

Live, Love, Laugh & Celebrate!

HR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICERS & STAFF IN THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE



‘Tis the Season to be Jolly!

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With COVID-19 pandemic, it is easy to look through the lens of uncertainty. However, during this festive season, let us choose to *live, love, laugh and celebrate* with our loved ones and look forward to all the possible opportunities the new year will bring.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful and isolating for many persons, especially parents and their children. Without a doubt, Christmas will definitely look different this year, but, does it have to *feel different*? No it does not! Gatherings during the holiday season, either face-to-face or virtually, can provide a great opportunity for families, friends and colleagues to reconnect.

Throughout this holiday season, follow the protocols issued by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and consider how your holiday plans can be modified to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to keep your friends, families, and communities healthy and safe. Do not let the empty chair at the dinner table or office, discourage you from enjoying the festive season. Life is filled with uncertainty, especially at times like these. So, take some time this holiday to create memories with the ones you love and cherish them. Also, set aside time to reflect on 2020 and create a vision for 2021. And while you are at it, “*Deck the halls with boughs of holly Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, Tis the season to be jolly, Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la...*”

CHRIS'MAS STILL AH KEEP!

Five ways to stay together ... apart this Christmas

Christmas is a-coming and ... what will be your plans for this 'covid-inal' season? We do not want this pandemic to put a damper on our celebrations, right? "Noooo!", I say, Chris'mas still ah keep!!! Here are *five (5)* suggestions that could help make your season a little merrier, while keeping safe and healthy.

1. Christmas Dinner for curbside pick up/delivery

Nothing beats the atmosphere of Christmas – the scents, the sounds, the lights, and not to mention the mouthwatering food. Without a doubt, the biggest tradition 'nyammins' on the Jamaican calendar, is Christmas dinner. This year should be no exception. Families should continue this tradition with their loved ones at home and protocols should be observed. Delivery and curbside pickup should also be encouraged, especially for the less fortunate.

2. Virtual Christmas Party

Christmas is not the same without songs and music. Make it a Christmas to remember. Connect with co-workers, loved ones or friends via a virtual platform and have a virtual carol service or Christmas party. Get persons involved, activate your home-grown talent pool, put a programme together and have a ball. If a games day or evening is preferred, gather the materials needed and make it happen. Create new memories that are positive, lasting and inspiring.

3. Keep in touch

Seeing that travel has been restricted, connection with family members who live overseas or out of town, may be done through video calls for small groups and/or virtual calls for larger groups. Organise your own 'Greetings Across the World', show. 'Dress up' the background with the colours of Christmas for the festive feel. It sure will make someone happy.

4. Give Back

There is no right or wrong time to give back, but there is something about the holiday season that puts people in a charitable mood. Even though social distancing is encouraged, you don't have to stop practising your civic duty. Seize opportunities to give back to the less fortunate. You may consider changing your delivery strategy, so instead of visiting and spending time with persons, you could do a curbside drop-off or paid delivery service.

5. Present haffi run!!

Although gifting will not be the same this year, gift-giving is a must! Online shopping – 'the in-thing' these days – will be your best friend this season. Spread the love this Christmas by giving to or exchanging gifts with family and friends. When was the last time you sent or even received a Christmas card or post card? Remember when that was a 'thing'? In this 'new normal', let us re-live the conventional, yet creative way of sending holiday greetings to our loved ones near and far. *Happy Holidays!*



Fun fact - Family rituals can be beneficial to your health. It is true!! Engaging and reliving experiences with our nearest and dearest boosts our mood and enhances enjoyment.

Source: <https://very.com/christmas-traditions-and-customs-from-around-the-world/>

PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVES

PROS AND CONS OF COVID-19: A TALE OF TWO SIDES

Mrs. Shelly-Ann Earle
HR Practitioner

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently facing a global health crisis unlike any other in the history of mankind. It has left a trail of uncertainty that has heightened the feelings of fear and trepidation, not just for myself but for so many people around me. Despite the *gloom and doom* being experienced, I have placed a greater value on the time being spent with the people I love the most; my family and this has deepened the bond I share with my child.

AS A MOTHER, I have observed that my child has developed a greater appreciation for technology and has learnt to manipulate several devices, and in this new normal, he is becoming more independent displaying his willingness to adapt.

However, my already demanding role has become more demanding, in that, sometimes there are challenges as it relates to balancing the time spent with my child assisting him to complete his school work, while simultaneously meeting my work targets.

AS AN HR PROFESSIONAL, I have faced this challenge head-on and found creative ways to meet my deadlines and targets without compromising the integrity of my work. One major challenge though, has been the fact that the pandemic has brought about social restrictions which directly limit my ability to facilitate face-to-face sessions with our valued clients.

