

## **Transcript of Interview of Marissa Rhodes by Angelica S Ramos**

**Interviewee:** Marissa Rhodes

**Interviewer:** Angelica S Ramos

**Date:** 07/05/2021

**Location (Interviewee):** Buffalo, New York

**Location (Interviewer):** Gilbert, Arizona

**Transcriber:** Angelica S Ramos

**Abstract** – Curator for the JOPTY program, Angelica S Ramos interviews mother of three, Dr. Marissa Rhodes. In this interview she discusses her role as a professor and how COVID-19 halted all the plans she had for her classes. She also discusses her pregnancy with her third baby and the struggles that came with prenatal care and birth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Rhodes also relates her birthing experience and how different the pandemic made it from her first two pregnancies; she discusses the complications that she faced and the stresses she dealt with. Dr. Rhodes also discusses how her social life was impacted and the struggle to find a balance between work, children, virtual-learning and a new baby. Lastly, she reflects on her personal silver lining and the lessons that she hopes will be learned from this experience.

### **Angelica Ramos 00:00:03**

Hi, my name is Angelica Ramos and I am a curator with the Journal of the play year COVID-19 archive project at Arizona State University. Today's date is July 15, 2021. And the time is 11:03am Mountain Standard Time. Today I will be interviewing Dr. Rhodes about her COVID-19 experience. To start, can you please state your full name, your location and current time?

### **Marissa Rhodes 00:00:34**

Sure. My name is Marissa Chrisman Rhodes, and I am in Buffalo, New York. And the time here locally is 2:03pm. Eastern Daylight Time.

### **Angelica Ramos 00:00:47**

I also need to ask for your consent to record this interview with the purpose of saving it into the JOTPY archival project at ASU.

### **Marissa Rhodes 00:00:57**

I consent

### **Angelica Ramos 00:01:00**

describe the moment you first learned about COVID and how it made you feel.

### **Marissa Rhodes 01:08**

So, when I first learned about COVID, I mean, I follow the news pretty closely. And I especially was at that time. So, I heard about it when it was still in Wuhan. And you know, I didn't think all that much of it, I thought of it as being sort of similar to SARS, which didn't really impact me personally at all, when that happened in the early 2000s. So, I thought of it like that when I first heard of it. But when I first heard of it, being in the United States,

and epidemiologist being worried about it, um, I was a visiting professor at Niagara University in Niagara Falls, New York. And I was actually teaching a history of medicine and public health class. And we had all these plans to actually do like play board games about the the influenza pandemic and things like that. And we had to cancel them because we had a real pandemic. So, it was kind of weird. I remember my students being really concerned, and asking me, I mean, is it possible that they're actually going to cancel in person class? And I remember thinking that it didn't seem like that was even a possibility it didn't I you know, it had no, I had never experienced anything like this in my life. So based on my experience, they came to me and said, like, what do you think's going to happen? And I said, I really can't imagine that, that that's going to happen, that we're going to not have class in person anymore. And that we're all going to be like on lockdown in our homes that like I can't imagine that that will actually be the case. But I was wrong. And that's exactly what happened. And a couple days after I had this conversation with my students, that happened, we also had to, we had a trip planned to go to this particular class, we had a trip to go to the motor Museum in Philadelphia, which is a medical museum. And I had just bought all the tickets. And I had just done all of that planning. And they were so excited. And they were going to write their final papers about their trip, kind of evaluating their trip. And I had just purchased all that stuff. And I had to cancel it. And I you know, at first I thought there's no way I'm gonna have to cancel this trip that's in, you know, that's in a month or whatever. Because of this, like, That's crazy. There's no way that that's possible. 100%, I had to cancel it. By the end of that week, I think the week of March 13 or so. um in 2020. So that was my experience of my first experience of COVID.

