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NAVIGATING TENSIONS BETWEEN THE WORK AND FAMILY DOMAINS  
DURING LOCKDOWN

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## **Abstract**

The qualitative research at hand examines the tensions of navigating the work and family domains during the Covid-19 lockdown. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with 25 working parents, who shared their experiences of working from home with children. Four major sources of tensions were derived namely (0) intervening variables, (1) role overload, (2) compromising between the ideal worker and ideal parent and (3) diminishing boundaries. Even though some tensions may be relieved with the proposed solutions, due to time constraints, it is hardly possible to fully meet such a multitude of responsibilities under exceptional circumstances like these.

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## **Keywords**

Working from home, lockdown, boundary management, home office, role overload

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## 1. Introduction

With the currently ongoing pandemic Covid-19, countries have imposed lockdown measures, with the result of many people being forced into remote working situations. Managing the boundaries of work and family poses its challenges on its own, which is being amplified by the element of working from home and the potential blurring of boundaries. With schools and kindergartens being closed, children had to be supervised at home and many parents were facing the challenge of having to meet multiple obligations at the same time (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). The aim of this thesis is to get a better understanding of the different tensions between work and family, that working parents are experiencing when work is embedded in the home domain. Finally, several tactics to alleviate some of the pressure and tensions of navigating work and family are being suggested.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Ashforth et al. (2000) boundary theory is defined to explain how individuals build and manage the boundaries between their work and family roles. It captures the development of certain boundaries from cognitive, physical and behavioral nature that separate the work and family domains and how those boundaries affect individuals (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Allen et al., 2014). Creating boundaries may aid in developing expectations as to how one behaves in each role and how the person interacts with its peers by defining the scope of each role (Allen et al., 2014; Ashforth et al., 2000). However, having set boundaries may add difficulty to transitioning between the roles, and can be a source of conflict. Therefore, finding ways to effectively manage transitions between the roles can reduce the risk of tensions (Allen et al., 2014). The role transitions can be classified into macro and micro transitions, differing in terms of frequency and impact. Macro role transitions do not occur on a regular basis and usually indicate more substantial, long-lasting change (Ashforth et al., 2000). In the context of this topic, transitions on a micro dimension are primarily relevant, as they focus on “recurring

transitions that occur on a frequent basis (e.g., the commute from home to work to home again)” (Allen, 2014, p.110). Boundaries can vary heavily in their form and characteristics, for some individuals the boundaries between their work and family roles are very thin, leading to a more blended approach whereas thick boundaries would be associated with having a clear distinction between one’s personal and professional domains (Allen, 2014). Often, certain roles can be attributed to specific locations or times, creating spatial and temporal guidance which role may be taken on. For instance, being at home on weekends or evenings is more associated with the family role, meaning that an individual will probably behave according to that role (Allen, 2014). As Hall and Richter (1988) stated, boundaries are defined by certain flexibility and permeability. By taking phone calls relating to the family role while at work, one can have a behavioral involvement with the family domain even though the physical location refers to the work role. The degree to which this is possible, is referred to permeability. The flexibility of boundaries refers to the degree to which a specific boundary is adaptable to certain needs. For instance, in a highly flexible working approach in which an employee is not bound to certain locations or times, the spatial and temporal boundaries show a high degree of flexibility, allowing individuals more autonomy of when and where role transitions happen. In contrast, inflexible boundaries are more restrictive by outlining specific times and places as to when a role may be enacted (Allen, 2014). With boundaries that are both highly flexible and highly permeable, the borders themselves are rather weak and blending of borders may occur (Clark, 2000). Additionally, certain overlaps may occur between the domains, like discussing work issues with family or having framed family photos on display in the workplace, the extent of those overlaps affects boundaries (Nippert-Eng, 1996). As Ashforth et al. (2000) suggested, if the work and family roles entail many similarities in their characteristics and attributed behavior, transitioning across the roles may be less complex.

