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When all the chaos started

Rosie Erechar

Name for posting: Rosie Erechar

Relationships to EWU: staff

Additional information: Hispanic, first time mom, coordinator/recruiter

Your experience during COVID-19:

I had my son right before all the chaos started, right before we all went into lockdown. January 2020. The goal was to be on maternity leave for four months and then return to work. We had secured daycare a few months before my son was born so we were ready for that, when the time came to go back to the office.

Then boom.... Everything is online and everyone is teleworking.

I came back from my maternity leave around April but by the time I came back, we were teleworking. It was so hard. I was dealing with severe postpartum depression while trying to keep up with all my zoom meetings and deadlines for work while cradling my son in one hand. It was hard. In between zoom meetings, I would cry from the stress. Working full time while caring for an infant and dealing with postpartum was the most difficult thing I have ever dealt with. We wouldn't see family because of the pandemic and even then, our family lived a few hours away from us.

My husband grew up without a dad, so he saw his grandpa as his father figure. They were super close to one another. My husband's grandpa (Robinson) was so excited for his first great grandbaby. We made a trip in late January to see Robinson while he was in a rehab facility for some health issues he was having. He had a lot of health issues. He was elated with happiness to see our son, Elijah-Rae. We named our son Rae after Robinson whose full name is Robinson Anthony Erechar, initials being RAE. We knew his health was declining. One day, we unfortunately got a call that Robinson had a heart attack and was told to get to the west side of the state as soon as possible because this time, unlike other times, he was not going to make it out of the hospital. We packed everything so quickly and left that same day.

This was around March so before everything really shut down but there were still very tight restrictions. My husband's family was told that only two people could in the hospital with Robinson. Those two being my husband and his grandma, Robinson's wife. At the hotel was myself, my son, my mother-in-law, her husband, and her younger son. The way they had to say goodbye was a way that would be all too familiar in the months to come for so many families, through video call. My husband has an uncle who is the other child to Robinson, who is living in Germany. While in the hospital, my husband made a group video call with his uncle and us and everyone got to say their goodbyes. It was the hardest things for them and a glimpse of what was yet to come for so many families who never got that opportunity to be besides their families who passed away.

As time went on, we all learned to try to find a balance with things. Again, it wasn't easy. Zoom fatigue was real. I was struggling. I am thankful that my anti-depressants helped me a long the way. I was chugging along the following months and then I get the dreaded email that I am getting laid off because of budget cuts. We saw that the pandemic caused so much financial stress on so many businesses and institutions. Getting a job was now a competition. My family and I can't live just off my husband's income. We have bills, we must pay our rent, our utilities, we have a newborn baby. My last day was just a few days shy of my birthday. Thanks to the CARES act and not getting the penalty on withdrawing

retirement savings, I made the decision to withdraw all my retirement to ensure that we made it by until I could find another job. It sucked. Retirement is supposed to be a safety net for when you're older but here I was having to withdraw it to ensure we made ends meet.

Through the tears, struggles, stress and laughs, I was lucky to obtain another position that I absolutely love, three months later after being laid off. Although I went through all this and more, others have gone through worse. It makes us realize that we need to be kind to one another because we do not know what another person may be going through.