**Angelica Ramos 00:03:53**

That's really interesting to hear your how your career was affected, but I wanted to gear it more towards your experience as a mother so I wanted to get into that. How many children do you have? And how old are they?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:04:10**

Sure. So, I have three children right now. My oldest is nine. And my middle child is going to be six next week. And then I have a six-month-old.

**Angelica Ramos 00:04:23**

What was prenatal care like during COVID?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:04:28**

So prenatal care was interesting because I actually go to a birthing center I do out of hospital births. So, I see an OB and she also works with midwives. But she has a birthing center, a freestanding birthing center. It's one of I think two in New York state where you give birth outside of the hospital in a kind of nice, friendly environment. And I did that with my son so I plan to do that with this baby. But the difference was that with My son, we stuck to a centering model of care. So, we would have, instead of having our individual OB appointments, we would meet every two weeks at the OBs office in the evening, with our partners, sometimes with our kids as well. And we would kind of be taken back one by one to be waived for, you know, health issues to be discussed on things you would do in a normal ob appointment. While everyone else kind of chatted, and got some of that social emotional development going, um, you know, that is so important. I think when you're pregnant, I was one of the only people in that centering group that had already had a child, and everyone else was a first time mom. So, it was really interesting, because they were all like, you know, saying, like, well, I'm gonna parent my kid like this, and I'm gonna do it like this. And I was like, Okay, well, you don't have kids yet, but we'll have, you know, um, so that was interesting, that all went away. So, during COVID, they kind of abolished the centering model of care.

And it went back to individual appointments. It's kind of nice in the sense that you kind of have your doctor's undivided attention, I guess. But you don't have that same socialization, or the same, you know, bi weekly support that you would get in a centering group. And, you know, with a centering group that I had with my son, you know, once our babies were all born, we stayed in touch, our kids all hang out, we know each other, it kind of forms like a little cohort for you, which I think is really important, especially if you're a first time mom. And this time, you know that I didn't have that option. So it was sort of isolating. And I remember feeling really bad for women who were becoming moms for the first time during COVID because they wouldn't get to experience that.

**Angelica Ramos 00:07:13**

What was it like giving birth during COVID? And was there anything positive about that experience?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:07:23**

So, my birth story with my third was kind of interesting. With my first two, I had very fast labor's very fast unmedicated, labor's The second one was in a birth center, I gave birth to him in a tub. And, you know, I was not in labor for very long. And everything was went well, with this baby. Something similar happened, I my water actually broke before I went into labor, which had never happened to me before. So that was different. But she came very, very fast. So like, my water broke, and then like, a couple hours later, I was pushing her out. And I mean, anyone who's a mom knows that that is very quick. And so I gave birth to her at the birth center on a birthing stool. It was like, you know, zero intervention. I mean, my OB was there, obviously. But I had no interventions or anything. But I ended up losing a lot of blood, which is one of the complications that could happen when you give birth and every now and then women have to transfer from the birthing center to the hospital if they need a blood transfusion. Mine wasn't so bad that I needed a transfusion, I was okay. But my daughter was not really okay. She was having trouble breathing. And because I gave birth to her so quickly. She did not, there wasn't time for her to be in the birth canal for all of her all of the gunk that's inside of their body in their their lungs, it usually gets squeezed out by contractions when they're in the birth canal. But she wasn't there long enough. And I didn't have enough contractions, I wasn't laboring for long enough for that to happen. So it was called transient to kick me out of the newborn and she was unable to breathe well. So after a few hours of giving her oxygen and kind of monitoring her, um, my OB, asked me if she could call in the neonatal emergency team from our local Children's Hospital. And I said yes, knowing though, that if they came out, they were going to admit her and she would be in the hospital and she would be a NICU baby. And that I would have to be spending all these days during the COVID pandemic in the hospital. But you know, better safe than sorry, I figured, so I gave consent. And they came and picked her up and they put her in incubator hooked her up to all these things and took her in an ambulance to the hospital without me and my husband. So, I had to say goodbye to my baby who was like a few hours old. That's so rare at the birthing center, you go home after a couple hours, and you bring your baby home with you. So, you're never separated from them. And I didn't have that option this time. So, I was very weak because I had lost a lot of blood. But my OB helped me shower and get dressed. And, and my husband helped me and he, they took me in a wheelchair to the car. And then we went to the hospital to meet the baby there. While I was birthing at the birthing center for the very short time that I was there, I did not wear a mask, but all of the people who were in the room with me, did wear a mask, including my husband. One of the biggest differences, besides from the prenatal care, because of COVID was that my mom was unable to attend the birth. She had been there for the birth of both of my other kids, and was sort of like, almost like a birth coach to me. My husband was also there. And I also had doulas for at least two or three births. So I had a lot of people there. And that was with me, that's what I liked. But um, my mom wasn't able to come. And she was heartbroken about that she brought it up all the time when I was pregnant, well, I'm not going to get to be able to be there. And

