

My Feel-Good Factor during Covid 19

WINNER

By Rachel Murphy Marie 3

My feel-good factor during Covid 19 ... well, the past seven months have been the weirdest, scariest, strangest months of my life. However, in one way they were the best.

My family means more to me than anything and everything else in the world put together. All my family live on the same road, but during *busy* life we could go weeks without seeing some of them. And that stretch of road can seem so long, and so far away! We all just get consumed by our own lives. Always worrying about where we should have been five minutes ago. Our minds never stop! All my cousins are deeply involved in sport, and a wide variety at that. We have runners, Irish and Leinster Rugby players, hurlers, footballers, soccer players, artists, and Irish dancers too. So, as a result, there is never a time when we all have “down-time” together. The one day of the year we get to spend together is Christmas and because of this it is my favourite day of the year. Having the 25 of us sitting around that table, well you will not get a better more loving feeling than that!

Over lockdown everyone was still, the world went quiet. Everyone took a minute to breathe. Even though everyone was apart, we were closer as a family than ever. At the beginning it was just Zoom group calls, but they were the highlight of my days. Sitting outside my nanny’s and grandad’s window while they waved at everybody and seeing their faces just light up, showed me what really matters. It is not that I’m not allowed to get that new jumper or that I’m ten minutes late for training, it is these people. My grandad is 93 years of age and suffers from dementia. He couldn’t understand why nobody could come and see him, why the house had gone from always being full to *still*. The buzz had gone. I spent hours sitting outside their kitchen window where, on the other side, he would sit in his chair and tell me all his stories about when he was in the fire brigade and worked on the ambulance. All he stories I had heard countless times before, but I didn’t care. Those are precious memories that I will cherish forever. My family got a blanket made for them with all the grandchildren on it so we could still keep them warm, even if the hugs had to wait. This small act brought my nanny to tears and that just made my heart melt.

Two of my cousins live next door and it was a weird time with them two. Instead of playing hurling in the garden, as per usual, we had to set up two rebound nets either side of the fence and hit the ball back and forth. But, we didn't care. At least we were together. Then we cut a hole in the fence, we would all sit out late into the night, just talking, laughing and singing. We felt like the luckiest people in the world just to have each other.

Another of my cousins, who is my age, was bored one day and asked me if I wanted to go for a cycle. Well, that was it! Everyday after dinner we just took off on the bikes, and we were gone for hours. We were cycling over 30 km a night, just taking our time, talking away. Our bond grew so much stronger. It was 10.30 some nights when we would get home, but we didn't care. We sang, we talked, we whistled, made up songs and raced and for those cycles I will always be grateful as they were my escape from the house. These nights made me realise that I had been missing out so much in life. Who cared who liked what on Instagram, or who cared who said what about whom! These people are all that matter. Friends will come and go, but these people, they are forever!

People talk about "core memories", well I think I experienced one of mine towards the end of lockdown. The first time I got to hug my nanny in *five* months! That hug meant more to me than anything else and that proves all these *big* things we worry about don't really matter at all. I cried hugging my nanny that day and I never wanted to let go. I will remember that feeling forever.

So, I suppose you will have gathered by now that my family were my *feel-good factor* during Covid 19. And, I will always be forever grateful for them and, that I had them so close by when the world was so far apart.