

**Interviewee:** Dr. Carla Lagorio

**Interviewer:** Andrew Beine

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**Abstract:**

Dr. Carla Lagorio is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and mother of two children. In this interview Dr. Lagorio discusses the difficulties of working from home while simultaneously being a caregiver for young children abruptly home from daycare during the height of the Covid pandemic. She also describes her experiences in being there for developmental milestones for her children and how Covid had impacted those moments. She also reflects on how her Covid caregiving experience didn't allow for much of the "luxury" of downtime others may have had during lockdown. Lastly, she describes the support system her and her family found in the families in their neighborhood, as well as looking at potential "silver linings" during an event that is overwhelmingly negative.

**Andrew Beine 00:04**

Okay, so it is Wednesday, August 31 2022. The time is 2:01pm. As of last night, current COVID-19 numbers in the United States as released by the CDC are: total number of cases 94,110,810, with total deaths 1,039,055. In Wisconsin total cases, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services are: 1,612,077 with total confirmed deaths in Wisconsin, at 13,340. Lastly, the current vaccination rate in the US recorded by the CDC: 223.9 million fully vaccinated with 108 point 5 million having received at least one booster. Okay, Dr. Lagorio, hello!

**Carla Lagorio 00:59**

Hi.

**AB 01:00**

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today.

**CL 01:04**

No problem.

**AB 01:05**

So just to start out, if you would just like to state your name, and maybe some basic demographic information that we get for the study: gender, ethnicity, those kinds of things.

**CL 01:17**

Yeah - My name is Carla Lagorio. I am a white female in my late 30s with two children and a husband.

**AB 01:30**

And do you live in Eau Claire?

**CL 01:31**

I do, yes. I live in Eau Claire Wisconsin.

**AB 01:35**

Gotcha. Okay, can you describe a little bit about your specific role on campus as we're focusing sort of on faculty with this part of the project?

**CL 01:47**

Yeah. Yeah, so I, I'm an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire in the psychology department. I teach primarily for - within the behavior analysis major that we have on campus, but I also teach in the general psych/liberal arts major as well. I've been, you know, I was actually a student here at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire quite some time ago now. And yeah, so it's kind of it's, it's fun being back but you know, we've been back then for 10 years now. So I think this is my 11th year teaching back in the psych department.

**AB 02:29**

Wow. And what did you, what did you study when you were here?

**CL 02:34**

Psychology with an emphasis on behavior analysis and then continuing my training.

**AB 02:40**

I gotcha.

**CL 02:42**

Mhm. Left for my doctorate program, postdoc, and then returned.

**AB 02:49**

In behavior analysis, what exactly is that?

**CL 02:51**

It's a, you know, a subfield of psychology. It's kind of like how there's different specialties within psychology, like clinical, counseling, social, developmental. So behavior analysis is another kind of branch of psychology.

**AB 03:09**

Okay. So, um, in addition to faculty, we're obviously kind of finding the cross section between faculty and caregivers. And we're sort of going forward with a pretty broad definition of caregiving in this. Could you share in your own words, what you would, what you would describe as a caregiver or caregiver duties?

**CL 03:33**

Yeah, the ones that I've been participating in mostly or..?

**AB 03:37**

Yeah, or even hearing on that, that you kind of think of when you hear

**CL 03:41**

Yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, like you said, it's a broad topic. I think, like, the first thing that comes to my mind is, of course, my children. Like, that's a very obvious caregiving role that I participate in. And you, it spans you know, caregiving certainly can span to - think about my professional life, students, and even trying to support colleagues. And then beyond that, of course, there's other family members that you try to support in a variety of ways. And then you know, even further to that is like self-care, which I know, especially throughout COVID, has been a somewhat challenging topic for people and trying to balance personal health and well-being with other things going on in the world and other duties.

**AB 04:46**

Sure. Yeah, that's definitely in some of the interviews I've done too, that with people with small children self-care usually takes a backseat to you know, the other -

**CL 05:00**

Yeah.

**AB 05:01**

-Caregiving duties that they have. Yeah, so that's, that's sort of what we're looking at. It's, it's not just children, but it's, you know, a much, much more wide sort of definition.

**CL 05:20**

Yeah.

**AB 05:25**

So specifically - and how old are your children?

**CL 05:27**

Actually, one has a birthday today. My youngest is turning 3 today.

**AB 05:32**

Oh gotcha. Sorry, I didn't mean to take you away from the party!