she was totally devastated by by that. And that devastation that she had because she couldn't be there, it was compounded by the fact that now that my baby was admitted into the NICU knew she wasn't going to be able to see her for weeks. So, nobody was allowed in the NICU because of COVID there were no visitors allowed. Um, there were, you know, masks 24 seven, so I had to sleep in a mask. And my husband had to sleep in a mask we stayed there and slept there every day for a week. And we never took her mask off, I had just given birth and lost a lot of blood. So that was really difficult because I couldn't eat or drink regularly (because I couldn't eat or drink in a room because I would have to take my mask off) so my husband had to, I couldn't quite walk because my blood loss so my husband had to put me in a wheelchair and wheel need to like a designated eating area and the hospital which was literally all the way across the hospital. Same thing with the bathroom, he had to wheel me there was no bathroom in the room he had to wheel me, you know, to a bathroom. And so I could eat drink, whatever. So I was super dehydrated, super underfed for those few days following the birth. And it was just extra sad. Because with all my other kids within an hour or two of them being born or even while they're being born, our closest family members would meet them. And with this one, you know, she was around for like a week and nobody had met her still. Um, should I keep going here? What's your what's your next question about because I have more things to share but

#### **Angelica Ramos 00:13:14**

My next question is about motherhood during the pandemic, so what was it after you brought the baby home and just the difference between bringing a baby home during COVID and bringing your first two babies' home?

#### **Marissa Rhodes 00:13:27**

Okay, so a couple things that I wanted to add about then NICU before I talk about bringing the kids home was that because of COVID I think people and my baby who had breathing issues, the breathing issues were unrelated to COVID but because of COVID everyone I think was very on edge and being extra cautious. One of the results for that for a family like me was that because they were being extra cautious. The nurses and doctors and everybody at the residence and everybody at the NICU refused to let my baby eat for a few days. Because the idea was that if she's having breathing issues and she has something in her stomach, whenever you have something in your stomach, it pushes on your diaphragm, and that can impede breathing breathing. So the idea is that she was having breathing issues, so they didn't want to possibly compound those issues. So they wouldn't let me feed her and that was they were just trying to be absolutely as you know, kind of conservative and and cautious as possible. And you know, it was really, really difficult to not feed my baby. She would scream and scream and scream for hours on end. And then they would come in and say, oh well I'm looking at her heart monitor and her brain rates, and they're all elevated for the past few hours. And I'm like, yeah, cuz she's starving. So she's screaming. And then they're like, well, because their heart rate and her breathing, her breathing rate have elevated, we're gonna have to put off feeding her even more, you know, because they work because they're looking at the numbers, they're not really in there. Like with the baby 24/7 , they're looking at monitored numbers that are kind of spit out at their desk. And so that was really difficult when we felt like we were in this endless cycle of interventions, that one intervention will lead to another intervention will lead to another one. And it was really difficult to get out of those interventions. Eventually, I kind of advocated for myself and for my baby, and I was like, we need to feed this fricking baby. She's starving, and the nurse who I had agreed, and even said, the whole time I was here, the only time her heart rate was elevated was when she was screaming because she woke up and was hungry. And the only time it wasn't elevated was when she was sleeping because she wasn't awake to be hungry. So eventually, they did let me feed her. But for the first like three days, I couldn't feed her. And that was really, really difficult. And to some of the nurses, you know, I said, Is this typical? And they said no, with like full

