

THE FINAL COLLECTION OF BEST PRACTICES EXAMPLES

Based on interviews with primary school teachers conducted by three project countries: the Czech Republic, Poland and Spain



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1. The Aim

The main idea of the BALDIS Project Results which is focused on the support of primary school teachers who under the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic time struggled to balance work life with their personal life is preparing the collection of best practices examples. Teachers who suffer from frustration and depression can take advantage of easy-to-read stories and motivational sentences that help them to cope with difficulties.

2. Background

According to the National Report developed by BALDIS partners (the Czech Republic, Spain, Poland) too long isolation at home led to many psychological and educational problems among teachers. The teachers from Spain, the Czech Republic, and Poland were asked about their ideas and solutions on how they were able to deal with burnout. The Final Collection of Best Practices Examples is based on twenty-four interviews conducted with primary teachers. All the interviewees have different backgrounds and life attitudes. It is very important to mention the fact that they teach different subjects, what has an impact on their time management and how they found the balance between their personal life and remote working environment.

3. Research Methodology

The BALDIS partners prepared semi-structured interviews which helped with preparing easy-to-read stories. The steps of the second project result are:

Step 1: Designing the research instruments and preparing templates.

Step 2: Collecting the best practices examples.

Step 3: Preparing the feedback to assess different aspects of the case studies.

Step 4: Creation of the final collection of the best examples in the form of an official document.

4. Collection of Best Practices Examples



A FRIEND OF NATURE

Our interviewee is a history teacher who works in a primary school. She described herself as a creative person who is not afraid of trying new things. She is in her thirties. Full-time mother of two kids, 11-year-old boy and 6-year-old girl. During the pandemic time, all of the family members worked remotely including her husband. She managed to arrange the day in a way to set time for work and her family life. Her day's schedule was well organised and she was able to do everything that she had planned. As a history teacher she realised that it is her duty to observe and record that new pandemic situation.

Story

It was really important for me to find a new hobby, which I could do in my free time. Due to moving away from a small apartment to a house on a large plot of land, the new hobby found itself. In the beginning, I took up gardening in the terms of planning. My children also got interested in online meetings with garden designers, planning the layout of flower beds and choosing appropriate flower species. We were creating miniature jar gardens, insect houses and we had fun doing it. Afternoons were dedicated just to children. We were doing their homework and later we had time for boarding games and other hobbies. I love turning everything into fun. We were organising hiking tours and treasure hunting. Many attractions were possible to arrange at home, there was no rush, we could finally stop and enjoy our new home. Together with the children we observed wild animals that live close to our house (deer, storks, etc.). I even downloaded an app which recognizes birds' sounds. We helped bees by planting many species of honey-bearing plants and we made houses for insects. I realised I became more eco-friendly. I wanted to get my children interested in folk through cultivating it and introducing them to agricultural work. The trips that we organised were always adjusted to subjects from school and nursery. We were expanding knowledge gained at school, learning new facts and traditions. We even created a genealogical tree of my family. I had time to systematise the family gallery through developing photographs. I got interested in physical activities, so I took up some sports. I started dancing again, since I used to do it as a member of a folk dance group. I shared my knowledge with kids by teaching them steps.

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Positive aspects and advice for the readers

In that difficult period of time, supporting each other was the most important thing, so online meetings and phone calls were very helpful. It was the only chance to see our family and friends so we could stay in touch. I also noticed I started talking with a bigger amount of co-workers, those I never exchange even a word with. Thanks to working with my husband, who has a demanding job when I am a workaholic, we could protect each other from burnout. The pandemic period made us stronger as a family. Even our animals finally felt pampered. For me as the teacher, that was a very interesting moment. I like looking for new methods to beef up my work. My lessons were more interesting and in my opinion, it all depends on the teacher's attitude. What is more, I got positive feedback from my students and their parents. So we cannot give up and always look for the bright side.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"The man with a new idea is crazy until he succeeds." Mark Twain



LIFE ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

This teacher studied psychology, and now she teaches social studies at primary school as well as psychology at the university. She has been teaching for almost eight years. She has a son who is visiting a kindergarten.

Story

As it was really difficult for me to keep my sanity sometimes, I was trying not to change things. I was trying to stick to my routine from pre-covid times and it helped me a lot. Actually, the only thing that changed was that I was spending more time in my garden and in nature. I enjoyed it a lot. Also, I was really grateful that my husband and my family were helping me, otherwise, I would have probably burnt out. However, the fact that family was helping me, it brought us closer, and we enjoyed the time together. Also, when we had difficulties at school,

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colleagues were helping each other. It was a really pleasant experience to know that together we can do it.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I tried to look on the bright side of things, such as time spent together with my family, or support from my colleagues. My advice is to always look on the bright side of life, because there are always people who love to support you and be by your side.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Always look on the bright side of life.”



BEING STRONGER

A primary school teacher in a public school, mother of two children.

Story

I changed the way I worked (since everything had to be online, by phone or via email). I had to move the work forward and keep trying to keep the students learning. My main motivation was to make sure they were cared for and happy and also that they felt they were not alone. During the time of confinement, I spent most of my time with my family. Sometimes I felt lonely as it seemed that my family did not care about me and we were all going through the same situation.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I feel that I know my limits more and I think we have become stronger and more human. I have learned to appreciate the little things even more.

