

For Mature Students by Mature Students

Parenting Through a Pandemic: Virtual Learning. How is it going?

By: Meshanda Phillips

I want to take a moment and salute all the parents that are parenting through this unprecedented time. I am not only a mature student but also a parent. I have learned that it is not easy, but all we can do is our best to keep our children safe and maintain some normalcy as we move forward each day.

Hello again, Meshanda Phillips here, mature student and single mommy to two kings. In my last blog, I wrote about what it is like for me to navigate virtual learning. I also mentioned that I have discovered that I am not in any way, shape, or form smarter than a fourth-grader, and now I am going to add the sixth-grader as well; I saw BEDMAS math recently and I can honestly say that I have cried, sweated, and tried to hide. Do not even get me started on French, but Amazon has become my new "BFF," so we got some French for beginners resources and dictionary. Fun fact: my youngest son's first name is French so you would think that I would have tried to learn more than "bonjour" and "Je m'appelle" (note to self: next time you want to give your child a French name please know more than two words, lol). At this point, I have ordered over twenty textbooks for grade six and four from Amazon on various subjects to teach myself so that I can try to help them. By now, I hope it is clear that this blog will discuss my children and how they are learning through the pandemic and maybe about how many times I have cried. My children are currently learning from home (why did I do it myself, lol; imagine being quarantined from March 12, 2020 with two boys! Thank God for the virtual church, bible study, and youth fellowship).

I chose to do virtual learning because I battle with anxiety and I have underlying health issues. Furthermore, I did also have a conversation with my children concerning which option they wanted. I thought it was only fair to have their input as well, and my oldest was all for virtual while my youngest was against it at first. I weighed my options since they were not at the same school, and then I started looking at the data of my area, and I found out that the schools in our neighbourhood have a vast population, so they would fall under the high-risk category. Therefore, having that information I had another talk with my boys, and we, as a family, decided to be virtual. But I also understood that they are children and children are used to specific environments conducive to their learning, so I accommodated. What do I mean by that? Luckily, I have a huge kitchen, and I converted half of it into a classroom with desks, and I even got some swivel chairs (my attempt to make them feel they are "happening"). I put up inspirational quotes, classroom rules, their daily schedules, and I even

got some banners. Now I have mentioned that I needed be relearning elementary, so I got a whiteboard to practice, to teach my sons and myself. Again, I will say teachers are superheroes because I have two" students," and I want to run for the hills.

The transition has not been smooth; in fact, we are still learning to adjust. My children had to wait almost two weeks for a teacher. My youngest first teacher would only send assignments in PDF, which was not that easy for my younger one to maneuver. Then in October, he said he could no longer teach and that he had asked for a replacement. The new teacher is great, and she makes the work more accessible but not much content. While I am in my online classes, I often must stop to help my younger one, which makes it a little difficult to focus on my classwork, but we are managing. I also do stick with a regular school schedule; I get up the same time I would pre-COVID-19 and get breakfast ready and their snacks; but for lunch, because we are home, I do try to make something hot for them. Lunch must be made before 12:30pm because that is when my classes start most days. I do not get a break until around 8pm each night. Most times, while I am in my studies, I am also making dinner. I have growing boys with a Jamaican background and they want Jamaican food all the time (still trying to figure out why I introduced them to food that takes longer to cook).

Again, I will leave you with some unsolicited advice. If you are a parent, please know that you are doing a great job, do not try to be perfect, do the best you can! No one could have anticipated the current times we are facing in our world today, but we are trying to navigate it as best as we can. Do not be hard on yourself! Our children appreciate us for trying and for being there. Find at least one day out of the week to be kind to yourself: do a home facial, find a quiet spot, and just BE - do something that puts you first. As parents, we give 100% percent of ourselves to our children, and therefore, because we do that, they always expect it, but if we do not take care of ourselves, we will burn out and be unable to give to our children. Remember, "You cannot pour from an empty cup. You must fill your cup FIRST."

REMEMBER

"Be Strong because things will get better. Though it may be stormy now, it never rains forever."