

November 16, 2020

An interview with children about the coronavirus pandemic. Questions were administered by mother Kristen Gabel. This is a transcription of the recorded interviews by Marie Gabel.

Isaac (Age 13. Grade 8)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: "Umm, I think the coronavirus pandemic is just, the COVID-19, is the big disease...sickness...the COVID stands for, uhh, coronavirus disease 2019. And the pandemic is that it's worldwide. So, it's spreading fast. And we don't have a cure yet but we're working on it."

Q: "What has it been like staying home and not going places? How does that make you feel?"

A: "Well, umm, I'm glad to have my family here with me, because, I don't know. I don't know what I'd do with this time without them. I mean, like, they're always the ones that I hang out with, and I don't really have anyone around me that I go to hang out with. And it makes me feel glad and grateful for my family and happy that I get to spend all this time with them. And I get to learn things that, even though I've been living with them my whole life, I haven't learned so many things and I've learned it through these times because we've all been home together. So, stuff like that."

Q: "What is one thing you will never forget about this time?"

A: "Umm, the amount of dishes we had to clean." (he laughs) "It was incredible because there was more people in the house but I remember that we had a lot of fun, *more* fun, like nights together and time because we were all there together and we talked a lot. I think that was fun. And, yeah."

Teresa (Age 11. Grade 6)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: "Um, it's a time when...it's a time when umm, people were...people are getting sick from, umm, badly sick, from umm, what was it, bats? From...well people are just getting really sick, and everything's closing down, and everyone is having to wear masks and stay at home and quarantine from others. And it's just a time where, uh, well, where there's a lot of sickness even though there has been sickness before. It's just a time where there's like a new sickness. And so it's new to everyone and everyone is scared about it. And, yeah."

Q: "Does it make you scared?"

A: "Umm, sometimes and sometimes not really."

Q: "Well, explain that."

A: “Umm, sometimes because Bernadette and Isaac because Isaac has asthma, and Bernadette and like, we don’t know what the effect has on us because it has a different effect on everyone. And also sometimes not just because, um, I feel safe sometimes like from- when I have to wear a mask like at the store. Like not that I wasn’t safe, like, I didn’t feel safe without a mask, but like during this time it’s kinda secure with a mask.”

Q: “What has it been like staying home and not going places? How does that make you feel?”

A: “Umm, it has been hard because I miss going to see friends and, umm, I loved like when dad would take us to umm, like Pizza Hut, and going mini-golfing and just going out. Like just because dad or mom wants to just take us out. And going out to eat. I miss all of that. And it’s just been, like, hard staying home, because, well, it was just fun going out to those places.”

Q: “What do you miss most?”

A: “Oh, umm, probably seeing friends.”

Q: “So you’re homeschooled during this time which is something we didn’t do before. So what are your thoughts on homeschooling, positive and negative?”

A: “Uh, positive would be umm, that I get stuff done easier. Like stuff like that. I get stuff done easier, and umm, I get to see everyone a lot more than I used to when I was out with school. Umm, and I don’t have to wear a mask at (home) school. And I get to spend time with Agnes. But, negatives...and umm, the hard thing would be not seeing friends. And I miss seeing the teachers. And, I just miss being at school.”

Q: “How did you feel last year in fifth grade when you had to just suddenly be in a two week quarantine and you never went back to school then?”

A: “Um, well at first I was excited. I was actually not wanting to go to school. And then after a while it got sad without having to actually see people and having to do virtual was hard because there was a lot of technology issues. And, I felt like I wasn’t getting stuff done as...like fast as I...like, I could get stuff done sometimes, like, and before then getting out of school. But sometimes it was just like a stress to know I have to wake up and go do my school.”

Q: “What’s one thing that made you really sad about not going back to school last year?”

A: “I missed seeing teachers and friends. Oh yeah, and no fifth grade cafe. I miss that. Yeah. We had to do a virtual retreat which wasn’t fun.”

Q: “What is the one thing you will never forget about this time?”

A: “Umm well, that it was just like a scary time for everyone. Like how nervous everyone was and what it was like, though. How fun it was to be homeschooled and get the opportunity to...and that it was just like a hard time for everyone. But I also won’t forget the opportunity of getting to homeschool and see everyone more.”

Q: "What is one thing you want to do when this is over?"

A: "Umm, probably either like go to like...I don't know. There's a lot I could do. Go to a friend's house probably."

From the Mother: "Teresa is like (Agnes's) second mom."

Lucia (Age 10. Grade 4)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: "Well, it's just umm, a big sickness that people...umm. It started, well it kinda just started from someone in China. And, umm, then it came here, and I just get nervous about if, like, I'm gonna get it."

Q: "What has it been like staying home and not going places? How does that make you feel?"

A: "Well, I'm not...I don't really...before this I really only went to like school and places that I needed to go. I don't really go on many fun trips. So, it's kinda...it isn't that different."

Q: "Now you're homeschooled. What do you think about missing school?"

A: "Well, I miss playing with my friends at sch-, um, at recess. And...but I do have my, um, family to play with me."

