BEFORE EDIT

Young and unemployed in a pandemic

Khanyiswa Mogotsi

We have reached the end of the year and I cannot help but release a sigh of relief after the year I and many other people have had.

Although, I am aware that other people had a harder time navigating adjusting to life in the pandemic, I can only speak on how awful, depressing and poor my experience has been

A little background context, I am a 22-year old final year student at NUST who has currently returned to her parents’ house because of the pandemic.

At the start of the year, I had just started a new internship and because I am in my final year, I did have to worry about schoolwork, because all I had to do was complete my internship.

About three months in, the severity of the pandemic had become apparent so as a safety precaution, I started saving as much as possible.

At the time, I was under the impression that my internship would run throughout the year but around six months in, I was faced with the news that due to budget cuts, I was being let go.

I was disappointed but not too worried about how I would sustain myself because I saved enough to carry through the remainder of the year.

Later into the year, when we all had adjusted to the virus, unemployment depression started to settle in and it had nothing to do with the fact that I did not have money but the fact that I was not doing anything throughout the day because there was nothing for me to do.

My second semester started and even though I finally had something to do my mental health was so deep in the gutter that I did not have a drop of motivation left to be a student again.

This unexpected surge in my mental health led me to see a psychologist and although a mature decision on my part, the medical expenses for this psychologist was never included in my budget.

Reaching the last quarter of the year, I was barely coping in school, my mental health had not improved but I was motivated enough to do my schoolwork and my bank account was heavily dented.

To make up for the money lost, I decided to apply to a few jobs and unfortunately, that was the trigger to my next mental breakdown.

It became a routine for me to wake up, apply to jobs and sit around eagerly for a response and I had a lot of faith in my CV so I expected a response pretty soon but for months there was no response. Not a rejection email, not an acceptance email. Just nothing.

This had been the first time in two years that I did not have a job and not being called in for interviews made me feel so much more depressed.

I had dipped into my savings so deep that what I left would not be enough to continue seeing my psychologist and being able to pay for all my essentials such as cosmetics and Netflix, so I opted not see my psychologist anymore.

Immediately after missing our next scheduled appointment because I was forced to cancel it, I became anxious and depressed, but this was not too much of a problem because of what I had learnt during my sessions.

I have since been able to find techniques that I can use when I feel too anxious and I have been able to make some more income through writing to enjoy the rest of the year and let my hair down.

One life lesson I will always carry with me that I learned from this pandemic is how important it is to save money. Anything can happen so we should always stay ready and be prepared financially.

AFTER EDIT

Young, unemployed, and broke in a pandemic

Khanyiswa Mogotsi

We have reached the end of the year and I cannot help but release a sigh of relief.

Although I am aware that other people had a harder time navigating and adjusting to life in the pandemic, I can only speak about how awful, depressing and poor my experience has been.

I am a 22-year-old final year student at the Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST). My situation has forced me to return to my parents’ house because the pandemic closed down campus housing.

At the start of the horrible year of 2020, I started a new internship. As a final year student, there was no course work to complete, only the internship assignments. I felt free to focus on obtaining job experience as a journalist.

About three months in, the severity of the pandemic had become apparent. I looked ahead and anticipated tight money on my horizon. As a safety precaution, I started saving as much as possible.

At the time, I was under the impression that my internship would run throughout the year. After only six months, I was faced with the news that I was being let go due to budget cuts at the newspaper where I was an intern.

I was disappointed but not too worried about how I would sustain myself because I saved enough to carry through the remainder of the year.

Later into the year, when I began adjusting to the new normal living with the virus, unemployment depression started to settle in. My struggle had less to do with the fact that I did not have much money and all to do with being idle throughout the day. I was sitting around on lockdown, with no access to my friends and no internship work. There was nothing for me to do.

Finally, despite pandemic regulations and opening delays, my second semester started. Even though I finally had something to do, my mental health was deep in the gutter and I lacked the motivation to be a student again.

This unexpected collapse in my mental health led me to see a psychologist. Although this was a mature decision, the medical expenses that resulted were not included in my original savings budget.

Reaching the last quarter of the year, I was barely coping in school. My mental health had not improved but I was motivated enough to do my schoolwork. Reality hit when my bank account was heavily dented after paying my living expenses.

To make up for the money lost, I decided to apply to a few jobs. Lack of success in that area and the stress of applying, waiting, interviewing and hearing a negative response triggered my next mental breakdown.

It became a routine for me to wake up, apply to jobs and sit around eagerly for a response. I had a lot of faith in the strength of my CV and my references, so I expected a response pretty soon. For months there was no response - no rejection email; no acceptance email. There as silence - nothing.

This had been the first time in two years that I did not have a job. Not being called in for interviews made me feel more depressed.

I dipped into my savings so deep that what I left would not be enough to continue seeing my psychologist and paying for my essentials such as cosmetics and Netflix. I opted not to see my psychologist anymore.

Immediately after missing our next scheduled appointment, I became anxious and depressed. I thought I could work through it by applying what I had learned from my previous sessions.

I have been able to use techniques that calm me when I feel too anxious. Thankfully, I have been able to earn income through writing. Thanks to my parent’s support, that income stream is enough for me to settle my mind and enjoy the rest of the year.

One life lesson I will always carry with me from this pandemic is how important it is to save money. Anyone can be employed one month and retrenched the next due to reasons beyond their control. Anything can happen -as COVID-19 showed us- so we should always stay ready and be prepared financially.