

Being a Father during the Covid-19 Lockdown...the Highs and Lows

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Being a parent is a job like no other. Challenging, exhausting, funny and exciting are just some of the words I would use to describe my average day. As soon as that baby is placed in your arms you not only have to take care of yourself, but you also have the responsibility of raising this child to become a responsible member of society. My wife and I have two healthy, happy children – Kiva is three years old with a continuous smile on her face and a seemingly endless amount of energy to burn off each day. To say she was a 'life changing experience' would be an understatement, and as her 3-year old mind expands she is full of questions about the world around us. In April of this year we welcomed a new addition to the family – Harry arrived safe and sound, oblivious to the Covid-19 storm swirling around. While 2020 has greatly impacted all aspects of our adult lives, I take great comfort from knowing that this will be just a distant memory for our young family.

There's no manual on how to raise a family during a global pandemic, so my wife and I just take it one day at a time. As we move through the lockdown phases, the lack of freedom to engage in typical day-to-day activities has been a challenge, with our daughter greatly missing her trips to visit her grandparents, cousins and friends. Undoubtedly she was suffering the most in early summer during childcare and Montessori closure, as well as having to compete with a new baby brother. Like most parents, we were greatly relieved to have her back to her routine when lockdown restrictions were eased. She was craving her Montessori friends and teachers and now skips into school every day. Despite our best efforts to minimize 'chat' about viral pandemics at home, she is picking up enough from school, radio, and TV to declare recently that '*Covid-19 is annoying because I can't hug and kiss my friends in school*'. Thankfully she is easily distracted by ice-pops and that moment of awareness was soon forgotten!

But it is not all doom and gloom as a parent in 2020, and I would be lying if I said there wasn't some positives too that have impacted me as a parent. Like many, I don't miss the two hours I spend each day in the car which was sapping both my energy levels and bank account. By reclaiming these hours, rather than staring at the clock and fearing what awaits me on the M50, I can spend more quality time with my family in the morning and evening. We converted a room in our house into a home office and this has allowed me to work pretty well from home, and keep on top of the many zoom meetings we all love so well! Having that outlet to join a meeting, seminar or coffee chat has been important to keep some sense of normality in abnormal times. Although my wife is on maternity leave, she greatly values these informal online coffee chats with colleagues and friends to have an outlet during lockdown.

As a father of a young family, 2020 has brought some highs and lows. But we are healthy and staying connected to family, friends and colleagues. We do not take this for granted and we are grateful. In a strange way, this global pandemic has given me more time to contribute to family life and spend more quality time with my kids, and has undoubtedly shaped my thinking as a parent for the future.