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Sheltering in Place From the Classroom to the Living Room

Mika Lindsay Ouellette

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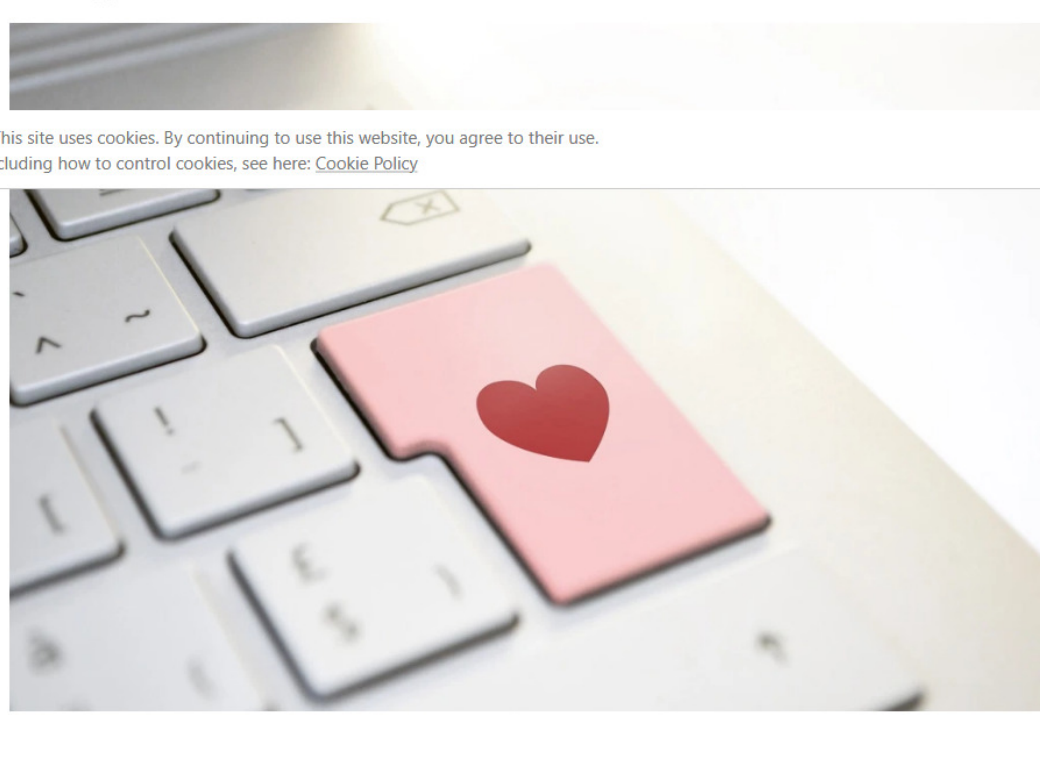
Single and on Quarantine



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Dating in the modern age is challenging enough. Adding a pandemic and quarantine to the mix doesn't make it any easier. As much as I'd love to "get out there," it's just not safe to do so. I've been on every dating app ever created for two years and I've yet to find my person. It's a blow to one's self-esteem as you wonder what's wrong with you that you're still searching after two whole years while others meet and marry within a month.

I often wish that arranged marriage was a common practice in American culture. My ex, who is from India, left me for one and he's happier than ever. Although my American mind cringed at the idea initially, as I did more research on the process, I realized there was something to it. Having the input of friends and family can help you make better decisions than going it alone.

This is why I decided to join a Facebook dating group, Quarantine Cupid, that was created by a friend who lives locally. Although she is married with two kids already, I trust her judgement. After all, I've often wished that I'd listened to friends' and family members' advice on dating in the past, this gave me an opportunity to.

It wasn't what I expected. If anything, I'm disappointed. So far, the group only has 30 members, 25 of which are female. Also, most of the men are college-aged, the rest are middle aged. I know that it's 2020 and women can date younger men, but it's not for me. Which is why I encourage single people reading this to join the group and those who aren't single to share it with anyone who might be interested.

I'd also be open to those readers who are willing to cut out the middle man (or group) and set me up with people in their circles. After all, nearly 40% of people meet their spouses through friends. Distance doesn't even matter at this point, since everyone is meeting online. I know, you don't want to pry into my personal life, but I'm inviting you to do so.

