

COMMUNITY ARCHIVE: COVID-19 EXPERIENCES ORAL HISTORIES

Katie Schinkel Interview

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Virtual Meeting, Mason, Michigan

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Katie Schinkel Interview

ROBYN PIERCE: Okay. My name is Robyn Pierce, working in conjunction with the Reuther Library at Wayne State University. Today's date is November 20th, 2020. This interview is of Katie Schinkel about the effects of COVID on her ability to work. The interview will go into detail about her job as a free-lance English coach, both before and after the shelter in place order was issued. Katie lives in Mason, Michigan, and works at a Speexx. This interview is being recorded remotely and will housed at the Reuther Library which is part of the Wayne State University.

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Okay, I closed my questions, so. But the first one I always ask everyone is, do you have an affiliation with Wayne State University?

KATIE SCHINKEL: No.

ROBYN PIERCE: Okay, so can you tell us what an English coach is?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Okay, so I am an English coach that specifically works with non-native speakers of English. So I am teaching people to speak the English language. It's not their native language. And furthermore, we specialize in business topics. So I'm working with adult business professionals, helping them with any number of issues they have to improve English for their specific job, or just because their company wants them to have kind of like further education or

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training as a benefit. So it can kind of vary widely, the different things that I'm coaching. But, generally it's the English language as a second language. [00:02:02]

ROBYN PIERCE: And, you do that at home, correct?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yes.

ROBYN PIERCE: Okay. So before COVID happened, walk me through a workday for you?

KATIE SCHINKEL: So, it's kind of funny, but I've been doing English teaching online since before it became cool with COVID to work from home. It's a really flexible job because it's freelance, so I usually was working maybe two to three days a week. And I would have classes in the morning. I would have either a dedicated daycare or some sort of childcare for when I teach, because I cannot be interrupted when I'm actually teaching. I'm on camera, just like you and I are right now. And then the afternoons are spent with the admin side of my job, which is email correction, feedback, midterm writing. [00:03:02] Occasionally I dabble in translation projects or content development for our platform. It can really vary quite a bit. And I'm also a team leader, a community leader within my company. So I have a team, a community of other trainers. We're all in North America, actually. And we kind of come together quarterly and take a look at what we're doing. Usually we have a focus and we're also looking at that. How can we improve, are we all meeting a standard, and so on.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, I want to ask about that later, but I want to work a timeline. So, once the stay-at-home order happened, the schools closed like the thirteenth, fourteenth of March. And pretty much after that the state shut down. So what did your life look like at that point?

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KATIE SCHINKEL: Heh. [00:04:03] Well, it was a—I remember that day, like, vividly in my mind. What is happening? None of us really remember what was happening. At first I felt like I was kind of smug, because I was like, Oh I can do this. I do this every day. And my husband, who generally works outside the house but had maybe an occasional day where he could work from home, he kind of was in the same situation. He got pushed home and he was like, This is great. But then we kind of soon found out, despite us both being home, it's still really hard to juggle appointments back and forth between us with two completely different jobs, two completely different schedules. I have a very strict schedule with blocks of time. He gets appointments in last minute. So sometimes we were scrabbling to make it work. [00:05:04] Smugness gone, pretty quickly.

ROBYN PIERCE: That's what smugness does, I think.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Definitely.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, and then childcare and—your oldest is in Kindergarten now?

KATIE SCHINKEL: He is in Young Fives, so technically Kindergarten. He was, at the time, at the local building that was a Kindergarten and early education building in Mason, where I live. And he was in the full-day program. So, I had him organized for at least nine to three each day, which is a perfect window for me to work. And that completely fell away. And with not knowing what was going on with COVID, we did not bring our grandma—I did not bring grandma and grandpa into the house. Because I didn't know—safe? Dangerous? What is it? None of us, I feel like.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. [00:06:04]

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KATIE SCHINKEL: So Christopher and I—my husband and I, we did everything by ourselves in the beginning, childcare-wise. My youngest was already at home, I should add.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, what changed with your work?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Well, it's funny because I work for a company that is—the headquarters is in Munich, Germany, and we have students all over the world. So you have to imagine that I've been following this pandemic since, more or less, the moment it started in China. Because all of a sudden, my Chinese students are home all the time. And you know, my students are all employees, and in China they work long hours. They come to class ten, eleven p.m. at night. Completely normal for them to stay up late to have English class. And yeah, we're following this. [00:07:05]

I even had a Spanish student who was working for a German company in China. You got that?