AS A HUMAN BEING, the pandemic has allowed me to become even more ingenious in my approach to managing my time, especially with working from home. COVID-19 however, has halted my travel plans and the hardest thing for me to accept is the fact that I will not be able to travel overseas to visit friends and family as usual and to hug my friends as often as I used to.

CLOSING THOUGHT:

"While the struggle is real, and as we grapple with this new normal, may we all be reminded that, life gives us both positives and negatives. I have chosen to focus on the positives and forge ahead in faith."

Mrs. Desreen Smith
HR Practitioner

I believe the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus in many instances, is bringing the world to a standstill and many persons have come to recognise that there are some things in life that really take precedence over others; like spending quality time with loved ones as often as you can. Personally, this has reiterated the importance of not taking anyone or anything for granted and it has allowed me to treasure everything, even what may seem to have been previously insignificant.

AS A MOTHER, COVID-19 has taught me how to slow down, prioritise and spend quality time with my husband and children. I have had to place a great value on prioritising my time with all the changes being experienced as a result of the virus.

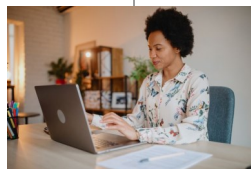
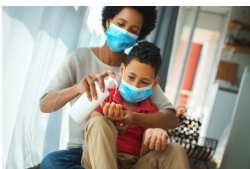
Having said that, the shift from face-to-face classes to virtual learning has placed a greater demand on me, as it has become necessary to juggle the responsibilities of home and work while supervising my children simultaneously.

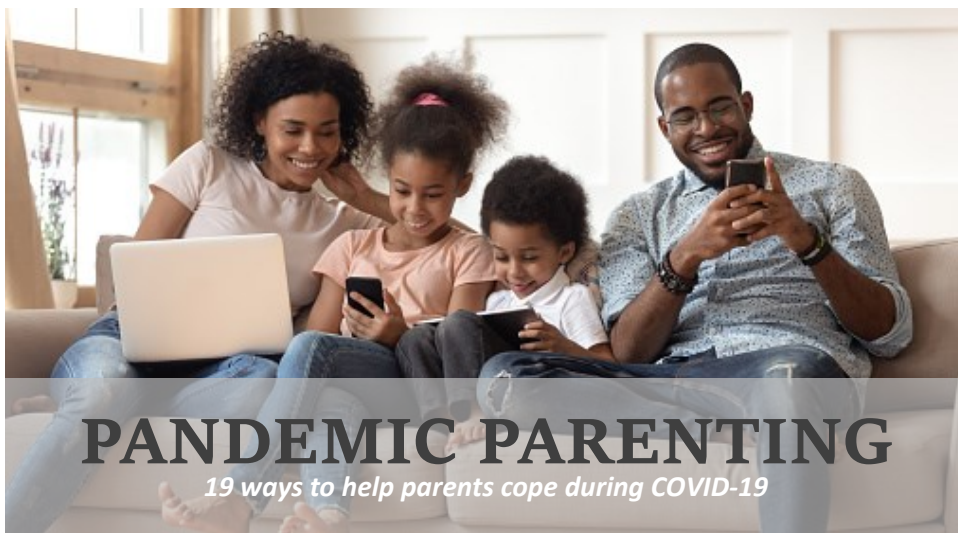
AS AN HR PROFESSIONAL, I have been able to complete work assignments from home and I enjoy participating in virtual meetings. However, one of the major challenges that I have been facing as a supervisor, is having to ensure that there is a balance between meeting work targets and managing my team's work-from-home arrangements.

AS A HUMAN BEING, COVID-19, on one hand, has been a catalyst in allowing me to embrace and appreciate the use of technology in completing many tasks and work assignments. On the other hand, social distancing protocols have changed the way we interact with others and as such going to regular places cannot be approached with the same mind-set. Everything has to be planned with COVID-19 restrictions in mind.

CLOSING THOUGHT:

"The only thing that remains sure and unchangeable is our faith in God. After all is said and done, everything else is temporary."





PANDEMIC PARENTING

19 ways to help parents cope during COVID-19

With the major changes introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, parents/guardians are being forced to take on extra work, which has become overwhelming. While working from home, parents/guardians have to play the role of teacher, organiser, tutor and possibly speech and language pathologist. Although this is vastly becoming the norm, some parents/guardians do not possess the skills and competencies to do this, while others do not have the technological devices and the Internet connectivity to access remote learning.

In our Jamaican society where social distancing, closed schools and limited outdoor movement have forced children to slowly and reluctantly adjust to a new way of life, parents/guardians now have this arduous task of facilitating their child's/children's learning, while helping them cope psychologically and emotionally.



As parents/guardians, we are in this together – raising the future.

So let us support each other.

Here are **19 ways** you can support your children during this pandemic.