term, normal weight babies, they're not normally this cautious. But because of COVID. And because we're in a hospital, there's a possibility this baby could get COVID, there's a possibility the breathing issues could get worse. They want to take every precaution. So there's little things like that, that people don't really realize that really impact people's life during a pandemic, I think um just small things like, you know, me having my milk come in, and I'm having to pump all the time, and I'm in the NICU. And I can't feed my baby who was literally starving. So and then they started with some of the while she's losing weight, it's like, well, you're not letting me feed her, you know, that kind of thing. So there's a lot of conflict there. And it was a ton of turmoil. So bringing the baby home to answer the question that you you posed a few minutes ago, bringing the baby home was extra complicated, because while I was in the hospital, my children were staying with my mom and my sister, I have a sister who's 18, who lives at home. And while we were in the NICU, I think the day before we got released, my sister tested positive for COVID. And my kids were with her. And now she has kind of her own little apartment in the basement. So it's not like they were, they weren't like next to her all day, every day, but they definitely interacted with her. And they were in the same house as her. So then came the choice of Okay, well, I had this baby a week ago, she was in the NICU for a week. Do I tell my kids who I haven't seen for a week, you know, and they were five and nine. Desperate to see me desperate to see the baby. They had never met her. Desperate to see their dad desperate to sleep at home, as all little kids are. Do I tell them you have to stay at grandma's house for two weeks, two more weeks now, because you've been exposed to COVID? Or do I take that risk and let them come home? For me, and the decision was not difficult, I let them come home. And I took that risk. And probably a lot of people would judge me for that. But I guess for me, I had been away from them for too long. And I just couldn't they were also in school. And they were also missing a bunch of school, they were missing. My son was missing a speech therapy. There was all of these things going on that that I needed to kind of pull my life back together. And if that wasn't gonna happen for another two weeks, I felt like I would lose my mind. So I let them come home. And just monitored them for symptoms. My mom who also lives with my sister, and who is actually high risk, did not contract COVID despite living with my sister, and being much closer to her, and neither did my kids. I got them tested a few times just to be sure. But yeah, so I took that risk. And sometimes I feel guilty about it because I think on paper that's probably wasn't the right decision. But in my actual real life, it was the only thing I could have done. So that was hard, because my mom was exposed to COVID and she entered a quarantine. This is this is at the point in COVID this is January of 2021. This is at the point where they're very strict quarantine rules because my mom was in the household with someone who testified Positive, she could not see my daughter for another two weeks. So she didn't meet my daughter until she was maybe three weeks old. And that was heartbreaking for her. Because with my other kids, she was there when they were born. And so that was difficult. My sister didn't meet my daughter until maybe a month after she was born. And our whole life sort of because of that, NICU stay, our whole life just started, started kind of falling apart. I actually started teaching a class, the day before I gave birth, at ASU, it was a history podcasting class, it started on the 11th. And then on the 12th, I gave birth. So in the NICU, I was running the class, grading all this stuff. And then I was doing all that stuff, also when I came home. And that was a lot. Another fallout thing from this situation is that because of our NICU stay, and because of COVID, my son who was in speech therapy classes, he has a severe speech delay. What he had to miss a couple speech classes, because I was in the NICU. And also because, he had a speech, because of that exposure from having been in the same house as my sister, he also had to miss a week of school, which includes speech. So he missed speech and things like that. A couple months later, after I thought we've gotten our life together. Um, he had his evaluation, his special ed evaluation, and I had been told that he was denied for summer services, because he missed some speech classes in the spring. And the reason you missed them is cuz I was on the NICU with the baby. And because he was exposed to COVID, immediately after that, and so he missed a couple in a row. And I cried for days, and I found this out, because I was like, Oh, my God, like, my, you know, he's, you