Over the past couple years, boundary management has increasingly become a topic of interest, partly due to an increase in boundary permeability and overlapping of the domains (Allen et al. 2014). Eddleston and Mulki (2017) define boundary management as the degree to which “individuals can successfully navigate the intersection between the work and non-work aspects of life”. Boundary management can be viewed from two different points of perspective: the organizational and individual. For this research, the focus lies on the individual dimension of boundary management, referring to the different tactics that aid individuals in managing their work and family obligations (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Allen et al., 2014).

A large part of boundary theory research assumes a physical and spatial separation between the work and home domain, as identified by Eddleston and Mulki (2017). This however is not the case when employees engage in their work from the comfort of their own home and are potentially being exposed to work and family matters simultaneously which may result in conflict of dealing with those roles at the same time (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020). We argue this exposure is heightened in the current pandemic crisis due to the mandatory confinement that includes all family members. Remote working and the growing overlap of the domains, lead to an increase in the number of role transitions an individual goes through, thus enabling the occurrence of role blurring (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006).

Research surrounding the topics of remote working is extensive. However, most of the research assumes remote working is an active decision made by the employees. During the pandemic, many countries imposed lockdown measures, requiring offices and other workplaces to temporarily shut down and therefore forcing many people to continue their work from home (Anderson & Kelliher 2020). As mentioned previously, the element of flexibility and autonomy plays a big role in boundary management and studies showed that remote working is more preferred in an occasional approach, rather than solely working from home (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Wight & Raley, 2009). However, during the lockdown situation remote working was not

a choice but forced onto the employees thus eliminating the flexibility aspect of remote working. This specific pandemic lockdown period was accompanied with many challenges, especially for working parents, who were facing increased demand by their children who had to be supervised while still meeting work obligations (Anderson & Kelliher, 2020).

The above covered findings suggest that role transitioning is more difficult when work is embedded in the family domain, thus increasing risk of conflict. During the lockdown situation, an increase in obligations and the collapsing of support systems collided, creating challenges for working parents. Consequently, this paper aims to understand where those tensions stem from and how people navigate through them. Based on this the following research question has been derived: *What are the main sources of tensions parents are experiencing when managing work and family during the lockdown and how can those tensions be mitigated?*

### 3. Methodology

#### **3.1 Sample and Procedure**

For this study, the chosen method to explore the tensions was qualitative research through non-probability sampling. By using a purposive sampling approach, participants had to fulfill certain criteria to be eligible for participation in the study. Therefore, the sample solely includes persons who were facing a home working situation and had at least one child home during that period. In total, 25 participants were interviewed, all of whom currently live in Austria. Most interviewees are female, with four out of 25 participants being male. The sample includes persons with various industry backgrounds, to maintain a broader perspective and get a more diverse sample. Informants ages range from 32 to 49. Ten of the interviewees work full-time, and the remaining 15 interviewees, all female, are employed part-time. Three participants work solely from home, whereas the clear majority had limited or no previous home office experience (Appendix 1 includes a table with descriptions of participants).

To get a grasp of the various tensions the participants experienced, the interviews were conducted in a partially structured way. First, key areas of interest were identified and based on

those areas, several open-ended questions were derived. This dynamic approach of collecting data allowed a more flexible approach to go deeper into certain topics based on the interviewees responses. Prior to the interview, the participants knew that they were going to be talking about their remote working experience with children during lockdown, but they had no detailed knowledge of the questions. This enabled the capturing of authentic responses that were given offhandedly and fostered a more conversational atmosphere. The interview guide included an introductory section, where the interviewees were asked to state their personal information including age, family situation and current occupation. Then it was established if the participant had any previous experience with working from home. The following open-ended questions aimed to get more insight into the specific challenges the individuals were facing and how they were navigating the situation. In some cases, the participants were asked to share more details, to facilitate a deeper and enriched understanding (Appendix 2 includes the full interview guide). Given the still prevailing pandemic situation, no in-person interviews were conducted. Instead, wherever possible, video calls were used to best-possible foster a face-to-face dynamic. In certain cases, a voice call had to suffice. With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As the interviews were all conducted in German, the transcriptions were then translated to English for this study (all transcripts can be viewed in Appendix 3). The duration of the interviews varied from 16 to 36 minutes.