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*"It's going to be okay."
"You are not alone."
"Only what adds up."*

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

I had many funny situations during remote lessons, with parents in the background. However, the funniest one concerns my son. During the online lessons, when he wanted to turn on the microphone and say something his parrots started singing but when he turned it off they stopped their song immediately.

While I was conducting an online class my cat really wanted to get into my office in which I was working. He announced it with loud meowing and scratching the door. When I let him in my students noticed him and instead of conducting history class I had to create a pet show. In the beginning, only my pets took part in it but later my students started introducing theirs as well. Instead of history classes, we had a biology lesson.

**SMALL ACHIEVABLE GOALS**

My interviewee was a lady, with over 30 years of experience in education; her primary subject is physical education, but she also teaches students in the early education stage and in pre-school education classes. She lives in a small village and likes walking and hiking a lot.

Story

The beginning of the pandemic was very hard from the work perspective. The work from home forced me to change the way I work completely. I haven't had the occasion to use any ICT tools for communication before the pandemic came. I needed plenty of time for learning. I've been spending a lot of time for making myself familiar with communication tools. I

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enrolled in the computer course and as a result, I was spending more than 12 hours a day in front of the computer, which was completely exhausting. Before the pandemic, I lived a very active life. I was walking every day, riding a bike, doing workouts and apparently I realised that I have no time for these activities. After two months I observed that this has damaged my health considerably. And then I decided that I have to spend at least two hours a day outside. In spite of the lockdown, I walked a lot in the forest (I live in the village, so the restrictions were not so harmful), and I was also hiking (I live in the mountains). During weekends I was going out for trips and trekking. I have also discovered new interests and passions. My main motivation was health. I observed health problems as a result of sitting in front of the computer for a long time. I couldn't allow myself to lose good health. I tried to organise myself in a way that prevented me from spending the whole day and evening at work. After classes, I was doing house works. I was planning the time for preparation for classes in the same hours every day and after 8 p.m. I didn't check any e-mails. "Thanks" to the pandemic I gained the time that I was losing for travels to work (for meetings with parents, conferences). I acquired new skills and I had to use my deep creativity for preparing classes. I also learned doing things that I have never had occasion to do, like cutting my hair or using ICT tools.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

The pandemic made me think more about myself. I learned to respect my needs and my time. The most important thing from my perspective is to find for yourself some activities that you are going to perform and keep a daily schedule. Do not let the work and people around you put pressure on you. Setting small but achievable goals will help you to overcome difficulties, and contact with nature, long walks helped me to recover and stay in good shape.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"Small, achievable goals and contact with nature!"

**TIME FOR YOURSELF**

A school-based special educator who has been working in this position for 5 years. Prior to that, she worked in a leisure organisation (free time organisation). She teaches a special

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education subject in a primary school which focuses on re-education, cognitive skills development or social development. She works mainly with children with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. She has 2 children of younger school age.

Story

Even though I am a psychological counsellor, during this time I deeply realised how important is "me time" and time to relax. Covid time was especially demanding and timely, and it was simply too much for me. Thus, I needed to take time off and it was really a great idea because I wanted to stay sane. I was working in the garden, we also did small adjustments in our house, so I can say it was also very good to work with our hands and do something creative. Also, during the time when we had to stay at home, I enjoyed the time spent with my dog, and I would like to believe that he enjoyed it as well.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Even though it was very difficult for me, I learned about the importance of time for myself. I keep this even now in the post covid time. Thus, my advice is to take time off, not to hurry and overload oneself with work.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

A bit of a spicy quotation by Charles Bukowski:

"The whole world is a sack of shit ripping open. I can't save it."

"The world belongs to those who doesn't shit."

**HAPPINESS IS NOT A GIFT**

Primary school teacher. Born in 1991. Teaching experience: 9 years.

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Story
<i>I learned to take things and work matters more calmly, creating work schedules at home and not dedicating more than I agreed with myself. In addition, I started to set myself personal challenges in order to also have goals in the more private sphere. After achieving all this, I noticed that the desire to work and the strength and energy with which I went to work improved and became more and more positive.</i>
Positive aspects and advice for the readers
<i>Confinement made us stronger people, more resilient in the face of adversity and left us with countless positive aspects, both social and personal. We had time to spend with our families. Due to the daily rhythm of work and routines, many of us did not have time to spend with our children, partners, parents and grandparents at home. With the confinement this situation changed and we were able to enjoy their company. Being at home allowed us to value our time more and invest it in various family and personal activities that gave us greater well-being. We had time to do physical exercise, read a book, finish unfinished tasks, tidy and redecorate the house, look for and prepare new recipes, cook with the children, paint, among many other activities. The confinement showed us that we know how to be flexible and adapt to new situations and learn from them.</i>
Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period
<i>“Happiness is not a gift. It comes from your own actions.”</i>

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

During the recitation of a poem (remotely), I heard the student's mother whispering from behind the curtain. Finally, I couldn't refrain from laughing and I gave the note both to the mother and the student. Both of them got “acceptable” grades for their efforts.

Once, when I switched on the camera, I saw the whole family including grandparents sitting behind my student and observing the classes.

I don't remember any funny situations. I simply liked when one of my students and her sister were online.