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lindsayouellette1819 April 28, 2020 Uncategorized
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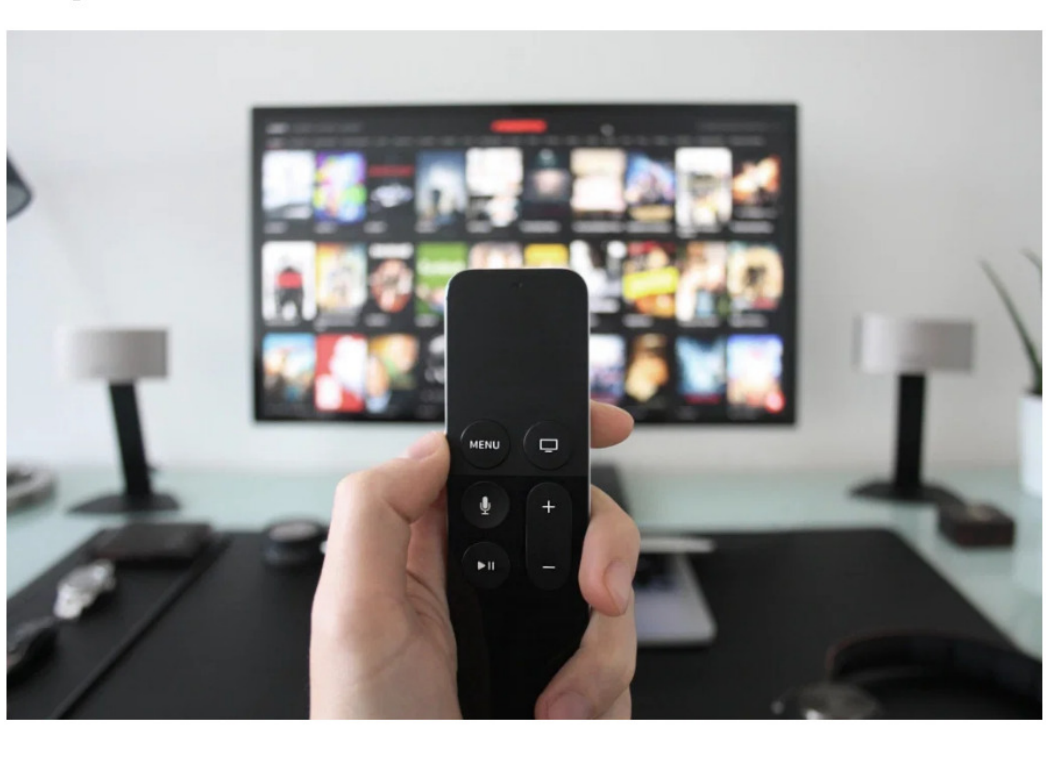
So, What's On?



In 2018, I went through some major personal and financial challenges. I just got out of a long-term relationship, I changed careers, and my car of 12 years quit prompting me to buy a new one. This made me take a look at my financial picture and make some cuts in order to balance my budget. The first thing to go was cable television.

I didn't become some Luddite who lives without television or modern entertainment. I brought my television viewing into the 21st century by swapping my cable subscription for services like Hulu and free content on YouTube. I'm not alone, as over 60% of my millennial peers have chosen to "cut the cord."

While under quarantine due to Coronavirus, cutting the cord has proven to be the best decision I've ever made. I don't have to plan my life around the TV Guide. I can watch whatever I want, whenever I want. This also came in handy while caregiving so that my mother could watch her local newscast from over 4 hours away and binge watch Antiques Roadshow.

Along with news from around the world, I can access a larger variety and better quality of content on these services. I can attend church online by watching the live stream of the service from home. I have taught myself to knit and do household repairs using YouTube. None of this would've been possible with traditional cable services. This is why I say now is the time to "cut the cord" if you haven't already done so. There is so much to learn, watch, and do that self-isolation doesn't need to be a time of boredom.

lindsayouellette1819 April 26, 2020 Uncategorized
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So, What's Cooking?

Anyone who has stepped foot in a grocery store since the Coronavirus restrictions began knows that there are shortages of certain items. As a single with no children living at home, I don't typically buy a lot of groceries. Luckily, what I do typically buy is still available.

I don't share this information about myself unless necessary because of ugly stereotypes, but I'm a vegetarian. I do still consume some dairy, but even that is limited to when I eat out and there are no other options. While supermarket shelves are cleared of meat and dairy milk, I'm still able to find fresh produce, tofu, vegan-friendly frozen meals, and plant-based milk. I often wonder if any of my omnivorous friends and family members will adjust their diets based on what is available for them to eat during this crisis.