### **3.2 Data Analysis and Structure**

A grounded theory approach was chosen to analyze the collected input, as it is an appropriate option when the objective is to find commonalities and to develop concepts to answer the research question (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Boehm, 1997). As the aim of grounded theory is to conceptualize data and develop theories, no hypotheses are formulated prior to the research (Boehm, 1997). Grounded theory uses a coding approach, to categorize collected data and enable the detection of common themes. Concepts only find their way into the final research, if they appear repeatedly in the examined data, in this case the interviews (Gioia et al.

2012; Boehm, 1997). Following that approach, the interview transcripts were segmented into statements which were then assigned directly-related categories in an inductive way, based on their commonalities (Boehm, 1997), resulting in 41 first-order concepts. These concepts were then clustered to identify links leading to the development of 13 second-order themes (Appendix 4 presents the quotations substantiating the 2nd-order themes). Finally, the second-order themes were examined to identify higher-level connections, resulting in four aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). The data structure is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Data Structure

1st-order concepts	2nd-order themes	Aggregate Dimensions
- Not being equipped properly - Lack of devices - Inadequate working space - Job not suitable for home office	(a) The Disadvantage of Inadequate Preparedness	<b>(0) Intervening Variables - The Amplifiers of Further Tensions</b>
- Newness of the situation - Not knowing how long it will go on - Increasing frustration over time	(b) The Uncertainty Factor	
- Lack of acknowledgement - Male as the breadwinner - Feeling taken for granted - Mother as crucial caregiver - Men taking it more relaxed	(c) The Female Penalty - Caught in an Outdated Stereotype	<b>(1) Wearing Too Many Hats - The Dilemma of Role Overload</b>
- Being more irritable - Lashing out more easily - Feeling like a bad mother	(d) The Drawback of Fast Role Transitions	
- Not being perceived according to the role - Lack of teaching capabilities - Pressure of wanting to meet school obligations - Being the parent and not the teacher	(e) The Parent-as-Teacher Trap	
- Screen time to occupy children - Feeling guilty - Feeling divided	(f) The Guilt Component	<b>(2) The Constant Compromise – Ideal Parent vs. Ideal Worker</b>
- Children's constant need for attention - Being present but not available - Missing support system - Children's lack of understanding	(g) Children's Non-stop Demand for Attention	
- Wanting to be seen as an equal employee - Children interfering with professionalism	(h) The Pressure of Professionalism	
- Inconsistent communication channels - Children's lack of technical capabilities	(i) The Homeschooling Burden	
- Lack of focus - Constant interruptions - Declining productivity - Doing tasks that require less attention	(j) The Downside of Multitasking	
- Shifting working hours around - Feeling frustrated & burned out	(k) The Imposed Early Bird – An Attempt to Make It All Work	<b>(3) The Proximity Effect – When Work Is Always Present</b>
- Hearing the ping of emails - Work always present in home domain - Not being able to call it a day - Not being able to unwind	(l) The Struggle of Calling It a Day	
- Children witnessing work struggles - Private situation exposed to work environment	(m) An Unwanted Flow of Information	

## 4. Findings

The above-described process led to four core dimensions: (0) Intervening Variables (The Amplifiers of Further Tensions), (1) Wearing Too Many Hats (The Dilemma of Role Overload), (2) The Constant Compromise (Ideal Parent vs. Ideal Worker) and (4) The Proximity Effect (When Work Is Always Present). In the following text, the corresponding second-order themes will be explained, including direct quotations from the interviews to exemplify their meaning.

### **Dimension 0: Intervening Variables – The Amplifiers of Further Tensions**

This dimension refers to underlying issues related to the base situation, that mostly acted as amplifiers for further tensions rather than being directly experienced by participants.

