

THE

WORLD



STOOD

still

but we are
still Here

Lockdown stories
by parents from
Aberlour's Family
Service in
South Ayrshire.

Foreward

This book is special for many reasons. The coronavirus pandemic has been challenging for us all and it has forced us to look extra hard for rainbows and rays of light. The stories within this book certainly bring warmth and hope to everyone who reads them.

This book is special because, at its heart, lies the theme of community. Even when families who normally use this service couldn't physically come together, they supported each other through uncertainty and isolation.


This book is special because its stories are happy, sad, thought-provoking, and ultimately, inspiring. I was lucky enough to visit South Ayrshire Family Service before the pandemic hit, and I know that parents who use this service love their children and want the best for them. Children have the right to be brought up in a family environment of happiness, love, and understanding, and parents have the right to be supported by the state to bring up their children. The support offered here is a great strength to many families.

Finally, it's a special book because it shows that even during adversity, the human spirit can triumph and create something beautiful. We can all learn a lot from these humbling stories.

Bruce Adamson
Children and Young
People's Commissioner
Scotland




INTRODUCTION

18 Mums and Dads wrote down their experiences during the first national lockdown in response to the global Coronavirus pandemic starting March 2020. And here is what they said;



This book, 'The World Stood Still, But We Are Still Here!' is important as it documents a part of history. And what makes it even more important is it's our history; a group of mums, dads and families brought together to share their stories and experiences through a tough time in our lives. There was NO plan or guidelines on how to handle this global pandemic....nothing. We have all been having to deal with this in our own individual way.



Through our determination and our experiences we are somehow pulling through with our families. This book shares our fears, our tears and our laughter throughout lockdown. It tells you how we coped and got through it and about the things we achieved to support our own families and each other. The lockdown has shown us even when things may seem dull there are a lot of ways we can come together and brighten the days.




This book highlights how parents, many with learning difficulties, have felt during lockdown and how they have had to find ways to deal with the situation that works to keep both them and their child or children safe and happy.

We have shared our stories to create a guide for families which shows even when things can feel tough there is always hope. We wanted something for the parents in the service and new to the service to have something to connect with so they didn't feel so alone. It has been a chance for us to take what we have learned in our unique journeys and share it with other families.

Being part of this book makes us feel so proud. It feels so good to be able to create something together that, we hope will inspire and bring a smile and maybe some comfort to mums and dads now and in the future. We have enjoyed sharing our stories and it has helped get us through. We feel amazing because we have been able to give our own stories, in our own words.



We hope all parents can use our stories and experiences in their own lives so they CAN come out of the other side of any difficult time stronger, more aware, wiser and most importantly connected to others knowing they are not alone.



Please read all these wonderful stories. You will see how we are all different, but we all have managed to adjust to this different way of life. The challenge is REAL, we never knew our own strength and determination until now.... just know that "we got this".



Learning to live without your children through lockdown

Being without our children during lockdown has been painful. It feels like there is nothing left to live for.

But don't let your head have time to think. You must find your passions inside to keep your mind on something that's positive.

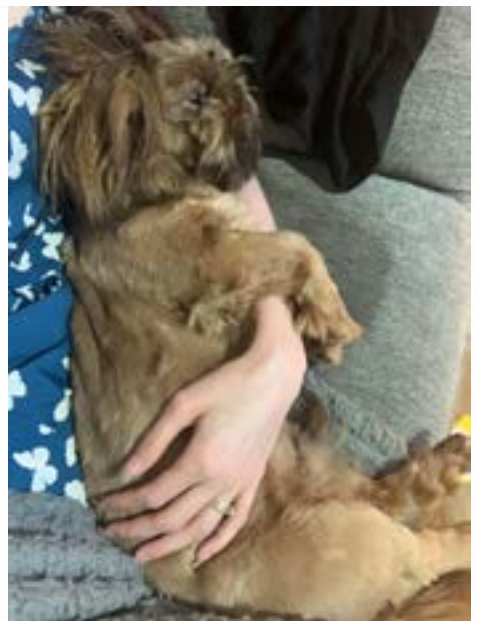


Having a dogs have helped – especially the little pup.

He just seems to know when I am low and jumps up on the sofa and makes me hold him like a baby. This is just so comforting.

He stands by us when we are doing hard jobs....we were building a unit and he stood by us and gave me a flat head screwdriver.

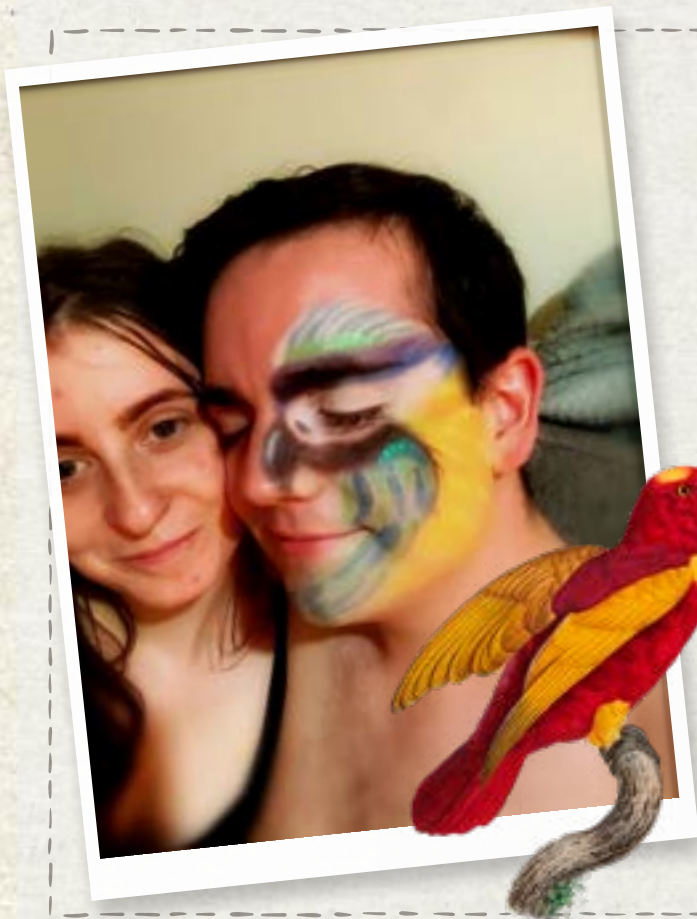
He puts his paw in place to help hold the unit in place.



I have been getting back into photography as an excuse to get out the house more. I used to be really good at it but then I stopped.

It is something that I am starting up again. It puts my mind elsewhere.

I did want to go up the hill today. Looking like a good day.



I got into skin care and makeup. I was getting a bit fed up with constantly breaking out and my skin affects how I feel. I think clear skin and a brighter complexion gives you a confidence boost.

I did some research online to see how best go about skin care and make up. I used to be into makeup a little bit but now I do it pretty much every day for something to do and I want to get better at it... my husband even lets me practice on him!... must be love.

Doing make up led to Face Painting and my favourite one is a parrot which I did on the whole of his face.

During lockdown and when our children were in foster care we had time to open up more. We realised that we should have got help as the house has deteriorated.

We have worked hard to transform our house. We really want to get the best chance to get our kids home. We have painted and decorated our children's room before. In fact we wallpapered our daughter's room just before she went but never got to see that yet!

We painted and moved the house around.



We got into getting a food delivery and getting into healthy eating and followed recipes to learn those types of skills.

By Aidan and Ohana

What is happening?

**What is happening.... Anyone... Anyone...
Anyone actually know what is happening?**

I was feeling so overwhelmed for many weeks of lockdown. I felt anxious and I felt everything was out of control.


I was reminded by the people that support me that I cannot change everything and that it is important to concentrate on dealing with what you can control.

Literally the minute I stopped watching social media videos and listening to the news constantly I felt better.

I found all the conflicting messages very stressful and now choose to deal with things a little at a time.

The restrictions about schools were changing all the time and my daughter was due to start primary school. It was too much to think about it all. I did not even think about how I was going to get Robynn-Belle to school, what clothes she should be wearing, what times etc??!

I got a letter saying my daughter was going to be in a 'bubble' and only go in on a Thursday and Friday and then I would have to home school her the rest of the time. How can I home school my child?!?... ABC's etc... home school was not going to be an option!!




But then the Scottish Government said the schools would be open full time. The schools were closed and I didn't know what was happening. I wasn't sure what the start date was or what the plan was..... and this was going to be her first day at Primary School!

I asked my Health Visitor lots of questions around Robynn-Belle starting school and she came back to me with the answers... Having the answers to these questions helped me to stop worrying.