Speaking of crises, my story as a vegetarian is closely linked to past epidemics. I have sensory processing issues, which as a child, my parents believed to be simply "picky eating" that I'd eventually outgrow, so they humored it by letting me eat whatever I wanted. I couldn't stand the taste, texture, or smell of animal products like meat and eggs. However, my "irrational" behavior became more rational in the early 2000's with the outbreak of diseases like Mad Cow and Bird Flu.

Growing up, my parents always had the news on during dinner. Even today, it is their programming of choice rather than holding an actual conversation with the people at the table. As I watched news reports about the diseases and how they could pass to humans who ate the affected animals, I couldn't rationalize why one would put themselves at risk if they didn't have to. Despite the fact that my mother is a nurse, she laughed at me for being anxious and irrational.

Today, my lifestyle is confirmed by the Coronavirus, not just by food shortages, but also from the possible origin of the disease. It is said that the disease originated in a Chinese meat market, called a wet market, where people purchase and consume wild animals, like bats. Although most Westerners would not buy or eat food in the same manner, past disease outbreaks show that such a thing could happen through our food supply as well.

As for my health, it's quite good. I've had blood work done and my nutrient levels are all where they need to be. Being female, this is especially surprising, since I'm more susceptible to certain nutrient deficiencies because of my gender. I attribute this to my diet, which many people, including medical professionals in my life, believe is leaving me malnourished.

My family also hopes that I will "grow out of it" so that my future husband doesn't starve. Ironically enough, learning to cook for my ex-partner who was a vegan expanded my palate and improved my diet. I've been fortunate to date men who also have dietary restrictions that are usually religious in nature (ex. Halal, Kosher, Hindu vegetarian, etc.), so they tend to be more understanding of my lifestyle and wouldn't divorce me just because I couldn't cook them a steak.

In fact, the kosher and halal men I've dated do eat some meat, but have had to eat mostly vegetarian diets due to the lack of availability of food that is suitable to their dietary restrictions in our predominantly white, Christian community. Our nearest ethnic grocery stores are about two hours away in southern Maine, so they don't get to shop there as often as they'd need to. I applaud them for their adaptability to the circumstances that they live in. I encourage others to adopt this attitude in order to better adapt to the current food landscape.

lindsayouellette1819 April 19, 2020 Uncategorized
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So, Church Isn't a Building?

Easter is this weekend. Those who celebrate may be doing so a little differently this year because of Coronavirus. Many churches have shut down and put services online, including Easter services.

I grew up in a faith tradition where church only happened at church. Even marriages were only considered to be "official" if the wedding was held at a church. I have since left this particular faith for a more liberal one, but I have friends and family who have not and are struggling with this new concept of online church.

The truth is, this really isn't anything new. Growing up, my parents watched televangelists like Joyce Meyer and Charles Stanley. As a child, I saw this as another one of their boring shows that tried to sell us overpriced coffee mugs and tote bags for donating to PBS or whatever station they were on.

Even after watching these programs, my parents insisted we put on our "good" clothes and go to church on Sundays to listen to a sermon that they wouldn't discuss or question. The music wasn't anything we'd listen to outside of church. We were expected to memorize Scripture and responses, but they never picked up a Bible other than the one in the pew in front of us. Even as I got older, I never got anything out of this brand of religion, so I walked away from it.

My story is not unusual, however, as my generation is the most unchurched, with about 1/3 of us having no religious affiliation. I wonder if it's because church was so compartmentalized from the other parts of our lives that many of us no longer participate in any form of it. Even though the church I attended before Coronavirus allowed us to wear jeans, drink coffee during the service, play modern music, and didn't expect us to know the correct "responses," I can see why negative childhood memories associated with church would keep my peers away.

As an adult, I've found a faith and practices that work for me. I take full advantage of YouTube to find content that feeds my brain and my soul in the form of TED Talks and sermons by relatable, young pastors like Andy Stanley (who is, ironically enough, the son of Charles) and Steven Furtick. These are used as devotionals that help me to learn more about topics discussed in church so I can better apply them to my life.

I also regularly listen to contemporary Christian radio stations like K-Love, which plays music I hear in church but is close enough to "secular" music that I'd be comfortable listening to it any time. In fact, many bands that were popular during my teenage years, like Switchfoot, were actually considered part of this genre. This is probably why my parents don't consider it to be "Christian" music, since it is a far cry from the old hymns they're used to.

