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UCF Forum

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8-12-2020

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Emma Gisclair

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## If 2020 Hasn't Turned Out the Way You Planned – You're Not Alone

By Emma Gisclair  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Even though others may have had it worse, that doesn't mean your emotions aren't valid. You're allowed to grieve.



Because of the coronavirus pandemic, nobody from my family was allowed to visit the hospital for the birth of my son, Oliver. 2020 was supposed to be an exciting year.

As we rang in the new year in January, my husband and I were filled with optimism. After more than a decade and three different schools, my husband was finally going to graduate with his bachelor's degree from UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. I was two semesters away from completing my master's degree in library and information science.

We anticipated the possibility of promotions, new jobs, and maybe even a move to a new city. And most exciting of all, we were looking forward to the birth of our first child in June.

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Then the week of our baby shower, everything shifted. UCF moved classes to remote instruction for at least two weeks, which soon became a much, much longer closure. We had to call my in-laws in Louisiana and tell them to cancel their travel plans to attend UCF's spring commencement.

Local theme parks (one of which is where my husband works) announced unprecedented long shutdowns. My husband could no longer accompany me to my doctor's appointments; I had to record my ultrasounds while he waited in the car outside.

In the weeks that followed, we learned that none of our family members would be allowed to visit the hospital for our son's birth. Our plans to tour pediatricians' offices and daycares were put on hold as we began isolating at home. It soon seemed inevitable that my own commencement ceremonies in August would be canceled, as well.

And we began to worry about how the economic downturn would affect our post-graduation job searches.

Our exciting year has been tainted. And I know we are not alone in our feelings of uncertainty, in our worries for the future or our grief for the experiences we were looking forward to and lost.

I know I have so much to be thankful for, especially when others have had to cancel weddings and baby showers and vacations. Especially when so many have died or are facing long-term health complications because of this virus.

We're fortunate that the people we love are healthy, that we've both retained our incomes, and that we got to have a baby shower before everything shut down. Right now, my beautiful, perfect little boy is napping a few feet away and it doesn't really matter that my childbirth class was canceled or that I had to wear a mask during labor.

Still the unknown looms before us and I can't help but feel anxious about the coming months and even years. I don't know what the future of libraries will look like. My husband doesn't know how long the tourism industry will be affected. We wonder what kind of world our son will grow up in and worry about the health of older family members.

All of this is to say: If you're feeling angry or sad because 2020 didn't turn out the way you'd planned, I hear you. You are not alone. And even though other people may have had it worse than you, worse than me, it doesn't mean that our emotions aren't valid. You're allowed to grieve. You're allowed to cry. You're allowed to rage at the universe.

If you want to spend a whole day curled up on the couch, playing video games or binge watching your favorite show, that's OK too.

But I hope you have been able to find the bright spots, too. I hope you have someone or something that makes you smile every once in a while. I hope you tell people you love them more often. I hope, in the years to come, that you remember to take nothing for granted.

I hope I will too.

Emma Gisclair is a library technical assistant at the UCF Library's Curriculum Materials Center. She can be reached at [Emma.Gisclair@ucf.edu](mailto:Emma.Gisclair@ucf.edu).