

### *Collecting COVID-19*

March 2020 became one of the scariest times of my life. Not knowing what was happening or what will happen; Not understanding what was currently happening; and the most terrifying, not knowing what to believe.

I won't forget March 17, 2020. It was a Tuesday. One of my co-workers was extremely nervous about this virus. Her and I kept filling each other in with what we knew or what we've heard. I believe she was more scared than I. We were receiving emails throughout the day explaining the exposures, the possibilities of closure, etc. I helped my supervisor create the continuity plan. Figure out who can work from home and is our office/unit capable of such measures and so on. Our unit had scatter to have a last-minute meeting about how we can continue to work from our homes, and the safety precautions that needed to be taken.

It happened all so fast.

The whole time in the back of my head I just kept thinking about my family. Where they all were at this moment in time, what were they feeling and thinking. What were my children's schools and teachers telling our children? Am I am going to lose my job? Will my husband lose his? What-ever will we do?!?!? My mind running at top speed and didn't know where to turn.

I stopped at one point and realized it will be "OK". Has humans, we always need to find the good in every bad situation. Talking with my husband we both agree that working from home is the safest place to be. More time with my children, less time rushing. Yes, this was the good.

We all thought this wouldn't last. I didn't take any minute with my children for granite. I treasured it all even though it could be very stressful trying to juggle so much with this new way of living.

In such little time I had to come to realization that I had to wear so many hats – To Many Hats. I went from a full-time working mother too: FT Employee, College Student, Mother, Wife, Teacher, Veterinarian (my dog decided to get very ill at this time), "Cleaning Fairy" as I call it in my house, and the list goes on.

What did this do to me? Well, for the first time in my life, I realized what "Depression" and "Mental Health" really was. I threw my hands up and realized I needed help – not with the physical labor that this endured, but the mental stress I gained. This turned me into a different person – A person I did not know, my husband didn't know, and my children. Sad, angry, crying, no appetite – Just not myself anymore. I lost myself and when you have a family to care for, you cannot lose yourself – it causes you too loose your whole family and your self dynamic.

I got help – I encourage anyone who is reading this to do the same if you feel any of what I have mentioned.

At this time, one year later, I am different person. Enjoying this new “normal” with every breath I take. Working from home, wearing all these hats is the new me – without the crying, anger, and sadness. It’s almost too difficult to think about going back to campus. I will have to start from scratch and create a new schedule and groove for myself and my kids again!

But again, we need to find the good in every bad situation.