#### *(a) The Disadvantage of Inadequate Preparedness:*

As the lockdown was unprecedented and took many by surprise, a lack of preparation in several areas added to the difficulty of the whole situation and determined certain parameters that acted as a base for further tensions. In the initial transition phase to working from home, many were facing issues due to being insufficiently equipped to perform their work and not having an adequate working space available, thus hindering them in meeting their work obligations. A commonly mentioned issue was the lack of space. Hardly any participant had “a separate office where you can close the door if you want some quiet time (I15)” in their homes, therefore they had to convert part of their living space into a working space. Most participants stated that they did “not really have the opportunity to set up a real working station (I8)”, and had to work from their dining table or bedroom. Either way, “that division between “being at work” or sitting at the dining table, where everyone eats (I2)” was missing, and participants described the situation as “really uncomfortable (I11)” and “extremely exhausting (I24)”. In addition to the spatial situation, which has been a source for further tensions that will be discussed below, the technical infrastructure was another aspect that caused issues. Even though many participants already disposed of the technical equipment, like interviewee I6 who stated, “I work mostly without any paperwork, where my laptop is, is my work station, so that was not a big transition and the

infrastructure was given”, some were not given the necessary devices by their employer, thus having to resort to the use of “private resources (I25)”. This led to coordination issues, when not enough devices for the family were available and children “needed access to devices occasionally (I25)” for their school work. As one participant shared, “coordinating all of this was horrible. We only had one laptop, we usually don’t need more. My husband studies, so he had to attend his classes from home, and needed a laptop as well – it was a catastrophe. I was working from home, so I needed the laptop, the children needed it and my husband needed it [...] (I12)”. Moreover, it became apparent that certain jobs involve tasks that are not yet suitable for remote working, thus limiting the scope to which work can be performed from home. One participant explained “no one knew what we should be doing [...] a large part of our work was not relevant (I21)”. Another stated “All of my documents and work material is at the office, and if I work from home I had to prepare really well to bring everything I would need for the day, as opposed to having everything available at the office. [...] that’s why my job is not ready to be performed from home yet (I14)”.

*(b) The Uncertainty Factor:*

During the study, it became apparent that this unprecedented situation was accompanied by an underlying “uncertainty of not knowing what’s next (I10)”, as no one knew how long the lockdown would last. This acted as an amplifying factor for many tensions and caused a lot of frustration over time. In the beginning, due to not knowing the extent of the lockdown, many “thought the whole situation would be much easier, than it turned out to be (I15)”, thus seemed to underestimate the full impact. As opposed to getting used to it, several participants experienced the situation becoming less bearable over time and “frustration levels just kept rising [...] (I1)”. Individuals were lacking that “light at the end of the tunnel” and were left with uncertainty. In the words of another participant “I really felt that the frustration level got unbearable by the end. In the beginning, we took the time to focus on our family and bond, but the longer the situation went on, the more frustrating everyone got. And then you could really

feel the tensions rising (I19)”. It can be concluded, that having to deal with that big uncertainty factor over a long period of time caused frustration and influenced the way people perceived the situation, thus making it more difficult to deal with.

### **First Dimension: Wearing Too Many Hats - The Dilemma of Role Overload**

Many role transitions and the taking on of unfamiliar roles led to role overload and increased irritability, thus creating the base for the next major tension that was observed during the study.

