



# PANDEMIC SILVER LININGS

By Ying Zhou

**T**he pandemic not only changed my practice but also my family life. I found myself assuming the following roles on a daily basis: the head chef, the custodian, the laundress, the virtual school assignment tracker, the computer use monitor, the musical instrument practice assistant . . . the list goes on.

All while trying to keep up with work—meeting the next deadline, responding to clients’ requests for case updates, etc. I do not believe this experience was unique to me. Many of you out there probably experienced the same thing, feeling exhausted and, at times, a little resentful for being the one who was responsible for what seems to be an endless amount of household chores on top of your already stressful workload.

Due to the stress, I started to feel symp-

toms of physical “burnout” manifesting in gastrointestinal issues of mysterious causes, which my doctors were not able to diagnose, despite the X-rays and other testing conducted. Wanting to reverse any potential damage I did to my body by the stress, I decided to make changes. I started to cook more vegetarian and vegan recipes, which were not always well received by my picky, culinarily spoiled, kids. However, the consumption of less meat made me feel

better, and my publicized attempts at vegetarian cooking gained me brownie points with my mother-in-law, who tried for years to persuade my husband to eat more vegetables and less meat. Also, I decided to limit my all-nighter working sessions, adopt a more regular sleep schedule, and increase outdoor exercise time, even if it meant walking to the nearby Whole Foods while listening to the latest episode of “This American Life” on my phone.

When I implemented the changes, I felt improvement in my digestive system, my mood, and mental health. I even started practicing piano more regularly, which I have not done for years since graduating from law school. I found more joy in playing the piano during the pandemic than any other time in my life, even when I was

a serious student of classical piano performance. I attribute this joy to the fact I needed something other than the work, the chores, and the uncertainties. Piano satisfies this need for me. When I play Chopin Nocturnes, I feel transcended and serene. I also organized my kids to play their respective instruments and broadcast family concerts to my in-laws, who live in Upstate New York, over Zoom and by telephone.

The pandemic brought a lot of changes to our lives. Sadly, we are more fearful, less social, more emotionally fragile ... just to name a few negative ones. Nonetheless, it also allowed us to get physically and emotionally closer to our immediate family members, such as seeing our kids engaged in virtual learning, hearing their laughter and chatter with their friends online, eating and sharing all meals and binge watching

everyone's favorite movie and TV shows together. I think there is a silver lining in all this after all—as I am determined to master a few more pieces of Chopin Nocturnes in the upcoming months. Hope you will find your silver lining as well. ■

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profession.

As all companies look to strengthen their DEI initiatives, it is important for legal departments and the legal community to lead the way. It's also a business imperative: Research has shown that diverse teams are more innovative and demonstrate stronger creativity and collaboration than teams comprised of members with similar backgrounds. Further, the entire organiza-

tion benefits when employees bring their unique life experiences and perspectives when dealing with clients or trying to solve legal issues. Finally, when people feel comfortable bringing their authentic selves to work, they tend to stay in those organizations.

Our community as a whole must continue being a “nurturing relative,” advancing the cause of creating a truly equitable legal profession that is open to all, no mat-

ter their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or background. The progress we make today will define the experience of future generations. ■

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