For me to cope during in lockdown I decided that I had to take one day at a time and not worry about tomorrow.





Don't touch that!.... Play which doesn't involve using household objects.

When lockdown started I was so scared about having to try and home school my daughter. I felt so anxious as nursery had encouraged me to let Robynn-Belle count the tins from the cupboard. Having Robynn-Belle in the kitchen makes me feel really anxious. I don't want her to think it is a safe place to play. I have tried very hard to teach Robynn-Belle that the kitchen is not a safe place to play.

I found alternatives like Robynn's wooden blocks to use for counting rather than using tins of food.

Building Independence for anxious parents

When you feel so anxious it is hard to let your child have new learning experiences that keep them safe. I found new ways for Robynn-Belle to stay safe while still allowing her to do things for herself. For example I let Robynn-Belle get dressed all by herself and let her hold the cereal containers and pour a bowl herself. I wanted to teach Robynn some independence and she did do really well with this over lockdown.

Now Robynn can dress herself she doesn't stop....now she loves to dress up a lot and she changes her dresses in a blink of an eye. She is so funny, she comes in like she's on a cat walk and says what character she is and what that character does..... like she says "Hi I'm cat lady princess and I have cat powers so cats like me, do you like my ears and whiskers?" I just say "hello cat princess" to her in character and let her keep enjoying being a cat!!





Messy Play for parents who don't like mess

I really don't like the many textures involved in messy play. I also understand that it is important for children to experience it. Robynn-Belle enjoys messy play at school so at home she enjoys drawing and play using her imagination.

During lockdown I worked out how to cope with my phobia of messy play. I coped by giving Robynn-Belle choices. I let my daughter know that if she wanted to play with her slime and playdough then she would have to tidy it up otherwise it would be left to go hard and that she would not have it to play with next time.

Big painting sessions are always done on the table and the paint is allowed to dry so I do not have to touch the wet paint. That this was a good way for Robynn-Belle to learn consequences to her actions and inactions.

“So... we have survived to tell the tale and we are super proud of what we have achieved. My characteristics can make some parts of parenting harder but if I can do it so can you!”



By Alice

My Covid story

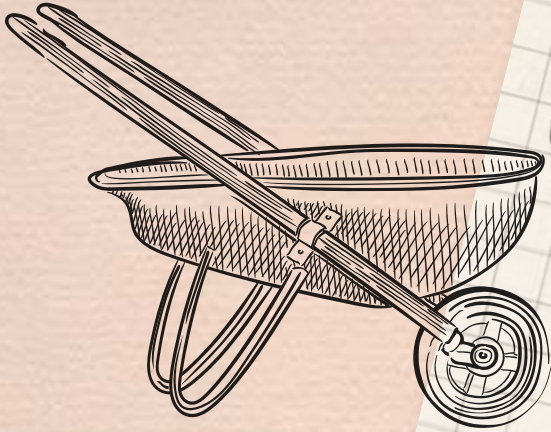
It has been tough not being able to get out fishing, camping and walking with the family. I haven't been fishing since lockdown has been lifted but I have been for walks.

I love getting out with my children, it makes me feel so good and I love seeing the children playing. I have been able to connect with my friends more by playing football.

Finding out we are having another baby has made me feel happy and excited. I have also been a little anxious in case we get social workers back in our lives. We worked hard with Aberlour to get deregistered and signed off from them. I know if we keep doing all the work we have been doing with Aberlour we will be fine, I just worry too much. We have both experienced these things together. I have really missed hearing the heartbeat. When Nicola was at the appointment I stayed at home to look after Ava-Mae and Tyler-James. When Nicola came home with the scan picture I was excited to see it but I was still nervous.

I am hoping that when the time comes for us to have the baby that I will be able to go in with Nicola and see my new baby girl being born.

By Mark



lets stay
HOME

Being at home has been ok... I learnt how to work the washing machine and I learnt how to tile my bathroom.... I was well proud of myself.



I was fooling about on a wheel barrow and jumped in it. It went rolling down the hill I came flying out it and landed in the grass on my back.

I enjoyed this experience but I have learnt not to do this again!

COVID-19

Lockdown Ideas



Managing Your Childs Behaviour

I used to raise my voice with Harley but she needs to know I can control my feelings. I still use different tone so she knows when I am happy, when she has been good or when she has done something I didn't want her to do.

Now I bend down to her level and I say to her "tell mummy what is the matter" Give them time to calm down. It is important to stop the meltdown before it begins. Children feel frustrated and upset and are still learning how to manage their feelings. They don't know how to tell us how they feel or explain what is happening to them. I focus on the positives rather than the negatives and this helps her to feel special and worthy.

It is so important for you to speak to someone – support each other.

Ideas for bonding with your child

When you are tired, not sure what is going to happen next and not sure what to do next with your little one.... It really will be ok.

I look back in time. How would I want someone to talk to me when I was three?

Using different voices "Harley really laughs when I pretend to be a man or be Peppa Pig and this has developed her interest in books".

Role Play

When you are at home all the time you realise that you don't physically need to play with toys all the time. Harley loves role play!!!

Harley sets up her teddies and babies – and she takes turn choosing a song. We would pass around a basket with finger puppets and a little sheep and a star in it and take turns to sing a song depending on what Harley, the teddies, babies or I picked out.

Even just sitting playing peekaboo with a blanket with Harley and then she does it with her dollies.



Have fun!
We made
playdough + Moon Sand
Stories together read
We made towers





I love you
I love you
I love you

One day Harley said to me "my mummy doesn't love me" ... she might have heard someone say that.

I did feel sad but I have learnt that this is a reaction and even though it is negative attention, it is better than no attention.

Walking for Mental Health

I stood on the scales and realised that I was 13 stone. I had put on 4 stone!!!

I realised I had to do something about it and decided that night to go for a walk with Harley before bedtime.

I started by taking longer routes to the shop and going to parks further away.

Harley really enjoyed it and because of coronavirus it was safer to take water and have a picnic which was cheaper too. We went on swings we'd never been on before and on new forest and woodland walks.

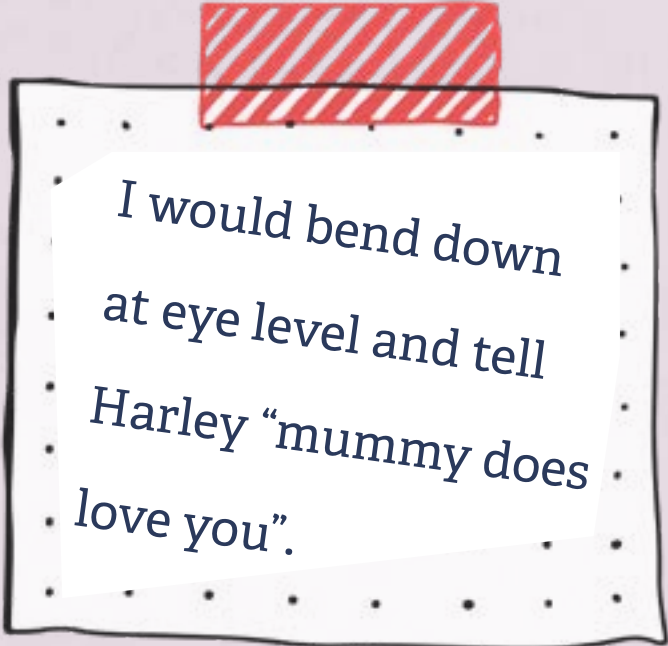
I could set my phone to count the steps and was always amazed at how many I had done.

The more I did the more motivated I felt.

It was important for me to remember about taking care of the house. I can't let the stress of my house impact on me.

Learning a New Skill

When you are dealing with depression and anxiety you have to give yourself something else to



*I would bend down
at eye level and tell
Harley "mummy does
love you".*

focus on. You can't always focus on your depression and anxiety. You can give yourself a different focus like cooking and you can prove to people that you can be a good parent at the same time.

I cooked rice by myself!! I used to always use microwave rice but now I wanted to cook my own rice. I didn't phone anyone or anything and I just got on with it and did it. I have tried before but every time I did I didn't cook it for long enough or it would stick to the pot.

This time I just needed to do it and I achieved it. I have seen other people do it and have learnt what to do. I just used what I learnt and it worked!!

You can make simple delicious food with from scratch with food from the food bank.

