

I LOVE EATING, AND HAVE NATURALLY GAINED WEIGHT SINCE THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Toshiya (71) from the Kanagawa Prefecture (south of Tokyo) in Japan, volunteer, lives together with his wife, their daughter lives abroad

GAINING WEIGHT DURING THE COVID CRISIS

I am a member of the sports club, and I used to go there once a week. But now I can't, and that's hurting more than anything, I guess. Since I love eating, I've naturally gained weight since the COVID-19 outbreak. I worked hard and achieved the ideal weight last December. But I regained some because of parties and drinking around New Year, and later, even more because of COVID-19. I've gained a total of around 5 kg. So, I need to lose some weight. I started going to the sports club again. They take measures to prevent infection, so I feel safe. I go there around lunch time to avoid crowds. I also take a walk in the neighborhood.

SAFE AT THE DENTIST

I go to the dentist on a regular basis, and I did it even during the COVID crisis. I've been using this dental clinic for almost 20 years, and they're great. They make arrangements to prevent overlapping appointments in the same time slot. Even if I arrive a little early or late, I don't see other patients. So, I feel really safe. They do everything to prevent COVID infection.

DRINKING PARTIES AND AWKWARD SILENCES

I have tried online drinking parties several times, but not too often. I definitely see my friends less often online, compared with when we went out for drinks in normal times. Just like women, men also like chatting, so we talked about many things. But if you ask me what a downside of online drinking parties is, I would say, we can't enjoy silence. It's harder to sense something in the air or create something from the atmosphere when we meet online. When we drink together at a pub, we sometimes have moments when no one speaks. This feels fine when we share the same physical space. But it's not the same when we meet online. I feel something like, I need to keep talking or keep listening without a break, and I feel tired. So, I think we need to prepare some themes when meeting online.

ALL FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS CANCELLED

I've been involved in the activities of a non-profit organization (NPO) that develops career education programs for children. Since about a year ago, I gradually handed over my work to others, and I kind of left the office at the end of March this year. Now, I help them whenever needed. At the NPO, I think we started feeling the effects of COVID-19 around mid-February. We had planned 7 to 8 events. But it was so hard for everyone to decide whether we should go ahead and have these events or not. Since these events were not just for our organization alone but involved other companies and people, we made a decision and announced that all the face-to-face meetings would be cancelled or postponed for the time being.

ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH ZOOM

We used to have orientation meetings, inviting potential members and bringing them together. But now, we do things like that online, all of them. We happened to start using Zoom around a year ago, so we were familiar with the tool and ready to use it. In that sense, I think our organization was ahead of many other NPOs in terms of switching to remote communication. Of course, we also have internal meetings online.

NO MATERIALS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

I've also been working as a volunteer reader for people with visual impairments for around 3 years. The workload is not heavy, so I do it in my spare time. COVID-19 is hitting us hard now. We can't rent a room for meetings, and we can't make printed materials for reading. Also, when we send an audio book to users, we edit sound, burn it on a CD-ROM, and mail it using a special method for people with visual impairments. But since the place with an editing machine is closed, we cannot do our work. For the users, they are not receiving what they are supposed to.

GOING WHEREVER THE WIND BLOWS

Once I left the NPO, I was originally planning to take a trip in early May for about 1.5 months. I wanted to drive around, not with a detailed schedule but going wherever the wind blows. But this trip is also on hold. So, my biggest concern now is when I should take this trip.

I MISS GOING DOWNTOWN

When the restrictions are lifted, the first thing I'd like to do, in the next month or two, is to go downtown to look around stores, not necessarily buying anything. Right now, when I go out, I have a clear purpose and will come home once I finish what I'm supposed to do. So, I hope I can just go out and look around stores with no particular

things to buy. I can do it now if I choose to. But I don't really feel like it. I'm kind of slow in that sense.

This kind of lifestyle, in a way, I think we'll get used to it. New lifestyles and new work styles. I think the measures against COVID-19 were most effective in the work style reform. Since we will need to live with COVID-19, I think things will really change in terms of how we work and how we enjoy ourselves.

Toshiya's story was shared with us by [International Longevity Center \(ILC\) Japan](#) - [国際長寿センター](#), member of the ILC Global Alliance, an international federation researching and advocating the vitality and the societal and economical position of older people. In the Netherlands, the ILC network is represented by Leyden Academy.