Q: "What is the one thing you will remember most?"

A: "Well, probably just like getting nervous about everything, and like, everybody being quarantined in our family and stuff."

Q: "So what makes you the most nervous?"

A: "Umm, well, just really getting sick."

Q: "So, if you're not going anywhere, what gets you so nervous?"

A: "Well, since like, the older kids are in school, they could get something and then we could get it too."

Q: "What will happen if you get sick?"

A: "Well, if I get really sick I could go to the hospital, or I would just be sitting in my bed all day."

Q: "What have you heard about people that have gotten sick from coronavirus? What have you heard happens?"

A: "Umm, some of them have died and some of them just get really really sick for a while."

Q: "Do you know anybody who has died?"

A: "Hmm, umm, I don't think so."

Q: "You don't know anyone personally. Do you know any friends who have lost a family member?"

A: "Nope."

Q: "What about next door?"

A: "Oh, yeah. They lost their uncle."

Q: "When the coronavirus is over, what's one of the first things you want to do?"

A: "Ummm, hmm. Well, maybe I'll see like my friends and we'll be able to go to school. Yeah, we *will* be able to go to school."

Q: "Are you glad you're homeschooled, or do you wish you were back in school?"

A: With no hesitation... "I'm glad I'm homeschooled!"

Q: "Why are you glad you're homeschooled?"

A: "Not just because like I don't wanna get sick, but, umm, uh...well I get to spend more time with my family."

From the Mother about homeschooling: "The kids at home have definitely lost the discipline of being able to stay focused for a long period of time because there's always a distraction here and the deadlines are pretty light. And even Aunt Donna (a teacher) said that on the phone yesterday. She notices that when kids come into class after they've done virtual learning for a while, they have lost that sense of, like, routine and being able to stick to things, and she's like, you'll be doing math class and all of a sudden you realize someone wants to get up and get a pizza. Right? So, these kids will be very good at working at home, I would think so eventually. But, umm, I think they've lost that sense of sustained- like, pushing through to sustain working when they're tired."

Rita (Age 8. Grade 3)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: Shrugged. No answer.

Q: "What has it been like staying home and not going places? How does that make you feel?"

A: "Uh, ner-, uh, like when I go out I'm gonna get it so then I'm nervous."

Q: "What has it been like staying home for the past 8 months?"

A: "Hmm. Uh, cramped. It's been hard."

Q: "What has been hard? What is the hardest part?"

A: "I miss not seeing my friends anymore."

Q: "Are you going to school this year?"

A: "No."

Q: "What do you think about having to stay home from school and being homeschooled?"

A: "Ummm, it's like, hard because there's a lot of distractions. And, umm, I don't always get everything done so I have to do it like the next day. I have to do it extra the next day."

Q: "What place do you miss going the most?"

A: "Umm, the sheep farm with the Keene's."

Q: "What is the one thing you will never forget?"

A: "Umm, that, hmm, I'm trying to think. It's hard. Umm, like, having all my family home with me."

Q: "What do you think about wearing masks?"

A: "Um, it makes me feel like I have a fever and I don't. They're like, I don't know, they're hard to wear sometimes."

Bernadette (Age 7. Grade 1. Bernadette is considered high risk for the coronavirus and has a congenital heart defect)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: "Umm, it's...I think it is like...well...umm...I think it's something that it...a big virus that spreads everytime. Like it keeps going around in circles and it will never stop. I think that."

Q: "What has it been like staying home and not going places? How does that make you feel?"

A: "It's umm...hard and it's really sad being...like not going anywhere, not going to first grade. And...but I'm happy that I get to homeschool with my mom."

Q: "So what do you miss about school?"

A: "Umm, the star helper. And my friends. And eating with my best friends."

Q: "How does coronavirus make you feel?"

A: "It makes me feel nervous that we're gonna get it."

Q: "What do you think will happen if we get it?"

A: "Uh, we..if it's not that big of a problem we'll stay home and try to make one of us feel better. And if it's getting worse then we will go to the doctor and see if the coronavirus could stop."

Q: "What is the one thing you will never forget?"

A: "I will tell them that it's a pandemic and umm, that coronavirus could stay forever. And that we have to be protected."

Q: "What is one thing that you would do if it was over next week?"

A: "Uh, probably, umm, people go to the store not wearing any masks and just have fun playing."

Q: "How does wearing a mask make you feel?"

A: "It makes me feel sad because I just want to be out of masks for church. Like no masks. And for school, they...I just want schools to be open again so people can start going to school not online anymore."

Q: "What is one place you want to go when coronavirus is over?"

A: "The zoo! But the zoo is barely open. Like one time there was nobody there."

Q: "How do you feel about staying home this whole time? How does that make you feel?"

A: "It just makes me happy and sad because, umm, sad because like I don't get to see my new teacher. But happy because I have my mom as a teacher and my dad as a principal."

Q: "Anything else you want to tell me about coronavirus?"

A: "I'll ask one question...umm, if it goes on forever, I'm probably just going to be like praying a lot. Saying 'Hail Mary' a lot."

Q: "Yeah. What are you praying about?"