1. Be a positive role model - model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices
2. Talk to your child or children; correct misinformation and explain safety tips
3. Stay connected to your child's or children's school(s)
4. Be your child's or children's best teacher
5. Track your child's or children's academic progress
6. Be aware of your child's or children's mental health and seek help if necessary
7. Plan a daily schedule together and stick to it
8. Schedule family time to do physical activities together
9. Monitor media and social media exposure/consumption
10. Know the symptoms of COVID-19 and educate them about it
11. Be calm and proactive
12. Create welcomed distractions such as movie nights, game nights and cooking sessions
13. Show empathy and provide emotional support at all times
14. Set aside time for your child or children to connect virtually with family and friends
15. Be patient and gentle with your child or children
16. Practise self-care
17. Monitor your own behaviour and mental health
18. Focus on the positive
19. Offer lots of love and affection

Sources: <https://www.popsugar.com/family/how-to-help-kids-succeed-in-school-during-pandemic-47673926>



Even though this pandemic may be short to medium-term, the psychological effects may be long lasting. Parents/guardians should therefore, take the time out to talk to their children and to demonstrate how to cope through stress, instead of just telling them that everything is going to be okay.

It is also important for parents/guardians to show empathy for their children who might be struggling academically, socially and psychologically. Likewise, parents/guardians should be cognizant of their own mental health and feel empowered to seek counselling for themselves, if needed.

So, during this pandemic, spend quality time with your children on a regular basis. Showing your children that you love and care for them will help to keep them mentally and emotionally strong, as your family navigates these unprecedented times.



REVIEW & RENEW

2020 Year in Review & Looking Ahead

The year 2020 was a much anticipated year. With new year's resolutions set, many persons could not wait for the new year to begin. Many envisioned 2020 to be "the year of perfect vision," "the year of clarity" and "the year of vision and self-reflection."

Besides having personal goals, there were a number of significant events or milestones that persons looked forward to in 2020. For example, the:

- i. 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo
- ii. Release of new movies, books and gadgets
- iii. Worldwide elections
- iv. Milestone celebrations
- v. The beginning of a new decade

2020 has however been a year like no other. Covid-19, has been sweeping through continents, countries and communities and wreaking havoc in every corner of the world. It has been causing world-wide chaos, loss, anxiety and pain.

Inevitably, governments, healthcare systems and families have come under great pressure. Everyone is now asking for the greatly anticipated year to end. However, the sad reality is that Covid-19 may be here for the long haul, as it is impossible to say how long this pandemic will last.

Here are **20** questions to help you reflect on the challenges, important lessons learnt and highlights of 2020 and **21** questions to focus your aspirations for **2021** and beyond.

2020

1. What are you thankful for this year?
2. What are you proudest of this year?
3. What was the best decision you took?
4. What new knowledge did you acquire?
5. What new skills did you learn?
6. What did you do for your career growth?
7. What did you enjoy the most?
8. What new habits did you start?
9. What did you do for your physical and mental health?
10. What did you learn about yourself?
11. How did your relationships with family, friends, and colleagues evolve?
12. Who or what had the biggest impact on your life this year?
13. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome?
14. What energised or drained you?
15. What would you do differently, if you could?
16. How would you describe 2020, in one word?
17. How are you different than a year ago?
18. What is the most important lesson you learned this year?
19. What advice would you give your 2020-year self?
20. How do you plan to end this year?



1. What is your plan for the new year?
2. What will be your purpose next year?
3. How will you make next year matter?
4. What career opportunities do you aspire for?
5. What skills do you want to learn?
6. What do you want to accomplish personally and professionally in the new year?
7. What are you going to continue doing?
8. What do you plan to do differently?
9. How will you challenge yourself next year?
10. How will you learn from your future mistakes?
11. Which existing relationships do you want to strengthen?
12. Who will you ask for help and support?
13. How will you help others?
14. What personal qualities do you want to strengthen?
15. How much money will you save?
16. What sacrifices will you make?
17. How will you take care of yourself?
18. What places do you want to visit?
19. What will you say "no" or "yes" to?
20. How do you intend to be different at the end of next year?
21. Who do you want to become next year?

*So now more than ever, it is the perfect time to pause and reflect on the year **2020**. As we brace ourselves for the second year in this new decade, it is the perfect time to create a vision for ourselves of where we want to go and who we want to be in **2021**.*



Congratulations!

*to our Civil Servants
of the Year 2020*

Your hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed.
Thank you for your excellent performance throughout the years.
All the very best in your future endeavours.



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The Office of the Services Commissions family
wish you all the peace and joy of the season!
Here's to wishing you and your loved ones a very

*Merry Christmas
and a joyful*

2021

*Keep safe and
see you in the New Year*

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