

Coronavirus and Reemergence of Gender Role: A Timeline

January 2020 - Rumors of a New Virus

While no one could have predicted the pandemic of 2020, it seemed like as soon as we all started packing away our holiday decorations we were hearing buzz of a new dangerous virus. Most of us were concerned, but largely went about our business as usual. Perhaps we picked up some extra household goods at the grocery store and washed our hands more; but largely our lives progressed as per usual in the first 60 days of the year. This was a time of blissful ignorance.

February 2020 - Covid-19 Lands on American Soil

All of a sudden, the virus was here and it was no longer something any of us could ignore. Businesses were immediately ordered to close, kids we were sent home from school and the luckiest among us were able to keep our jobs, but were now required to work from home. Adjustments were being made daily, we were all adjusting, pivoting, making necessary arrangements; but we were managing. It was all okay because we just needed to shelter in place for a few weeks to flatten the curve and then maybe things would return to normal. This was a time of hope, optimism and perseverance. .

March 2020 - A Global Pandemic is Declared

The virus was classified as a pandemic. Thousands of people were testing positive every day. Most of us were glued to the news, watching the real-time updates in New York. The death tolls were sobering, the outlook was depressing, we were scared. That's when it became apparent that this was not going away anytime soon. Long-term plans had to be made. This was a time of fear and anxiety.

April 2020 - Adjusting to a New Normal

Children had to transition to home-education, parents had to transition to working from home and/or being without work, and partners had to learn how to spend more time with each other than they've ever had to do before. All of this was taking place in almost an instant, and while dealing with the incalculable stress and anxiety we were all feeling. Normal was dead. There was not and is not anyway that life will return to the ways of 2019, ever. This was a time of acceptance and adjustment.

May 2020 - The Resurgence of Gender Stereotypes

The adjustments were not easy, especially in homes with children. On top of working from home and learning how to peacefully share a space, parents now had to entertain, educate and occupy children all day. Meals were being cooked at home more, as a result of many restaurants being closed. Even going to the grocery store was more complicated, taking more time and preparation than just a few months ago. This is where many women started to notice an unfair, outdated and frankly, ridiculous trend reemerge; sexist gender roles.

In many marriages the whiplash to the ways of our grandparents took place without even so much as a conversation. When the kids needed wrangling, it was just assumed that the mother would handle it. Daddy is working. When the kids were hungry, moms were finding themselves making the snacks because Daddy was working. When the fridge was running low on food or household goods needed restocked, it was usually noticed and handled by the mother. Why? Because Daddy was busy working and didn't notice.

Countless mothers across the country were left scratching their heads. They were working too. They had jobs that needed them to be present too. But many didn't speak out. Instead they let the discontentment fester internally. It seemed wrong to point out such a grievance when so many bigger issues were going on. Plus it didn't even seem like their husbands were doing anything wrong. But the question remained; why were these roles falling on them, and largely them alone?

This was a time of resentment.

June 2020 and Beyond - Leveling the Playing Field

The answer to why is simple, but reasons behind the why are complex. Over the years, these roles and assumptions have been carved into the fabric of our society. Many men may not even realize they are doing it, and women are not blameless in this endeavour either. How we act matters. The decisions we, as women and men, are making now will shape the future of our society. Our children are learning from our actions, even now. So how do we fix it?

The first step to solving this problem is communication. Real honest, open and clear communication. As women we need to speak out. We need to push back when our husbands assume we will handle a task that isn't solely our responsibility.

As men we need to check our assumptions. If your child needs help with their homework or needs a snack or comforting, don't immediately defer that request to your partner because you are working. It's possible you have time to grab that bandaid, it's possible what she is currently doing has just as much value as what you

are currently doing. A woman's time needs to hold as much value as a man's time in order for true equality to be achieved. .

Gender roles are resilient. Oftentimes it may seem as if we as a society have achieved the dream of equality, until something happens and shows us just how much work is left to be done. Enter the Covid-19 pandemic. Mother's day has come and gone this year leaving most women disappointed. What they wanted wasn't flowers, or breakfast in bed. What they wanted - what they still want - is equality. An equitable division of labor.

Coronavirus has forced us all to adjust, and these adjustments are unequally being forced on mothers. Children are not a women's responsibility, household management is not a women's responsibility and cooking is not a women's responsibility. Understanding and accepting these facts is the only way we will ever move past these toxic stereotypes, and actually level the playing field. Making tomorrow the time of equality.