**CL 05:36**

Oh, no, no party was Sunday. But we'll still do some celebrating today. But my, my older child is 4 and she'll be 5 in November. So we, yeah, we had children a year, about a year and a half apart. And if you do the math, like, think about when COVID started. We had I know, I'm like okay - we had we had a two year old and about a seven month old.

**AB 06:11**

Wow

**CL 06:12**

When COVID first emerged in the United States, when everything shut down. So, so yeah, we've, they've known this, you know, throughout a majority of their lives, too.

**AB 06:26**

Right. So in terms of your caregiving duties, either with your children or like you said, students, colleagues, or self care, how would you have - or can you describe a little bit about what those duties specifically that you had pre-pandemic? Just kind of what that looked like, in your personal or private, or professional pace.

**CL 06:54**

Yeah. Um, well, yeah, it's interesting, because, you know, like I said, the, my, my youngest was really quite young, when COVID started. So. So we, we had, both children had really just started at the university affiliated daycare - the "Nature Academy". I - My older daughter, she had been there for some time, you know, over a year, at that point of the pandemic. And my youngest, Margot, she had just started daycare, maybe a month and a half, you know, in like the late January or early February 2020. And, and COVID wasn't really being discussed that much at that time. But so, so I was just kind of getting back into some type of, kind of normalcy at the beginning of, of 2020. With, with my work, and, you know - I don't want to say I was, like "off" maternity leave because I never really went on it in the first place. But I was still teaching the semester prior, but I was really more like, fully back on campus that spring and teaching in-person and both kids were in daycare. We, we were really doing well, you know. Like life was going pretty well. And, and yeah, and obviously, you know, things shifted abruptly then, which, you know, we don't want to jump at any possible questions, but you know, in terms of my faculty role, too, with with caregiving - it was us speaking more with students in person a lot more in person meetings, and I was actually fairly familiar with online things pre-COVID, just due to having two young children. And really recently, I was teaching a little bit more online pre-COVID. But still, like having that kind of, kind of caregiving role with students toom through an advising sense, and having a little bit more in person interaction. But yeah, I mean, so life was good. You know, like, my husband and I are both, you know, we're, we're focused more on good routines and good self care, and really kind of getting back into the swing of things after having like, two really young children. Sure, yeah.

**AB 09:24**

Sure. So then, as, as COVID, then happened in March, March of 2020. Um, what were some of the specific - I mean, you mentioned that you, you had experience prior to that with online learning (unintelligible) and I'm assuming that increased dramatically after that. So what was, what was that like?

**CL 09:58**

With the teaching, or with everything?

**AB 10:10**

Yeah, yeah [the teaching]

**CL 10:02**

Yeah, it's, um, I adjusted I think a little bit more quickly to the transition. So we're, you know, when, when things shut down in March, I had already taught some of, you know - some of the courses I was currently teaching I had already taught online. And so I was able to kind of have that template in a sense. So I had, you know, PowerPoints that already had me speaking with them, and so I could just put those onto our online Canvas page and email them and say, "Hi everyone, you know, like, we're going to shift - you're going to be alright, because, you know, I've, I've taught through this method before, you have a lot of content available. I'm still here", you know. So, so in that sense, like, some of that transition was fairly smooth. In another class that I was teaching in-person at the time, I had never taught that one online, so kind of rethinking how to move that content to that format and make it similar, especially, you know, trying to replicate some of the in class discussions that we would do. Some of it just wasn't possible to kind of throw in there right away. Also being, you know, mindful of the fact that at that time, you know, both of my kids were then at home with me. So it wasn't as simple as just saying, "Hi everyone, we're going to meet on zoom at 11 like we used to". It just like, that was not an option anymore. It just was not an option. So I knew I had to do things asynchronously with Lee, like, just let them do it at their own pace. And luckily, you know, everyone at that time had quite a bit of grace, though, for each other's circumstances. And I think, you know, the faculty did was students students do with faculty, no one knew what was going on, you know, with COVID. So everyone was very, I think, more accommodating. Even if we didn't know each other's circumstances, like they don't know what it's like to be home with two toddlers or so. You know, but, you know, it's, yeah. So.

**AB 12:23**

So that switch to the asynchronous - you mentioned that the kind of the more structure was just not necessarily plausible in your situation. That was directly because of having two young kids.