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OPTIMISM

I teach in a small school, in a village. I received a master's degree from a music academy. Teacher training college, postgraduate studies and many other courses and training. I've been a teacher for 31 years in a small school in a village (incl. 15 years in kindergarten). When the pandemic started I was teaching in kindergarten, but now I'm a tutor in 3rd grade.

Story

It was a hard time for me. First, a few days of the pandemic coincided with my illness. I visited a doctor but immediately the lockdown and the remote teaching were introduced. It required a rapid shift from traditional teaching to online work. I had to search for interesting teaching aids at the same time tailored to the kid's educational level. The only positive aspect of this form of work was that I didn't have to travel to work. Personal life was limited to basic cleaning activities because preparation for the classes was so time-consuming, that I hadn't time for anything else. Life became extremely monotonous. One day was similar to the other: online classes, preparing meals for the family, preparation for the next day (surfing the Internet for useful teaching aids), drafting lesson scenarios, supporting my 7-year-old nephew and having an evening bath. I had to spend too much time (about 10 hours a day) in front of the computer, which caused my hands ache and my spine ache. My sight has worsened and I had to contact the doctor. I didn't receive any support from the school but on the other hand, I also thought I didn't need psychological support. I plowed a part of my field and set up a vegetable garden in order to have a reason to go out and do anything else instead of sitting in front of the computer. Honestly, I didn't have spare time for my hobbies. During the pandemic time, we had a lot of restrictions, and I was afraid of catching Covid-19 disease. My favourite way of spending these rare moments of free time was taking care of my garden.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Both in private and professional life it is good to look into the future with optimism. One needs to believe in himself/herself. I gained knowledge and experience, which might be helpful in the future life and in working with students. Now, I'm prepared for remote teaching. I collected a lot of teaching materials, which I will be able to use during the online work with students. I'm more confident, I got to know my and my students' abilities. I think a dedicated teacher will always meet the challenges.

BALDIS PROJECT
KA220-SCH-454BD7C3**Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period**

"It's never so bad, that it couldn't be worse!"

**TIME TO RELAX**

French language and PE teacher with 19 years of experience. For the last 5 years, she has also been working as an educational counsellor, coordinating the activities of the school counselling centre (consisting of a special educator, a school psychologist and a prevention methodologist). She has two school-age daughters.

Story

This weird time was a good opportunity for me to learn how to work with a computer and other technologies. Of course, sometimes I did not know how to use some applications, but every day I was getting better and better. I was also glad that I could spend more time with my family. I hope they were glad as well. I could help my daughters with their classes and spend time together in nature (as there was nowhere else to go).

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Even though the covid time was bad, I found it as an opportunity to learn how to work with a computer more confidently.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"What does not kill you, makes you stronger."

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RESILIENCE

The 37-year-old teacher works in a school in Los Alcazares (Murcia). At the moment he works as a secretary and PE teacher.

Story

We had to change the way we taught because the situation required it. We adapted because it was necessary. My main motivation, and everyone's, was that the children would not miss too many classes and that they would be able to continue learning in spite of everything. Also, to make the situation less complicated and more fun for all of them. I was able to spend more time with my wife and daughter.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I feel much better now. Although, everything has its good side. Being able to be at home, and enjoying my family was very nice. I was also able to see how resilient I am in that sense, because for me, not being able to leave the house seemed very hard at first; however, I was able to cope with it, in fact, I even managed to adapt very well.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period


*"The sun always rises."
"Look on the bright side of things."*

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

Once, when I had classes, my cat decided to go out (through the closed window) :) he jumped as if he wanted to go through the glass, but of course, he fell down, directly on the flower pot. The flower immediately landed on the carpet and all the students had a great fun of this situation.

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While I was teaching an online maths class, my dog came into the room and started barking, so I had to stop the class to kick him out.


PLANNING
<p><i>Teacher in primary private-public school founded by the association. A lady with two kids.</i></p>
Story
<p><i>During the pandemic, my work fulfilled almost the whole day. I worked from home. Day by day this situation was becoming more and more overwhelming. Since I had to devote most of my time to work, my physical activity almost disappeared. In order to cope with that situation, I tried to think rationally, and prepare myself for classes by searching new ideas and developing my skills thanks to the Internet. I think I wasn't in need of psychological assistance, but I knew that my school was very helpful and in case of problems, teachers could find support. I think, at least for me, one of the most important aspects of preventing burnout and depression was to stick to the weekly plans. I paid attention to different activities, like small celebrations (i.e. birthdays, family events), to have the vision. I was spending my free time with my friends and family. We'd been traveling a lot, and even a one-day trip was worth the effort. I also organised bike trips. My main motivation was not to give up and find my way in that situation.</i></p>
Positive aspects and advice for the readers
<p><i>What I learned from that period, being well organised and focused may help us to cope with too many obligations both from the personal and professional side. I also learned to appreciate contact with friends and family. Unfortunately, I can't see many positive aspects of the pandemic and remote teaching. Maybe one of them is saving time and money, which I didn't spend on fuel :).</i></p>
Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period
<p><i>"You've got the power!"</i></p>

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FAVOURITE BOOKS

This interviewee is a history and civics (social studies) teacher who is currently working as a teaching assistant due to her time constraints. However, she continues to do tutoring and intensive individual work with pupils and students. During the pandemic, she was in charge of a group of children who were struggling with the lessons and often substituted in other classes as well. She herself has a large family, five children and over 20 years of experience in teaching.