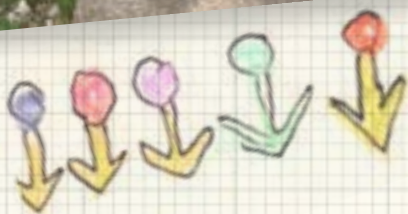
By Alyssa

Tuesdays

I have missed my Tuesdays and going down to Ayr and being at The Man shed. I really missed sitting on the bus to Ayr, thinking and wondering what the guys and myself will talk about today.

What part of the shed project can we do next or what's on the menu at Strathyre house today? Hammer a few bits of old wood, build a shelf, have a tea and cake and couple of games of pool....

After the Lockdown started I started to feel lost and down.....at first I could not understand why and what it was, I put it down to being like everyone else during lockdown.....Then I realised I was missing the shed and what it had become in my life.





The shed and the other fathers have been routine in my life for the last eight months. The shed has occupied my Tuesdays and made me think about other things, use my imagination and engage me in conversations with other guys, a place where we talk about us and our families.

I decided to buy myself a shed and started to work on my garden, this has helped me cope during lockdown and being isolated.

Not seeing my son during contact has been hard but working away in my garden has helped me through this....and I hope that Tuesdays back at The Man shed start back soon.

Thank you for reading, Tuesdays by James.



By James

Being Alone...

Social isolation for adults is hard but not being able to see your children is impossible.....

My children are in foster care.

I have not been able to see my son and only had phone contact. I was able to take my son for his jags this made me feel over the moon.

Being able to hug him and tell him everything will be okay then take him for an ice cream was brilliant. I am wondering when we will have face to face time together again.....

Not having updates about the girls since week two of lockdown is hard. My sons foster carer received photos of my girls to give to my son and this saddened me as I got nothing. I am their mum.

On my birthday my sister surprised me with a birthday cake with 31 candles, this made me feel special!



Lockdown Wedding

It was the full family from Scotland that was to go to Ireland for my uncles wedding in June but lockdown got in the way.

I had ordered a blue dress for the wedding as the colours were blue and white. We wanted to get excited but we knew we couldn't.

We kept an eye on the news and everything to see if we could get across but Ireland shut everything down before Scotland. When the rules in Ireland loosened they got the go ahead to have their wedding but crowds weren't allowed and all the families weren't allowed to travel They still wanted to get married so decided to get married on Zoom!!!


So Uncle and his wife got married in their garden with the family watching on Zoom!!

Me and my mum went to ma nanas with my 2 sisters, we all joined in and got into our party clothes and watched the wedding on Zoom.

We joined in at the end and we toasted the bride and groom.

We had a little party in the house hoping to have a big party when everything gets back to normal!!!!

By Sherena



I have
had to
keep busy
and stay
positive.

I have done lots of crafting
to help the community stay
connected. I crocheted a total
of 40 cuddly bears, these have
been used in the community and
I have given them to families that
couldn't see each other.

This made me feel good
being able to do them. All
bears came with a hand
written note.

Lockdown for me



Lockdown has been hard for me as we are stuck in the same routine every day, with no break from it.

Because of my Autism communication with others has been even more difficult. I've spent years on working on being around other people and now I feel like all that work is ruined.

I felt ok at first, but after a while, it started to get to me and I started to withdraw.

Each day I made sure my kids were fed, dressed and they didn't find it too difficult being stuck in lockdown. I just let them do things that made them happy.

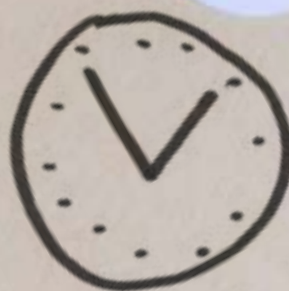
One of the positives of us all being lockdown is that my son has come forward a lot in his development. We have all been together and he has our full attention and has started talking more.

I have also lost weight. I have been careful what I have been eating been out walking when I feel I can. I feel I am better at doing things in the house working out methods to do things. I have been getting better at cooking.

There's not much to have made me happy during lockdown, difficulty with communication and not being around anyone other than my husband and kids has made life rather lonely.

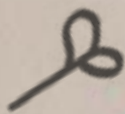
Something that I have learned to do differently is to stop putting myself down as much and remind myself of what I am doing well.

 SOCIAL
DISTANCING



DAY IN
DAY OUT

DAILY
ROUTINE



By Natasha

Sad times, Quiet times, Happy times

I have had mixed feelings during Covid.... At first I felt high anxiety to the extent I was doing my shopping in fear that I would catch Coronavirus. I was not sleeping and worrying and was thinking 'I am going to die if I get it'.

I did not feel the need to panic buy as I had bought a large shop just before the pandemic hit..... but seeing the empty shelves on TV didn't stop me worrying that I might run out of things.

Sad times

When my friend died during the Covid pandemic it was so hard for me. I couldn't attend the funeral and was so sad not being able to be with him and all the family and friends.



But so many of us felt like this. As a community we could not come together and go to his funeral, so instead we all arranged a money lift. We used this money to get him a piper for the day of his funeral. This put us all at ease as we felt we were getting to say goodbye in our own special way. When we could I went up to his grave with my friend, it was all quiet and so nice to be there in the peace.

By Hazel

Quiet times

Sometimes in Lockdown it was so quiet even though I had all my kids at home. I have had the time to stop being so busy and chilling out more. I have loved hearing the birds chirping away.... Maybe they are always there but it was so peaceful the birds were happy!

Happy times

I have also enjoyed the garden. Before lockdown my son Kenzie, started a gardening project at school. Kenzie was wanted to carry this on when we went into lockdown.

So together we turned scraps of wood into planters and learnt to grow tomatoes, peapods, carrots and spinach. My son has been enjoying checking on them and taking care of them. Doing all this has given us a sense of achievement as a family. We have all learnt something new that we will carry on after lockdown. We ended up getting a polytunnel for our plants because they came on so well.

We have done zoom family quizzes with extended family. Me and my family were always close knit. I worried that during the restrictions we would lose closeness but being able to see them on video calls on a daily basis put my mind at ease.

Uncertain times

I have recently gained new anxiety as I feel things are moving too quickly. My anxiety is still here. I hope one day we can come back to a normal way of life family friends hugs and cuddles that's what I miss.

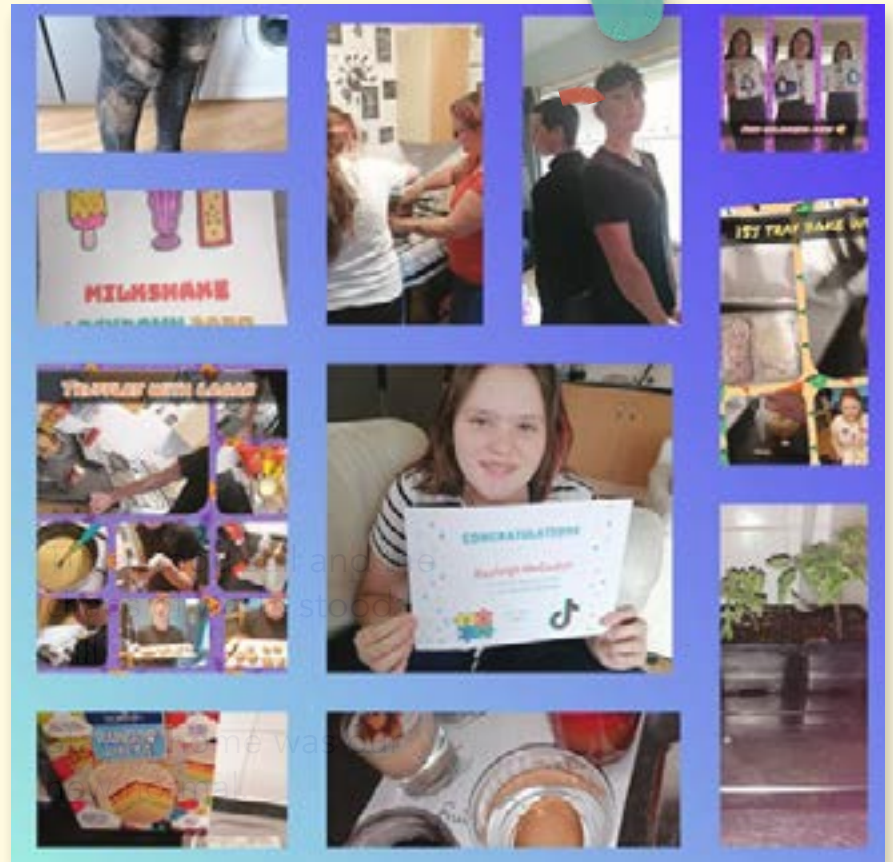


Covid 19 and the McCuskers



"You cannot be lonely
if you love the people
your alone with"