**CL 12:35**

Okay, yeah, absolutely. I, I may have done you, I tend to teach at least one or two of my classes, like, if I'm teaching them online, I do tend to do that asynchronously anyway. So I don't know if that would have totally impacted things. But I know, like, for sure for one of my classes, like doing it via zoom, or something would be better if I was going to do it all over again, you know, and really try to do that as a perfect online course. That's the route I would choose for sure. But it just, there's no way no way it would have worked at that time. No.

**AB 13:14**

So to that... What type of what type of changes or impacts did you see? Did you notice whether you were your husband? In taking care of these two young kids after COVID hit?

**CL 13:28**

Yeah. Our whole life changed, like our whole entire life was completely upended really, you know. Like, so with the school shutdown daycare shutting down. Like, and but we were both still working, and neither of us didn't want to be working. Either honestly, at different points of the pandemic, we had to think whether one of us should quit, you know, like, I was just like, I and we never really thought too seriously about it, but we can't, we couldn't live that way. Like it was - and we did for a long time. But, to have two toddlers especially who really like especially with a baby, I mean that even our three year old, they can't - they need full full on care, you know. Like fall one of us has to be fully present at all times. There's no way that both can be kind of working a little bit with two very young individuals at home. And, and so like that, we shifted our schedules where you know, he'd work like six till nine. I would then - he'd take over with the children I would work from, you know, like nine till noon ish, kind of make some lunch then they would nap in the afternoon and, and you know, I would take the baby out for a walk. It was just like our we had this very regimented schedule. Which involved a lot of me working at nights and weekends, but it was just it was, it worked okay. We were we figured it out how it could work, but it was nonstop and even the things that that threw me like, right initially was having to kind of meal plan too and make meals. Like three meals a day, we are now sitting down and eating and that 's, it's, it's super time consuming. And I remember like Googling, like "toddler lunches", like what do you have for lunch like Ritz crackers and cheese or like, I mean [a] sandwich - I was like repeating the same meals. And I'm like, I need more variety, like things like that, that you're like I did - I had to now think about and execute with zero assistance. And yeah, so those things are, were extremely time consuming. We then, you know, summer came quickly, then, you know, the semester ended. And we made the decision to just keep them home over the summer, I was on a nine month contract. So I technically didn't need to be doing extra things for the university at that point. So yeah, we ended up persisting with a schedule until almost exactly a year ago, now. They went back to daycare.

**AB 16:30**

At the Nature Academy?

**CL 16:33**

Yeah. Yep. They're, they're out there now. And so it was, you know, there's been a shortage. And you may have heard this from other interviews and stuff of that shortage of childcare. And, you know, once people were kind of venturing back out and bringing their children places, again, it's really challenging to find places for them to go that are really high quality and affordable. A lot of barriers for people in the community. And it's not unique to Eau Claire, I've heard it for other cities as well.

**AB 17:11**

With the nature Academy, have you gotten a sense of the types of effects or impacts that they have had, either because of having kids there or from colleagues?

**CL 17:27**

Yeah, um, you mean, like in terms of, like, just different COVID impacts and things?

**AB 17:33**

Yeah.

**CL 17:34**

Yeah, um, you know, they're, they've been just fantastic throughout all this. They're, like I said, affiliated with the university. And I think that that has helped them to be able to function as well as they have. Like, just as one example, if, if we - and there has, there has been COVID cases, going through the daycare, there have been quite quite a few cases, I mean there's just cases everywhere depending on the time and everything - but, but, so if they need to shut down a room to quarantine the children, they don't charge us for the time that we're out. And while that sounds like of course they you know, they shouldn't charge you when your kids aren't there, a lot of centers have had to do that, because of course, their employees still need to get paid. They can't just like not be paid for a couple of weeks in a month, because COVID happens to be going through the facility. And so, so it's, they've done a really good job. And they've been, you know, really working closely with people at the University with the Eau Claire health department to try to figure out the best way to minimize COVID cases in these young children who cannot wear masks. Do not wear masks appropriately. But also like the kids are eating their, they're napping there. It's hard to limit spread of any disease in a daycare center and so, so they've, they've really been doing a fantastic job. But it has impacted a lot of caregivers there. And even the, you know, the employees I... You know, with the shutdowns and stuff during times where COVID cases have been reported in different classrooms, it's challenging because it's like the world, the community everyone has kind of like moved on, but we still have faculty and other people in the community who suddenly you know, they get a phone call and they have no childcare then for you know, a week or 10 days. But still we need, we're expected to do our job and keep things running. Yeah. So there's still that kind of ongoing, ongoing issues and challenges, even though the pandemic seems, you know, a lot of things have gone back to a certain level of pre-pandemic normalcy, but still a lot of effects that we're seeing.

