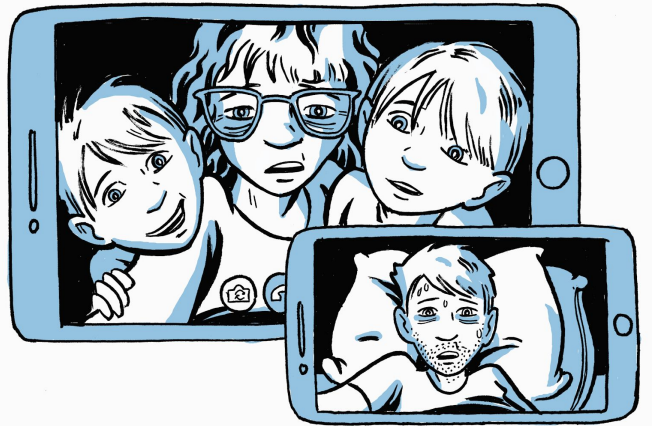


ZONES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

By Emily LaShorne Walz

My husband has the Coronavirus. That carries its own weight, and here I am with my two beautifully energetic boys, ages 5 and 7, trying to hold down part-time teaching and consulting jobs, homeschooling my kids, doing the cooking, laundry, disinfecting, organizing prescriptions, grocery shopping and coordinating meal drop-offs. All this while sleeping on the couch and freaking out about my husband being delirious from fever in isolation upstairs where I can't physically check on him. Not a pretty picture, is it?



I am healthy, but I am **not** okay.

Art by Jason Walz

The thing is, I've been teaching my kids emotional regulation tools using *The Zones of Regulation*- and now they're using them with me. "What Zone are you in?" asks my 5-year old. He moves my Lego character to the yellow section on our multi-colored Zones' check-in board. "Do you need both feet in yellow? What does stress mean?" he asks. My emotional 7-year old was having a hard time rolling with the changes in our home routines now that Dad is isolated. "That sounds like a worry" says his little brother, "Remember that book? You should talk about it... Mommy, you need to read that book to your kids on the computer!" (referring to my GoogleMeets with the K-2 graders on my school caseload). Later that day, my 7 year-old drew a picture of his worry tools- FaceTiming Grandma, reading, and getting a hug.

I've been a special education teacher teaching regulation skills for over 15 years. I've taught regulation skills every day of those 15 years, and I've moved on to teaching them at home with my own children. Now, when I need it the most, my kids are using these skills to help them through a terrible situation and teaching them back to me. By showing them how to recognize and name feelings using *The Zones*, they have a framework and language to understand ME- their mom who is barely hanging on. They are my allies in this.

The reason I share this is to say to all the parents out there- **it's going to be okay**. All of the hard work you've put into teaching your kids about noticing and managing big feelings will help you get through this, the same way it helped my family. As for us, I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know we'll find a way to get through it together.

Update since writing this last week, thankfully my husband is recovering well and has joined us downstairs again!

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