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**“...when you’re cooped up and you feel like your life is only about cooking dinner and cleaning a kitchen and washing dishes, vacuuming and doing laundry, it can really mess you up, because you feel like you have nothing outside of that. And then, you realize, you know what? I am surrounded by all of these great people. And you know what else? I live in an amazing neighbourhood! I have a great job! And you know maybe my husband is not working? But, I as a woman can support a family of three, and that’s amazing!”**

For me I have one son and it’s just the three of us. So I work from home and I have been working from home five, six years now. So I am used to being at home but what ends up happening is you are wearing the wife hat, the mother hat and work every day. My lunch break, which used to be me going for a walk for an hour, now turns to me having to make lunch for everybody. And then like doing laundry and all this stuff. I mean, as much as you can ask people to help, it doesn’t always happen and I was doing a lot around the house and I was the only one working at the time. It was really tough even financially, so I burnt out and I was having panic attacks.

I am just starting to be, it’s been six weeks and I am just starting to be on the mend. And my husband found a job, which is great, so there’s another income coming in and he is not at my house, in my face. Because you know, you can love people, but it’s hard when you are stuck with them in the house 24-7, you know. So yeah, I ended up having this panic attack and I walked myself over to the hospital because I’m right here in Cornell. They were really nice to me, and I think it’s cause they’ve kind of seen people come in for that kind of stuff already and cause you’re just jacked up, just doing all of these things and you don’t have time to relax for yourself. It kind of just snuck up on me, I did not realize how stress can affect you, I did not know.

So now I know and I'm working with a therapist, like a psychotherapist, working with my doctor and a naturopath, just to make sure I have everything that I need to get out of this rut, just to become normal again. I'm getting there, but it's been tough physically, emotionally and mentally. You have this brain fog and can't concentrate, because you haven't slept in days and then, now you might need the help of a sleep aid. I haven't been anyone who needed any drugs or anything, I take any prescriptions, so it's just been a real eye-opener that stress can creep up on you and no matter what the situation is, you have to find time for yourself, even if it's like 10 to 15 minutes in the morning, 10-15 minutes in the afternoon and just before bed try to do some exercise, which I am doing actually, funny enough. I've been exercising very consistently, but when you are stressed I guess, it doesn't matter. So that's my story. It was tough too, because, so my mom usually watches my son, she's kind of in the high risk category, so we did not want her to potentially get infected, so it was really tough, just not being able to see family and friends for a while. Now, it's letting up a little bit, but it was tough, just the isolation and the feeling like the walls are closing in, and on top of that having all of these things on your plate; it was really hard.

So, there's always a light at the end of the tunnel I guess. The good thing is that I have chats with family members; I have one chat with aunts and uncles on one side and one with the cousins on my dad's side, so it's like we were in constant contact, having video chats, but you realize what's so important to you, you know. We're so fortunate, we can still have our homes, we're still eating food, all that stuff is still going. But, you realize how important minor things are, like getting together with people on weekends and having fun, and how you can really miss that. It's also helped to let us enjoy simple things like going for walks, you know, it does not always have to be something spectacular to enjoy. I think it brought us closer as a family because we're in each other's faces so much.

It makes you really realize what's important and you know at the end of the day, you really don't want COVID and if you didn't get it then, be thankful for

that. All these other things can come up, like mental illness from being isolated.

Everyone around me is successful and does well in life, and I am so glad I am surrounded by that. I'm just starting to see the reality of my situation, because when you're cooped up and you feel like your life is only about cooking dinner and cleaning a kitchen and washing dishes, vacuuming and doing laundry, it can really mess you up, because you feel like you have nothing outside of that. And then, you realize, you know what? I am surrounded by all of these great people. And you know what else? I live in an amazing neighbourhood! I have a great job! And you know maybe my husband is not working? But, I as a woman can support a family of three, and that's amazing! We weren't behind on any bills and I still even managed to save money, because you know, you are not going out anywhere, so I was able to save a little bit. I still even paid down some debt that I had and continued on with the mortgage and all the other activities and groceries. I kept everything running, so I thought that is amazing for a woman. So, if I am looking at all the good things, it doesn't seem so bad.

I would say though, that meditating is huge, to get that alone time. Even, if you have to lock yourself in the bathroom, you need to meditate every day. Also, doing any kind of ritual that you do, I sage the house.