**AB 20:20**

Yeah. With - So with that kind of change, to your caregiving roles at home specifically - was there anything that you found to be I don't wanna say "positive", but like a sort of a, I guess, maybe silver lining in those times that happened with those changes in your caregiving role now that you're that you were home more? And you know, had that, sort of, to deal with that?

**CL 20:56**

Yeah. I'm certainly - Yeah, I think, throughout this, and I think especially early on, I remember in the early months, people would start talking about silver linings a little bit. And it was really kind of premature, I think. But like, it also makes sense, because everyone's kind of tried to grasp it. Like, "what do we learn from this experience"? Or, you know, and what's been good about it. And of course, I can say that we were able to spend more time with our children than we ever would have been able to, had this not occurred. And it's sometimes that, you know, I would think about that it wasn't always, like, the perfect experience or something. You know, it was like we were spending more time with them. But we were also really busy. So, so it kind of comes with, like these balances and things where it wasn't always like, "yes, it was just so amazing to be able to be there for their early years", which it definitely was to be able to be more present. But then we were also a lot more stressed out. So those early years, maybe weren't always as happy for us. You know, I like I was just thinking earlier - I don't really remember teaching my youngest to eat. Like, I know, it happened. But you know, some of these things are kind of like, blocked out because it was just such a stressful time that, like we did it, we did it, we did it all. But the timing of things, I don't reflect back as much on the early kind of COVID time as maybe I would, like had COVID not occurred, I might reflect back more on their early experiences. Just because it's hard. It's hard like somebody you just said maybe it's a bit of a psychological kind of tool, in a sense to not just dwell not to, like think bad to kind of move forward. And so yeah, so like, there are silver lining and so I but there was a lot of there's, it's hard to say much positive about COVID Though,

**AB 23:13**

Of course. Yeah.

**CL 23:14**

Yeah. Yeah.

**AB 23:15**

Being around for those really crucial development ears. Yeah, I can imagine it would be nice, but it would, under different circumstances - a choice you make

**CL 23:29**

It's a choice, yeah, it is. And it's, you know, my husband and I never - you know, when we had children, we knew that we were not going to be stay at home parents. So just so you know, we both had jobs that we had been in for some time and so yeah, it was like suddenly we were stay at home parents. And under different circumstances I think that would be wonderful. You know, but we never made that choice. It was kind of, so we didn't have all the craft activities in place or the - and not saying that stay at home parents all do it, you don't have to have everything put

together. But I don't even know what to make for lunch. You know, I was just like okay, yeah, there's a bit of a learning curve here that happened for you know, a couple of months and what kind of system is gonna work best. I started creating, I have these little notebooks all over the house. I mean, I have one here. They're like, they list the day of the week, like what we're going to eat and things that so you need [a] system. You need like that kind of organizational system in place. And it took me some time to really get there. Can't say that I am totally there now. But you know.

**AB 24:42**

You mentioned a little bit ago that when this all happened, you were, you had discussions of possibly leaving your job or your husband is that right? Was that just to just to kind of ease a lot of that burden?

**CL 24:59**

Yeah. Oh yeah. We didn't know when or if it was going, if things would ever get better. So you're living through this and it's just like, okay, you know, we got vaccines on the horizon. And then it's like, okay, so even with vaccines like, this is going to keep going and like, okay, maybe death rate lowering - that's positive. But I don't know, there's just these different things, new thoughts throughout the way, like, how are we going to live this. And when you have children, then your whole kind of perspective shifts toward their livelihood, and their future. And so trying to do what's best for them. You know, we still don't know what the effects might be of catching COVID 10 times, you know, throughout your life and, and we will soon know, you know that. But you know, so it was never like we never really sat down and had serious conversations about leaving, or one of us leaving work. But it was just like, we can't keep going like this. So something needs to change. And the discussions within society were never, if anything, they were geared toward school aged children and getting them back in the classroom and trying to return to some normalcy. But no one was really ever mentioning much about toddlers or young children. So we were really alone. Like, we really felt like we knew we had our other friends and other people that we communicate with who have children who are young, but just kind of that uncertainty. Yeah.