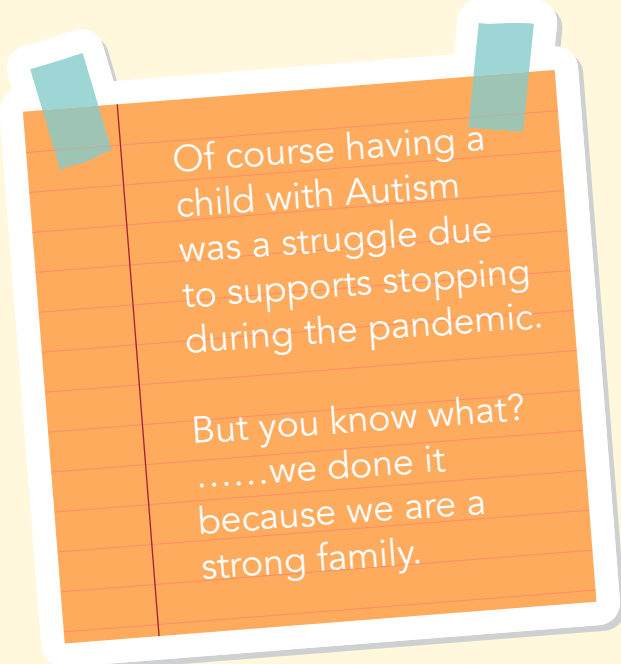
Covid 19 has taught
our family love.



Technology was a god send,
chatting to family we couldn't
visit and friends too.

My daughter she has
excelled in her story
making and has been
enjoying writing some
wee stories.





Of course having a child with Autism was a struggle due to supports stopping during the pandemic.

But you know what?
.....we done it
because we are a
strong family.

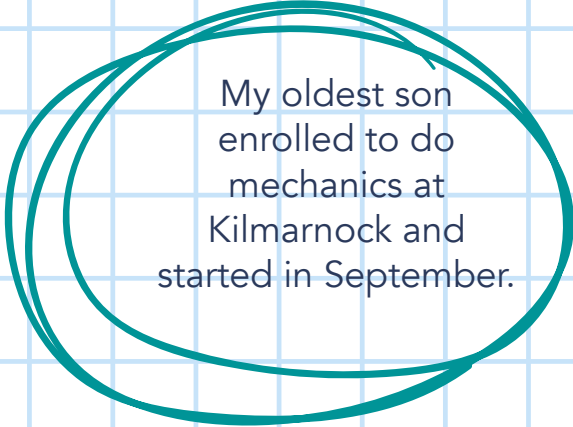
This was not easy to begin with but soon it was OK and it was normal.

Time wasn't an issue we didn't need to say....." aw I'm too busy I can't". Lots of time to play, chat, watch TV, baking, gardening etc.

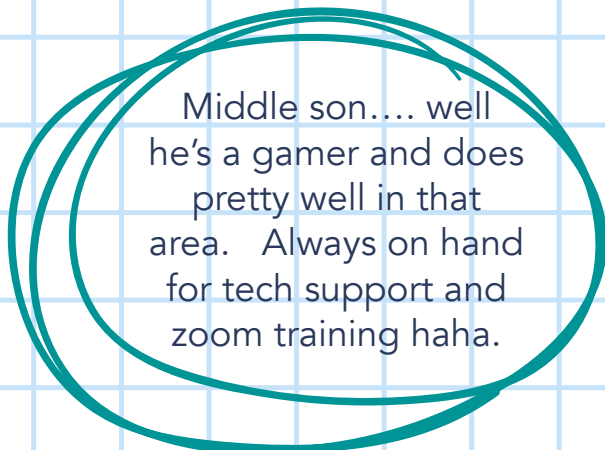
Restrictions eased and the world is slowly returning to normal and chaotic again.

Worries are backwhat if's, with the schools open, pubs restaurants etc.

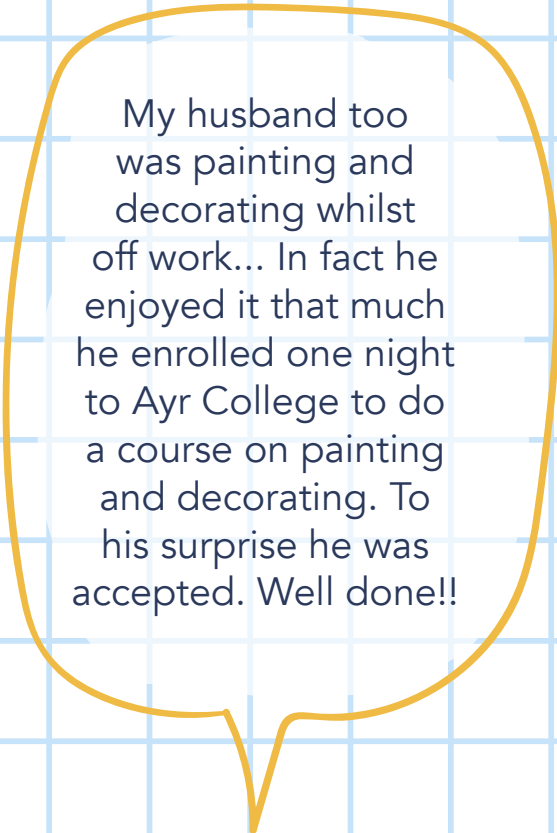
One thing I know as a family of five we will survive and continue to do what's best for our family and not let Covid 19 beat us!!!



My oldest son enrolled to do mechanics at Kilmarnock and started in September.



Middle son.... well he's a gamer and does pretty well in that area. Always on hand for tech support and zoom training haha.



My husband too was painting and decorating whilst off work... In fact he enjoyed it that much he enrolled one night to Ayr College to do a course on painting and decorating. To his surprise he was accepted. Well done!!

**So from the McCuskers...
Stay safe, stay positive
and enjoy life.**

You are not alone

Worries

Lockdown was hard financially for me and Fraser because we didn't get furloughed. Things are still really really hard and still a big struggle with catching up on everything and Christmas coming. We have just always tried to put as much or as little money away at a time as we could.

In worrying times always remember you are doing the best you can and you are an amazing parent. Your kids will always look up to you as their role model. But also remember you are human and need a bit of relaxing time for yourself.

Always remember tomorrow is another day and you will get through any hard times.

What's happening mum?

CJ, my son, was not understanding what was going on, he can not understand negative things and could not grasp he couldn't go out couldn't see his friends.

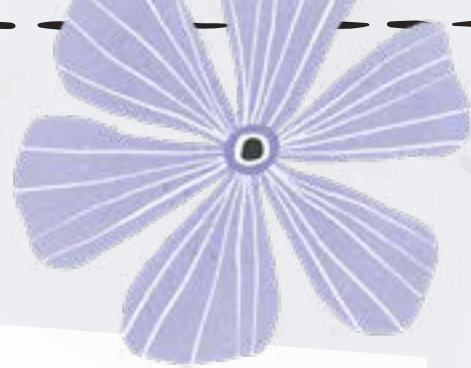
I remember sitting down with CJ trying to explain lock down to him but how do you explain to a child that doesn't understand a negative??..... You can't. It is impossible. I tried saying to him if you don't wash your hands and go to crowded places you will end up ill and so can everyone else.

It wasn't and isn't easy as he doesn't understand a lot of things.

The pressure was off.....

Lockdown was hard but the same time lockdown was great as CJ didn't stress about school and was easier to handle because of that. He still had hard days and days he didn't cope too well but we got by.

On the good day we would cuddle up together and watch movies or have family game time or colour in and make pictures.



You are not alone

Feeling like you are alone is a big struggle for a lot of people.

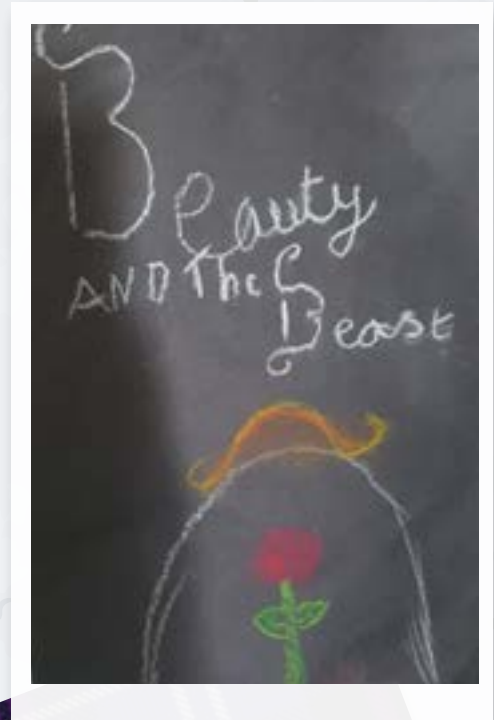
What I try and remember is there is a lot of parents out there who struggle and feel like it's only them that feels like they aren't good enough or struggle to cope.