know, desperately needs help. He's, you know, falling behind in school, his speeches not improving, and instead of giving him help, the district is kind of punishing us, for him missing those classes, you know what I mean? It was really hard to take, I ended up like going on the warpath and calling everybody I could, and I ended up getting him approved for summer services. So you know, it worked out on the end, but it took about five months to work. And, but that was kind of another example of the small kind of cascading problems that happen because of the pandemic. And because of, you know, missed school and missed speech. A lot of people will say, oh, like, you know, don't worry about the kids missing. You know, they're not going to fall behind, you know, they're learning different things. They'll catch up, kids are resilient. All that stuff is true. But when you have a kid who's in special ed and has a speech impediment, missing out on those therapies, is really crucial to their development as a human. And he was at a point where we were starting to worry that he was going to have a speech impediment forever, because he is getting old enough now and it's not improving. So when people say things like that, there's a lot of like things floating on Facebook, like don't worry about the kids, blah, blah, blah. Yeah, that's true if you have a typical kid, but if you have a kid who has issues then COVID has really thrown people through for a loop. You know? I think that was all I had to say about that.

**Angelica Ramos 00:23:37**

How, did COVID (sneeze) sorry, how did COVID change your day to day routine?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:23:47**

I made it really difficult because I live in New York state and in New York State. They suspended in person school for really long time. New York State our governor was Cuomo was very cautious about it very almost authoritarian, like, Hey, we're doing this. Everybody Shut up. This is what we're gonna do. I appreciated it because I knew how important that kind of attitude was during a pandemic. But a lot of people hate him for that. But the result of that is that our kids were out of school a lot longer than most kids were. So my kids left school in March of 2020. And did not go back until the winter of 20. Wait, what's what is now? March? Yeah, they didn't go back until almost a year. They had been out, you know, of school for almost a year. So they were at home. And as I'm sure lots of other mothers and fathers now. And guardians and caretakers, everybody who's taken care of kids, it takes so much effort on the parents part to do to do remote schooling. So I had a kindergartener and a third grader. And I had to help them with schooling, especially kindergartener, I had to sit there with him the whole time. You know, have all the supplies ready every day, I got a message from a teacher every day, hey, we need this, this and this. So then every morning, I'd get up, get the supplies ready. I had to get my kids out of bed. And it was hard with my youngest, he well, he was my youngest at the time, because I was pregnant. He didn't want to get up didn't understand why he had to get dressed, or brush his teeth, or like, do anything that humans do. Because he's like, I'm not going to school. And I'm like, Well, you know, you have to, that's just the rule, it was literally one of the rules for their school. So every single thing was a fight with him, every single thing our daughter was okay, he was really, really difficult. You know, everything, he would need to brush his teeth, he wouldn't go to sleep, he wouldn't, you know, wash his face, he wouldn't take a bath, he wouldn't get dressed, he wouldn't brush his hair, he would not do anything. And I think it was him to sort of looking for something to control, I guess, because, you know, everything just seem so out of control. So I tried to be really gentle with him. But um, what my day looked like was Yes, getting them ready for school, then I helped them with school till noon. And then we all ate lunch. And then I started working because I'm in eastern. And my job is in Mountain Standard Time, and they don't observe daylight savings. So they're three hours behind me most of the time. So their meetings at ASU and stuff would start at nine their time, noon my time. And so by that time the kids were done, I was done with teaching the kids. And then I would usually work from like 12 to six or eight in the day, so