#### *(c) The Female Penalty - Caught in an Outdated Stereotype*

During the interviews, the frustration about typical gender stereotypes of the male being the main breadwinner and the female being expected to take care of the children and house, was repeatedly mentioned by female participants - even when they had to work as well. Interviewee I10 shared that her “partner left in the morning to go to the office, and for him it was crystal clear that I do all house work. He took it for granted. But honestly, just because I work from home it is not obvious that I do all things like laundry and loading the dish-washer – I have to work as well”, she even felt like she had to “justify doing work”. The expectation that “women do it all and meet all obligations (I23)” and therefore being taken for granted and not feeling validated, has been a source of frustration for many participants during the time of working from home. As another participant stated “What bothered me was that everyone took for granted that I would take care of all of that. And if my work performance would be affected by that, did not matter (I14)”. The interviews showed, that many females felt that taking care of the house and children has been put on their shoulders, thus immensely reinforcing the traditional gender stereotype. In the words of one female participant, “I see myself as a very emancipated person, but in this situation, you can’t hide from that stone-age role picture. The woman cooks, the man leaves the house – you are thrown back into that situation. And I think many families were facing that situation, where men would isolate themselves from some responsibilities and say well home schooling is none of my business (I10)”. The study showed, that in many households the female part took care of things while the father could work without interruptions in a

separate room. Two male participants shared that their wives took on most of the responsibilities concerning the children. In those cases, though, it can be partly attributed to the males working full-time while their partners work part-time. As one stated that, “Well, I mean I worked, and my wife took care of the children (I11)” while another pointed out “as I work full time, and my wife works less, she took over most of the school work. [...] the majority definitely did my wife, she also helped them before the lockdown (I19)”. Interestingly, the research showed that even when the father did look after the children, the mother’s attention was often demanded as well as she is “a crucial caregiver (I16)”. In the words of participant I16, “even when my husband was home, he tried to take over occasionally, but my daughter knew that I was home so she wanted the attention of both of us”. Another female participant shared a similar experience, with her son always demanding her attention, “he would not let his father explain things, he would not let his sister explain things, he only listened to me. So that was pure stress. I had to work, I had to support him whenever he needed it (I24)”. Moreover, based on the interviewees responses, male participants seemed less affected by stress and frustration. As a male participant stated “I don’t feel like anything would have to be improved. I mean, of course there can be little improvements. But nothing was as bad, as I would feel the need to change it [...] (I6)”. A female participant pointed out that she “had the impression that men tended to take the situation way better than I did, they were so much more calm and relaxed about it and I did wonder why that was. [...] To me it seemed like that guilt component was not that present for them [...] (I2)”. It can be concluded that females were expected to take care of most family and house related issues often disregarding the fact that they were working as well and thus felt invalidated, taken for granted and caught in an outdated stereotype.

*(d) The Drawback of Fast Role Transitions*

From parent to worker to teacher in a matter of seconds. By bringing work home, into a space predominantly associated with the family role, many participants struggled with the numerous role transitions happening during the day and family interfering with their work. As one

participant stated “there was just a lot of potential for conflict. I was in my role as a mother, while also having to act as a teacher – in addition to that, I had to meet my work obligations and take care of house work (I21)”. As a result, participants seemed to react more sensitively towards their children’s requests without wanting to. Interviewee I8 argued that, “you do not want to be a bad mother for your child, but you’re automatically more irritable and quicker to scold them – I am usually a very patient person, but during that situation it was hard”. When comparing the interviewees experiences, many commonalities in that regard became apparent. Several participants struggled with interruptions caused by their children and experienced heightened irritability as a result. In the words of participant I19 “[...] in that situation, I got extremely irritated as I knew I had to get work done, and it is hard as a mother as you lash out more easily, which is not a good feeling. It does not matter what they ask, you are irritated”. Consequently, both domains were affected by the issues of having to transition between roles frequently, resulting in participants feeling “really torn during that time (I7)” and “extremely irritable (I15)” and making their children feel that. Interviewee I2 stated, that “there was more than one evening where I just cried in the evening”, emphasizing the severity of impact this tension can have.

