

Recognizing Joy in 2020



2020: the year that may best be deemed a dumpster fire.

This year will certainly be one for history, seen often as quite dire.

We've sat with bad news and hours where we just doom-scrolled,
However, for me it seems that the hidden joys remain more untold.

At times it feels selfish to have felt life's peaks and happiness this year,
How can I look at this drowning world and still have moments of self-cheer?

Here I aim to spend the time reflecting on the types of joy in my 2020 life;

In no way to paint toxic positivity over the year of tremendous strife!

JOY 1: PROFESSIONAL PASSION

[Beginning a job in April as a virtual math coach quickly unveiled the need for a professional community and to share an organization's vision for education; becoming a Knowles Program Fellow brought professional joy to the end of my 2020.]

Each day filled with waking up just in time to log in and be "present,"

Virtual icebreakers and "you're on mute" among things I resent.

Repeating the mantra each morning: "You have a deep love and passion for

education,”

But knowing your current position is just a contribution to standardization nation.

How do you balance the gratitude for being employed while knowing you need more?

During this year, is it possible to even find a role to support teachers and a field you adore?

Then comes a glimmer of hope and an interview with familiar faces,
An organization that cares and wants to meet teachers in their unique places.

No doubt this has been a trying year for teachers and students alike;

Now I can offer support from a community that has always felt homelike.

Right from the beginning, I felt safe and comfortable to voice questions.

Despite being new, my voice was valued and space was given for my suggestions.

Each meeting, even though virtual, began with time for authentic connection.

The goals and passion for education felt they were truly in the right direction.

The field of education has left more to envision and question this year,

Time was given to appreciate and desire more from this essential career.

Do you feel you made and had time to reflect upon your professional passion and goal?

How can you utilize the pace of 2020 to make changes that are within your control?

JOY 2: A DISTANCED COMMUNITY

[Many say there is no perfect time to bring a baby into the world; however, a global pandemic brought unique challenges as we prepare to bring this next adventure home!]

Though in our original dreaming, this was the right time in our family vision,

The challenges of this year started to make this a much harder decision.

It would be so much harder to celebrate and share with those who love us;

One of the greatest parts of this life change is having others make a fuss.

Is it possible to share this joy with loved ones with a pandemic underway?

Will they even care or be so overwhelmed that it just gets kept at bay?

At first we kept our news a secret and privately cheered as a party of two,

But it became obvious that we'd need others for what we were going through. This was in-person news for our families, so we took a roadtrip of several miles.

Even from a 6-foot distance, we could feel the joy of their masked smiles.

The next few weeks were full of virtual calls with friends to share our news, Our friends were thrilled for us and eager for a topic that wasn't the COVID blues. We've grown to embrace the time spent with family and friends through Zoom, This technology has allowed us to see lots of people from our own living room. Although we still don't know when we will be in-person to give hugs and celebrate, We're grateful for the virtual love and bonds we've been challenged to create.

Have the changes of 2020 pushed your vision of support and community?

How will you utilize these digital tools in a future connecting opportunity?

JOY 3: NEW PACE & HEAD SPACE

[Every weekend was planned to a T and weekdays were rushed through with such urgency; 2020 pushed me to reevaluate my schedule and priorities.]

Before, each day felt a bit new and from the start it was "go-go-go";

Getting ready for people you may see felt like preparing for a show.

Rushing when you got home to plan some leisure or quality time.

Thinking about work while you scarfed dinner had become the paradigm.

March 2020: the world took a collective, though masked, breath and pause.

Time to stay home, protecting yourself and others, with COVID as the cause.

At first, this time was filled with disappointments and a sense of frustration.

I found myself wondering about the unknown and the isolation duration.

It felt like our already small house grew tinier with each passing day,

Asking ourselves daily: how long can we keep living and working this way?

It took some negotiating and a great deal of relationship communication,

But our mindset shifted to embracing this time to build a refreshed foundation.

We talked about how this pause on urgent living would allow us to move slower,

Life would start to look a bit different—it's not that the bar had to be lower.

We began to embrace the time for dog snuggles and extra family walks,

Waking up with time to read and evenings spent with puzzles and deep talks.

Deciding what to wear each day was no longer a big decision to make;

This provided more time for resting and deciding on the next treat to bake. Although we are uncertain of when this pandemic lifestyle will come to an end, Questioning the need for urgency and regular reflecting are habits I hope to extend.

*What are the positive changes that 2020 enabled your household to embrace?
How can you prioritize these and not easily retreat back to the urgency pace?*

2021: the time has come for the calendar to yet again be turned.

May you be inspired to look back at 2020's small joys and lessons learned.

[**Download Poem**](#)

Carlee Madis, a Knowles Senior Fellow, is currently serving the Knowles Teacher Initiative as a Program Fellow, working to support Teaching and Senior Fellows. Carlee taught high school math for six years at High Tech High North County in San Marcos, California, where she focused her curriculum around project-based learning and complex instruction. Carlee has had diverse experiences as a teacher, research assistant, and most recently a math coach in deeply exploring her own teaching, collaborating with other teachers, and supporting teachers in virtual teaching. Carlee recently moved back to northern Michigan, where she lives with her husband, their dog, and their future child. When not seeking outlets to maintain her passion for education, Carlee loves hiking, traveling to national parks, and attending baseball games. Reach Carlee at

[**carlee.madis@knowlesteachers.org**](mailto:carlee.madis@knowlesteachers.org).