Always remember there are other people there for you and to help in any way they can.

Talking from experience of having poor mental health you always feel alone but you are not alone in the Aberlour family. I have learned to talk when I'm in the dark place and it has helped me get through it..... you can too.

We are all here to help and support each other and remember whatever is said is confidential.

You do have one person you can always turn to no matter what. Someone that will always have your back and support you. Talk to them when you feel alone.



I would like you all
to know I am here
anytime to chat to
and give support

Love Natalie xxx

Lets stay
home

By Natalie

Lockdown Diaries

Changing Lives

Well here we are March 2020 and our lives are changing forever.....

For the past two weeks I have cleaned my house everyday. My boys, who are 14 & 9, think I'm going mad.

I SHOUT WASH YOUR HANDS, ALL DAY
-EVERY DAY.

I run wipes down the bannister, up and down the stairs all the time. The news was telling us for days and days that people are dying in China with a virus called Covid 19 and we are going into Lockdown.

What does that mean?

I have four kids... two of them are out of the house and we are not allowed out to see them. We have to stay in our own homes. How do you explain to your kids "what's going on" if you don't understand it yourself.

23rd March

I have a sore throat and a runny nose, I thought it was hayfever..... but I had also lost my sense of smell and taste. I call the boys school and inform that I'm worried and not going to send them in and I don't really understand what Covid 19 was.

25th March

Everyone it is March 2020 and lockdown confirmed. How do I explain this to a 14

year old who is Autistic and to a 9 year old when you can't understand it yourself? I'm watching the news all day and everyday..... trying to find out what's going on in the rest of the world.

At this point we're told not to leave the house unless it's to go to the supermarket and only for essentials. The boys are begging me not to leave the house, not to go out.

Trying to explain what is happening to my boys

My 14 year old keeps asking "what's happening?", I answer that "I don't know but I know that we are safe".

"How many people are dying and why?"
"The people dying are really ill and have something wrong with them".

"But Gran is old and ill and so is papa?"

"Please don't worry, they are in their own home and safe, we are safe".

"Can you promise they will be safe and won't die?"

"I can say that they are safe in their own home."

"Mum, YouTube says they will die.... that all old people will die."

"I hope not baby, but we will stay away from them to keep them safe"

"Mum, I'm staying in, its airborne please don't go out, I need to you to stay safe."

"I'm fine, I only go shopping."

"Promise me you won't get it and die."

"I can't".

And so he turned night into day.... he doesn't see me going in and out.

I really miss him, as he gets up when I'm sleeping.

My night is his day

My 14 year old is really confused. Not really understanding what's going on is very hard and he hasn't left the house in weeks, he won't even go out the back door. It's not healthy and he is trying to change.

I see him for an hour or so a day, more in the morning. I get him to shower and give him hot food and I get a cuddle. Fantastic!

He has some great people supporting him, if only he was awake to listen to them. People like his Guidance Teacher at School call every week to see how both my boys are coping and how they can help. I have explained that 14 year old is up all night and sleeping during the day and hardly speaks to anyone and refuses to do his school work.

His support worker from Aberlour phone every second day. I was really glad to have someone else to speak with and talk about my son's behaviour, how to explain this virus.... what it's all about.

I started to make him meals and leave them in the microwave.

Really miss talking to him about everyday things, but he needed a routine in his life and with school not on, he did not have any routine.

My Other Son

My other son is 9 years old he does his school work for 2 hours every morning. He misses school but doesn't understand what's going on, he asks if our family are safe I just say, I hope so.

We keep busy and do lots of different things together.

Like baking to eat and that makes us happy...yummy.

Painting stones to make our garden look nice. Painted the plant pots to give to their Grandparents for a treat during lockdown.

Quick dry clay-moulding it into candle holders to paint.

Splashing away in the paddling pool to pass the time away.

Refilling the bird feedersThen we got fed up doing so many things, the weather changed and was bad again so we went indoors.

He also helped me with the housework... but it did cost me £1.

Lockdown Birthdays

May is my son's birthday - a lockdown birthday for a soon to be 15 year old. He was soooo happy as he can't manage loads of people in the house and he hates people singing to him anyway.

He is still up all night and sleeping all day apart from his birthday, he got up and got his presents and we had loads to say to each other!

I told him that all his Grandparents were safe and well. I said, "see, I am I'm still here and I miss you when I don't see you." I made sure he knew Ayr is doing good during the virus!

And please come down to see us during the day, at meal times? And yes, he did it, he changed his own routine back round. It was great to see him every day.

It's June

It's June and it's my youngest son's 10th Birthday. He is completely different, he wants all his family here and cake and singing and laughing.

My other son stayed in his room all the time that we were outside in the garden with the Birthday boy.

TWO LOCKDOWN BIRTHDAYS COMPLETLEY DIFFERENT

School goes back full time in 18th August 2020. Will the kids be safe??..... Who Knows?

Partners

Let's talk about being in lockdown with a partner or husband.....

Well in my case, a husband. It's hard being together 24 hours a day and trying to get away from them.

The first two weeks we did the same as everyone else.....Cleaned the whole house with so many different cleaning products, thinking this would keep us safe from this virus.

Wash and wash and more washing of hands, hand wash is running low and my boys thinking mum must have gone mad. I washed upstairs and down, cleaning everything in sight.

Then my husband was getting on my wick, I can't lie.... He was driving me mad!

He was a drinker and had to have lots of different kinds of cider all the time..... I was very lonely. So I asked him to leave, and he did. He went to his parents' house. (Yes I know he shouldn't have gone there to keep them safe).

He came down to take our youngest son out. That was the first time in his whole life

that his father had taken him to the park (woohoo).

Then it just happened one day. I got up and decided that this single life was good. I changed my bedroom all about and packed his clothes. It made me feel fantastic and the next day I cleaned the hall and bought a new lamp for my stairs. After that I did the bathroom, painted my window sills (took me three days) and I was on top of the world, I was so happy.

My husband was on a visit to see the boys. My oldest with ASD, said just came back, I miss you. "Oh no", I thought...he might just don't that. And the next day he just moved back in. I was screaming "No!!!" I said, I needed more time... "just go!"

He told me "my boys need me here". Thursday morning he came back and my life is dead again my heart sunk! I was screaming in a bubble. No one was listening to me, this went on for a few days. On Sunday, because of all the arguments, he decided he was going for a run in the car. So, I thought he was going to his friend's house as he was seeing him a lot recently when he was staying at his parents.

I was upstairs just tidying up. My daughter called and was looking for her dad, she said, "Mum, where is my dad?"... I said "he isn't here, he's out, away in the car somewhere, think he went to his friends."

When I came down stairs I could hear his phone ringing, I answered it and it was my daughter looking for him. She started screaming "Mum, where is he, he has been away for hours now." She called his friend, he wasn't there so they went out looking for him. His friends found him up at the Carrick

Hills, unconscious. He had tried to take an overdose. My daughter and his friends managed to get him into a car and take him to Ayr Hospital. He was OK..... As you can tellhe has done this before. He got out the next day and was saying "if my marriage is OK, I won't kill myself again". This was his third attempt. Every time I asked him to leave, he does this. I feel like no one listens to me. I phoned the doctors for help and he has refused to assist me.

My husband needs help to sort his head and his drink problem. He says he wants his marriage to work (I don't) but he isn't listening to me. He says if he can't have me, he doesn't want my boys (sad man). He will kill himself ... if I don't let him stay. How can I live with this on my mind all the time?

So yes, he is still here andyes I know I'm daft as a door mat. Yes, I have given him more chances than the Jeremy Kyle show but my kids are my everything. He is getting help for his drinking and has not drunk since that Sunday. But I'm waiting because I don't believe he can change.

HE WONT GO-I have asked him.

But he says

I want my marriage to work

I want you, I love you

I want this to work

"I keep saying, there is no I in Team", but again who is listening to me??

He is here and again I have to live my life with him.

ONE DAY I WILL BE FREE.

NEWS

I have stopped listening to the news, was getting too much and driving myself crazy.... Why was I worrying about something I didn't understand?

My daughter is a Support Worker and has had to isolate for 14 days, I spoke with her every day but it wasn't the same. She is 20 and lives with her boyfriend in their own place. They both had to stay home, no work. It was hard for all of us thinking about them. Our lives are going to change forever.

