

Jessica finds silver lining during COVID.



Jessica is a young woman in her late 20's. Normally right now she would be working her two jobs cleaning offices in Freeland, taking trips and getting together with her friends, and enjoying the best parts of summer on Whidbey Island. But like many of us, her life has been turned upside down in the era of COVID.

Jessica lives at home with her parents, one of whom is especially high risk at this time, so she and her family have been quarantined in their home since early March.

"I don't want to take a risk and get my parents sick. . . The hardest thing has been being stuck at home and feeling isolated. I'm adapting to it, even though it's getting to the point of no return." says Jessica.

Jessica would usually be taking advantage of multiple services that have been disrupted for her during this time. She utilized Sherwood for employment support, as well as a recreation center in Langley for respite care, a behavioral health therapist, and a social group called Heritage Adventures.

During her quarantine Sherwood has stuck with her. Jessica and her job coaches meet twice per week for mental health support, and to make plans about her future employment once she is able to return to work. Because Jessica experiences acute anxiety she has asked for support to help alleviate some of the symptoms she's been experiencing in the wake of all the change in her life. Right now she is working on building a social story with her job coaches that will help remind her that this disruption is temporary, and that once it is safe to resume some of her normal activities she can help fill the gaps that have been created over the past few months. Jessica reports that these meetings are a "lifeline." It would be a "big blow" if these services were cut, as "this is what I look forward to each week."

There has been a silver lining to staying home during this time. Jessica and her mom report that they have seen some shifting in her anxiety – fewer panic attacks and overall more stable mood; though Jessica fears how she will do when things start opening up again and her new routine will once again be upended. "This has been really hard on me, but I'm getting better with it. . . I talk to my counselor and to you guys. I need to learn how to speak up for myself. I'm very quiet and I want to be heard but I want to be nice about it too. I'm a really nice person. It has made me see that I want to do something new in my career, even though that is scary." And with continued funding and support from services like those provided by Sherwood, Jessica will be able to explore new career paths, and grow in her skills, her life, and her career for many years to come.

In an abundance of caution, Jessica and her family plan to continue to quarantine until Island County moves to Phase 4, or a vaccine is available, depending case numbers and potential health risks to family members. The Sherwood team will continue to provide virtual supports and when the time comes be by her side back in the community.