To be fair, people are doing a lot of things they're "not used to" because of Coronavirus. My hope is that this becomes a new way of life. Instead of trying to get our children up and dressed in their Sunday best, we sit around the television in our pajamas, worship together, and discuss what we learned at the breakfast (or dinner) table. Our children deserve a better moral education and I believe this is where it could start.

lindsayouellette1819 April 12, 2020 Uncategorized
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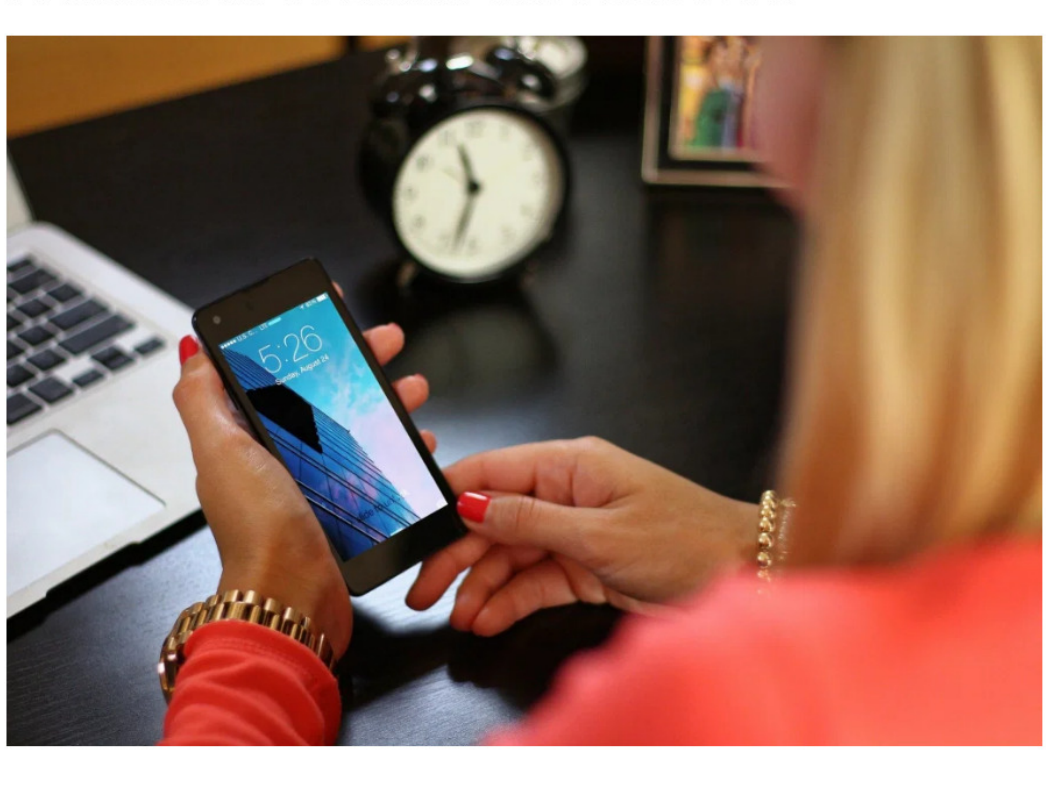
A Remote Worker Can Survive



If you've been following this blog for any amount of time, you'd know that I've worked remotely for most of my adult life. With schools closed for the next month in my area due to Coronavirus, many of my former colleagues are beginning to realize that teaching online isn't just another passing fad in the world of education. Even outside of education, many people are being sent to work from home and entering uncharted territory.

Knowing my work history, people have been asking me for advice. Out of the kindness of my heart, I've offered it, despite the fact that many of them criticized me for not having a "real" job in the past. I still get this criticism from "essential" workers like my mother, who is a nurse, but those who are able to work from home are starting to realize that maybe I was on to something. The truth is, I didn't choose this lifestyle, it chose me, and I adapted to the situations I was presented.

As a senior in high school, I attended a small, rural school. As a result, I had to take AP classes online. This served me well when I entered university and took half of my coursework online as part of my "fast track" master's program in education. I was a self-disciplined student, so I was able to keep myself on track and complete my assignments. I never would've thought that this was preparing me for the workforce in the future, but it was.

As an adult, I live in a small town in Maine. Job opportunities are few and far between. I'm grateful to have my current job as a remote social media manager. If I would have passed on any career opportunity because I would've had to work from home, I likely would've been unemployed. Even as an educator, most of my classes were either completely online or online-live hybrid classes. I found resources and activities that I could modify for my students. Many of them appreciated this as they also worked or took part in extracurricular activities.