Story

I really did struggle with the computer and all the applications. I even had to ask my students for help. They were very kind and helped me with the technique, thus every day I was getting better and now I use computers without any hesitation. So, this I see as a positive side of the covid times. What I have to say is that I really appreciated the fact that I only work part-time. I had enough time for my children to help them with their classes and I could help them learn. If I did not have so much time, I do not know if I could make it through those times. And I also can't imagine how my colleagues who work full time and have their own children had to struggle with time and focus.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I would say that it is really important to have enough time, especially if one has children. Also, I used that time for myself, so I could read my favourite books as well as new ones.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“When you can't keep going, go faster.”

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AMERICAN MOVIE

Male, 35 years old, language specialist, adventurer, sportsman, traveler, and very restless.

Story

I changed my way of doing things when I realised that the situation invited me to think and reflect introspectively about my life, existentialism and happiness. Once I realised how much time I was wasting on certain tasks, I tried to optimise actions and resources that were unnecessary or irrelevant. My main motivation was to improve as a person and human being, to mature and evolve in order to feel better about myself. I managed to appreciate the small moments of happiness, leaving aside the absurd problems that had no solution.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

We can't say better or worse, but the Pandemic has changed us all to a greater or lesser degree. The fact of restricting freedoms and daily habits worldwide affects physically and mentally any human being. Perhaps now, looking back, I feel better as a man and much more mature but also more concerned about the future of humanity, something that before sounded like a mid-afternoon American movie.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"It is in the worst moments that one learns the most and evolves as a person (no calm sea ever made a sailor an expert)."

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

While teaching my students English, they all stood like statues and I thought the screen was frozen.

While I asked one of the students for an answer (he did not have a webcam), I heard silence, asked again and again ...nothing... after some time the student said "I'm sorry, I was for ketchup because I'm eating sausage"...



BICYCLE MANIA

Female (47) - has been working as a primary school English teacher for 24 years. Enthusiastic about new technologies and their place in education. Believes that online education and its numerous tools may be an amazing opportunity to take more effective care of individual students' needs.

Story

After a week or two of the first lockdown my relatives pointed out that I am basically stuck to my desk and laptop and have practically no time for anything but work (both school and housework). They didn't need to tell me about the physical and mental toll it should take because I was able to spot the first symptoms myself. Backache and headache caused by the hours I spent on the computer plus frustration and stress resulting from the schoolwork that seemed to pile up much faster than it could be dealt with.

I did realise the dangers of isolation and "bringing work home" well and fast enough. Therefore, my main motivation was to remain sane, healthy and physically fit. I thought it could be done with the right diet, a reasonable amount of physical activity and rest including sleep. I had decided to make my own daily schedule with 3 well-balanced meals, a 2-hour walk/bike ride and bedtime at 11 p.m. which I should follow come rain or shine. I did follow the rules that I drew myself and as a result, I went through the isolation period with flying colours. I've been in good shape both mentally and physically and most of my frustration just disappeared. I consider it my most precious personal gain.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

It's much easier to follow a set of rules concerning your work if you make the rules yourself. When you plan your everyday activities don't forget about well-balanced meals, some physical activity you can enjoy outdoors and a reasonable amount of sleep and rest. Try to

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focus on the positive aspects of your life and work. After all, we - teachers - are well-trained, resilient, adaptable and oftentimes ingenious people who can come up with a bright side if we try hard enough.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Strive for progress, not perfection.”



RANKING OF VALUES

She is a school psychologist and during the pandemic, she also tutored students in humanities subjects (psychology, etc.), implemented online programs for classes, and provided online consultations. She has 11 years of experience in education, has one child of her own, another child in her family (son of a partner) with whom she shares a household.

Story

I have changed my approach to planning. I don't just plan according to the time available, but also according to the energy I need for those activities - not only in the work but also in the personal space. I also pay attention to the variety of activities, too boring and repetitive work takes away my motivation. The main motivation is the perceived meaningfulness of the activities and usefulness to others/the world. In the area of interpersonal relationships, I think more than before about where I will put my energy, who I will associate with in my free time, and what activities I will engage in.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

The biggest benefit has been the change in approach to planning (see above). And the realisation of how fragile our own mental and physical health is. It shifted up my value ladder.

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Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Hope is not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

Václav Havel

“Hope is not about the magic.” Zdeněk Matějček



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Female who has 4 years of experience as a teacher in different schools where she has worked as an interim teacher and as a substitute teacher. She is currently working as a fifth-grade teacher at school and is working as a substitute for another teacher.

Story

The interviewee tells us that it was necessary to change the way of doing things because we moved from face-to-face teaching to distance learning and using new technologies. Her main motivation was to develop her ability as a teacher to teach in a virtual environment, and also to develop the students' ability to learn in virtual environments. She tells us that this whole situation has helped her to take more care of herself emotionally, she used to worry more about other personal aspects and she has learned that the emotional aspect is fundamental, that emotional health is as important as physical health.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

She highlighted as a positive aspect that, with the state of alarm, teachers had to put into practice transversal competencies such as autonomy, responsibility, initiative and creativity, among others, in order to adapt to the new situation that had arisen in teaching. It was necessary to rethink the subjects and establish new educational methods. She told us that after what they have experienced, they are more prepared for a mixed and more flexible pedagogical model.