*(e) The Parent-as-Teacher Trap*

With schools being closed and children transitioning to homeschooling, many participants had to take on a new role. As one cannot expect children to “do all the work independently (I15)” and that at the age of a child “you are not fully capable to structure your time that well to get everything done (I8)”, in addition to the parent and worker roles, participants now had to “play teacher a lot (I12)”. Having to take on this new and unfamiliar role posed the challenge of knowing when to be the caring parent and when to take on the teacher role. One participant shared “I wanted him to keep up with his school work, but I also did not want to be so harsh that it could affect our relationship, I just felt really divided (I21)”. Participants also struggled with the fact that they are being perceived as the parent and not the teacher by their children,

leading the children to behave differently than they would in a regular school setting. Many shared experiences of their children acting out, as interviewee I14 stated, “he would sit down and throw a tantrum when it came to doing his school work, and I mean obviously, he would not do that at school, but at home he does”. Another participant shared “with me, they may throw a tantrum after five minutes and give up, because I am their mother, they would not do that with a teacher (I23)”. Additionally, participants felt like they were not equipped with “the time as well as knowledge and techniques necessary skills (I1)” to take on the teacher role. One participant argued “I am not able to explain it as well as a teacher [...]” and added, “[...] I am their mother not their teacher, I know that they learn more from someone else (I23)”. Some participants also brought up the concern of teaching material being too complex and parents not having “the knowledge to support your children (I21)”. As one participant shared “I am a bit afraid if another stricter lockdown is being imposed, that with him being in a higher grade now, it is going to be a bit more difficult for me (I9)”. This added pressure onto the parents, as many participants showed a strong sense of responsibility towards their children and prioritized their needs over anything else. As interviewee I5 stated “having my children meet all their school obligations was crucial for me, to not fail in that aspect”. Evidently, wanting to succeed in that teacher role while lacking the time and knowledge to fully support their children was a source of tensions during the lockdown period and put an immense strain onto many parents, who wanted their children to stay on track with their school work.

### **Second dimension: The Constant Compromise – Ideal Parent vs. Ideal Worker**

This dimension is concerned with the tension occurring due to the collision of a multitude of responsibilities and the resulting need to compromise, as there is not enough time and resources to meet all obligations fully.

#### *(f) The Guilt Component*

Creating an adequate environment for focused work at home is challenging, especially when children are around. A commonly mentioned struggle for the participants was to keep their

children occupied, without feeling like neglecting them. One participant stated that, “the iPad and YouTube Kids were a constant companion when I had to focus on work (I16)” while another pointed out she “tried to give my kid books or other things, but screen time was the most effective (I8)”. Screen time seemed to have been a particularly successful way to get work done without disturbances, but it was often accompanied by guilt. In the words of participant I1, “It really was a constant trade-off [...]. Theoretically, I could have worked for hours without interruption, if I did not feel guilty about giving my children too much screen time and feeling like I neglected them”. In fact, several interviewees shared that experience of feeling guilty about how they kept their children occupied, when needing to focus on work. Another participant stated that “at the end of the day, I just felt guilty, guilty for not being able to give my daughter the attention she wants, and guilty that I could not be fully focused on my job responsibilities (I2)”. This illustrates the tension that arises when trying to meet multiple responsibilities at once and having to turn to undesirable measures to keep children occupied. One participant added that, “it was not possible any other way, when you have work to do, you do not have an alternative option (I8)”. Moreover, the study showed that due to having additional obligations and wanting to take care of everything, many participants were left feeling divided when trying to meet all needs at the same time. Balancing work and family is a tough act, and a situation like this only adds to the difficulty. As one participant stated “That’s something that is hard, even under normal circumstances. When you have children and you work, you feel extremely divided. When you do your job well, you feel like a bad mother – when you are a great mother, you feel like you are a horrible employee (I7)”. Another pointed out “That was one thing I struggled with, I wanted to be there for my children but also perform my tasks for work. It was hard to coordinate both, so you do not feel like neglecting either work or family (I13)”. This illustrates that being the ideal worker and being the ideal parent are often expected to be mutually exclusive, and that success in one domain is automatically linked to

failing in the other. Interestingly, this tension was predominantly visible in female participants. During the research, it also became apparent that many participants had reached their capacity limits and that being in this situation permanently could put a serious strain on their mental health. In the words of one participant, “If it would have gone on much longer, I am not sure what would have happened, maybe I would’ve steered towards a burnout. For me, the end of lockdown did not come a day too early (I7)”. Another participant argued that “[...]it was kind of surreal, you just went with it and pushed through. But over time I realized just how hard it actually was (I2)”. Feeling responsible for so many things at the same time and constantly having to compromise either family or work, burdened many individuals and left them feeling severely divided.