I'm married

I'm married, well I can't call it a marriage, my husband likes to drink and I am very lonely. At times if it was not for my beautiful kids, I really don't know where I would be. He just drinks his life away and blames me for everything that goes wrong. With the help of my kids and friends I will get through this Pandemic.

Staying at home 24hrs a day, just makes you realise how unhappy I really am.

I am lonely and sad. I just eat all day, everyday to make myself happy. He just drinks all day every day.

BRAVEFACE

I'm 48 years old and I feel trapped in a ball, screaming and no one is listening to me.

Everyday I put a brave face on and say to everyone, I'm fine and smile but really..... I'm in tears and my heart is breaking. I really want to be alone, because being lonely in a marriage really isn't good. I'm really scared of my husband, he is obsessed and won't let go.

It's been a long time coming and I finally got him out of MY HOUSE, I'm getting my life back to normal even though we are still in Lockdown. There's spare money as he isn't here to drink it.

By Caterina

Make Happy Memories



Make happy memories not scary memories

This may be a strange era for us all but even more so for the children round the globe.

This is the time to make memories for children so they will look back at and remember the fun that we, as parents, made out of the strange and scary time.

A lot has changed in a rapid space of time and for children and it can be harder to understand and cope.

To be able to understand the challenges of parenting at this time, we may need to look through our child's eyes. The old saying "put yourself in their shoes" can go a long way.

Be a child at heart!

Now is the time to be a child at heart and show them we can turn the tide.

Children can learn a lot through play and just a simple walk can be like an adventure to them. You can turn anything into fun if we stretch our imagination.

For example you could make telescopes out of kitchen roll holders or binoculars out of toilet roll tubes and go a walk along the beach and pretend you are looking out for pirate ships or at night time pretend you're looking up into space for planets and stars.

You CAN help your child to learn

You can connect with what your child is learning at school.

Since Ava May started nursery, when she was just under a year old, I always checked in on what she was doing and learning there so I could promote her development and learning at home without confusing her too much to help her reach her milestones.

I found out from the nursery that phonics was one of the things she needed extra work. Between her Key Worker doing one to one with her for about 10 minutes each day she was at nursery and me doing what I did at home we helped build up Ava May's confidence and promote her development.

But where do you start to teach phonics? I did some research into how to help my daughter's age group learn to read, reflected on it and used my creative skills to create new ways on how to encourage Ava May's learning, in a fun way on her literacy skills.

You Tube have the Jolly Phonic Song and Alphablocks but sometimes it can be just as fun for kids for you to make up your own games, songs or poems to promote their learning.

Also sometimes arts and crafts can encourage their interest in learning and



can be therapeutic at same time. It took time for me though to actually find confidence in the work I'd been doing for years.

I made phonics eye spy or phonics lotto or even phonics hop scotch – you can draw the letters out on the pavement with chalk and you child can hop or jump from one letter to another.

You can make the difference! I didn't really reflect on how much Ava May had actually benefited from the attention I gave her until recent months. I started to see how much she has learnt and how far she come along the way.

As a first time parent it can be habit to overthink your role and question whether you are doing enough. Sometimes it's best to take the time to take a step back for a moment and reflect at the bigger picture. Take a moment in to look back at the special moments between parent and child as they've grown and the achievements you've helped your child make along the way.

Even if you have worked with children when it comes to your own child it's different. For every parent and will be every time as each child is unique and they all develop and learn at their own unique pace.

The main thing I learnt at the end of lockdown is you can never give a child too much attention, as it's a parent's attention that brings them on.

You can write children's stories when you are isolated.....

It is a chance to escape reality. It is your chance to break-away from the world around you and you can become part of the story you are writing.

It was so nice to see the world from a different perspective and that is what happens when you are writing a song, poem or something creative.

I got really into it and I started getting tips from other writers from a Facebook group. I started making new connections and learning new skills. And I have been looking at other books for all ages.

I also feel I know the audience (children) quite well! (BIG SMILE!)





2020 has been the year of mountains.

It started with a pandemic that affected us all in different ways. During the climb we stumbled and fell but got back up again as we made our way up one mountain and onto the next. Mountains are the symbol of new challenges we faced along our journey and we each have our own hidden strengths that helped us make the climb.

I express mine through a creative process through art and writing. During the journey of life itself there always a mountain to climb, I believe the pandemic has just been exactly that.

The year of the mountains, a year where we were just faced with more mountains we weren't expecting.

Monkeys first day at school



Cody Monkey's first day of School Alarm went off " beep, beep, beep". Mummy monkey shouted upstairs " Cody breakfast's ready" Mummy monkey waited 5 minutes , there was no sign of Cody coming down so she we went up.

Mummy monkey opened Cody's bedroom door , Cody was still in bed pretending to be asleep. Mummy monkey went up to Cody and just as she was about to speak Cody pulled the cover up and hid under.

" Aren't you excited for your first day of school " Mummy monkey spoke softly. "No" Cody cried still not coming out from the covers. " I'm sure you'll have fun once you're there " Mummy monkey said as she pulled the cover back "Let's get you ready."

Cody pulled a fuss getting ready before heading down for breakfast. "Your friends will be there and I'm sure you'll make new friends too" Mummy monkey said trying to cheer Cody up and reassure him while sitting down to breakfast.

Cody tried to talk his way out of going to school all through breakfast and the drive to school. Mummy monkey reassured Cody everything would be okay and talked about all the fun new things he'd get to learn and take part in at school. When they arrived at the school , after they got out the car Cody monkey clung to his mummy's hand. He still felt really nervous and scared about his first day at school. " come on we'll do this together everything will be okay" Mummy monkey reassured Cody as they walked through the school gates.

"Cody" shouted a voice from the playground. It was Cyra tiger Cody's friend. She came up to Cody. "

We're playing hopscotch, come and join us" she said excitedly pointing to the kids across the playground. Cody monkey then looked up to Mummy Monkey and gave her a cuddle " See you after school Mummy " he then said with a smile , then he ran off with Cyra.

He waved over at Mummy monkey before he started playing hopscotch. " Goodbye " Mummy monkey shouted as she waved back at him with tears of joy and a smile.

Family life during lockdown

Lockdown was hard for a lot of people to handle including myself at times.

I found it easier to take it day by day as there was so much uncertainty in what the future holds for your family and yourself.





I found the weather very favourable during lockdown and, as I stay in the country, I found it easy to get out walks etc with keeping social distancing advice given.

My daughter and myself would always have daily walks along by the river up to the castle or in the other direction we headed up the hills to the forest for the views all over South Ayrshire.

On the other hand on those damp wet days, when we couldn't spend all day in the garden playing on the trampoline or digging for insects and worms, we would spend it in the house with arts and crafts, making dens from cardboard boxes we got school lunches delivered in every week.

I found they were hard times but every parent must admit the good thing that came out of it all was spending good quality family time with your kids and watch them all grow up and flourish.



By Paul &
Mollie-Mae

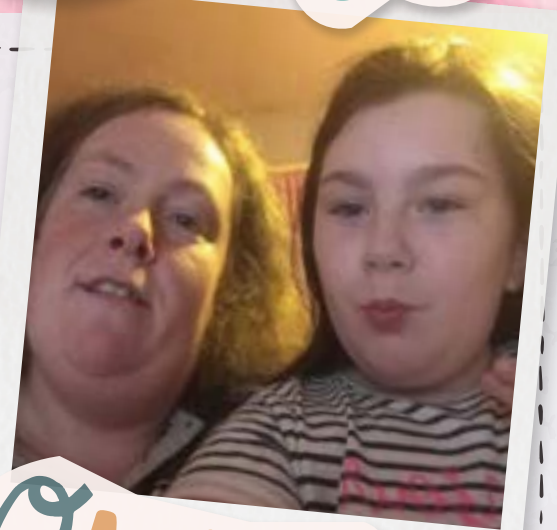
Changes



The hard part.....

During lockdown I was feeling isolated, alone and sometimes a wee bit angry. What I found really hard was that couldn't get the usual supports to help me explain things to my daughter.

My daughter Rachel is growing fast and working out the world. She likes to play Roblox, she loves unicorns and watching Tik Tok videos. Rachel dances with the music in the videos and copies the moves. At times she can have a quick temper but she is loving and caring almost like she has two different personalities. Rachel isn't a teenager yet and she loves listening to Kidz Bop and little mix.



I didn't know how to explain to my growing daughter about puberty, what she was going through and all the changes this involved. I could tell that my daughter's hormones were all over the place and I was finding it more difficult than ever to cope.