in a way it worked out. But that also meant that my kids just ran wild. From 12 to 6, my husband worked, he worked at a grocery store. And they're always understaffed. So COVID meant that he needed to work more hours and more days than ever before. And so my day was Yeah, just being interrupted 500 times when I'm working to get snacks and milk for the kids. I'm just working and try to keep them out of the zoom camera range. And, you know, just trying to make sure that that I didn't ignore them, but also having to get my work done, because I'm getting paid to do this. All of that sort of difficult stuff. That's kind of what my day to day was like. And for a lot of that I was pregnant. And then I gave birth in January of 2021. And then I did all that plus a baby. Um, thankfully, my kids went back full time, I think in April of this year. Um, so yeah, my kids were out of when they went back, they initially went back two days a week and that kind of thing, like a hybrid thing. But they didn't go back full time until over a year after they had left school. And that helped a ton. That was awesome. Because instead of being teacher and parent during the day, I could focus on getting worked on, put the baby in the baby carrier gets I worked on and then have some of my evening to myself sometimes. So that was really nice. It was difficult to always remember to have their masks washed. That was like a big thing. No matter how many masks we buy, we lose all of them. At least the kid ones. So every night I'd be like running around, like wheres a mask wheres a mask, I need to hand wash it or you need to, you know, whatever. It was just always, it just adds an extra step to everything. So yeah, and right now, now that COVID is sort of winding down in my neck of the woods. It's not everywhere, but we have a really, really high like an 80% vaccination rate in my county. My kids don't have to wear masks anymore to school. Nobody has to wear masks anywhere. There really aren't any more, you know, precautions that you that are mandated. And it's really cool because our rates are still really low. We only have like a dozen people that have COVID in the whole county right now. So now my days are much more normal. Since it's summer. Once again, I'm working all summer. I have a baby, my husband's working constantly and my kids are home. So but at least I'm not, you know, failing it, helping them study and stuff at least like they don't have schoolwork to do so at least. If they just run around like wild children then It's, it's more Okay. Yes.

**Angelica Ramos 00:30:01**

I think you already touched on my next two questions, but I'll skim through them just in case you had something else to add. What were the biggest challenges you faced during COVID? And how was your mental and physical health affected?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:30:20**

The biggest challenges? challenges? Did you say it cut out? Right when you said that? So I didn't know.

**Angelica Ramos 00:30:24**

Yeah, sorry, what were the biggest challenges you faced due to COVID. And did COVID affect your mental or physical health?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:30:32**

Um, so the biggest challenges were was just how to manage my life, how to work and do laundry, and be a mom and a teacher, and a college professor, and a curatorial lead at an archive, and a podcaster, and a friend and a wife and all of those things, how to do all of those things at once and not have any life separation whatsoever, I think that's the most challenging thing. You know, instead of going to work for eight hours, and then coming home, I have to, you know, I've been answering emails, 24/7, you know, every single day, because I don't ever get a solid eight hours to sit down and do work so that my work ends up being spread out. And my kids are, you know, up my butt every second. That lack of separation, and having to do all of those things at once, is definitely the most