*(g) Children’s Non-stop Demand for Attention*

Working from home was a new situation for many participants, consequently it was also new for children to have their parents in close proximity at all times. “When you are present as a mother, you have to give them your attention, you are the first contact for everything – if they want to drink something, if they want to eat, if they are looking for something (I19).” During the research, it became evident that children, especially younger ones, “do not quite understand that you have to work (I3)”. Given that the usual support systems were missing, children were not accustomed to the situation and “when you are home, you are present and they feel like you are available at all times (I19)”. Therefore, children often interfere with work. Even participant I9, who works solely from home, stated “my son, who grew up with me working from home the past 7 years, still does not understand that when I am on the phone, I am on the phone”. One cannot expect a younger child to understand the parent is working, as one participant stated, her daughter “did not care, if she wants attention, she demands it (I23)”. Children’s demand for attention throughout the day was a common theme across the interviews and brought along additional disturbances to the working parent, as children will “scream for as long as it takes to get my attention (I14)”. Having to tend to a child while working is incredibly challenging,

interviewee I7 shared that her children were “super attached, and sometimes when I had a call, I was on mute with two screaming children on my lap”. Another mentioned that the whole situation “resorted in very bizarre and unpleasant situations, like your daughter standing next to you, crying saying “mom, please don’t work, not work all the time.” That was very hard for me [...] (I2)”. The lack of usual support systems and thus an increase in childcare responsibilities evidently posed challenges to working parents, who want to be the ideal parent while also not neglecting work.

*(h) The Pressure of Professionalism*

Even before the lockdown, female participants often wanted to avoid being seen as “the colleague with children (I14)”. The study showed, that many females increasingly experienced that pressure of professionalism during the lockdown period, due to having children at home. Having one’s family situation visible or audible to others during calls and being tied to fulfill children’s needs at certain times is thought to interfere with work and how one is being perceived by colleagues. The interviews showed that many felt like they had to prove themselves to be a “fully capable team member (I2)” and that being interrupted by children while in a call “is not very professional (I5)” and “[...] may hinder me professionally when trying to push through with something (I1)”. Therefore, it can be concluded that working from home may amplify the pressure of wanting to be seen as an equal employee, due to the family situation being more exposed and present to others.

*(i) The Homeschooling Burden*

In addition to the above-mentioned difficulties related to taking on the teacher role, participants were facing the challenge of homeschooling taking up a lot of their time, while already battling with time constraints. As stated by one participant, “It is hard to find the balance, you do not want your kid to fall behind with school work, but you also do not have the time [...] to help them properly (I1)” Due to the unforeseen situation, a lack of preparedness of some schools fortified the time constraint further by having a “chaotic flow of communication (I6)”, leaving

parents to spend a lot of time figuring out school-related things. Participant I19 explained that “Teachers were struggling, children were struggling and as a parent you had to sit next to them and gather all the information from the different platforms. It was really chaotic, and it took so much time to structure everything [...] that I could not work simultaneously”. Moreover, children needed the support of their parents when it came to technical issues as “they were overwhelmed especially regarding their computer skills (I10)” and did not dispose of the necessary capabilities to perform certain tasks. Having to “prepare every e-mail, check the attachments, check if the recipient is correct (I12)” takes up additional time and effort by the parents, thus leaving them less time to focus on other tasks and consequently interferes with their work schedule.