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Another aspect that stands out is that they have realised that the screen, although it has helped us to see ourselves, cannot do everything, and the classroom is an excellent place for a lot of learning to take place that cannot happen with digital media.

Another piece of advice given by our interviewee is the importance of Emotional Intelligence, that teachers need support to address not only the academic needs of students but also their mental health, social and emotional needs.

Another positive aspect is that parents have become more involved in their children's education.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"We must always look on the bright side of things and that everything happens for a reason."

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

My dog was thrilled! If there was a period of time when there was less work, I was able to spend much more time in the garden and performing small changes in the house. During this time, we fine-tuned a lot of things such as new flower beds, finishing the bathroom, etc.

I accidentally scheduled a meeting and a class for midnight. Or I assigned students to prepare interviews in pairs. The tech-savvy kids left for another server in a matter of seconds, and I spent half an hour looking at a dark monitor and praying they'd come back. Luckily, they came back. They use discord to communicate with each other daily.

Until I mastered computers and technology in general, I had to be invited to my classes by one of my student's mother.

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FAMILY TIME

Our interviewee is a Polish teacher who works in a primary school. She described herself as a hard-working person who has many duties as a mother of three children. During the pandemic time, all of the family members worked remotely except her husband. She managed to work online and to deal with her busy personal life.

Story

During the pandemic time, I worked remotely from home. My children also had online lessons. That meant I didn't waste time commuting to work and dropping my children off at school and nursery. I had a set schedule for the day. My life went more smoothly. I had more time to take care of my health. I pursued my hobbies and developed a passion for cooking and cake baking. I also tried to engage my children in it and we spent a great time together. It made me feel better and my mental well-being improved. I spent a lot of time with my husband. We watched movies together and talked more than before. Long phone calls with friends lifted my spirits and we helped each other. During the pandemic, I had time to read books and also I could rest and relax in the fresh air in my allotment garden. It was my special place and my asylum.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Family relationships improved as we spent more time together. We were all more rested, avoiding the morning rush. I paid attention to healthy eating and had time to prepare it. On occasions when the children were sick, I was there all the time and took care of them. Working remotely made it easier for me to fulfill my professional duties with my daily household chores. I found it easier to organise my work, I was not as stressed as I was before. I was able to make time for my children on a regular basis and help them with their homework.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"Half of the success is a good attitude. Think positively!"

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SIESTA

Young teacher, without children, a class teacher (main teacher for the class) at primary school, but also teaches Czech and English at lower secondary school. She is a class teacher in an Italian class, so she had to learn some Italian as well. She has been working at the school for 7 years (she has been in different positions but started as a teacher of Czech for foreigners). During the first wave of the pandemic, she was part of the show UčíTelka! on the Czech national TV.

Story

During the covid, I realised that I needed to relax more because the online classes were very demanding for me. So, I made a rule for myself to have “a siesta” after lunch. This habit helped me a lot to relax and gain strength for the afternoon classes and other assignments I had to do in the afternoon. You could say that thanks to the covid and the fact that I was confined to my home with limited possibilities to exercise, I started to exercise more regularly. Not only was it good for my body, but it was also good for my psyche. I was also very comfortable with making lists of tasks I needed to accomplish in a day and gradually ticking them off. It was a very pleasant feeling. I had this habit in the past, but during covid, checking off the lists was even more enjoyable. It also made me realise how important family and friends are to me and confirmed that I can rely on them.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Thanks to the lockdown, I've come to like after-lunch naps, which unfortunately I can't practice at school now, but when I have a free day and I'm at home, I like to rest after lunch. I've also found that to-do lists help me keep track of what I'm going to do during the day and spread my tasks evenly throughout the day according to their difficulty.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Hold on, it cannot last forever.”

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PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Male who has 15 years of teaching experience. He has worked in several private and state schools. He is currently working as a tutor in 6th Grade Primary.

Story

The interviewee told us that he had to change his way of doing things radically and for him, it meant being overloaded and working long hours with the implementation of online teaching. There was no choice in the situation we were in. We had to change our role as teachers in a classroom to one of applying new technologies, to try to make up for the deficiencies in the best possible way. As a teaching professional, my main motivation was to enable my students to continue learning, although in that situation we all learned. I had to innovate in the way I taught the students and that also meant a personal challenge that I ended up overcoming. I have improved my digital training and I have learned to manage better in stressful situations that I thought I would not be able to overcome. I have strengthened my relationships with my family and friends.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

One positive thing is that the situation made me rethink my outlook on life. Another positive aspect is that I learned how to deal with adversity. One positive aspect is that those hard moments helped me to learn about myself, to know how to manage my emotions and try to be positive so that fear, anguish and depression did not overwhelm me. One thing I also learned that is positive is how important relationships are and how important it is to have supportive people. Another positive experience is that you learn to deal with suffering.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Nobody said life is easy.”

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

Several times it happened to me (probably like to most of the teachers during the lockdown period) that my children intervened in my online work (during a meeting with the headmistress, my five-year-old daughter asked in disbelief if "is this lady really the headmistress?"), there were several such situations, and everyone involved was always sympathetic.

As the differences between the days blurred, it happened once that I started teaching on a completely different day's schedule. The kids didn't tell me at first and thought it was a change. Near the end of the morning, I figured it out and we all laughed. The kids saw that the teacher was "just a person" too.



