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## I miss coffee shops

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The last few months have been... well, interesting. From working at home to wearing masks to becoming an expert at washing my hands, 2020 took a turn I don't think any of us expected. I feel like I have been able to keep a reasonably positive attitude throughout it all. Despite having some significant shifts in my life, I am very grateful

for my health, my family's health, and that I live in northern MN where I can enjoy the great outdoors any day. However, there is one thing that I have been seriously craving lately. That is, to sit down at a coffee shop.

Like many others, I love a good cup of coffee. My perfect coffee drink at the moment would be an iced caramel macchiato to keep some sweetness and beat the heat. While I am grateful for the ability to order coffee through drive through or pick-up, I do miss sitting down for a few hours at a coffee shop.

My love for coffee shops began in college. Living in Moorhead, MN, I often went to local shops to do homework or meet up with friends. My fiancé and I had our favorite places to go for dates. I even did one of my final research projects for my major (Communications) on the nonverbal communication of various coffee shops. Needless to say, this was my dream project.

For this project I selected a few different coffee shops in the area and compared their interiors. From corporate shops to small local joints, each place had something different to offer. I extended my research down to St. Paul when I went to visit my fiancé, who was student teaching there at the time. During the day when he was busy, I went to more coffee places to finish up my research and wrap up that semester.

When I moved to Grand Rapids last year (I can't believe it's been more than a year already!), one of the things I wanted to do was explore the local coffee places. Of course I knew what to expect at more of the corporate facilities, but local shops intrigued me. Since then I have gone to these shops to interview people for the paper, to take an afternoon for myself, or to catch up with a friend.

Those moments of connections are what I miss the most, not necessarily the coffee. I actually was gifted an espresso maker last Christmas and have been experimenting with making my own drinks at home. But it's not the same as going to your favorite

shop and catching up with a friend for a couple hours while you sip on a tasty coffee drink.

As we continue to navigate these odd times, I am reminded of how good life really is and that the seemingly simple things really mean a lot when they are taken away. I am so excited for when I can comfortably go to my favorite coffee shops and meet up with the people I love. Until then, I guess I'll just brew another pot of coffee at home.