

# YOUR 20S AREN'T ALWAYS YOUR BEST YEARS

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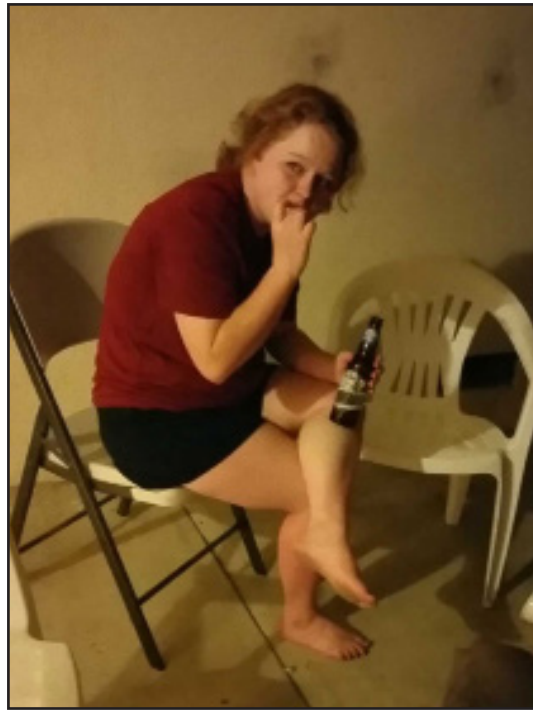
Being 28 years young, I can certainly say that my 20s have been some of the most challenging years of my life. I have dealt with drug addiction, homelessness, and abusive relationships.

I feel like there is this common cultural understanding that your 20s are going to be a period of growth, personal discovery, and challenge but I was not made aware just how hard that was going to be. So, for myself, no. My 20s simply have not been the best years of my life.

While others were pursuing careers and degrees, I was partying every night with no hope for my future and no end in sight.

There came a point in my life around 26 when I finally had enough of the drugs and alcohol, and decided to seek out therapy. That was two years ago and thankfully I am still seeing a therapist weekly to work through the trauma that was my 20s.

I feel that many older people I talk to reminisce about being “so young,” yet I look back on my younger years and am thankful I’m not like



This was me July 19 2015 at a friend’s house drinking a beer at a party smoking a joint, my average night for six years. Photo Contributed

that anymore.

There has been this common theme throughout American culture that youth is the standard

for women and men, yet this mindset directly contradicts the idea that we should always be growing as individuals.

If we are constantly living in the past and hoping to “go back to the golden years,” we never experience what life truly has to offer us. We should be welcoming aging with open arms instead of doing everything in our power to slow it down.

I believe people should be allowed to go out, party, and have fun. But, there comes a point in time when you have to consider your future and the impact you make on the world around you. I understand it is hard to see and be aware of these things, believe me, I did not think anything of my actions.

I believe there will come a point in time when you will look back on your 20s as a very important lesson. And to me, that’s exactly what my 20s were, a lesson. A lesson on how to love myself and those around me, as well as how important it is to be true to yourself and your aspirations.

Most importantly, my 20s taught me to not give up on myself so early in life for I have only just begun to blossom.

## GRIEVANCES ON DISTANT LEARNING

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Being online and homeschooled for eight years and now exclusively attending in-person classes has shaped my perception of the pitfalls of distance learning.

I was expected to mentally discipline myself from a young age to concentrate for hours on a screen. The material was never interactive, teachers were difficult to contact, and there was no way to cope with isolation. This especially affected my learning of difficult subjects such as math.

The system was built for those with specific learning styles and capabilities.

This distaste continues at college, where I have forbidden myself from taking any online courses besides my previous semester’s counseling class.

Online classes have their merits. Self-paced and at-home work allows people to have flexibility.