Normally someone would come to my house and we would talk about this and give me ideas of the words to use and help of how to talk with her. I would have been able to talk about this with other parents at my Aberlour parenting class but that wasn't on so I couldn't do that.

Because I didn't have this information it made things really difficult as my daughter was wanting and needing answers all her questions. I did not want to scare her with words she didn't understand.



Positives

Although when the schools were closed and it was really hard but I got to spend more time with my daughter than I would have if things had been normal. We enjoyed watching Scooby Doo DVD's and play with her Monsters High Dolls.

We would going for walks and play Roblox together. I felt we bonded more because we were together all the time.

I had a look at some websites and my family support workers ordered me a book. Rachel has seen the book now and I think it was a lot for her to take in but glad we have it now. Rachel has seen the bit where the baby is in a mums tummy so she is trying to figure out how it gets there (!)so now she knows that you don't go to the doctors to get a pill and have a baby which is what I used to say!

JOY



XOXO

I wasn't ready for the talk to my daughter but nowadays children are growing up quicker. The book I got sent made it a lot clear for Rachel.

I told my daughter that our bodies change at some point in life. You start getting growing pains and that you put on some weight. I've explained when your boobs grow then you start wearing a bra. I showed her how to put a pad on by using a doll. She has had a talk at school so it was good that she knew most of it already.

It was good to talk to her myself.



OH!



By Karen

Lockdown: a Parent's Perspective



Home Schooling

Home Schooling for us was something we wanted to do from the get go but we were put off it by the school. Always excuses about a school environment being better for our son when in fact he didn't fit in and was miserable to the point it was causing severe anxiety at home, so for us home schooling wasn't as daunting as most have found it.

Having our family at home 24/7 has been great for our son he has had limited meltdowns and has been much calmer than every morning we would have to take him on the school run, being at home in his comfortable surroundings and with us he has been the boy we rarely see throughout the week when he was attending school.

I am beginning to believe that "school isn't for everyone" is actually a thing and not something I am making myself believe.

Since the lockdown began we were given work from the school for him to do but as we know school work

can be boring for all children, not just kids on the Autism Spectrum or Additional Support Needs.

I have made an educational plan of the things that are needed to be taught, things I want him to be taught as a subject as life skills, hobbies being put into an educational environment and having fun through art and physical activities.

The plan has been like a timetable for him which he finds better knowing when he will be doing what and when his school work is completed he can choose an activity he would like to do and have his own free time. Free time is in 2 parts 1 on his own and the other doing something as a family. The schedule I have developed with our son has been great as he has had his own input into his education and he understands that even though we are learning its more laid back and fun and I can give him everything he needs as its all 121 which he thrives with and is more stimulated in his learning. I chose to continue education and life skills over the summer holidays as he progresses better with structure and routine. We do a 4 day week with the 5th day where life skills and physical activities are something we can do as a family

LOCK DOWN FOR ME

our son has chosen Wednesday and Sunday as his days off to split the week up which has proven to be very positive in his learning.

We have chosen subjects based around his interests and hobbies we read our books. Just now we are reading the Percy Jackson series at the end of each book we are doing a book report so that I can see his understanding of the story and how a story is start middle finish etc and he draws pictures of his favourite scene in the book and will write a short paragraph about characters and his favourite part of the story. Keeping the theme of the Greek Gods, I have bought books in learning about the Greek Gods and I have printed out a lot of colouring and art projects. This has made handwriting, English, history and Geography a breeze. Also building on his imagination and vast general knowledge this has helped also.

Science using youtube Science center and Brainiac have kept him occupied and the experiments are always fun for everyone.

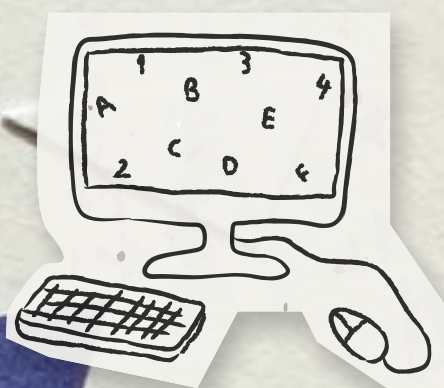
The life skills we have brought to our son has been learning to grow your own fruit and vegetables in our greenhouse how



to plant, measure, maintain and harvest again maths can be fun and not even know you are doing it.

We have brought in cooking and baking. These skills can be brought through life and can be used in later life once older. These sorts of practical activities have boosted his confidence which he struggles with daily being in a school environment. As you can read, we have had such a great time learning and being together as a family. Showing him he can do all these things has put a smile on our faces and has made him feel good about himself.

Aaron has been our superhero giving us hope that we can get through this and we are here for each other no matter what. I have enjoyed all that we have accomplished with the education side of lockdown and has been fun for all of us.





Not A Movie!

It is scary to think that this is "real life"! Not a Movie, actual reality, this is happening to everyone all over the world. No one knowing if or when normal will ever return! Will we even want it, that is the question?

Keeping it Together and reaching out.

This pandemic has affected us with not being able to see family especially our own parents worrying especially my own mum being almost 70 and living alone and not

being able to be there for her. Being a parent that must be shielded myself staying inside and not going out in case I get sick or pass something to anyone has been a nightmare on my own mental health. There has been times were it feels like none of this is real and that I am scared for the future and how this will affect our family and everyone how will life be like will we ever feel the way we did before.

The anxiety is real and I am sure everyone is having some sort of panic or anxiety with our own individual situations; I can totally relate to this it's crazy to think that everyone else can relate to each and every person to some extent.

Keeping it together when you aren't ok is the biggest test of all as a parent this is usually something most go through, but it is such an enormous challenge right now and will be for who knows when.

All we can do is reach out if needed and know that there is always someone that can listen, or email, text just knowing that has been a great relief really hope these stories and experiences help someone out there or give some inspiration in the world we are living in right now.



Lockdown from a Child's Point of View

Aaron wanted to add that lockdown for him has been great as he prefers spending his time at home with his family. He hasn't missed school he wishes that he can homeschool for as long as he can.

He has missed seeing both of his grans and that it was difficult having his birthday in lockdown as he couldn't do his traditional birthday with bowling, Ikea and Mr. Basrais. He had a family picnic indoors with all his favourites and played with his toys and had party games.

By Angie

Lockdown Drawings



By Ashley



Lockdown

It's the small stuff that make the biggest difference

The biggest thing I missed during lockdown was going to football training on a Tuesday afternoon. When I felt down or stressed I could go there and forget about everything and get fit at the same time. The group of boys were also always there to talk if I ever needed to what was really good of them.

I miss the boys banter..... it's the small stuff that make the biggest difference. When I couldn't go to the football I cycled and walked a lot.

I do keep in touch with one of the boys from the group which has been important. We help and support each other by just listening and helping each other out in any way we can.

