for oh, but why'd you falsely report at the beginning, like, which is the truth? So they're, I feel like they're gonna be the losers at the end of the day of this whole pandemic for that. But they're kind of doing the best they can just like health care workers.

Hannah Soyer 27:50

So you mentioned earlier that you had had a roommate, and you were now, are you living alone currently? Yes. Would you mind speaking a bit more to how that decision came about? Yeah.

Vickey Young 28:05

So at the beginning of the pandemic, we moved into this apartment in February and then when pandemic struck in March, you know, we were doing pretty good here, other than, you know, just sheer terror of, you know, we don't know what's going on. We're both very kind of anxious about the pandemic and whatnot. He wasn't getting unemployment and I was. My roommate also didn't apply for it properly and didn't fix it. So I was kind of bearing the full financial weight of the pandemic. And at some point, I genuinely just stopped caring, especially come like May, June where every other day, he's out at bars, he's going home to visit his family. He's bringing people into the apartment after I've

told him, Hey, I'm immunocompromised. Please don't do this. And it became quite clear to me that he didn't care if I lived or died, because it was an inconvenience to him, that he had to follow the rules. So instead of handling it like a mature adult, I talked to the police department in my town and asked what I could do through an eviction route without going through my landlord, because when I told her about all of this, she said he didn't violate anything in the lease. So she couldn't evict him. And I was like, I didn't know you can endanger your roommates life and that's somehow not against our lease, but okay. I talked to our police department, and they're like, We technically can't do anything because like, we can't arrest him for, you know, not wearing a mask or something like that. We don't have the legal capacity to do that. So I actually just continually avoided him in the apartment for like, four months. Instead of kind of, because I'd already tried addressing it with him. And it was kind of, it was very, very clear that nothing I would say was going to matter at the end of the day to him, and that, you know, I could yell at him and beg him to protect my life all as much as I wanted to, but it wasn't going to change anything. I was not in any financial position to just move out. And he decided to move out all on his own accord, as far as I know. My landlord was actually the one to tell me by surprise, because he wasn't planning on it. But

Vickey Young 30:45

yeah, that's kind of it wasn't. It was not necessarily a mutual decision. Like I was glad that he left, it just was not done in the proper way at all. So I was when he moved out, I was very nervous because he broke the lease, broke multiple things in the contract, didn't even give proper 30 days notice of leaving to our landlord, and I was like, well, legally speaking, this contract is null and void. And so I was trying to figure out okay, well, I basically have two weeks to clear out of my apartment technically, because this lease is null and void. And my landlord ended up just saying, No, it's good, you'll keep your apartment. You'll keep the lease. We'll just take his name off, but it won't be broken or anything. And I'm like, okay, but technically I should be signing a new lease with just my name on it and kind of switching all the paperwork. So I was definitely in that like state of I know legally that I didn't have a legal right to live here anymore because my lease was null and void. I would be squatting at that point. So I was trying to figure out you know, what do I do at this point? Where do I go? Do I move home Do I stay here you know, what's my COVID risk either way, what's my financial risk? So and I did get my landlord clearly is letting me stay here so, obviously so long as I pay my rent. So definitely now living in a safer environment. Like cans of lysol were my best friend for that entire time period once the state open back up. So every like, it's definitely I feel a lot more comfortable, a lot safer, like living here by myself, because I don't have to worry about you know, a roommate coming in with COVID. He was exposed several different times. Because he would, like I said, go to parks. He went to Cedar Point at one point and Cedar Point issued a statement saying that they had positive cases reported and they had employees who had it, and asked that anyone who'd been to the park over those few days to, you know, go get tested. And his response was he didn't have time to go get tested and then didn't and then would be coughing and complaining about a sore throat to his mom on the phone. And I was like, Cool. I'm pretty sure my roommate has COVID That's great. So

Hannah Soyer 33:17

So what is Cedar Point?

Vickey Young 33:22

Oh, it's an amusement park. Okay. Yeah. At Sandusky, Ohio. Just alll roller coasters. Yeah.

Hannah Soyer 33:31

So um, yeah. So I was going to ask that you sort of already answered this just of, yeah, if you feel safer now in your current living environment?

Vickey Young 33:42

I'm debating about moving home, just financially speaking. So I'm kind of weighing the risk of my mom is an essential worker. So she's in the midst of all of it. So weighing the COVID risk, you know, COVID risk of I have a whole apartment space here, that's nice, clean and safe. If I move home, my room then becomes my only safe space. So that that's kind of hard to figure out.

Hannah Soyer 34:10

So it sort of sounds like you're in this place where you are having to decide what is the best option for you both health wise and financially. Would you say that's true?

Vickey Young 34:27

Yeah, financially, I would say financially is my bigger concern. Just because I know the ramifications of you know, not paying your rent in eviction. Those are harder to deal with, and they affect your life on in the future. versus, you know, if I go home and I'm exposed, maybe I will die, but also maybe I will, and I still don't have to worry about eviction at that point. So there's definitely kind of a way What do I do? What's the best option? That kind of thing? Which one's more important? And how do I both, you know, stay healthy? And, you know, deal with my financial situation?