**AB 26:56**

Yeah, it was, I think that's what's so kind of one of the fascinating things about this was, I mean, it's so unprecedented in everybody's lives, and we were all just kind of thrown into it and don't have any idea. "Is this, is this gonna last a month? Is this gonna last years?" And trying to make as informed decisions as you can about that, I think is, yeah, it was scary.

**CL 27:24**

Of course, all the decisions just, revolve around health versus money. It's like, I mean, so many things kind of boiled down to that, like, what is - what do you value more? What do you need more? Based on your current level of health, your current financial institute, or whatever it may be. It's just like, we're constantly inside of them making these personal decisions that differ, you know, based on different circumstances. So it's tough.

**AB 27:57**

Yeah. In terms of that type of, like, drastic change, obviously, your children were very young when that happened. Have you seen not to ask you to psychoanalyze your children? Did you, did you ever get a sense of, I guess, how, how they understood or didn't understand what was going on. From the start to now?

**CL 28:31**

Yeah, yeah. So the the youngest, obviously had no idea and she's still, actually so she has three today. Like I said, she still has no conception of COVID to my knowledge. She she knows that people wear masks sometimes. But that's never, that's all she's ever known. So it's not something that bothers her. And she doesn't ask about like, why some people do and some people don't or like some people do sometimes and some people don't sometimes. So it's interesting that she doesn't have any clue that COVID is is happening. And then my four year old who is almost five - so she was she has more of an idea and even did at the time. So she was two when things shut down, maybe about two and a half. So the daycare just shut down. Like it was just like all of a sudden we just complete like, I don't think she said goodbye. I remember leaving one day like leaving her daycare. I actually hugged her teacher and I was like, "I don't think we should be hugging" [laughs]. Like none of us knew - we weren't wearing masks really. Because it was like almost too, like too early. It was just like, yes, we went from one day being open to one day being closed. And so I don't think she said goodbye to her friends or anything. And of course, you know, the University and other people were saying, "it's gonna be two weeks, and we'll see you back after spring break". And I knew at the time, like I had been doing some kind of, you're looking up of things online, trying to learn more about COVID. And I was doing a very fast, fast to catch up, I guess, of what the heck was going on. And I knew we weren't coming back after two weeks. I planned like, with my classes, I knew we were, I was not going to see them again that semester. But so, so she, the two year old then, I was just, I kind of shared some stuff with her. She's fairly bright, even at the time and I shared some people are, we were just trying to prevent people from being sick. So we're going to just stay home for a while and everyone's staying home, everyone's staying home. And she missed her friends. And I remember they sent out, you know, we sent him some photos of what we've been up to. And her teacher compiled them and sent a PowerPoint of photos of her friends, I just remember her laying there looking at it. And it was sad, it was really sad. Like, I have a lot of emotions still thinking about that initial shutdown. But then as time went by, you know, I, the only - it would kind of come up once in a while. We'd be driving at Target, and we'd be driving to Target to go and sit in the pickup line, their amazing pickup that they offer now. And so the kids

would come with me, this is like one one of our kind of ways to get an outing with the children during early COVID was to go to the Target pickup. And my daughter would be like, like, after about six months or maybe even longer, you know, she'd be like, "Oh, why are we not going into Target"? And I'm like, "Well, we could go into Target, you know, it's just safer". You know, and she'd be like, "well, that person's going into Target" - like the worker. And I was like "how much do I share with you, you're like two or three years old?" And I, you know, I would just say that "they're brave and, you know, they're doing us a service and like a major favor". And especially like, early on, I was just like, man, these Target workers and other essential workers are like, risking their lives to bring me my groceries and that profound appreciation that I had. But anyways. So my daughter, like now she'll - her friends at school talk about COVID and she was just telling me she's like, "Well I didn't go by Lola too much. Lola was being mean to me because she had COVID. And so she couldn't come near me". And I was like, What are you talking about, you know, like, but it was like past the infectious period and everything so she wasn't like a current infection. But the way that a four year old thinks about things. So it's hard to, you know, tell them to try to keep their distance from peers. But she knows she knows what COVID is, she knows that it's going on. But she does not have a good conception of that it's not normal or something, you know, that it's different. Or like why it kind of shut things down. So yeah, it's interesting to see from their, their perspective. And, and then we talk more about germs, I'm sure and everything like that, then we maybe - she has a better idea of like what a germ is.

**AB 33:41**

I think we all do!

**CL 33:42**

Exactly, so true. So true. Like don't touch your face. So there's a silver lining, there we go. So we do all have more knowledge about hygiene and the spread of things.

