

SURVIVING 14-DAY QUARANTINE WITH MY KIDS

METROLAND HALTON PHOTOG SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF SELF-ISOLATION

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Earlier this month I was enjoying the warmth of the sun on my skin, the sand between my toes, and watching my children frolic in ocean waves. We swam with sea turtles in the Caribbean Ocean, and it was magical...until.

"You're on vacation until April 5," my friend, Gayle, told my children as she walked in the door where we were staying in beautiful Barbados.

I should explain that my boisterous five-year-old, Sam, had accidentally broken the Wi-Fi at the beginning of the week. Being frugal, I resolved not to spend \$12 a day to use my phone, so I had relied on Gayle to relay any world news.

"What!?" I thought, "We're stuck here?"

She explained that schools were closed, but we could still go home. In that moment, my vacation bubble burst. I realized we weren't coming home to

the same Burlington we had left just a week before.

Now we are home and in quarantine for 14 days.

Working from home with one sick child is manageable. They sleep most of the time and I can download and caption previously photographed assignments. I can write in the silence.

Working from home with two healthy, boisterous children — who can't leave our property — is proving to be more of a challenge. When I'm trying to write, they are naturally curious and want to know what I'm doing. While I was trying to edit the video for this story, we did it collaboratively — because otherwise it wasn't going to get done. The kids are now excited about video editing their footage from Barbados so that was an unexpected bonus.

Other complications to our quarantine include Scarlett's ninth birthday. We've obviously cancelled her party. And while she was definitely disappoint-



Nikki Wesley/Torstar

Torstar photographer Nikki Wesley is quarantined with her five- and nine-year-old children.

ed, she is showing a remarkable amount of maturity about it.

So what have we been doing to cope?

We've made a schedule to keep our days flowing without becoming an unending Netflix marathon. I took a schedule that's been floating around on Facebook and modified it to fit our family. It includes academic time — both with and without computers — as well as outdoor time, craft time, chores, quiet time, free time and screen time.

We're also working on some things we seemingly haven't had time for, including Sam learning to tie

his shoelaces and Scarlett learning to sew.

We're on day three of living with the schedule and, while we certainly haven't been keeping to the times perfectly, I'm fairly sure it's been keeping me from going insane.

One of the choice phrases of the first two days were Sam commenting, "I don't want to write, I want to sword fight." He was supposed to be practicing his letters.

Not to be outdone, Scarlett boasted to her brother, "I've been helpful all day and now I get to watch an extra show, and you don't."

Their proud faces after baking, not one, but two

batches of peanut butter cookies were priceless. (Side note: we can't take these to school because of allergies, so bring on the peanut butter in this quarantine.)

In the afternoon we've been taking virtual field trips to the bottom of the ocean, museums and tomorrow we plan to visit Mars. Here are some of the websites we've used so far: The Deep Sea, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Virtual Field Trips, and Uffizi Gallery tour.

I've reached out to friends to help with things we need from the grocery store; they've dropped them on the doorstep and

I've e-transferred them the money. My editor even delivered dog food last night to make sure my dogs don't go hungry!

I certainly haven't got it all figured out, and there have definitely been meltdowns (both theirs and mine), and a few time outs as we navigate how to not get under each other's skin.

We are all in this together and the support I have received virtually and through phone calls, text messages and Facebook has been so welcome. I wish you all the best of luck keeping your little ones busy through the next few weeks.

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