

Communities for Immunity: Stories about COVID The Peale, Baltimore | 2022

Taylor Mugar (00:00): I'm Taylor Mugar, and I'm from West Baltimore. I'm 29 years old and I'm young, black and gifted.

Whitney Frazier (00:14): And over the last few years, Taylor, what's it been like with COVID for you? What's your experience been like?

Taylor Mugar (00:25): COVID has been very interesting, challenging, frustrating, sometimes debilitating, paralyzing, dealing with a lot of fear based when it comes to vaccination conversations on side effects, especially being a health employee and working at a hospital and hearing patients who have had COVID and still have had lingering symptoms that has lasted for three, four, five months, still dealing with brain fog, loss of taste and smell, these symptoms are lingering for months on and that's scary.

Taylor Mugar (01:24): Even side effects in things from the vaccination, which I was hesitant on getting, because I felt like it was pushed out too soon and not a lot of research, I felt like wasn't done. And I have heard like a lot of patients getting a lot of side effects that I wasn't too happy about. It was just very concerning, especially being on the health side of things and actually hearing these stories, because it's different from someone who's not in the hospital and they saying like, "I don't want to give vaccinated, COVID is not real." It's kind of easier for them to say those things because they haven't been in a position where they're speaking to patients who have experienced COVID and things like that.

Whitney Frazier (02:32): Can you describe your role a little. You don't have to give your title and all that, but you're in the hospital in what way? What's your . . . ?

Taylor Mugar (02:41): So in the hospital I mostly coordinate with scheduling patients and communicating with doctors. I'm more so in the physical medicine and rehab department. And we actually have a post COVID clinic.

Whitney Frazier (03:07): Is that something people go to in person or they can go online?

Taylor Mugar (03:07): It's mostly tele-med because if you have had COVID, those are mostly tele-med appointments. I think therapy, you were able to come in, but for a physician appointment it was done through tele-med. But I think all of them are done through tele-med now.

Whitney Frazier (03:25): Nice. So you help people get set up with those resources at the hospital?

Taylor Mugar (03:29): Yeah. I assist with scheduling. So like when a patient calls and they experiencing symptoms and they want to be seen by a physician who has experience in COVID long haul symptoms. So I can assist with scheduling them and getting them to the right place where they can be assisted.

Whitney Frazier (03:51): Wow. And I'm sure you've heard some tough stories.

Taylor Mugar (03:56): Yeah. Yeah. Patients to the point of crying, lot of young patients still experiencing symptoms like that loss of taste and smell. I don't think we talk about the importance of loss of smell because nobody, non-smelling is not a disability. You've never heard of somebody saying like, "I can't smell this." So when I have heard people use that, I was like, dang, I didn't realize how important that was, until you're without it. Not being able to smell if something is burning, not being able to smell your food or smelling certain things. It's a very important sense that I think we don't realize the significance of it until it's not there, which is interesting, but yeah.

Taylor Mugar (04:53): I haven't experienced COVID, which I'm grateful for. Mainly I'm grateful for the fact that I work from home and I think that has prevented me and protected me from not having it because I'm mostly in the house and if I go to the store or anything, it's very quick.

Whitney Frazier (05:21): So what would you say to young people, maybe specifically young black people who are not willing to get vaccinated? If you're up for sharing.

Taylor Mugar (05:42): In all honestly I feel like it shouldn't be mandated to the point that it was mandated. I also feel like in some conversations it can be inconsiderate of you to speak on you not getting it in the presence of someone that has been mandated to get it. If I'm at a hospital and I have been mandated to get the vaccination and I'm already kind of upset and frustrated, like I don't want to get it, but I don't have another source of income. I can't just up and quit my job. So that's already frustrating. So to be in certain type of conversations with people actually do have the choice and don't have to get it and are not mandated, sometimes I feel like it can be inconsiderate.

Taylor Mugar (06:42): Other people may not feel like it's inconsiderate because they're like, "This is my health." So I feel like you shouldn't look at you being an advocate of your health and expressing your opinion as being inconsiderate. But I do feel like in some conversations, if someone's constantly telling me, "I'm not getting in, I'm not for that," it does make me feel some type of way because it's like, I wasn't awarded that choice.