**AB 33:56**

That's true. For sure.

**CL 33:58**

Better calculation of distance, maybe [laughs]. Yeah.

**AB 34:04**

Do you think um, with your, with your extensive background in psychology specifically that you - that gave you sort of a unique perspective on the effects of COVID whether it's the way you provided caregiving or just in general?

**CL 34:22**

Yeah, and I think even related to your last question, I think I kind of diverted off to like knowledge. But, um, I don't know, [to] speak to my children in particular. I think initially, my husband and I were both kind of like well, you know, the timing of this is pretty awful with their ages. But it's also like, pretty okay, because, you know, when you have an infant or young, younger baby or child, you don't go out that much anyway. Like you still typically like go to the store or something, but you might not be hitting up the restaurants like twice a week, because it's just a little more complicated when you have a baby along in tow. But we would go out to eat a lot and do things. But, we didn't miss it a ton at the time, you know. Because we don't - Yeah, their ages. And so they also, given that they were not school age yet, they weren't missing out on a lot of like, critical learning that might take place at that age. And so I was, you know, I have enough knowledge about child development and, and certainly learning like, I specialized more in learning theory, ways to teach concepts, et cetera. And so I was able to, you know, like, work with my children on skills that they should be developing at that age. A lot of it's just through play and things like learning colors, and through repetition, and very, very basic kind of skills. But, but I think that, that, yeah, having that background knowledge was potentially, you know, helpful or beneficial for me to be able to, you know, kind of know, to not stress so much too about, like, what my kids should know, at the time. You know, I see a lot of stress with parents, like, "my four year old is doing this", or is not doing this skill, like, "is that okay"? And a lot of it's like, "yes, they will learn, they will learn that". You know, kids focus on different skills at different times. So even having like that knowledge that could reassure me that their development was on track, and progressing.

**AB 36:50**

So in those instances where they were worried or not, well, yeah, concerned about if they were developmentally, like lagging behind or farther ahead. Is that, was that because of the changes with everything in COVID, that suddenly when they're taken out of daycare, these places that would be the norm that when they have more, I guess, effects or responsibility that then they're not doing it.

**CL 37:21**

Yeah. Yeah, I think it's like almost common concerns for children. For parents of children, like not even in a pandemic, there's always like, milestones, like, are they hitting the milestones. But, but I think, especially with younger kids or toddler age, parents were more concerned about the social aspects that they were missing out on. And, like, this critical kind of window of the opportunities for socialization with peers, that maybe they, you know, the kids weren't getting as much of. But I would remind myself, too, that there are a lot of people, a lot of kids who stay at home with their parents until preschool or even kindergarten. And they have, they certainly have playdates, they go out, they do things with other people, but they don't have the kind of school or like daycare to study and type of socialization, and they are completely fine. You know, they get the socialization in pre-K and kindergarten. And so I would remind myself that too, that

there's been tons and tons of kids for long, long periods of time that have not had that kind of daycare socialization, and they, it works out. And we certainly, you know, after several months of COVID, we started started socializing more with other kids, especially outdoors, we would see neighbors outside frequently, especially in that like that next fall and things, we started to do more intentional things to have our kids be able to see other children more frequently. So it's really just that first shutdown period that was like, "hey, guys, it's just us now". Like, it's just your two kids

**AB 39:17**

Right. In terms of that socialization, switching that to more of the self care, did you as a caregiver responsible for these, these two young children - Did you notice any, I guess, adverse effects on your own personal feelings or sort of emotional development? Over the course of COVID?

**CL 39:45**

Yeah, like so for me personally?

**AB 39:47**

Yes.

**CL 39:48**

Yeah. Yeah, it was- absolutely yeah. I undeniably like it was and still is, like a challenging time. There were a lot of world events too. I mean, there's just so much to kind of think about and try to grapple with going on in the world that spans beyond COVID. That just gave me kind of a different worldview and perspective of, you know, who - I don't know, like, who we are, especially like in the United States. What what are we doing? What do we value most? Are the some of the challenges and some of those things are concerning. Upsetting. And, and I think that, you know, I think the thing that stands out like the most from these couple of years was, especially initially in the first year, was the increased stress level that my husband and I both had, and he handles and handled it really well. But I never felt a lot of like, physical effects of stress or anything, but just kind of starts to wear down on you over time. And um, but you don't, there's like, literally, there was nothing that we could do about it. So there's been it's like, there's, there's different strategies to managing stress, but when you don't have the time, like time was the biggest, biggest factor that we did not have. It's hard to prioritize things and you have to do it very intentionally. You know, like, I remember, like, and most people could probably relate to this early on, like, you don't know now that you're not going to the grocery store, not walking to campus or anything, like all of a sudden you're like not moving that much. And luckily, I had I was you know, had a pedometer, so I get like tell like my, my movement, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I'm like, like 2000 steps a day". Like that's, like, that's gotta change if you're just walking around your house, like, you just need to go very far. So like, I'm more intentionally of you, like, we're getting out of the house in the stroller, we're gonna go for walks more often. And so even