Okay. She—you know, her and I were working together like, really closely. She had some intensive training, one-on-one. And it was like a play-by-play, seeing everything happen in China. They were locked down. It was crazy for them. And then, all of a sudden, it hits Italy. And I have quite a few students in Italy, too. All of my super, awesome, trendy Italian men—. I mean, I teach a lot of people who are in the Milano, the Milan region where this hit first, because the business is kind of—the business center of Italy. All these super suave, always dressed-to-the-nines guys in their tracksuits with their beards, online with me all of a sudden.

[00:08:04] So I watched it go from China to Italy.

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And when I saw the first cases in Washington happen, I was like, Oh my goodness, what's going on? And it was around the time that it hit the U.S. that my employer started to notice problems in Europe, because it spread on Italy, it had come into Germany. Companies didn't know how to handle it. They were shutting down. So we immediately all got a pretty big pay cut.

ROBYN PIERCE: Oh.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yup, we started with a pay cut, and for many of us we were already struggling because things had been a little slow the year before. I didn't care so much per se, in the sense that I didn't really have a ton of extra time anyways to worry about work. But I was thankful to still have something, because people were losing their jobs, companies were closing down. Nobody knew what was happening. [00:09:03] And I think that uncertainty really reflected in the market and the work. But it was interesting to me how you could really feel how global this was. This wasn't just, This is here. This was everywhere.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. Did you end up getting furloughed at all?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I'm a freelancer, so not technically. My husband did.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: But I did not. It was just a reduction in pay, and theoretically a reduction in hours and availability for me, because I had my kids at home more.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, what did you do with your kids when they came home? Like well, your youngest was already home, but your oldest came home from school March, so he had to finish the rest of the school year at home. So, how did that work? [00:09:53]

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KATIE SCHINKEL: I honestly—I didn't. Because I said, he's in preschool. Whatever.

ROBYN PIERCE: Did they send stuff and, like, set stuff up and you decided not to? Or did they not set anything up, or nothing worthwhile?

KATIE SCHINKEL: There was some stuff that they gave us online, like some resources. And I have plenty of resources. But I also said, I'm not going to stress myself out about it, because he was only four at the time and I just wanted him to be a kid. And I said, We'll take this next year as it comes, when he's in Kindergarten. But I really didn't want to stress myself out about it. Because, frankly, listening to all my friends who were dealing with kids and school, who were not given a lot of resources, who had people coming in and teaching their kids, figuring this all out—I was like, Nope. No stress for us. It was hard enough trying to keep everything else afloat. And because I lost grandma, so to speak—because I said, Don't come over. I lost my help with the then—how old was he? About one and a half. I lost my help with him and so I was like, No. [00:11:09] We're just going to take it easy. And I did get my kid ABC Mouse, you know, the [educational web] app.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: He did like that. And we read. And, you know, I only usually watch educational stuff on TV. And there was a lot of tablet [computer] and a lot of TV, but—they're still alive.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah, there was a lot tablet and a lot of TV over here too. There still is.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yup.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. Actually the boys are downstairs playing video games so that they're quiet right now.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Whatever works. Seriously.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yup, seriously.

KATIE SCHINKEL: That's my motto. My pandemic motto.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yup. So, how's it—what has happened? Like how's it now? Is it different now? Is it better now?

KATIE SCHINKEL: It's—I think as more and more information comes out about the pandemic, where we are, where we're going, I think there's a little bit more knowledge that maybe we see the light at the end of the tunnel now. [00:12:05] That we know, okay, as of—yeah, November, mid-November—there seems to be promising vaccine research out. For the most part, assuming that XYZ falls into place, and enough people gain protection from said vaccine, if that goes smoothly maybe we can at least get the curve on this. That, I don't know, it's just another day in paradise, like every other flu season, or whatever. I don't know. I think it helps that things have developed and we kind of have a direction, is I guess is what I'm saying.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah. Whereas in the beginning it felt like you just didn't know what was going on, how long was it going to be for. [00:12:59] You didn't have the same amount of pandemic fatigue, that even when you are very—you have a good conviction, you believe in what you believe in, it still is hard some days.

