

The “New Normal”

By Andrew Arena

I wake up, and see as usual that my breakfast is waiting for me at the table. My babysitter, Ms. Carla, is asking me questions while I eat like “How’d you sleep?” or “What are you doing at school today?” It’s a day like any other, except it’s not like any other. It’s a day of life during the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the course of the past year, life has changed around the Arena household. Me and my brother, Nicholas are at the house ALL the time. He usually wakes before me and practices the flute. He likes to get all of his work done beforehand. I, on the other hand, like to save the precious moments of sleep I have left, but it’s sort of hard when my little brother is playing the flute.

When I wake up, and after I eat breakfast, I brush my teeth and get dressed. I really only wear a select few shirts, and sweatpants. Yes, that’s right, I don’t wear jeans. It’s not like I’m against them—wait no, I am against them—I just don’t find them comfortable to wear. It’s not like I’m going anywhere, anyway.

I get ready for school. And by that, I mean virtual school. I’ve only gone to school in person for about 8 days, and haven’t gone there since November. Anyway, usually I have a couple minutes before school. I draw a comic about a character I created back in September. I call him “Stinky Jeff”.

Once school begins I do the “New usual” school stuff. I join the google meet, then I listen to my teacher and his or her lesson and usually get assigned some work on the computer. I remember when we used to use paper to do our work. It seems like ancient times, but it was really only about a year ago. Anyway, back to school. I’ve always felt like a big part of school is friends. Now I only get to see my friends in three-inch boxes on a computer. There are playdates, but it’s really not the same.

At lunch, it’s really not all that different from school. Except it’s not loud. And I’m the only one there. My brother’s lunch is much earlier than mine, so I eat alone. Once that is over, I get back to school, and things are basically the same. It feels like the longest century of my life, except it’s only been a little less than a year. Once school is over I do my homework. Usually it takes an hour or two. So that’s what my school days like 8 hours a day. 5 days a week.

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“Time to wake up!” It’s my dad. It’s around 7:00 am. I get up and see my breakfast of a bagel with cream cheese on the kitchen table. I don’t like waking up early, but my brain is so used to it by now that it is a habit. After eating breakfast, getting dressed, and the rest of the usual morning routine, I make sure my backpack has all the stuff I need for school. You’re probably wondering “Backpack?” “School?” “I thought we were in covid times.” But this is the Andrew I was before. Before coronavirus.

“Honk! Honk!” It’s the bus. My bus used to come really early at 7:15 and I barely had enough time to get on usually. I usually talk to other kids on the bus about homework and stuff like that. No masks. It was normal not to wear masks back then, but now without a mask, my face feels nakid.

When we get to school, I go to the cafeteria. Now, in Albert Leonard, I barely remember where the cafeteria is. My friends and I talk a little in the cafeteria, and once the bell rings, we go to our classes. School goes on like it usually does before covid. We take notes, we learn about topics and after that we go to recess. Recess was very different back then in ancient times. We used to play outside, on jungle gyms, and on the kickball field, recess was very fun.

This pandemic really turned my life upside down. It’s had a lot of downs and even some ups too. For example I get to spend more time with my brother and my family. Overall, this is what the new normal means to me. It contrasts to life before the pandemic a lot, but that’s okay. Because in a way, life’s all about change.