like, right, right from the get go, like early pandemic, No one's leaving their house and we are out like, anyone with kids. We are like, the only ones out in the street in those weeks. Everyone's just like, holed up, like no one knows how contagious it is. And they're like, they see you on the street and they like walk as far away as possible. But we were out there, like got kids, you can't just keep them cooped up inside, so - but yeah, I just tried to, like, make some time. It's hard to prioritize things, like even showering. And so it's like, well, you know, like, I'm not going to do that all the time. You know, we don't have time if we have to, like make concessions here. Like we either are going to eat or we're going to, like what do you have time for? Um, but yeah, again, you're not leaving the house like, no one's gonna see you all time. So. So yeah, like trying to decide like, what's, what's important to me? What do I need to be happy? What can we live with or without, you know, to, to manage our time better and be happier. And this is just like a constant, COVID or not, constant life struggle of like finding balance in, you know, between like, personal, professional, etc. priorities. And COVID really, man, it just brought it to like a point where you got to deal with it now like you separate your personal/professional life and make time for yourself. Yeah, we just did not - time was the biggest problem and something that like, gosh, even when I think about it, in the early COVID times, that still really gets me is the contrast between people. And I don't want to like lump everyone who isn't or didn't have as much of a caregiving role into like one category. Because there was certainly a blend, but there were a lot of people who were bored. A lot of people who are bored, including, you know, some of our own family members, and certainly friends, It's something you'd hear about people like picking up new hobbies, to try to combat the boredom and reading more and working on a new instrument or baking sourdough bread. And so you'd hear about these things. And I had, we had a really hard time hearing that when we were like so over, burdened with it. So yeah, we were so busy, and I just couldn't believe that there was no way to like shift responsibilities at all. You know, the way society is kind of built typically, like if you do work more, you couldn't, you couldn't afford some other services to help offload the burden, the time burden, you know, to support your ability to like, spend time at work. So you have this kind of balance, and then when that's completely broken, and suddenly you're doing everything, then there was no one for us to turn to, you know, we had no family that could help. Because, of course, you don't want to risk you know, your health of family members and things. So yeah, that was difficult, though. Like, when other people have a lot of time and then we are like, overloaded with stress and things and trying to figure out how is this gonna, you know, end.

### **AB 45:43**

Did you - you mentioned sometimes when you would, you know, go out and be like, "we gotta go, we gotta get out of the house", you would see a lot of other people doing the same thing, where you either if they were colleagues or just family friends - did you ever like, I guess, connect or speak with other caregivers, that you knew whether they were parents, and just to kind of, I guess, discuss what was going on? And what was that like?

### **CL 46:13**

Yeah, there was certainly, we built, here's another silver lining: We built more of a community around us nearby. We knew all of our neighbors, pre-COVID, and some of them fairly well. But then, throughout the pandemic, we became closer to people in our surrounding area, because we'd see them more often. And we're very fortunate that where we live, there are children all over the block. Like, it's neighbors on either end of us, they have kids that are my youngest age, and we've got kids across the street. So that first like kind of, maybe fall 2020 moving into spring 2021 a lot of us are still at home very much of the time and the kids are just running around together and able to interact and play and then the adults, meanwhile, are like either trying to work or we're just standing there talking about our lives and like kind of commiserating. Yeah, usually they're, especially in the early time, we'd, there'd be like a beer involved. It's like mid afternoon or something. But like, it's - yeah, so like, we kind of helped each other through in a sense, just because you knew that at least even though we're alone in what we need to accomplish we have other people all around us physically, who are doing the same thing. And who are making it through. So is help just helpful and to compare experiences to like one, you know, what are your kids doing? Are you going back to school yet? And then you know, are you shut down? Oh, and then your family caught COVID, how did, you know- just having people to talk to to share those experiences and in-person too, was refreshing. You know, we get a lot of stuff online, of course, a lot of communication.

