

# How Coronavirus Affects Families - Through a 4-Year-Old's Eyes

My family and I have been sequestered in our home since March 13.

My husband has taken full charge of our four children - ages 13, 7, 4 and 2 - during the day while I work from my makeshift closet office.

Research about the impact of this unprecedented seclusion upon children is bleak. Statistics on academic regression, food insecurity and child abuse are tragic.

My empathetic heart breaks for the children and families who are struggling. However, there are some bright spots in the gloom.

While I join many of my parenting peers in wringing my hands over how to create the ultimate Pinterest paradise for our little ones, I continue to notice the delight our children find in the simple act of play. They thrive on dirt and Popsicles.

Through balancing the weight of almost constant impending doom and conveying the severity in developmentally appropriate terms, I've watched our children continue to struggle then flourish. Childhood is adaptable whimsy.

Based on anecdotes, conversations and observations from our children, I created a kid's-eye view of COVID-19 - told from the perspective of our fluffy-haired 4-year-old son.

*I can't go to preschool anymore. I miss my friends. Mama told me the virus is a bad guy. Dad hugged me and said we shouldn't be scared because we are safe at home.*

*Teacher sings to my class on Mama's computer, but her face stops moving a lot and she can't give me hugs.*

*I waved to my teachers on the sidewalk and my friends in their cars when we drove to pick up my artwork from school after it closed. We didn't sing our goodbye song together because of the Bad Guy Virus.*

*Mama works in her closet all day and Dad's job went away. I think Dad is our teacher now.*

*Mama and Dad watch the news people on TV talking about the Bad Guy Virus a lot. The people on TV are in a hospital sometimes and they sound scared. I don't want to go to the hospital.*

*I am worried about Little Sister because I think she doesn't know about the Bad Guy Virus. She ran close to one of our neighbors today to pet their dog who was walking on a leash.*

*I pulled her away because Dad says we can't get close to anybody who doesn't live in our house. Not even animals. Little Sister cried because she fell down when I pulled her away. I have to keep her safe.*

*Big Sister lets me come in her room to build Legos sometimes. She is in middle school and mostly likes to be alone.*

*I heard her talking to her friends on her computer. She said she misses playing her viola with the orchestra and seeing her friends in class.*

*Before the Bad Guy Virus, she had sleepovers with her friends and volleyball practice. Now she is home with us all the time.*

*I like having Big Sister at home with me. I wish she would be happy. I pick dandelion wish flowers to cheer her up.*

*Because of the Bad Guy Virus, Big Brother and I play outside as long as we want. We find bird's nests and frogs and turtles.*

*My job is to make sure our puppy doesn't dig up Mama Turtle's eggs. We watched Mama Turtle lay her eggs in a deep hole in our yard. In 50 days, we will see them hatch!*

*I wear my rain boots almost every day so I can stomp in the mud. Sometimes, Dad sprays us off outside because we get dirt all over us.*

*I miss the playground at my school, but I can zoom my bike fast in our neighborhood since I practice every day. Our neighborhood is a big recess!*

*Before the Bad Guy Virus, we didn't know our neighbors. Now, Big Brother and I*

*know every dog's name in every house! All our neighbors walk their dogs a lot.*

*We all wave happy hello hands when we see each other. I think we are all bored of our houses.*

*We stay far away while we talk to our neighbors. They know our names and like our chalk art on the sidewalk. They say we are artists!*

*I was supposed to see my grandparents who live far away for spring break. Mama said they couldn't come to our house because of the Bad Guy Virus. I have grown two inches since I saw them at Christmas. I think they won't believe how big I am when I see them again!*

*I miss my cousins, aunts and uncles too. We send each other pictures. The silliest picture was when we all wore pajamas on Easter Sunday! We even hunted Easter eggs in pajamas.*

*Usually, I have to wear scratchy shirts and pinching shoes to church. Because of the Bad Guy Virus, Sundays are pajama day at our house now. I think this makes God laugh!*

*Mama and Dad tell me the Bad Guy Virus will go away someday. We will go back to school and church, and I will give my grandmas and grandpas tight hugs! I am sad so many people are sick and scared.*

*I like having my whole family in my house with me all day and night. I can snuggle with Mama any time I want. Dad reads me every book I pick. Big Sister and Big Brother play with me and don't even say I am too little. I help my Little Sister be safe and teach her how to count to 20!*

*The virus is a bad guy, but I am a good guy. I think the good guys will win.*

*Let's all keep loving our children exactly where they are. We must acknowledge their feelings, even the difficult ones, and then authentically reassure them by teaching them how to be safe.*

*Childhood doesn't have to be perfect. It's not our job as parents, grandparents or village partners to manufacture bliss.*

*Dealing with setbacks in the safety of our nest, with loving guidance and endless*

patience, teaches children how to become resilient adults.

This pandemic may be one of the greatest teachable moments in our lifetimes. May we be the good guys; may we raise the good guys.

*Editor's note: This article is part of a series this week for Mental Health Awareness Month. The previous articles in the series are:*

[\*How Coronavirus Affects Your Mental Health and What You Can Do\*](#) | Cate Schilling

[\*Despite ACA, Not All Insurance Provides Mental Health Care\*](#) | Monty Self

[\*7 Issues Your Family Must Navigate During COVID-19 Crisis\*](#) | Kristyn Arnold

[\*Young Adults Face Mental Health Issues in 'Emerging Adulthood'\*](#) | Rebekah Gordon

[\*Maintaining Clergy Mental Health Proves to be Complex Puzzle\*](#) | Elizabeth Denham Thompson

[\*Her Fight: How Many Pastors' Spouses Deal with Depression\*](#) | Patrick Broaddus

[\*4 Suggestions on How We Can Improve Clergy Mental Health\*](#) | Paula Betts