Much like my own online classes as a student, working from home took self-discipline and required me to set boundaries. I set hours for when I'm working if I don't have a schedule assigned to me by my employer. I turn off my phone and computer outside of that hours in order to preserve my free time and avoid the temptation to answer "just one more email." I find that this helps me to maintain work-life balance as a remote worker.

Hank Williams, Jr. once sang "a country boy can survive." I'd update this to say "a remote worker can survive." Nobody knows how long this quarantine will last, but for those who are fortunate enough to be able to work from home, they will be gaining skills that will benefit them now and in the future.

lindsayouellette1819 April 5, 2020 Uncategorized Leave a comment

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So, What Are You Reading?

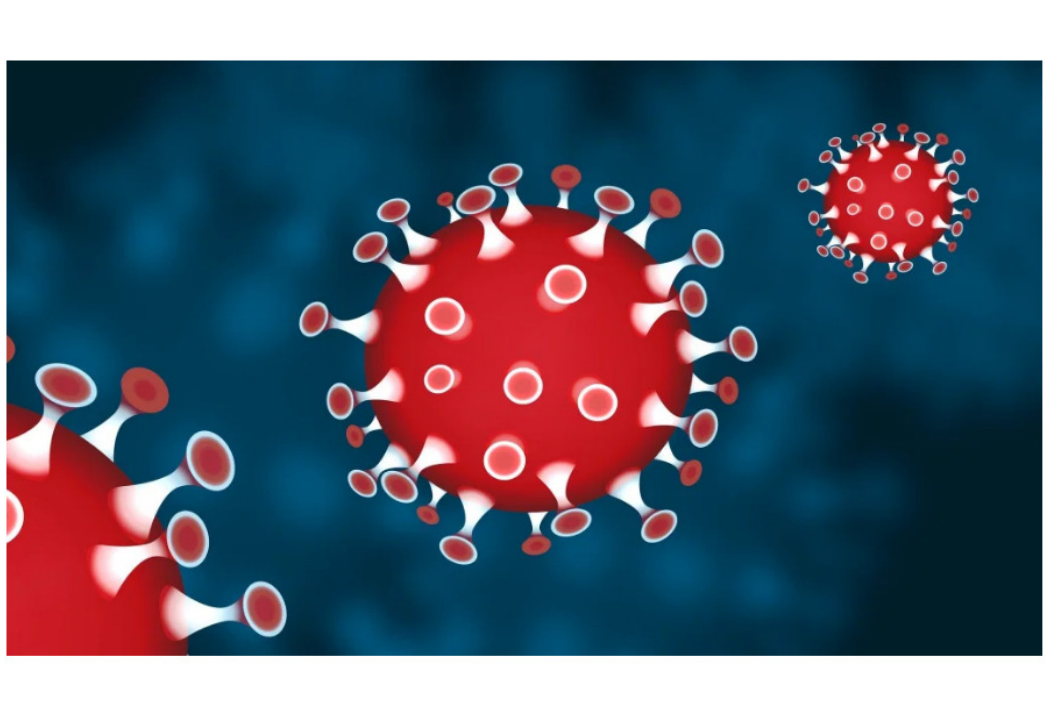
Ever since I was a child, I've been a bookworm. I learned to read at 3 and I'm grateful that I had this ability to help me escape my difficult home life growing up. It should come as no surprise that I've used this coping mechanism with Coronavirus. It also has allowed me to continue to participate in a community event from home.

Literacy Volunteers of Bangor has moved its tea party fundraiser online and has asked viewers to share what they're reading on Facebook. I figured I'd take this a step further and write a blog post. I've both volunteered with this organization and been a beneficiary of their services while I was teaching, so it's my turn to give back.

What I'm reading right now is inspired by my Netflix queue. I'm not cheating and watching the movie instead of the book, I'm doing just the opposite. I'm reading the book, then watching the movie to compare the two and keep my memory sharp. This also helps me to make connections between books and real life.

My most recent read is Janette Oke's "When Calls the Heart" which inspired the Hallmark Channel series of the same name. It follows the story of a schoolteacher who must learn to survive in the Canadian West. I find it to be a timely read as many teachers are finding themselves in new territories as their classes are moved online due to Coronavirus. As a former online educator, I have a great deal of empathy for those who are experiencing this.

Finding this parallel between real events and the story I'm reading is one of the greatest gifts literacy offers in times like these. When I feel alone, I know that I can find the story of someone going through something similar in the pages of a book. My hope is that everyone who is currently isolating can find that for themselves.

lindsayouellette1819 March 29, 2020 Uncategorized
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