

Quotes from women in Palestine collected by Birzeit University students under guidance from Rita Giacaman and Weeam Hammoudeh:

There is so much to do, I must teach the children, so I am a teacher, plus I have to clean and cook. And it is unbelievable they keep asking for food and more food. When they are stuck inside they eat a lot, so I have to keep preparing food. And then there is the strict sanitary cleaning. So by the time my husband is home I am exhausted. I really must go out for some fresh air. I need to go for a walk! (Woman in her 40s, mother of 3 children)

Our family uses whatsapp to talk with family members and make sure they are ok, and my family continues to communicate socially, which provides emotional support to all in an unprecedented situation, in addition to several social initiatives including disinfecting streets and children's playgrounds and public spaces, and the free electronic courses. (Mother of 3 children)

The nightmare of the pandemic breaks our hearts and minds before it breaks our bodies. Because of the severe pressure I live now I scream at my children without warning. I am unable to withstand more. I am not able to endure. (Mother in urban area)

I have lived different situations which shook stability and safety beginning with the Gulf war, and our (my and my family's) sudden return to our country (Palestine), to the second Intifada and the exceptional situation of the spread of the pandemic COVID-19 worldwide. It happened so suddenly and flipped the balance of calculations and changed courses. (Mother of 3 children)

I usually enjoy health teaching for my clients, I do that with all my heart, in spite of the presence of some ignorance in the young mothers knowledge, but I always manage to find an excuse for that. (Woman in her 30s, nurse in Area C where Covidvirus infection rates are higher than elsewhere)

I visited a bed ridden patient today to install urinary catheter, I took all precautions needed, and kept recommended her family for a proper quarantine. (Woman in her 30s, nurse in Area C where Covidvirus infection rates are higher than elsewhere)

Quotes from women in the UK collected by Hanna Kienzler:

My life since the lockdown has been a mixed journey filled with contrasts. On the one hand, I feel incredibly blessed, I already work from home in an international role for a major pharmaceutical company, with a good salary, so initially my work life was business as usual although my workload has increased a lot in response to Covid-19. I live in a beautiful home with a garden and lots of lovely walks on my doorstep which with the good weather has been a delight. I had also fairly recently commenced a new relationship, so my new partner and I made the decision that he would stay at my house for the lockdown so that has been exciting giving us unexpected permission to invest in and explore a more permanent future for our relationship. It has been fun and has prevented me from feeling lonely and he has been a wonderful support in helping me care for my elderly father who due to his age has been self isolating. Nonetheless, I have struggled at not being able to see my married

children and grandchildren. My daughter had a baby 2 weeks prior to the lockdown and I had been so looking forward to spending time together with her new baby as mum, daughter and grand baby. This has been taken away from us. I had been particularly looking forward to this time as I had not really had this opportunity with my son and his little boy as my daughter in law's family took priority. My new grandson has had a lot of colic and there have been a lot of tears on both sides. I have felt so guilty that I haven't been able to be there for my daughter and felt angry and resentful that her mother in law has been able to play more of a role as she lives and works more locally. This has felt quite devastating at times as we both feel robbed of what should have been our special mother and daughter time. However, I do continue to count my blessings. I speak to the family more than ever on Zoom and FaceTime. My older grandson recognises me on camera and says "Grandma Time" which is lovely and I have had the opportunity to find and explore love again! (Woman in her 50s)

I just want to tell you about the situation that we are facing. Most of us support workers [for people with learning disabilities] are black women. I know that we are on the forefront. We love our job. But the way how the money [salary] is, is not... we are not happy about the money. We are not happy about the situation of the whole system. I know that we can control some of the things, but some of the companies and big bosses treat us like children which is not very good. But my concern is that they should respect us as key workers for more money. I understand that the government has given the clients more money... but we have to record all the PPE which we use. We need to calculate now how many gloves we used, how many masks we used... it is so stressful for us. Because, it looks like no one is trusting each other. I don't even see a reason for why we are counting the gloves and the masks that we are using. It is so stressful. To me it is stressful. All we want is just to work and to be respected for what we are doing. We need especially more money as we are putting ourselves at risk all the time. (Woman in her 50s, support worker)

The thing that really strikes me with the challenge of this moment is how hard it is to be good. I always think about moments where you are trying to exhibit virtue. You know, virtue or care in parenting, in your work life, as a teacher. I think that this is shared by everyone, but I think it just feels particularly abrasive that task of caring when you just... I am just torn between a variety of emotions. One is the sense of privilege – that I have the time to spend with my kids that I never do and to learn something about how they are and how they learn. Particularly my older son who struggles with some learning difficulties – just learning how he learns has been really humbling. And watching that has made me incredibly sad that I failed to notice these things before and frustrated that I can't do more and be more engaged. I feel so tired. I just feel so tired. I feel that I should want and seize the opportunity to be with them [the kids] and yet desperate to be doing research on this incredible moment and, you know, also wanting to find some coherence and continuity with life before we were stuck at home. Anyhow, to say again, this is not specific to women, but it is just the starkness of demand and the clash and collapse of roles – mother, partner, professional. It just feels like it falls together in some heap that is completely unrecognisable and unstructured and sometimes that can be beautiful and other times it just makes me want to crawl under the couch and weep. (Woman in her mid-40s, academic)

Lockdown has been suffocating. And relentless. And full of guilt because I am luckier than most. Being pregnant and having a sick mother at the other end of the country don't help.

Days are all the same. Food, work, food, childcare, food, bed.

I'm trying to be productive but I'm really tired and worried. I miss my friends and the perspective they bring to my daily anxiety.

I've coped terribly though I've tried all the usual tricks: TV escapism, exercise, nature, Zoom calls with friends and family.

I've had some nice times walking with my daughter in the sunshine, listening to the birds in the garden in the evening, and eating lunch outside as a family.

I've also been the recipient of some incredible acts of kindness from friends and strangers which have lifted my spirits and helped the loneliness.

I don't think I could have asked for more support. Work has been very flexible and generous.

My husband does twice as much housework and childcare as I do. As I said, I'm very, very lucky. (Woman in her late 30s, academic)