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ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. It is.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah. That's probably the hardest part. Is that you know it's temporary, but you're still just like, just mentally exhausted. I think the mental health has taken its toll more than anything on this end of the year. That's what I would say.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. And, moving into the winter too, there's a lot of seasonal depression that happens in Michigan, and it's going to be an interesting winter.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah. I mean I've already noticed it. I mean, I didn't want to go outside. I wasn't outside as much as I usually am, this summer already. But now that it's gotten cold and, you know, the sun doesn't always shine every day, it's—you can feel it creeping back in.

[00:13:58]

ROBYN PIERCE: Mmmm hmmm. So—

KATIE SCHINKEL: I hate Michigan.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. Is your oldest back in school now?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yes, he is in the Young Fives program, and yeah, he's doing that all online right now.

ROBYN PIERCE: So essentially the same program he was in last year, he's just doing it this year?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Last year was technically early learning,

ROBYN PIERCE: Oh, okay.

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KATIE SCHINKEL: This is actually Young Fives, it's the first year that Mason public schools has done Young Fives., as in I guess what they would call developmental kindergarten. So for all those kids bunched up right at the deadline of turning five in September.

ROBYN PIERCE: Right. So, what is his school look like?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Online, every day from about 9 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m., give or take. And then in little blocks of time. [00:14:55] At the beginning it was a little bit shorter, and not quite as stretched out. But, then a bunch of parents really advocated for Mason public schools to open up some sort of in-school [learning]. And so we switched to this hybrid or high-flex model, where our teacher was teaching the kids online at the same time as rotating cohorts or groups of children in the classroom. And that was when the school changed a little bit and the schedule kind of went from this to this. Because, yeah, you don't realize until you try to match an in-person school setting how much filler time there is during the day.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. Yeah we haven't moved over to that yet. [00:15:55] So I'm interested to see how it works with in person and online teaching for the same curriculum, same classes.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It was okay. As in, like, you know everybody was doing their best. But I did not like how it made the day longer, I feel like. But that was the other problem. We were not given the option. There was no other option. It was either—well, first they told us there won't be an online option at all for Young Fives, and there was a bit of a revolt.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

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KATIE SCHINKEL: And I think they figured something out. But, yeah. Actually, the most stressful about school has been the constant changes there too. I really wish our school district would have spent more time sticking to one plan, versus adapting and trying this, and trying that. It's been quite frankly a bit stressful. [00:16:55]

ROBYN PIERCE: So, did your son go to the in-person rotations?

KATIE SCHINKEL: No.

ROBYN PIERCE: No.

KATIE SCHINKEL: No, he was on the, he was in group online. Or there was the Red Group, the Blue Group and the Zoomers, and he was always in the Zoom [videoconferencing app] group. And funnily enough, I don't think it would have worked either to do the cohorts if there wouldn't have been a certain number of kids who did stay online. So, I mean. yeah.

ROBYN PIERCE: So did he, like, get to watch the kids in the class?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah. Everybody had their camera on. I don't know if he was able to always see what was going on with the kids in the class. Sometimes she would show the camera on them, but the camera for the kids in the classroom was often displayed on the board. So the kids who were in the classroom felt like everybody was there. Whereas Evan was only able to see who else was online that day, which cohort and then all the Zoomers. [00:17:58]

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah, so.

ROBYN PIERCE: That's kind of sad.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Not perfect, but definitely yeah. It's—it's interesting.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. So, how's he doing with online school? Does he like it?

KATIE SCHINKEL: He does. But as the days started to get stretched out, I noticed in him a lot more restlessness, a lot more wiggles, focus issues. I mean, he is only five and being online that often and that long during the day, it's rough. It's rough for a kid who isn't forced to do it every day for the school year.

ROBYN PIERCE: Well, it's like a little job.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It is. And little boys that age—maybe there's a few unicorn children out there that can sit still for that long. Not mine. [00:18:57] Little boys are active. I mean, this is actually part of the reason he is in Young Fives, is I know my son. Academically, I'm not particularly worried about him. But he needs time to kind of get used to that whole being forced to sit down in a classroom all day, let alone on the computer.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Where you don't have the same camaraderie, the same feel of sitting at, like, your table with your tablemates. It's just not the same. But—.

ROBYN PIERCE: No.