Whitney Frazier (07:17): Like you gave into the system or you?

Taylor Mugar (07:20): Yeah.

Whitney Frazier (07:21): You weren't strong enough to like figure something else.

Taylor Mugar (07:25): It's simple that I didn't have that choice.

Whitney Frazier (07:27): Right. You weren't going to give up your job.

Taylor Mugar (07:30): Yeah. So in certain conversations that can be difficult and intimidating.

Whitney Frazier (07:38): Have you lost friendships or closeness with certain people in your life because of COVID?

Taylor Mugar (07:44): No, no. I just have to constantly be reiterating to certain people about the effects that I have seen, not have seen, but have heard about through patients, like telling certain family members I've talked to patients who have had these symptoms, have experienced this. So whatever it is

that is going on out here, we should take it serious in a sense because there are real life situations and real life things that are happening because of it. I could see if it was just not resulting in real life things, like it was just something going around, it's not real. I could see if it wasn't resulting in certain things, but when you have results that said something is going on, I feel like then you should take into account it is some seriousness behind it.

Whitney Frazier (08:54): Has anything good come out of this last few years for you?

Taylor Mugar (09:00): Oh yeah, absolutely. I think that's the importance of what has come out of COVID is health awareness. And that's what I more so appreciate about, how can I say this? How can I say it? I appreciate the health awareness that its brought to the community, like monitoring what you eat, changing your diet and I don't really like saying diet that much, but changing your eating regimen and your eating routine, you're eating more healthy foods and moderation because once you change what you eat, you prevent yourself from having a lot of diseases and viruses because 200% believe that the body can be healed from anything. Even if I'm vaccinated, I feel like that vaccination can be eradicated from my system. I feel like the human body is intelligent enough and is designed to heal itself if I'm feeding it with what it needs to be, feeding it with nourishing foods, herbal remedies. I mean even the thought process because I feel like a lot of it is related to fear too. And fear is very toxifying to the body.

Whitney Frazier (10:34): I hear you're saying that there has been kind of this awareness with you and others maybe, that you are in your community around like, okay, we can't maybe control how COVID happened, but what we can control is what we put in our bodies and how we offset things and how we take care of each other and our own wellness.

Taylor Mugar (11:02): Yeah. And how we can protect ourselves better and then protecting ourselves better, we start to feel better. All this time, who would've thought that just changing the way you eat could affect you in such a successful way.

Whitney Frazier (11:22): I know you have this awareness, but how are people learning about that in communities in Baltimore? Or is it through online? Is it through social media? Is it through each other or a combination of things? I'm just wondering.

Taylor Mugar (11:38): I think definitely social media. Social media had a big influence on, I think, bringing awareness to holistic eating and preventing the viruses and diseases. Social media definitely had a big influence on that. I think definitely word of mouth too. And especially because if you have a family member that is knowledgeable of that, or if you have a friend that's knowledgeable of that and anytime the good news is around or somebody feels better, they want to share it with people. So it's great that people share that with people. I take this, I take this remedy and I'm eating . . .

Whitney Frazier (12:21): A supplement.

Taylor Mugar (12:21): Yeah. And I've been protected. I haven't been affected so much by COVID. Grateful because I am aware that knowledge because it hurts when you hear people and they're not aware of that knowledge and they're suffering.

Whitney Frazier (12:39): Right, right.

Tayler Mugar (12:40): Like when you change your regiment, especially in the black community, if you have depressed neighborhoods and deprived neighborhoods and no grocery stores in your neighborhood, you go in the grocery store and you read the back of the ingredient label and you sitting there like, "What the? I can't eat this." Once you really start becoming knowledgeable and more aware, you'll be in the aisle 20, 30 minutes reading the back of ingredients.

Tayler Mugar (13:06): But I am grateful that that has brought awareness to the community and it can be intimidating, but I feel like you definitely shouldn't overwhelm yourself because you've been eating this way for a long time. So you really have to be patient with yourself when you're aware of this new information and not try to bombard yourself. I feel like you definitely should forgive yourself for not knowing this information because sometimes a lot of people can experience guilt and shame. I've been eating this all my life and I didn't know this, but I feel like you should definitely forgive yourself for not knowing because you didn't know.