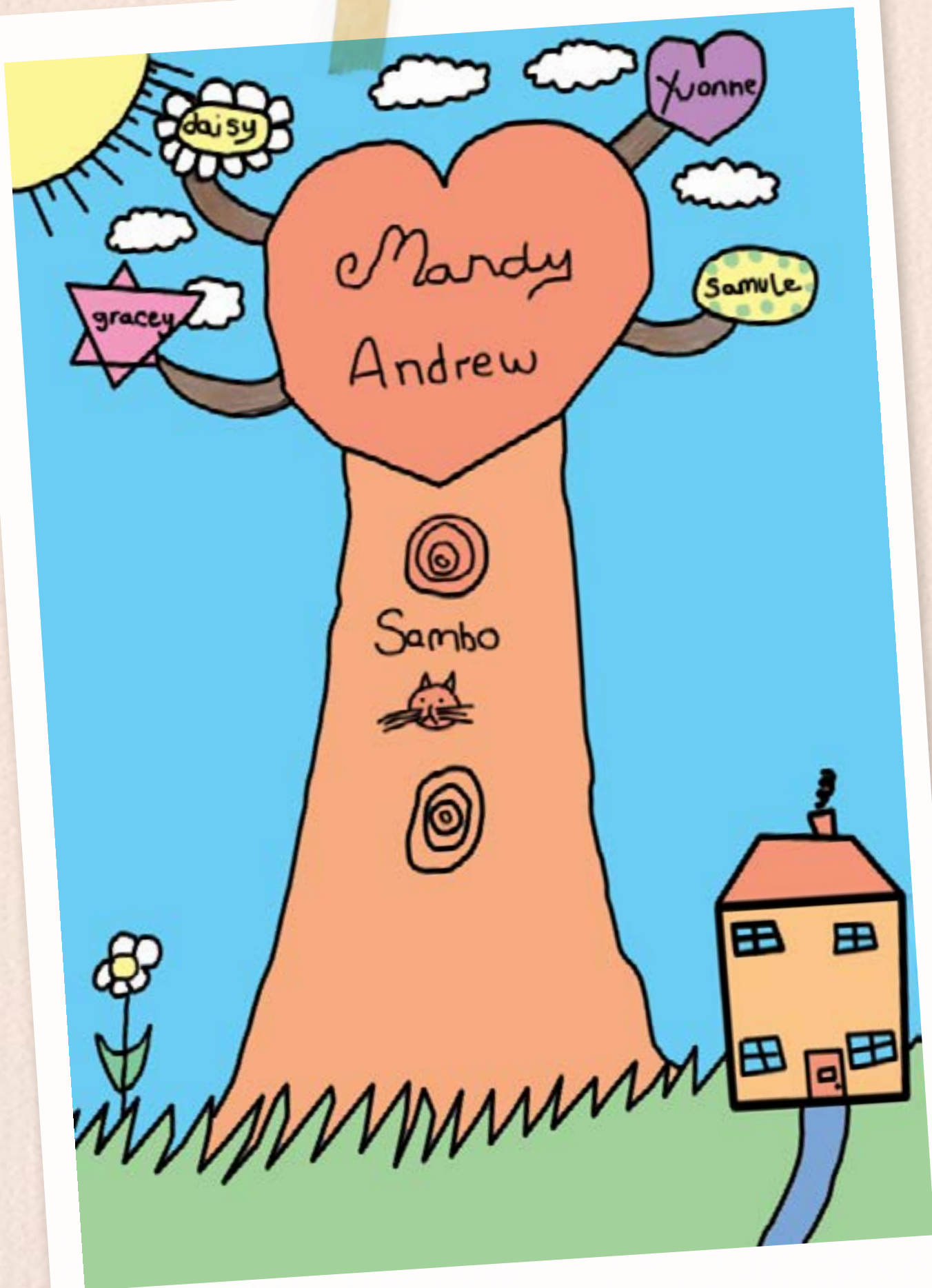
The way I always looked at it was if I get the virus then I will just have to deal with it if I thought any other way then it would have had a big effect on my mental health.

Working though lockdown

Also during lockdown I worked the whole way through. It what was hard and stressful as everything changed and added more pressure and strain onto the job as cleaning standards where really high. The travelling to and from work was the hard bit with buses being at uncertain times or none at all.

Everyone was stressed about what the future would hold for their jobs and families.





Our Family Tree

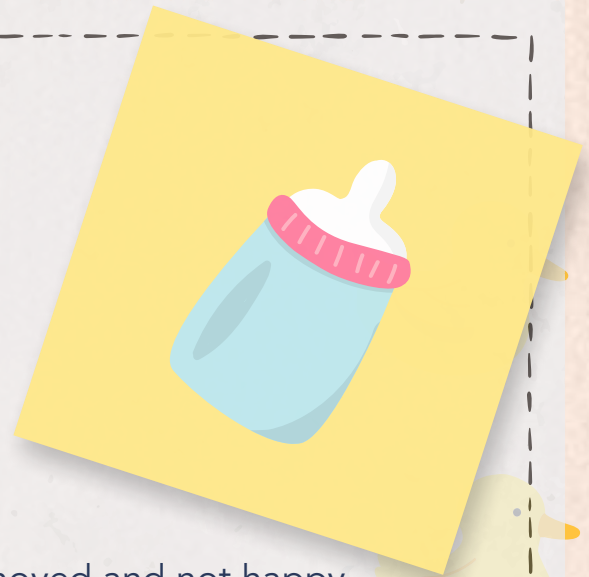
Having a Baby in Lockdown – Dad's view

During lockdown our first son, Samuel was born.

It was very hard and uncertain times. We didn't know how it was all going to work. The government guidance was all over the place, always changing, and the rules were bad for the mothersnot be able to get support by their partners.

I had to miss a few scans which made me a bit annoyed and not happy. But it was worse on the day Samuel was born. Samuel wasn't my first baby and it was even harder because I knew how it normally should have been. I hated not being there to support Mandy from the start to the finish.

It would probably be just as hard for a new dad too. It would be their first kid and their partner would not know what to expect and would need all the help they could get.



On the day of the birth Mandy went to Ayr hospital by herself and just sent to Crosshouse Hospital by herself – that got me annoyed again as I couldn't be there. When I got the call to say she was going to the labour ward I rushed about to get to the hospital and I had to wait for a bus!

On the way there I was feeling nervous about what it's going to be like. When I got there the staff were really nice and put me at ease. Once Samuel was born I was told I would have to leave and he was only an hour old what made me upset.

Travelling home by myself was really difficult as I could not see Mandy and Samuel and didn't know when they would get home.

Mandy kept me updated on he was doing well they both got home that night. I was so happy to have them home.



Moving Nursey in Lockdown

Also during lockdown we had to move our 4 year old to a new nursery as the one she was at wasn't learning her enough.

She moved just before lockdown and it benefitted her so well she got learning packs from there which helped her.



Home Schooling our family

The biggest and hardest part was having to home school a 6 year old and a 4 year old while a 1 year old running about and our new baby in a two bedroom flat..... was soo hard to get any of the home schooling done.

Me and Mandy felt bad as all the other kids had done loads of home schooling and we just did what we could with our two.

The school and teachers where sooooo supportive all the way though lockdown, they helped with food, clothes baking stuff and just being there to ask any questions about anything.

We are fun, weird, draft, stupid and crazy so we got through it somehow!!!

We do have to have a routine and let the older girls get themselves dressed. We would keep them busy with their toys and definitely separate them if they started arguing!!! We just felt so happy as our baby boy had arrived.

By Andrew & Mandy

That Waiting Game

My son had all the Covid symptoms, so I phoned 111 and they said go for a test and self-isolate.... So lockdown had just finished and we have to go into another lockdown of our own.

My son was tested on the Thursday 27th Aug at 10am and it was his first birthday on 28th Aug.... We were supposed to have a big family party.

We went to the car park at Prestwick airport for the test.

It is like being in a film... you show up, there are loads of signs telling you what to do like to keep the windows up.

When you book the test you get a barcode sent to your email and you have to hold the bar code up to the window so they can scan it.... I wonder what happens if you don't have a phone?

Then you go drive along to the next bit of the car park. There are more instructions.....Keep the windows and the doors shut, dash cams off, no photos, no recording.

Someone comes out of the tent.... They aren't wearing big white suits like you see in the news. They just have masks and gloves on and normal clothes.

Tell you to bring your window down a bit and they stick the test through the window. You get moved on to another part of the care part again.

You sit and read the test and work out what need to do.

The test said to get it back of my 11 months old sons throatbut there was no chance of that so put it up his nose. I am not sure he will ever forgive for shoving that bud up his nose! He screamed his head off!

When you are ready to drive along to the next bit and you put your window down and drop the test into the big bin and then you drive off. And from that moment on I felt sick, anxious and on edge whilst I was checking emails every two minutes.

Whilst we were waiting for his test we just tried to make his birthday as special as we could.

We managed to get him 8 helium balloons which he totally loved and my papa did come to the window to wave and to see him.

We got his results on 29th Aug at 9.30pm which came through on email. I just burst into tears I felt so relieved.

We just have to get on with it don't we?



Brought
to you by
mums &
dads



This book is brought to you by mums and dads from Aberlour's Family Service in South Ayrshire. They have recorded their thoughts and memories of lockdown in a unique, thought-provoking and inspiring way.

At Aberlour we are committed to working collaboratively towards overcoming poverty, disadvantage and discrimination, ensuring all children have an equal chance. Aberlour is one of Scotland's largest children's charities working to improve the lives of children, young people and families. Aberlour's Family Service in South Ayrshire works with whole families where mums or dads have learning disabilities, learning needs or autism. We work together with families in their own homes, in groups or out and about in communities. We work alongside families maximising their strengths and interests to build their skills, capacity and confidence. Families are supported to recognise their capabilities and potential allowing a strong, happy and healthy family life to be sustained.

If you believe in what we do and would like to support our work by donating money you can do that by calling 0141 260 9190 or by visiting www.aberlour.org.uk/parents-book

Thank you to Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund managed by the Corra Foundation which gave mums and dads in South Ayrshire their chance to have a voice.
THANK YOU.

This book aims to make you smile, laugh and maybe even cry. If you find it collecting dust please pass it on to a friend. You never know how it might make them feel.