Hannah Soyer 35:14

Right absolutely. Um, so I know we're sort of going back, I want to circle back to a question that you mentioned earlier, about this moment where you realized that you began to identify as disabled. Could you speak a bit more about sort of what prompted you to begin identifying that way? If there was a specific instance, and you mentioned something about an anxiety attack on a football field, if you felt comfortable telling that story, that would be great.

Vickey Young 35:52

So, back in March, and April, I kind of started, I was really deciding, you know, what I wanted to do with my education. I was still between, I told myself, I was taking one year off from school after graduating from university to figure out if I was going to law school or going into counterterrorism. And I kept trying to figure it out. And I was like, I had this moment when I was just like, you know, what, it doesn't matter where I go, I have arthritis, I'm not going to be able to do either of these things. Because I'd seen so many accessibility issues, at you know, all of my previous academic institutions, and I was like, I have brain damage, like, who's gonna want that in, you know, their academic programs. And I was actually scrolling through Instagram, and there was something of like, it's okay to be disabled. And I was like,

Vickey Young 36:55

No, it's not everybody hates me. Like, if it was okay, you know, I could get into my university, like, I wouldn't have had these barriers to my education. And I just kind of started like, stalking this one

Instagram account. And it connected me to all of these other influencers in the disabled community and whatnot. And eventually, like, it just kind of struck me, I was like, oh, there are other people out there like me, there are people who are successful, and they're like me. I'm now signed up for a program for a mentorship program called legally abled, and the person running it has lupus, and she graduated from law school in an accelerated program. And that was kind of moment was like, no, no, I most definitely can do this. Um, and even in the middle, middle of kind of figuring out like, it's okay to, you know, call yourself disabled, like, it's not a bad word. I just kind of went through the Instagram wormhole of, you know, creepin on influencers, getting new accounts. And I connected with this group on Instagram called Crip Chat. And it's basically just a zoom party every Saturday with a bunch of disabled people. We all talk about various topics. And it's just a great way to connect with other people that are like me, to some degree, you know, we might not share the same diagnosis, but we still share a, you know, a common thing of being members of the disabled community during the global pandemic. And so something that I've done for the past, I did it every 911 for a few years, and I would, you know, run the stairs, 110 floors, do 110 sprints on the football field, do something. And basically, my workout would total up to the number of stairs run on that day, the number of lives lost and the number of lives that were injured. And so it's a really horrible workout. But I do it every, every single 911 I always do something in honor of those people that sacrificed and I thought I would do it for the pandemic, do a sprint for every single person that died. Um, well, I got halfway through and I realized these were way too many deaths to be doing a sprint for or let alone even this many people to be dead. And we weren't over like 50,000 yet we were, you know, not too far along in this process. When this happened, and I got like, three fourths of the way through and I could just feel as I was running, I'm like, my chest is closing, went over and took my inhaler. And I was like, Oh, this isn't an asthma attack. This is an anxiety attack. And it usually happens when you do it on 911 too, because you're running for a really morbid reason. And I'm doing it for people that have died who are like me, it just, it hit home so much harder than I expected it to. And I had been arguing with one of my friends about I don't understand why you, you know, keep perpetrating the spread of COVID. Even though you live with someone who's high risk. You know, you're just being a horrible human being, and it kind of all just added up all at the same time. And I literally collapsed at the half field mark, there was a lady walking the track who yelled like, if I was okay, and I'm like, Yeah, I'm good. And she goes, okay, cool, have a nice night. And I'm like, Uh, sure, cool as my brains like, you just saw a human collapse in the middle of a football field. It's pretty weird to just dismiss it and walk away. But okay, cool. And from there, I just kind of went down that wormhole of a spiral bred all just hit home. Once that, not only am I a member of the disabled community, but if I die, I'm not going to be remembered necessarily. I'm going to be a statistic. I'm going to be an acceptable loss of life. And it just, it really, really hit home for me that not only were complete strangers risking other people's lives, but people around that I thought highly of, were also doing the same thing.

Hannah Soyer 41:45

Thank you, Vickey. So I don't believe I have any more questions. Do you have anything else that you would like to share or add?

Vickey Young 41:57

Um, I think the one thing that is important to remember about the pandemic is there's been a sense of community that has risen up with some minority groups, especially using Zoom technology. And there

are some good things that I think have come out of it. You know, you can now do zoom interviews for university. So if you can't afford to travel and go visit your undergrad location, your law school, your grad program, you can like do a zoom call with your admissions counselors, you can do virtual tours of it. And I think, like a lot of progress has been made that I don't think we ever thought possible, you know, remote work from home is possible. We have like curbside delivery now. And you can just kind of all of the very few positives that have come out of it is we have to not lose sight of those few things even amidst all of the death and the pain, the suffering the horrors. We have to at least try to remember something good just because otherwise you're gonna drown in the sea of negativity here and no one should have to do that. And also no one's alone in this. So like, reach out for help if you need it, reach out if you just want friends like there's, there's good to be found even in these hard times and trying to focus on those things is a good way to keep going even when the world is literally on fire around you.

Hannah Soyer 43:49

Thank you so much. I am going to stop the recording. Awesome.