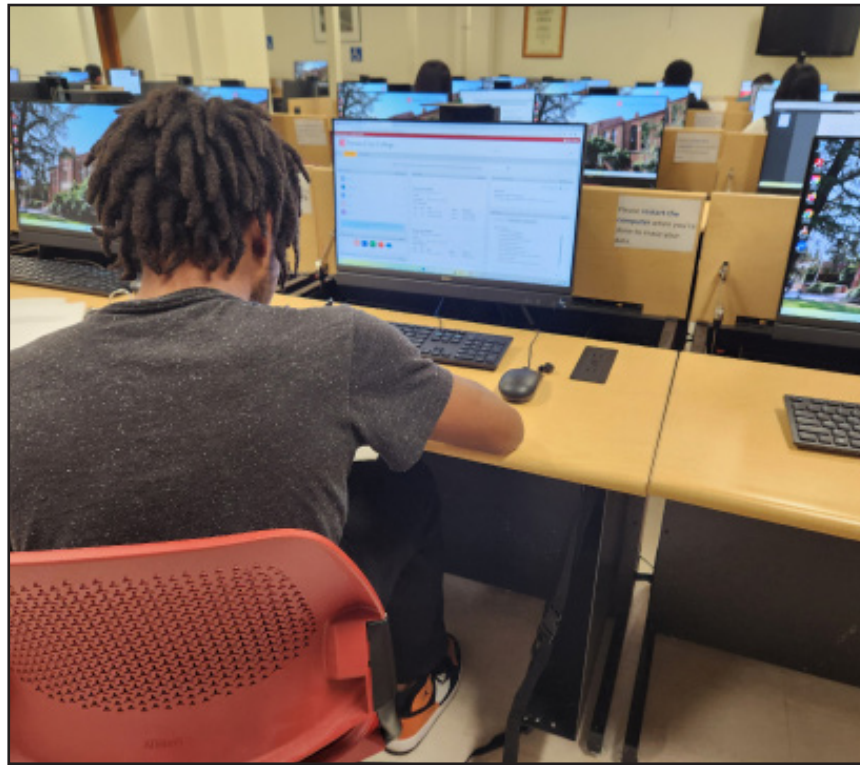
A Pre-Allied Health major, Gladys De Jesus, liked some parts of online classes.

“I was able to do it in my own time, so I feel like it worked for me,” De Jesus said.

But he expressed frustration with a former teacher who did not often show their face. “It’s like I’m talking to a stranger,” De Jesus said.

De Jesus also struggled to feel a sense of belonging in online classes.

Asking for help or retaining knowledge is made difficult by the instructors who are meant to help their students. There is no enthusiasm towards students, as displayed by long and primitive pre-recorded lectures. With no classmates to ask for support the students are left to themselves.



A student works in the Fresno City College library computer lab. The room is quiet as others study on Canvas on Monday, Jan. 29. Photo/ Matthew Echavez

Dance major Moises Sambrano is not a fan of online courses. Sambrano finds online to be distracting and prefers working on paper.

“It’s hard for me to get organized,” Sambrano said.

Online classes require a degree of self-discipline that is difficult to obtain. Unlike the in-person structure with classmates and live instruction, online students have to create their own environment to learn and support themselves. They are expected to work on their own accord and have the strong mental capability that is necessary to focus.

Fresno City College’s Dean of Humanities Kerry McCutcheon said, “To have that drive and persistence to completely self-regulate is hard.”

McCutcheon also highlighted the high student success rates recorded by Fresno City Col-

lege’s Institutional Research, which guides the administrative decisions through data assessments of faculty to maintain good standards.

Yet, an argument could be made about the validity of statistics. Even when students are successful according to the numbers, it doesn’t say much regarding the nuanced situations of the people behind those numbers.

The ability to concentrate in an increasingly noisy world with distractions like social media can affect students both in-person and online. Those with neurodiverse can struggle in finding study places. This is further amplified with the invasiveness and mobility of social media that puts individuals under constant struggle to stay focused.

In my experience, telling yourself to focus on a series of math questions can only do so much

when there is accessible algorithmic fun on TikTok. Concentration and attention span are impossible under these circumstances.

Acting Academic Senate President Jacqueline Williams said the college is working to ensure that students feel the presence of their instructors in online classes. The Academic Senate approved the Regular and Substantive Interaction Policy, which clarifies expectations for faculty conducting online classes. This ensures FCC’s courses follow state, federal, and accreditation guidelines.

Yet questions must be posed as to whether these policies will generate meaningful change. Online classrooms are impersonal environments that take away from the learning experience of students. While some do prefer this mode of instruction, there are incompatible grievances for others.