

Smart Money: My COVID-19 story

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Brad Brain: "Nobody thinks something bad will happen to them, and yet it is certain that bad things do happen. I didn't think I would get COVID last week – and if I did get it, I didn't think it would be crippling. But I did. And it was." | Getty Images

So I got COVID.

The good news is that by the time you are reading this I am recovered, no longer contagious, so no need to run away if you see me coming down the street. But that's now. Last week was a different story. Last week, for a while, I was more sick than I could imagine.

The funny thing is that I didn't exhibit what I thought are the typical COVID symptoms. No respiratory problems, no cough. But my throat was bothering me, and I was severely fatigued.

I just thought I had strep throat. But, as a precaution, I took a rapid antigen test, as I have on previous occasions when there was potential for an exposure. All those other times the tests came back negative, and I was fully expecting this one to do the same.

But it didn't. This test was positive. That surprised me at first, I didn't think that I had COVID, I just took the test because that is what you are supposed to do in a pandemic when you aren't feeling well.

Suddenly it all made sense. Why I felt so disoriented. So tired. No strength at all.

The positive test was actually a bit of a relief, because I knew that meant I would be quarantining for a week. I didn't have to feel guilty about taking a sick day.

But then the COVID really kicked in. It knocked me down, and it knocked me down hard. There weren't any further questions about feeling guilty over taking a sick day. I didn't think about that, or much else. I was out of it. Incapacitated.

I was too sick to take a phone call. Think about that. How much energy do you need to answer the phone? True story, I had a person call me, wanting me to have a look at the investments he holds at

another financial institution, and I had to tell him to call me next week because I literally do not have the energy to talk on the phone right now.

Too sick for emails. Too sick to read. Too weak to stand. Throat on fire. I sneeze and my body aches afterwards. From a sneeze!

I was way too sick to work. Fortunately, that didn't last. I got better.

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But here is the point of this article. What if I didn't? What if I didn't get better? What would happen if I was unable to work for an extended period?

It's important to note that the cause of my incapacity to function being COVID-19 is not relevant. I know that there are an abundance of people with passionate opinions about COVID, but that's not the point of this piece. What matters is that I could not work, not why I couldn't. From a pure cash flow point of view, there is no difference in an interruption of income whether it is COVID, or heart attack, or cancer or a car accident.

I want to point out that I have a desk job. It has to be a pretty thorough disability to incapacitate me to the degree that it impinges on my ability to work.

Here's what I mean. I tore my Achilles tendon in February. I am still not cleared to resume my normal physical activities. If my job required mobility, then the torn tendon would also have shut me down already. But I don't need my ankle to do a desk job, so that didn't affect my ability to earn an income.

Not being able to use the phone through, that's another story. Being that sick is a problem.

Here's the point, and it's a very important one. Nobody thinks something bad will happen to them, and yet it is certain that bad things do happen. I didn't think I would get COVID last week – and if I did get it, I didn't think it would be crippling. But I did. And it was.

Disabilities don't arrive by appointment, and the really bad ones don't last for only a week. So what would happen to your finances if you were suddenly unable to work because you were ill or injured?

Do you have an emergency fund? Do you know what kind of disability coverage you have in your group benefits package?

As sick as I was, I was never worried that this would be permanent. But if it was, I am prepared. I have group insurance disability benefits. But I also personally own a disability insurance income replacement policy, a business overhead expense reimbursement disability insurance policy, and a critical illness insurance policy. And I have staff to cover for me. And I have a business continuity plan with my business partner.

Because disabilities don't arrive by appointment.

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