

## **Life As We Know It Has Changed**

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Life as we know it has come to a halt, at least for right now. I constantly wonder when things will go back to normal. I have experienced both anxiety and a sense of gratefulness during recent times. I have had the opportunity to also reflect on what is truly important. What keeps my sanity is knowing that I am not alone in all of this. I know that we are all in this together, whether we like it or not.

I have worked for University Prep Schools for close to 20 years. I love that this network of schools is dedicated to putting children first. When I was asked to author an article to provide support to parents, I was initially struck with angst and I sat on the idea for a while. But then I realized, others are in the same boat. Others are feeling what I am feeling. You see, I too, am a parent trying to figure out how to work and teach simultaneously.

I have four children. One was living in New York when it was considered the epicenter of the pandemic. One was in St. Louis, in college, forging through all the uncertainty by himself. My other two school-aged children were working on their virtual studies, alongside me while I worked. As a parent, juggling work and teaching your own children, can be all-consuming, stressful and completely exhausting. I realized that I had to put some things in place. I spoke with others and did a little research. I will share what helped me and provide some resources that may help you.

**Structure and Routine:** This proved to be the most beneficial thing I could do. I did not *want* to keep the same routine everyday, but found that doing so was important for me, for my husband and for my children. Every day, we woke up at the same time. I created a schedule for my youngest and posted it. Every day, he would look at the schedule to see what came next. I was not always perfect; we missed a few of his meetings, but we could always get back on track and keep it moving.

**Time for Self and Fun:** There were a couple of days when I masked up and went to the grocery store because I needed a break. I needed a moment to myself, without the husband, kids or dogs. For fun, we would watch TV together or play with the water hose in the backyard. One night, we popped popcorn and watched a Redbox movie, and one night, we made dinner together.

**Honest Communication:** I was overwhelmed on many occasions because I wasn't in control. Being in denial isn't helpful and I found that talking to others actually helped me feel better. This pandemic allowed me to connect with friends and family that I hadn't talked to in years. Asking others for advice or their thoughts helped to ease the frustration that I encountered.

**Prayer:** The power of prayer is underestimated. Even without strong religious beliefs, one can express gratitude. Every evening my husband and I would ask each other the same question, "What are you grateful for today?" This small ritual kept me grounded in positivity.

I sincerely hope that my words will help you and your children in some way. Attached are links to a few resources that may also be beneficial as we enter this new school year virtually. I know that we will all have challenges, but together we can support each other.

**Resources:**

Articles about healthy living and managing stress and anxiety:

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

Tools and resources for online/virtual learning:

<https://www.pbisrewards.com/resources/online-learning/>

Provides tools and resources for online/virtual learning

Tools for virtual and distance learning:

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/top-picks/best-tools-for-virtual-and-distance-learning>