challenging. And 100% my mental health suffered because of COVID. I always really struggle with pregnancy anyway. I have my last two pregnancies were on the difficult side, I had gestational diabetes, and I have really bad scoliosis. So I have a lot of musculoskeletal problems that happen when I'm pregnant, nothing that puts the baby in danger, but just makes it painful for me. So pregnancy is always difficult for me, but pregnancy during COVID was even worse, I think. I mean, I honestly think that I laid in my bed almost every day all day. You know, it was... Yeah, very isolating. I had friends who didn't see me even once the whole time I was pregnant, and are just meeting my baby. Now, friends who I talked to every day. It's very strange. And so they see me and they're like, it's like, you didn't even have a baby. Because the last time they saw me, I wasn't pregnant yet. And now I have, you know, a six month old. So, you know, I think my friendships took a huge a huge sort of dip. And, you know, it's just really difficult to maintain those relationships remotely, it's not that you can, I did, like I said, I text with my friends every day and have group texts and Facebook messages or whatever. But it's just not the same. I'm a very social person. And I get my energy from other people. And I feel better with my life when I'm not home all the time. I'm not a homebody, I'm more of a out and about kind of person. So being home, and being pregnant and in pain, not being able to eat any food that I wanted, because of the gestational diabetes, it was miserable. I think having a newborn was very good for my soul. And it really, I'm so glad that I had her when I did, because I could, I could just be at home, you know, on lockdown, and just sit here and cuddle with my little newborn all day, every day. And nobody could say anything about it because I couldn't go anywhere because we weren't supposed to be going places. So I think that in many ways not to be dramatic, but like kind of saved me are sort of helped me to recover from, from those darker days when when I was pregnant and when the pandemic was at its worst. And I have to say, it's been a huge weight off my shoulders since Biden won the election. Like I think like honestly, having Donald Trump as the President was really, really chaotic. And I feel like I have like, adrenaline exhaustion or whatever it's called, like, where you're just like on it all day, every day and you just sort of totally lose it. I sort of that's how I was, you know, doom scrolling all the time, worrying about what kind of stupid shit he was going to say next. Worrying about how him not taking the pandemic seriously would result in more deaths. You know, worrying about my own family members who are Trump supporters who believe that the pandemic wasn't real and then got COVID and then almost died. You know, all of those things, they, they weighed so heavily on me. I was just worried all the time. So I'm not gonna like it's not like Biden being elected, saved everything or anything like that. There's still a lot of issues. And as soon as Biden was elected, I was like, Yes, now I can start criticizing him, because I think it's important to criticize people who are in power, because they're the ones who can actually, you know, make some changes. And I think it's important to think critically about everybody. But just the difference in personalities between President Trump and President Biden has been such a relief. And I finally feel like, Oh, we have someone who takes the pandemic seriously. We have someone who isn't spreading misinformation and disinformation. We have someone who, you know, wants to get relief, money out to families, things like that. Just really the policy specifics that Biden has brought to the White House have taken a huge weight off my shoulders. Don't get me wrong, I'm still doom scrolling. I'm so pissed off about everybody in Congress. I still hate politicians. I still, I still, you know, I'm active and an upset and politically woke I guess. But it's not as chaotic, I think is that was.

**Angelica Ramos 00:36:31**

Going back to, you mentioned a little bit the communication you had with your friends over social media and texting, how did COVID limit the kind of support you had after you had your baby?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:36:44**



Yeah, so it was difficult because just every time someone was exposed to COVID, they couldn't be around for two weeks, my mom was exposed once when my sister got it, she was exposed another time, I think, my friend, and she couldn't come then. And that ruined everything. Because she was the only one that I had, with my husband working so much also, because of COVID. Because he worked at a grocery store. With my husband working so much. She was like all I had. So she had to keep, you know, quarantine yourself and not seeing anybody. And suddenly, I have five meetings and a crying baby and two kids at home with me. (baby making noise) See, she's like she's on cue, could you hear her just know, she's, she's on my back. And it's made the day, 10 times more stressful, made me worry about how professional I would see, if I had kids crawling all over me at every meeting I have at work, you know, it really (baby fussing) give her a pacifier, let's see if she'll calm down. Um, you know, it was a lot of pressure. So, I think that that ripple effect is something that I want to revisit, too, is that every time that someone was exposed and had a quarantine every single person who was counting on them in their life, lost, that, you know, lost their help. Sometimes their money, their support, their love, their presence, they lost something every time that happened. And my mom, I think, is still grieving for the fact that she didn't watch this baby be born. And I think people, you know, obviously, there's a grief for lives that were lost, which is horrible. But I think a lot of people are also grieving for, you know, relationships that have ended now, because of the pandemic. ways of life that have ended for them. And yeah, I think and just sort (baby fussing) of the way things used to be, and there's this kind of feeling that nothing will ever really be the same again. My husband just had a start. He just stopped wearing masks at work a week ago. And he was texting me and he's like, I'm having so much anxiety because he, he suddenly had to have no mask. And he was kind of freaking out about it. And weirdly, he kept saying that. (baby fussing) He never really knew what any of his co workers looked like because he got transferred to a new store during COVID. They all wore masks, he never saw them without mass. So once they all took their masks off, he didn't nobody could recognize anybody else. Nobody knew who anybody was. And he's and that was really stressful. (baby fussing) And then he felt naked. So we felt like oh my god, there's something wrong. And his the one funny thing that he said about it, (baby fussing) sorry. The one funny thing that he said about it was That, he now realizes that if it's left up to the imagination, he'll always imagine the person is more attractive than they are. And so when he saw people take their masks off, he was like, Oh, that's what he looked like. (baby fussing) And he, he realized that when they have their masks on that he filled in the rest of their face with like supermodel faces. And then it was like all yours regular people. (baby crying) Um, hang on one second, I'm gonna pass her off so that we can finish up. And so just just pause one sec. I mean, you don't actually pause the recording or anything, whatever you want to do. Be right back. (Marissa stepped out to take care of her baby and came back to finish the interview)

