

I've been spending a lot of time at home with my kids lately. Just me? Surprisingly enough, homeschooling my children in German and cancelling everything in the near future, outside of staying home, was not in my dream plans.

Instead of my normal routine, we now spend our mornings doing math homework while listening to the Lego Movie 2 soundtrack—neither of which I really enjoy. Lately the song 'Everything's Not Awesome' has really spoken to me, maybe because I've listened to it 657 times, maybe because it's clearly designed to get stuck inside your head.

I really thought I would be good at this. I'm great in a crisis and I've always excelled under stress. Living overseas for the past nine years has forced me to be adaptive and flexible. I have made three international moves pregnant, had children in two different countries, and studied and worked while raising my children.

I watched the press conference from the Swiss government with my family. When it was announced that schools were closing for three weeks, my fluent children were cheering and jumping up and down long before I fully comprehended the announcement. After recovering some dignity, I went into a planning panic. I spent hours researching home school schedules, planning our routines and compiling job charts complete with life skills to be learned and options for child directed projects. I printed out a 'couch to 5k' training plan, made my own an age-based English literature program, bought a Lego robot, and announced that all screen time would be in German or French. I was prepared to be great at this.

But I wasn't.

Within a week I felt like the lyrics of the song, "What's the point? There's no hope. Awesomeness was a pipe dream". But mostly I've just identified with Batman, "I just wanna eat carbs, pass the ice cream".

Sure—on paper I may have performed well. But early into week two I felt like I was sinking into quicksand while juggling shards of glass.

Last week my husband walked into the kitchen during a homeschool session and took some pictures to document this abnormal time. When I saw the pictures later it was enlightening in a very horrible way. In every picture I was grimacing and angry, most likely trying to discern which work sheet was the Verbenheft and which was the Verarbeitungsblatt. I wondered if this clenched teeth determination to excel would be how my children would remember this time—me barking orders and demanding they do extra math to compensate for not completing their Deutsch work correctly.

The date our school was originally supposed to return has passed. Instead we have one more week of homeschool before our two-week spring holiday—where we will be doing much of what

we have done the past three weeks—staying in our apartment. Maybe school will start again in May, maybe it won't. This is heavy to me. Being responsible for so much is heavy.

When I am not homeschooling, cleaning up the 8th snack of the day, or trying to keep my kids from watching screens and/or killing each other, I am working on editing and finalizing references on my dissertation for my Masters due next month. And then I think about planning something for home church. Just when I feel that I need the connection from my Branch family the most—that I need their support, that everything feels too much, I am cut off and feel forgotten. Sometimes I feel there could be three of me going full speed and I would never accomplish all that I feel needs to be done.

Yet I am keenly aware of the level of privilege from which I am experiencing this moment in history. My job is involved with reading grants from organizations looking for funding for a variety of program responding to the virus—medical trainings and isolation units for refugee camps, food deliveries for children who depend of school lunches, emergency assistance for day laborers under mandatory lockdown. The vast consequences of this situation worldwide will not lighten my load, but it does help put it into perspective.

Because what is really important for me to do? What is essential at this time?

I've been sitting in these questions for some time. My answers will not mirror yours. What is essential for me is not essential for my neighbor, sister or friend. That is okay. What is not essential for me are the expectations of other people. We will probably not finish all our worksheets or send in the requested videos to music teachers. I may not receive an outstanding mark on my dissertation. That is okay. It is not essential that we keep our home clean or make robots instead of watching old episodes of Duck Tales. It is not essential that we hold a two-hour home church service. It is not essential that we are always happy or productive.

What is important is that we find ways to be okay. That we choose to focus on the good and spend time doing what uplifts and stretches us in ways that help us become better. It is important that I remember I can turn to God. Not to ask him to carry what I can't but instead to ask for clarity to know what I even need to carry. "everything's not awesome, but that doesn't mean that it's hopeless or bleak". I know there can be good that comes from the hard and I hope to find it. Even if it's difficult. Even if it requires me to carry heavy things. And even if it sometimes asks me to set down things I do not really need to carry.