ASSERTIVENESS

My interviewee was a lady teacher in a village school. She is a qualified teacher with 35 years of professional experience. Her subjects are: Polish, IT, revalidation, pre-school education. Previously she was responsible for physical education. Currently, she is also a kindergarten teacher.

Story

I'm a person who likes new challenges, and remote teaching was one of them. I didn't think about the professional burnout that days, because I had no time for that, for giving up. The time had come to rise to this challenge, and I did. From the very first day of the pandemic and the governmental decision about remote teaching, I decided to address this challenge. I was doing my classes via Skype. I simply organised my working hours. I didn't respond to the messages and didn't let students send homework after a certain hour. I didn't give any homework to students for the weekends. The assertiveness was here the solution. My students passed their exams very well, which gave me a lot of satisfaction from my well-performed job and tasks, however more difficult at that time. I care about my 8th- students' final exams and wanted my other students to acquire as much skills and knowledge as possible. I didn't give exercises for self-education, as many teachers did, but only via Skype, together with my students. I tried to be successful in teaching via Skype, of course. I have a grown-up child, so for sure it was easier for me to organise myself and to engage in

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professional work, which in the times of remote teaching required more effort from teachers and the ability to use ICT. Did I profit from this situation anyhow? No, rather not. Except for the fact that I didn't have to shovel the driveway :) I could do housework between the lessons. On the other hand, my eyesight has worsened, I got thrombosis, my electricity bill has risen and didactic aids stored on my computer caused problems with efficient performance.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

In the long run, I can't see any positive aspects of remote teaching and learning. Maybe only that students acquired more ICT skills. As for me, I don't feel any better. Remote teaching limited contact with other teachers, which of course affected negatively the exchange of pedagogical experience, the current evaluation of the overall students' performance, which happens most of all in the informal discussions between teachers. My advice for other teachers is to organise well activities and to be strict as regards working hours.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"If not me, then who?" or "I can make it!"



GREAT HELPERS

This respondent is an English teacher. She teaches children of all age groups - from the youngest to the oldest. She has two children herself - a son (11) and a daughter (13). She has also lived abroad for many years, including a period of lockdown with her family in England. Now she lives and works in Prague.

Story

With lockdowns and us being forced to stay at home, I learned to prioritise things. My family comes first, and I don't consider work, even if I do it honestly, to be the most important thing in my life. It was also an important moment for me to realise how independent my own

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children are, and I don't have to do everything myself and can delegate responsibility in terms of housework, etc. This realisation was a great help to me. I also benefited from the help of my colleagues at school. We were all a bit lost and knowing that I could share my work-related emotions with my colleagues was nice. I also got into exercising more regularly because of Covid, where I forced myself into the sport a little bit, but as a result, I was happy for the movement.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I enjoyed my time with my family, and I believe they enjoyed their time with me as well. It was interesting to find out how they actually work when I'm not around them. And figuring out that I don't have to do everything myself has actually made me feel better and I see my kids as great helpers.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"You can do it if you really want to."

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Male who has 4 years of teaching experience. He has been working in a private school. He is currently a tutor in the fifth year of primary school.

Story

The interviewee believes that many changes have taken place. To begin with, rethinking the whole of education, adapting the way of teaching to a totally online methodology at the beginning, which meant a greater workload due to the difficulties of adaptation. It changed their way of doing things because they had to innovate in education and change the pedagogical model towards blended learning. For the interviewee, the main motivation was his pupils, the work as a teacher at that time was a challenge for him. In his personal life, he was able to spend more time with his family in those moments of confinement and although

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at the beginning it was a bit overwhelming due to the workload, with good planning with his wife and children they were able to adapt to the situation. The interviewee comments that they have also learned the importance of emotional education.

Positive aspects and tips for readers

As mentioned above by the interviewee as a positive aspect he says that it has been a real challenge and that despite the difficulties and having exposed some shortcomings in the education system we have been able to overcome it. A positive aspect for the interviewee in terms of education is that he took the initiative to get more training in digital competencies. Another positive aspect he highlighted is the ability to adapt to the circumstances he developed. Another aspect he realised during this period was his key role in his children's education as a motivator and facilitator of their learning. Another positive aspect is that everything he has experienced has helped him to see how important schools and teachers are for society. The interviewee believes that teachers are now valued more and better.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

“Opportunities for improvement always arise from all changes and difficulties.”

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

Often my pupils didn't check in or show up, or when I called them up, they mysteriously disconnected. Sometimes I also heard hints to my questions from my parents... Unfortunately, the embarrassing moments outweighed the hilarious ones.

My class and I had a form class online and I was talking to my 11-year-olds on MEET (my camera and mic were on). I was using my earphones so when my husband came into the room he could hear me talking but he didn't realise I wasn't talking to him. The thing is my husband had had quite a lengthy “conversation” with me before he saw my computer screen and it finally dawned on him that all my comments and remarks were a part of a weekly class meeting with 5a.

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PRAYER

Primary school teacher with fifteen years of experience. For the last fourteen years, she has been working in a small village with 1 to 3 graders. Specialist in working with children with educational difficulties, including autism spectrum disorders. During the pandemic, she was also a form teacher for children in 7th and 8th grade. She has 2 children of kindergarten and younger school age.