Whitney Frazier (13:55): So what else comes to mind when you hear the word COVID or pandemic or vaccinations or anything that comes up for you?

Tayler Mugar (14:09): I think what comes up for me is that the body can heal itself. That definitely comes up for me. I'm spiritually protected, definitely comes up. Of course health awareness comes up for me. Detoxifying a body comes up for me. Anxiety does come up for me too, a bit.

Whitney Frazier (14:38): You want to say more about that? You don't have to.

Tayler Mugar (14:47): I mean I experienced a lot of anxiety and I think a lot of people also experienced it and that's why people was in a rush to get out the store and go in the store. And when you're going outside, it's like you got to mentally prepare yourself that you are around people that you may not aware if they have it or they're experiencing symptoms from it. It's like you really have to mentally prepare yourself and be okay with the fact that, okay, I'm going outside. This is what I'm going to get. I don't need to have this paralyzing fear surrounding me. I can still do my daily routine because at the end of the day I have to. You have to.

Whitney Frazier (15:33): Right. We have to do certain things to survive, we have to connect with other-

Tayler Mugar (15:36): You have to keep living. Yeah, yeah.

Whitney Frazier (15:39): What would you say, I have family members that did not get vaccinated and they were like, "God's got me, God's got a plan."

Tayler Mugar (15:56): He does though. He does.

Whitney Frazier (15:59): I know. I know you're a deeply religious spiritual person. I'm just curious what you would say to people with that outlook or that way of thinking about the vaccine.

Tayler Mugar (16:11): And that's a good question. I mean, with the vaccination, I mean, to be honest, the way that it's going is feel like you're going to have to get it at some point. To be honest because I mean, if you have a government in place in your country and if they have the means to mandate that, especially if it comes to traveling and things like that, or even if you have your own personal business, if

it comes to the point where they say, "Hey, you can't work out of this location unless you're vaccinated," at some point and we're just speaking honestly, it feels like you're going to have to get it at some point.

Whitney Frazier (17:02): Right. What if they homeschool and they work for themselves and I'm just thinking out, I'm just playing out scenarios with you.

Taylor Mugar (17:14): Yeah. They feel like they're not at risk of getting mandated ever. Which seems unrealistic to me now. Because the way that it's moving-

Whitney Frazier (17:24): Right, they can't get on a plane.

Taylor Mugar (17:26): Yeah. Eventually in order for you to continue, for you to have access to anything outside of your house, it feels like they're putting it in place where it's like you're going to have to get it.

Whitney Frazier (17:40): Do you agree with that?

Taylor Mugar (17:42): I mean, I feel like people should have a choice. It's difficult. It's always frustrating when that free will is kind of and you jeopardizing that type of choice. It can be frustrating. And I think that's why a lot of people, most maybe majority of people I know that decided to get vaccinated because of their grandparents and the older people in their family, to protect them. I mean, protecting them would also be sharing knowledge with them about what they eat. But a lot of older people don't want to change what they eat because they so conditioned to what they have been eating for years.

Whitney Frazier (18:32): Yeah. That's a hard. Well, any last thoughts about this topic? I know we'll talk more about other things in the future, but.

Taylor Mugar (18:41): I'm trying to think.

Whitney Frazier (18:44): What are you hopeful for coming out of this?

Taylor Mugar (18:49): I definitely am excited to see my community more knowledgeable of healthy eating, more knowledgeable of advocating for themselves when it comes to speaking to healthcare professionals and things like that. And knowing their body more, being more in tune with their body.

Whitney Frazier (19:22): And what do you think would help with that? I know you said there's kind of this-

Taylor Mugar (19:29): I mean, continuing to share that knowledge. I think continuing to share that knowledge, I feel like that's the best that you can do. I mean, you can't control people and get them to change, but you can share that knowledge and share your experience and things like that.

Whitney Frazier (19:56): Cool. Thank you for sharing yours.

Taylor Mugar (20:00): Thanks.