KATIE SCHINKEL: I digress. I really do think for the most part he does really well, and I have seen academic improvement in him. And in areas that I'm glad—like using scissors, for example. Huge improvements. Coloring, huge improvements. So stuff is happening. But yeah, the focus is a struggle. But I'm told we're not the only ones. [00:19:57]

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ROBYN PIERCE: No, absolutely not. My kids' days are structured like that—8:30 to 3:15, or whatever it is. And they get three breaks a day. And you know, I can't imagine having a classroom full of children, or having to control all of them on Zoom, but I don't feel like three breaks are enough some days. They're just crazy.

KATIE SCHINKEL: We have more than that for sure.

ROBYN PIERCE: We're a little older than five, so.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah, I know but still.

ROBYN PIERCE: I know.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah.

ROBYN PIERCE: I know.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It's not fun for anybody.

ROBYN PIERCE: No. So, have you explored daycare options for your youngest now that, well, before this new shutdown happened? We're you using work, or using resources outside of the home at all?

KATIE SCHINKEL: We finally did bring grandma back in to help us, because we agreed on the kind of extended family bubble rule, if you will, where two households share the same views and rules on what they consider safe. [00:20:58] So, grandma definitely doesn't really go out much, gets her groceries picked up and dropped off in her car, that sort of thing. Only goes to necessary appointments and otherwise, yeah. It wasn't—we felt it was safe. In the summer when the case load in Michigan was not quite as scary as it is right now, you know, we spent

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time together Up North, just our little group. We didn't go out as much. We didn't really do anything. We kind of just stuck together in our little bubble. But that helped immensely, bringing grandma back in. That has kind of been the compromise. [00:21:53] And before, right before this happened, probably like the winter [2020]—October-ish, November-ish, before everything started going down in China—we had moved Ben from daycare back home because my hours, like I mentioned, had already kind of been slowing. There was just a slow period and it wasn't even worth it for me to pay for daycare. And so grandma took pity on me and came and helped with Ben. And, yeah, then all this happened, and I was like, Boy I'm glad I'm not paying for daycare right now.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah, I bet.

KATIE SCHINKEL: So.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, how's work? Has it come up?

KATIE SCHINKEL: It's really strange, and I'm not—. So, they had us at the pay cut, and they released some of the pay cut. And then about a month ago they announced in January [2021] the pay cut will be gone entirely and we'll be back to normal rates. And then they said, Well, right now they're actually desperate for people to have hours, but they're having trouble getting people to have hours because all of us trainers now are juggling homes, school, and second jobs from the slow down last year. [00:23:10] And then they're trying to figure out, How do we hire more freelancers without taking away the work from the existing freelancers.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

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KATIE SCHINKEL: so I've actually been getting emails begging me to put more hours on the calendar, but really my hands are tied at the moment. But I did talk to grandma in January about opening up again some days and—

ROBYN PIERCE: So, with your oldest in school, do you have to help him through his things, or you just set him on his computer and he's good for the—?

KATIE SCHINKEL: He's mostly good, but we have to—they send home a folder each week with, like, papers in it. And then she [teacher] posts on Clever, or Seesaw. It's called Seesaw. She posts on Seesaw, it's an app. [00:23:58] It's a classroom app. She posts a schedule, and then in each block of time you see what papers he needs for that block.

ROBYN PIERCE: Oh.

KATIE SCHINKEL: So I prep all the papers, get them out, put them down for him. Usually it's accurate. Every once in a while, there's a change-up, and it gets a little, Mom where is this, but. And that works pretty well but, you know, sometimes he still needs help. He's five.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: So, for the most part he's pretty independent. And you know, I can sit here, where I'm sitting in my living room, and I can kind of see him out of the corner of my eye in the kitchen. He's in the kitchen, where he has a little bit less distraction. You know, there's no toys in there and he can focus. But it would be impossible to actually teach and help him at the same time.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: That would not be feasible.

ROBYN PIERCE: That's too bad.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It is. So, still a lot of juggling. [00:24:58]

ROBYN PIERCE: So, did your husband go back to work in the physical sense?

KATIE SCHINKEL: He—no. I mean, he's still working from home, at home. And the whole company is working from home. And actually, as we speak half of his team is, like, down with COVID so, I mean.

ROBYN PIERCE: Oh my God.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah.

ROBYN PIERCE: That sucks.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah, and none of them have been back to work. That's just like the local spread.

ROBYN PIERCE: Gross.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Yeah. Yeah, seriously. Not good.