A: "Umm, to be safe, to never get it, and to be healthy."

Q: "What happens when people get coronavirus?"

A: "Uh, they have to go to the doctor. And I know somethin'! I know influenza."

Q: "Is coronavirus and influenza the same?"

A: "No. Because coronavirus is really bad, influenza is kinda bad."

Q: "Do we have any medicine for coronavirus?"

A: "No. Not yet, but we probably will."

Q: "What are we doing to help people?"

A: "They're getting medicine like seeing which one is right and mixing the whole thing up. So we can go outside, not wear our masks, play with our friends, and have fun."

Q: "You know so much about coronavirus. You surprised me with all your answers. How do you know so much about coronavirus?"

A: "Well we have been wearing masks at church a lot and I never get my first communion, so...I think I know."

Q: "But how do you know all the other stuff? How do you know they're trying to get medicine and how you get sick?"

A: "Because the news is..."

Q: "Do you listen to the news?"

A: "Kind of."

Q: "What does coronavirus look like?"

A: "It looks like there's like umm, a lot of strings and they're like, laying down. And they have to wear something like that (covers her face) that they have to breathe in. A lot of people died from coronavirus."

Q: "Right. We just saw a story about a 5 year old boy whose mom and dad both died."

A: "Well, uh, the little boy didn't die. Now he has to make food and he's only like five. And probably now he has a babysitter to drive him and babysit probably."

Q: "What's your last thought?"

A: "Umm, is coronavirus always gonna stay like this? Or is it gonna get like worse and worse or is it gonna get better and better and stop?"

Micah (Age 5. Grade Kindergarten)

Q: "What is the coronavirus pandemic?"

A: "Hmm. I don't know."

Q: "What has it been like staying at home and not going places?"

A: "Boring!"

Q: "So how does it make you feel to have to stay home all the time?"

A: "Sad."

Q: "Where do you wish you could go?"

A: "I mean it's fun staying home."

Q: "But what places do you miss going to?"

A: "Golfing." (Mini-golfing with dad and his brother)

Q: "Do you wish you would have been able to go to school this year?"

A: Nods yes.

Q: "What's one thing you were looking forward to about school that you can't do now?"

A: "Umm, I was looking forward to...like, hmm. I don't know."

Q: "What's another thing that you miss going out to do?"

A: "Going out to eat."

Q: "Do you miss going to family parties at Grandma Gabel's house?"

A: Nods yes.

Q: "Do you miss seeing Grandma and Papa Werth?"

A: Nods yes.

Q: "What else do you miss?"

A: "I, mom, what's the place where we go-ed with Marie and we ate there? It's like the...and we got to go inside. We ate outside." Shrugs. "It was you, Faustina, and Marie...Oh! At the capitol!"

Q: "You're right we did meet Marie there! Do you miss going to see Marie and moving her into school? And going to see her room?"

A: Nods yes.

Q: "And seeing Ian's dorm?"

A: Nods yes.

Q: "So when you're a dad and you're telling your kids about coronavirus, what is the one thing you will tell them about coronavirus?"

A: "Umm, it can maybe make you die."

Q: "You'll tell them that? Does that make you scared when you hear that?"

A: Nods yes. Big sigh out.

Q: "Does coronavirus make you nervous, or are you ok with it?"

A: "I'm ok."

Faustina (Age 2)

Q: "What is coronavirus?"

A: "Umm, I don't know."

Q: "Why do we have to wear masks?"

A: "Because we have to."

Q: "Do you like to wear masks?"

A: "Uh huh at church."

Q: "At church you wear masks. Do you like to wear them?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "No...when you take them off what do you tell me?"

A: "Uhh...aw yucky."

Q: "Why are masks yucky?"

A: "Because the mask is yucky."

Q: "Why?"

A: "Cuz my mouth gets yucky."

Q: "What gets yucky? Does it smell yucky or does it taste yucky?"

A: "Uhh it's yucky!"

Q: "Do you like everybody being at home with you?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "Do you like when Daddy works from home?"

A: "Uh huh."

Q: "What do you think about everybody being home? What do you like about it?"

A: "I don't know.."

Agnes (Age 8 months. Born March 6, 2020...1 week before the nation shut down)

From the Mother: "I have noticed, having this be my 12th child, I have noticed that her stranger anxiety is really bad because she hasn't had to do all the things babies do. She doesn't go to the store with mom. She only goes to church and that's it. When Mrs. Keene came over the other

day, she leaned down and said, “Hi, Agnes, how are you,” and Agnes was crawling and she fell down, like put her head on the ground, and fell down and just goes, “waaah.” And when we went to go see Grandma and Grandpa Werth the other day, she was being held by Grandma Werth and she kept putting her head down on her but she wouldn’t look at her. So she’s very anxious with strangers because she has seen so little strangers. Um, you know the plus side is, to this, is that she doesn’t get your typical baby colds and fevers and things like that. She hasn’t picked up any childhood viruses. Um, I’m also behind on her well checks because I just, I don’t want to go in to the pediatrician every two months. So, that’s another perspective.”