Story


The pandemic period was a hard time for me. There are big problems with the internet connection in the village where I teach. I teach children at a younger school age so learning to write, to enter letters remotely, was a huge challenge. We worked on Messenger and Teams so technical deficiencies meant that the children worked the way they could. It was a time when I couldn't cope with the work-life balance. I worked at home in the presence of two children and grandparents. Grandma's fear of a pandemic made it difficult to cope with professional responsibilities. I had constant remorse that I was neglecting my own children, that they were in second place and that I was not a good parent. I lacked assertiveness - I was at the disposal of my students' parents all day - including phone calls at 10 pm. It made me frustrated all the time, I was nervous about the kids, and it made me feel guilty again. At that time, the support of my husband was a huge help for me, he had a calming effect on everyone, conversations with my colleagues who also had to face the same problems as me were also very helpful and energising. I was also encouraged by gratitude and good words from my students' parents. I tried to relieve stress by cleaning the house and taking care of the garden. When I was fed up with everything, I went for walks in the fields so that nobody would talk to me, I took my rosary and prayed for strength.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I don't see too many positive aspects of the pandemic and remote teaching in my life. The only positive thing is that I didn't have to commute to work so I was able to sleep longer in the morning. Fortunately, I really like my job and the pandemic period has not changed that, although it was an incredibly difficult time for all of us, I do not feel professionally burned out because of it.

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Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period
<p><i>“If you can dream it, you can do it!”</i></p>


BUILDING A HOUSE
<p><i>A PE, Civics and Music teacher who has been in education for about 8 years. During Covid, he decided to build a house for his future family on his own.</i></p>
Story
<p><i>Even before the Covid period, I had a strict division of work and private time. I don't like to talk about work at home, so I set strict boundaries. Maybe that's why it was easier for me to maintain these boundaries during the Covid period. I also think it was easier for me than for my fellow teachers of other subjects because I don't have to spend so much time preparing for my classes. During the Covid I kept my sanity by doing sports as before, when possible, I went to play football, and when not (full lockdown, etc.) I went jogging, or I was walking in the nature. Also, manual labour in building my house helped me clear my head.</i></p>
Positive aspects and advice for the readers
<p><i>I don't think Covid has affected me in the long run. I tried to stick to the routine I had from the pre-covid period, and I also started building my own house and having such a goal helped me during the Covid period. So maybe I can advise that it's good to do manual labour when things are difficult.</i></p>
Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period
<p><i>“Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.”</i> <i>“It is what it is.”</i></p>

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SMILE AND MOVE ON

The interviewee has 9 years of experience as an English teacher at school.

Story

The interviewee says that everyone changed their way of doing things during the pandemic. Her main motivation was to strive to continue the education process despite the difficulties. The interviewee says that in her personal life, despite the stress and exhaustion of the situation, she managed to overcome this professional and personal challenge. She learned to give value to the things that really matter, which are often the small everyday things that, due to the speed at which we live, we don't stop to appreciate them. She has learned to cope with uncertainty and adversity, to be more flexible, and to improve her ability to adapt to circumstances.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

A positive aspect of working from home was to save costs, and of course to contribute to the reduction of collective pollutant emissions from commuting. Another positive aspect was the appreciation of the importance of the family. Valuing the importance of the simple things. One of the teachings and life lessons that the pandemic has shown us is the value of a place that we had before the pandemic, (actions such as giving each other a simple hug, etc.). Revaluing the teaching profession, strengthening the socialising role of the school.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"Smile and move on."

THE FUNNY INCIDENTS THAT HAPPENED WHILE WORKING REMOTELY

When I was recording videos for telematics teaching, my dog was constantly on the video.

I had plenty. Many of them involved getting a sneak peek at my students' families. We had kids attending classes in pyjamas, parents jumping in, microphones not being turned off when they should have been and so on.



AFTER WINTER ALWAYS COMES SPRING

The interviewee was a teacher in a primary school in a small village. The school is managed by the Association (unlike typical public schools, by local government), but it is still a public school.

Story

The pandemic time was not an easy time, however, I tried to manage this time carefully and consciously. When I was leading classes with my kids online, I stayed in one place, trying not to distract myself, until the lessons were over. I was focusing only on this one task and my job.

Fortunately, I didn't experience any serious health or psychological issues. It was just problems with tired eyes, but I tried to rest at night and sleep a sufficient amount of time.

Unfortunately, we, as teachers, didn't get any help from the school management, but I think it was also a difficult time for them. It was an unexpected situation for all of us and the management didn't have time to prepare. We had to lean on ourselves as peers.


I found a way to prevent burnout. I read interesting books and spend a lot of time outside, walking and breathing fresh air. I also found some positive aspects of spending time at home. I didn't waste time driving to work and back.

My tip for this time was to make a task list for the next day, to get organized better in loads of activities.

That time we experienced various strange situations, but none particularly funny got stuck in my head.