ROBYN PIERCE: Do you go to the grocery store?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I go, and sometimes he goes. But we go at night when it's empty. It's our favorite time to go.

ROBYN PIERCE: Well, that was my favorite time to go even before COVID, but now it's even better.

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KATIE SCHINKEL: Agreed. Agreed. That's when we used to go and be like, We're going to go. I don't have to talk to people. I don't have to look at people.

ROBYN PIERCE: Mm hmm, exactly.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Don't have to fight with people down the aisle, yeah. I like Meijer at night in general. But that's where we—that's what we're doing now. [00:25:58] So.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, outside of work and school, what is something, like a big change that's happened?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Probably—I mean, we never were super busy with tons of activities as it were. I mean, I wouldn't say that we—we didn't really do sports. We had little kids, and I'm not a big fan of taking my kids places, because they're little, and they're wild, and they're active. So as far as that goes, like I don't think we have some of this "missing out" like some families have really struggled with, I think. Especially families that have been very busy. But obviously you feel, in a sense, like even just basic things like going to Target, going to get fast food, going for a drive—. [00:26:58] I'm going to stop here at this store, and here at this store, and here at this store. You know, make an errand run out of it. It feels like even the simple things, like running errands with the cases as high as they are right now—. And what I know now about the virus—obviously back in March, April I think all of us were super careful and cautious and the state was shut down. But now, now I know the actual virus count is quite high and even with the mask it doesn't feel like it's super-duper risk-free. And so now you definitely feel the burden of it, in a bigger sense. So that part is kind of sad. And also there are family members that I have seen quite a bit less because of the virus, as well. [00:27:58]

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. That's been the biggest.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Because I don't feel that they have been very safe.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. That's probably the biggest sad part in my experience right now, too. I mean it's been over a year since I've seen some of my family that don't live in the immediate area.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Right. And friends. I don't—I mean, where I would go out to lunch with a friend. I don't go out. Because it's like, where we going to go? Sit in a car with a mask on and talk?

ROBYN PIERCE: Well, I mean I did sit with a friend of mine in my car and eat sushi at first, at like the first few weeks that we could go into grocery stores and stuff.

KATIE SCHINKEL: I think there was a time and a place, knowing now what I know now, that I would have done that. But I wouldn't do it now.

ROBYN PIERCE: So, I mean if I felt safe with someone, I'm always down for a road trip and some food.

KATIE SCHINKEL: I probably have some safe people that I could trust, but I don't know. I've also just been on this, like this super erring on the side of caution. [00:28:54] Also with the holidays coming up, you know you don't want to accidentally expose yourself and then be down for Christmas, and—

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Nothing says "Merry Christmas" like COVID for you.

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ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah, yeah. Have you found yourself trying new things or taking up an old hobby? Or maybe something that's happened over the course of—like you mentioned people, some families are very, very busy and now they have to be at home. But I've talked to a couple people that say that's actually a blessing because they gotten a chance to actually talk to their teen-aged children, who are usually running, playing softball, and everything. So is there anything like that, that has happened through this?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I mean, because we have always been kind of stay-at-home folks, we've always been into the hobbies. So obviously we've done maybe more hobbies. I've definitely been knitting more, and buying more yarn than I need in a thousand years.

ROBYN PIERCE: You had more than you needed before. [00:29:59] Every yarner has more than they needed before COVID.

KATIE SCHINKEL: And COVID—and just add to the power of X to that.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yes.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Chris has been doing woodworking. We did do this summer—we did a little bit more home improvement around the house. Not a ton, but the roof had to be replaced because we had that crazy hail storm in March. So we've been doing stuff around the house, little projects. But honestly, we've always kind of done that. So I would just say it's an increased amount of, maybe our hobbies, our crafting, that we've done maybe more.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

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KATIE SCHINKEL: More cooking. I mean not that we don't cook a lot. But we've started—especially when the shutdown was first happening, we cooked so much more. We started to get creative because in the past, you know, for us working so much take-out was definitely an outlet for us to take it easy. But yeah, we started cooking. We did like the meal service delivery. Like that Hello Fresh, and that was fun, yeah. But I don't want to say it changed for us too much. Just kind of the, I'd say the biggest impact was actually like my outlet, my kid-free time disappeared entirely.

ROBYN PIERCE: I know.