#### **AB 48:20**

Sure. All right, um, we're almost at 2:50 so I don't want to keep you too long. If there was one thing that you could go back in time, and tell yourself at the beginning of all this, would there be something that you would want to, you would want to sort of inform yourself about? Knowing what you do now about this whole experience with COVID and your caregiving roles?

#### **CL 48:53**

Yeah. I think something that would have been - there's a couple things that would have been helpful. I think something...I don't know. So like, fairly early on, I was looking at some projections, maybe it was like six months in or so, just kind of looking at some projections about COVID, and someone mentioned - actually was probably like four months in - someone who was like, "well from this projection, we're gonna hit like, a million deaths". And I was like, in shock, I was like, in complete shock for a long time. And I was like, well, that can't be right. And here we are. Um, so at a time, I don't know. So like, initially, I'm kind of like, well, I almost wish I would have known how things would have progressed. But actually, maybe that wouldn't have been helpful knowledge because I even remember, like how shocked I - it was really, really upsetting, you know. When I first thought that it could possibly be. And I remember talking to other people, and they're like "no way", like, "there's no way that that's going to happen" like "you're overreacting to things" and then yeah, like I said, here we are. So I don't know, maybe it's best I didn't really know how - and we don't even know how - we still had 500, almost 500 deaths yesterday and so like, this is not, it's not done, you know. It's not over. But I think maybe if I would have done something a little differently or known more about would be putting the kids back in daycare would be a bit sooner. Just knowing that they're likely going to be okay,

catching COVID. Again, we don't know what, what's gonna happen if they catch it 10 times or you know - and we don't we don't know enough about long COVID and other things. But at the same time, like the Nature Academy, I've mentioned, they've done - I really want to praise the job that they've done, and in helping families in the community. And I feel safe with my kids there even though COVID's going round and things. So knowing that, knowing how I feel about my children's care there, I think I should have put them back a bit sooner. Just to make, to protect my husband and I like our health and well being. Because it's hard, managing everything altogether. And yeah, I think that that kind of knowledge - and that now we do know more, we do know more, and we can feel a little bit more secure in our choices that we're making, I think and, and knowing that there's no good choice anymore. Like there's no perfect choice anymore. But, we don't know as time goes by, and I really wish that someone in two years could come back and tell me something now. To either keep doing this, or you know, like, yeah, that would be that would be nice. But -

**AB 52:21**

Yeah, because like you mentioned, we're still very much in it. And it's, it's just so it's been a weird, weird time.

**CL 52:30**

Yeah, yeah. And I think people have been coping relatively well, I think. And just to kind of accepting that it's going to be here with us. And this is going to be, you know, endemic. And, despite, like not wanting it to be here, I mean, we just - and other countries, I mean, there's different strategies, it's like the United States has its own personal kind of strategy. But, um, but so at least in the United States, it will be here. And I don't like to think about that, that now, like as we age and get older, the leading cause of death, you know, it's gonna be heart attack and cancer and COVID. And so we knew it might not affect you as much in your 30s or 40s. But then, yeah, that's kind of thinking I still am wondering about and just how, as a society, you know, "are we doing enough to kind of protect people who are vulnerable"? And the answer to that is probably no. So I don't know. We're definitely in it still and trying and do the best we can of course..

**AB 53:42**

Okay, um, was there anything else that I maybe didn't get to that you kind of want to discuss, or - ?

**CL 53:50**

No. I mean, we could probably keep talking for hours. Now that years have gone by. But yeah, I don't know. It's, you know, I don't want to put the like kind of a negative light on anything with the caregiving aspect. And even though like, certainly, it's been good too, you know, to some extent. It's just not something that people should be expected to do while also working full time. You

know, it's just that that aspect is tough. But yeah, I guess you know, even thinking again about the silver linings and stuff. I am fortunate to have been able to spend more of that time with my kids. So despite it's difficulty, it's like we love being around them more than anything, so that's fun.

**AB 54:51**

Well, thank you so much.

**CL 54:53**

Yeah, thank you.

**AB 54:55**

[I] appreciate all of your insights and your - sharing your experiences. And yeah we're hoping that it'll be it'll be really useful in the future for people to sort of look back at and have [these] firsthand, you know, accounts of what it was what it was like during all of it.

**CL 55:16**

Yeah thanks for helping with this project, this was very good.