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Positive aspects and advice for the readers
<i>What I think is that we always have to see the world in a positive way and take from what we experience only good things. I think I learned a lot about myself during this time. I became more patient, and appreciated more the free time outside and carrying about myself.</i>
Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period
<i>After winter always comes spring!</i>


IT WILL BE OVER ONE DAY
<i>A lady teacher, age 43 in a small village in Poskwitów in the Małopolska Region in Poland.</i>
Story
<p><i>I would like to start with the fact, that for me it was a really hard time. I couldn't find a balance between my work and the role of mother. I felt overwhelmed, isolated, and left alone with all the problems resulting from the pandemic.</i></p> <p><i>This resulted in deep professional burnout. I couldn't prevent it, because I didn't feel well even before the pandemic, so it simply amplified its symptoms.</i></p> <p><i>We didn't have much support from school, for sure not individualized ones. We can say that online meetings with other teachers of the educational board at school were somehow helpful because we could exchange our experiences, methods, and problems with colleagues, but it was not professional help. We just tried to manage the situation.</i></p> <p><i>The most valuable time for me during the pandemic was the time with my family. Of course, most of the time I spent on teaching and preparing lessons, but they were close and we could chat even between the lessons. As regards free time, I also came back to reading books and if possible, spent as much of it with my family.</i></p>

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Unfortunately, I do not see any value in such a situation as a pandemic and lockdown. One should have a visible distinction between professional life and private life. I really couldn't find the balance when working at home.

Even though it was a difficult time, sometimes funny situations happened, most of all resulting from using various apps and technical devices. One time I was checking attendance in an online lesson and I asked: Johnny Kowalski, and I saw that Johnny was fidgeting and talking to a colleague. To which another colleague comments "Ma'am, Johny got kicked out of the lesson".

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

Honestly, there weren't many positive aspects to this situation, however - as I said before - a very valuable aspect was the time with my family. We learned a lesson from the pandemic.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"It will be over one day!"



PREVENTION PROGRAMME

Teacher of primary school in small village Poskwitów.

Story

The pandemic definitely forced me to implement some changes in my "life-management". It was necessary so as not to "go crazy". In order to keep at least some balance between work and personal life, I used to set a daily schedule and stick to it strictly.

I didn't get much support from my school management, but to be honest, it was not so much necessary. I didn't experience any health problems at that time, but from the very beginning I implemented my own "prevention program" ;) I set clear boundaries for myself

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(and the school). I took care of my personal development and took breaks when I encountered difficult and stressful situations. To counteract the negative effects of lockdown, I found ways to unload my emotions. I read books, watched movies, and rode my bike.

What helped me during the pandemic was very good organization of my work time and discipline. I worked Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. or sometimes until 2 p.m. or in the evenings when the baby went to bed. I appreciated the fact that I didn't have to commute, I could devote time to the children myself and I didn't have to find a babysitter.

Sometimes funny situations happened during the online lessons, and we could learn about each other :) Once, one of my students forgot to switch off the mic and started to comment on my teaching and what was happening during the class :) Well, he got a little bit embarrassed when it came out that I was listening to everything he was saying, but we decided to have fun about it.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I was hoping that it (the pandemic) would end, and we will all return to normal life. It was a good experience in a sense because I had time to concentrate on my wellbeing. The situation forced me to organize myself in time, in order not to go crazy, and it was a great lesson :)

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

Looking forward to the future.



FOREST MY NEIGHBOUR

Teacher of geography, civic knowledge, technology, and nature. 16 years of experience in the profession. Works in a small rural school (100 pupils).

Story

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Working during the pandemic was a nightmare for me on the one hand, but on the other hand I found a lot of benefits for myself and my family (at least in the beginning). The school where I teach is 7 km from my home. The remote lessons allowed me to eliminate the morning rush and I could sleep longer because I didn't have to commute to school.

However, the work itself took me longer than before the pandemic. Especially getting ready for classes. This was further complicated by the fact that I teach several different subjects. Each required different preparation. Nature was the most difficult, because how could I, for example, carry out experiments and observations with the pupils? I had to encourage the pupils to work more on their own. There also had to be more cooperation with the parents, because they had to control the tasks the children did.

Not all the children had a computer at home and couldn't participate in the online activities. So I had to assign homework on the Librus platform and the pupils only sent it back in the evening. So work took up my whole day and I found it difficult to separate my private and professional life. I also wanted to help my students cope with this difficult situation, to give them psychological comfort when they couldn't attend lessons for technical reasons. I didn't want to burden the parents too much, but on the other hand I had to implement the core curriculum.

I live close to a forest, so I spent every free hour walking, tending my garden and chatting with friends. My lessons didn't last 45 seconds, I introduced the principle of learning by doing to the pupils.

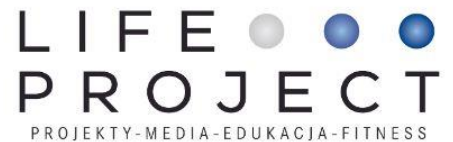
It was important that I had the comfort of having my own computer and room, so no one interfered with my work. However, I much prefer to teach in person. That's why I enjoyed it at first, but then the work and the lack of face-to-face contact with my pupils really bothered me. I was also worried about my dysfunctional pupils. The children also started to get fed up with this kind of learning and didn't connect during the online lessons.

Positive aspects and advice for the readers

I gained new IT competences through my online work and learned a lot from my students. But they also had the satisfaction of being smarter than the teachers. However, contact with another human being is the most important thing, emotions are read differently. Behind the screen, children could hide and cheat.

Motivational sentence or quotation that helped you to cope with difficulties during the pandemic period

"Do not be afraid" J.P.II



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