KATIE SCHINKEL: My knitting nights, I usually go knitting with my friends on Mondays. We go out to, like, Panera or Qdoba or just somewhere informal. Have a meal, no kids, just having a good old time. You know, innocent. Well, I don't know. Knitting group is not always innocent.

ROBYN PIERCE: No.

KATIE SCHINKEL: But it was fun. It was fun. But all of a sudden it was 24/7 with my kids, 24/7. [00:32:01] And then that time period when grandma didn't even come in.

ROBYN PIERCE: I know. I know. What is the biggest thing that you miss?

KATIE SCHINKEL: Probably knitting group. Just that one.

ROBYN PIERCE: I was thinking that.

KATIE SCHINKEL: That one night. And it's more—not just the knitting, but it's also the time with other women, like-minded women. The time that we have where, you know, I don't have to be a mom. When I'm home, it doesn't matter what. I'm always, always going to be a little bit mom.

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And the kids know it. You know what I'm talking about. Kids have a sniffer for that. As long as mom is in the house, just forget it. So I think I miss that the most. We do meet up on Zoom, but just by nature of me being in the house it's—you know. If somebody wakes up early or has a tough time going to bed, I'm home. [00:33:02] If I'm out with my friends, mom's not home, can't ask mom.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. That's a big difference. So, once we get back to something closer to what we know as normal, what are you looking forward to doing, besides the knitting group?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I think I definitely look forward to getting Evan back in the classroom. Not because I'm like, Ugh, kids need to be out of my house. But because it's—for his age, it is important. And I'm so thankful that this year was Young Fives. I really hope that next year he might have something resembling kindergarten. As in, in person. The real deal, the feeling of it all. And just being able to kind of like I have—like, if I had to wear a mask for the rest of my life when I went shopping, it would not bother me one bit, personally. [00:34:04] But just more peace of mind to move around without worrying about the health of my parents.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: You know. I think I'm overly cautious now because, you know, you just don't want to run a risk. And I would like to be able to move through life with just a little bit more peace of mind that not every step I do could bring a deadly disease home.

ROBYN PIERCE: Right.

Katie Schinkel Interview

KATIE SCHINKEL: But, generally speaking, yeah. I mean, I know there's always risk in life. I think that that's fair to say, but.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It seems to me like, just some of the more basic pleasures. And getting together with people without having to worry about, like, creating a super-spreader event. I think getting together with people would be nice. I think that's—I've kind of forgotten that a little bit because this is what we're doing right now. [00:35:07] We're just hanging out at home, and I've gotten so used to it. But it would be nice to go and hug somebody.

ROBYN PIERCE: I know, I know. So, are you waiting for full in-person school to send your oldest back or, is there something else that you're waiting for?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I would be open to sending him to some sort of high-flex if the community spread was down and more controlled, if the vaccine was well in circulation. That being said, as long as I have grandma coming into the house, and maybe she doesn't have the vaccine or the protection, I'm not sure. I need to maybe, some kind of reassurance that there's a little bit of protection. I'm mostly worried about them. And I can't do this little kid thing without them, because I will lose my mind.

ROBYN PIERCE: It takes a village, man.

KATIE SCHINKEL: It does. It does. [00:36:04]

ROBYN PIERCE: I am thankful that my kids are not younger, like your kids, because I first of all don't miss that at all. I love them dearly, but I love them now.

Katie Schinkel Interview

KATIE SCHINKEL: I understand, there's definitely—Evan is coming out of it for the most part. He still has his moments. But Ben is in the thick of it. And the, the Terrible Twos—I'm sorry, they're pretty terrible right now.

ROBYN PIERCE: Yeah. And then it gets a little worse at three before it gets better, doesn't it?

KATIE SCHINKEL: I know, I remember. Evan was three when we brought Ben home from the hospital and that was like, I thought this was supposed to be easier.

ROBYN PIERCE: No.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Lies. [00:37:04]

ROBYN PIERCE: Well, I think that's everything, unless you want to go over something that we didn't cover.

KATIE SCHINKEL: No. I think that's pretty accurate, as far as what questions you asked. I think I said what I—

ROBYN PIERCE: I think you did good.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Okay.

ROBYN PIERCE: I'm going to stop the recording, but if you could hang out. I just have one more thing to go over with you.

KATIE SCHINKEL: Mmm hmm.

ROBYN PIERCE: Thank you.

End of interview