**Marissa Rhodes 00:41:04**

Okay, sorry. I just didn't want her to be screaming for the rest. So what was so your let you had two more questions that I answered both of them?

**Angelica Ramos 00:41:15**

Yes, you did. It was just about the support you had when you brought

**Marissa Rhodes 00:41:21**

Okay, I can't hear you hang on. Okay, what do you say?

**Angelica Ramos 00:41:25**

It was just a question about the support that you had or lack thereof when you brought the baby home?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:41:32**

Yeah, it was, that was really difficult. And childcare was really difficult. So I was, I've had to kind of face my fears of being a stay at home mom, I think stay at home moms are like the most badass people in the world, because I think it's so hard to do. And I'm not just saying that in sort of the sort of twee way I really do think it's super hard. And I don't know that I could do it. But I kind of had to do it anyway. So, if one good thing came out of COVID, it might be that I was forced to sort of face my fears of being home all day, every day with my kids. And having that pressure to entertain them and, and all that stuff and to get stuff done house but also to enrich their lives and all that all that pressure that comes with being a stay-at-home mom. I was working full time from home. So, I wasn't exactly a stay-at-home mom, but I still had to do a lot of stuff stay at home moms have to do. And I realized that there's really nothing to be afraid of. It's really, really difficult. But I found ways to enjoy spending time with my kids that I hadn't really experienced before the pandemic. So, I guess you can say it's sort of one silver lining.

**Angelica Ramos 00:42:58**

And my last question for you was because you already answered the silver lining part. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Marissa Rhodes 00:43:08**

Um, no, I don't think so. I mean, I think I think I covered everything. I'm a talker. And that's the way my brain works. So hopefully, people can follow it. I guess. Yeah, the one thing I'd want to say is that I think that it's important to always be reflecting on how COVID has changed us. I think, nowadays people are now that the pandemic is winding down in some places, not another's. And with the Delta variant, it's kind of ramping back up again, in a lot of places. But in some places, people are really in a hurry to not talk about COVID at all, and to move on and, and sort of ignore that the trauma that was COVID. And I think that with like with any traumatic experience, it's really important to reflect on it, at least when you're ready, and to think about how it changed your life. Think about what was and what wasn't in your control. Give yourself some grace, but also give yourself the kind of whatever therapeutic thing you need to kind of move on. That's kind of my one thing is that I hope that moving forward that after a brief, never wanting to talk about COVID, or do anything related to COVID. Again, I hope that we are kind of all are able, as a country and as like the world able to kind of look back and reflect and I think it would be it'll be better for us to do that.

**Angelica Ramos 00:44:46**

All right. Well, I wanted to thank you so much for your time and for allowing us to do this interview.

**Marissa Rhodes 00:44:52**

Thank you