

New Normal

Category: COVID-19

written by Jazbeen Ahmad | April 4, 2020

The fear is palpable as I walk through the near-empty maze-like hallways of the hospital. Having no visitors makes things eerily quiet. It is the same as the quiet throughout my small city—in empty shopping center parking lots, down neighborhood roads.

The quiet is broken only by the laughter of my children, with whom I spend my evenings and days off. I smile and carry on as usual, so as not let them feel the worry I carry. We keep to the usual routine—baths, storytime, and building with Magnatiles.

But despite my best efforts, they are aware of the difference in their routine. My options for child care are limited, so now they attend a day care that has vowed to remain open for essential workers. They are taken from my car in the darkness of the early mornings to have their temperatures checked. Their classrooms have narrowed down to only a few children, and they are learning about the “coronavirus.” “It’s the corona!” my 3 and 5-year-old say.

We have also halted our park visits, ballet lessons, gymnastics. Tee ball has been postponed. The bluebonnets and paintbrushes are blooming, and when I look out on the beautiful landscape I’d never know anything has changed.

My reminder comes in the form of my respirator, sitting perched on the counter of my mud room; the surgical caps I have purchased to protect my hair; the eye protection I keep in my car; the constant updates and emails from colleagues, friends, and family.

Any sense of normalcy is brief and fleeting.

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