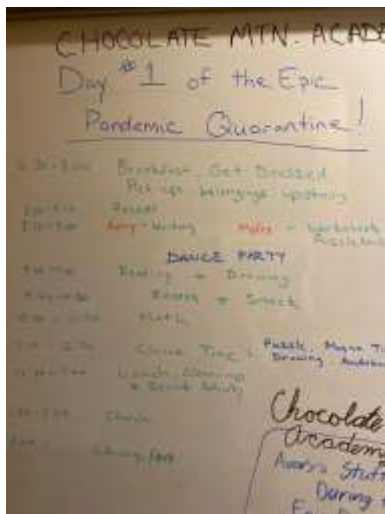


Treading Water But We Can Do It!

Well, here we are. We are in the midst of a global pandemic. Families have been asked to self-quarantine for the most part. Schools are closed. Churches are closed. LIBRARIES ARE CLOSED. And if you are like me, you find yourself juggling more than ever before. I thought life was busy as a working mom trying to do it all. Now, it's as if we were treading water and someone has tossed us a baby elephant to hold on to. But, I'm here to tell you. We can do it!

I happen to be rector of an Episcopal Church in Seattle, WA and, I am the mother of two school aged children. In the week that lasted a year, March 9-13, it seems that Seattle was a day or two ahead of the rest of the country. The first day of homeschooling/running a church felt like too much. There were some tears (okay it was me). In the middle of juggling everything, I learned the schools would be closed for six weeks, not two and had to communicate to my congregation that we were also closing the church building. So, in world that is changing by the day, even hour, how do we not only survive, but thrive?

Here are a few ideas that are keeping us going as we move into a new rhythm of living, learning, and working from home together. Create workspaces for each member of the family where materials and resources can be easily accessible. For children, this might include workbooks, a cozy reading nook, headphones, and art supplies. Make a schedule for each day. We are used to routines and schedules. Setting expectations that everyone eat breakfast, get dressed for the day, and "get ready" for school or work as usual goes a long way towards keeping things "normal".



When making your schedule for the day, make sure it has lots of time for being outdoors, spontaneous dance parties, and choice time. Moving our bodies, getting fresh air, and laughing will certainly help break up the long days. In our early days of homeschooling, I gave my children a secret mission or task to complete during lunch each day. On the first day, their mission was to come up with a name for their homeschool. They had to work collaboratively and agree on the name. With a six and nine-year-old brother and sister, this was no easy feat! They had to use negotiation skills and compromise. We have named our school Chocolate Mountain Academy. On the second day, the secret mission was to come up with a mascot for Chocolate Mountain Academy. In between math worksheets and reading, these sorts of fun and secret activities keep the days interesting and full of whimsy delighting children and parents alike.

Recess is essential. Playing in the yard, going for walks, yoga videos online, the possibilities are endless for getting those bodies moving. Over the weekend, my children took a large cardboard box and created a game called “Whack a Sibling” complete with cardboard hammers. They plan to drag this outside for hours of recess play in the weeks to come.



This takes care of the kids. But what about getting any work done you may be wondering. It’s true. Whether you are running a congregation, working for Microsoft, or balancing any other kind of job while supervising the Chocolate Mountain Academy, it is a lot. Adjust your expectations. This is a time of sabbath. It is a time of shifting gears and changing our routines. There are times when it will be necessary to tell the children you cannot help them and days when they will watch more television than they should. It will be okay. Work will happen in the moments of grace and calm when everyone is on task and there will be times when we must let it go and be present in the moment that is before us.

As we close each day in this strange new world we live in, I find myself going to prayer for comfort. A favorite that has been coming to mind often is this: *“God, what has been done, has been done. What has not been done, has not been done. Let it be. Amen.”*

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