*(j) The Downside of Multitasking*

With all those things going on at the same time and the usual support system out of order, individuals tried to find ways to stay on top of everything. Many participants attempted to meet their work and family obligations simultaneously, which led to various difficulties. First, many experienced being interrupted on a regular basis, and “when you work with constant interruption, it takes you so much longer to finish tasks (I19)”. Being interrupted interfered with individuals focus and often resulted in reduced productivity and thus left participants feeling frustrated. In the words of one participant “I also felt like it took me twice as long to finish a task as it would usually, because I was distracted and there was so much going on at the same time. I could not understand how others do it (I15)”. Moreover, when multitasking, many shared the experience of never being fully focused on the actual task they were doing, be it work or family-related. One participant stated that “when helping my son with his school things, while working, I never was fully present to help him and that really made me feel like I neglected being a mother (I1)”. Furthermore, it also influenced the working approach of participants. It was repeatedly mentioned that when children were around, participants tried to do “tasks that did not need my full attention (I2)” and when the children were occupied, participants would

“move on to the tasks that required more focus (I1)”. Participant I12 described the time when her children had to do their things as “always the most challenging time”, stating that during the peak times she could not really work but “only move the mouse 90% of the time”. In short, it can be concluded that people were facing frequent interruptions and therefore were unable to work on the same level of productivity and focus as they would under normal circumstances.

*(k) The Imposed Early Bird – An Attempt to Make It All Work*

Many other participants mentioned shifting their work around, as working and taking care of the children “simultaneously was impossible (I19)”. To manage multiple responsibilities, an approach of restructuring their working day around their children’s needs was adopted by many, to forego the simultaneous approach mentioned above. As a result, several participants started to wake up extremely early to “start working right away so that I had some quiet time to get work done before the children would wake up (I5)”, as that was “the only time I could be fully focused on my work [...] (I5)”. Additionally, they would try to find periods during the day, when their children were occupied, so that they could get some more work done. Interviewee I2 described a typical day during lockdown as follows, “I would wake up at 4.30 in the morning, to start working until my daughter would wake up, then I would have to take care of her while trying to work simultaneously. When she had a nap, I would use that time to work again, then in the afternoon I had to entertain her again, and after putting her to sleep I would work some more – and the next day the same thing, for 13 weeks”. Since children’s needs are often inflexible and need to be addressed immediately, individuals were dependent on flexible working hours. Due to the lack of alternatives, many had to resort to working outside their “usual hours (I19)”, as it would not have been possible otherwise – even then, many were struggling to fulfill their work obligations as there was simply not enough time. In the words of participant I7, “Sometimes I worked in the evenings, sometimes I worked on the weekends, to somehow keep up with everything. Still, some things were neglected”. She also added that by shifting the working hours around and spreading them out, she “did not have an off day

anymore, I had my laptop on every single day (I7)”. Another participant mentioned “sometimes I went to the office Saturday and Sunday afternoon to finish some tasks, those that need my full attention and focus (I14)” while another pointed out that “the times before everyone starts working and after are the ones I can be very efficient, same goes for the weekend (I9)”. Based on the interviewees responses, it can be assumed that the temporal boundaries vanished, as times usually attributed for the family domain, like evenings and weekends, were often occupied with work-related tasks during the lockdown and that a lack of time overall was apparent.

### **Third dimension: The Proximity Effect – When Work Is Always Present**

The last dimension explores the tension of struggling to keep work and family separated, due to blurring of the domains and the lack of physical and temporal boundaries.

#### *(1) The Struggle of Calling It a Day*

Due to having work embedded in the home domain, the “division between work and family diminishes (I12)” and boundaries start to blur. Participants argued that going to the office creates that clear distinction between the domains and “really helped to separate work and family (I15)”, which is not given when working from home. Another interesting aspect to be derived from the research is that when working remotely, many missed having that “cut off point, like you would when you leave the office (I8)” and thus making a “more conscious cut (I17)”. Consequently, individuals seemed to struggle with calling it a day when working from home. In the words of one interviewee, “I think that definitely is an issue, at an office when you leave, your day is over, when you are at home it is much harder to draw that line (I9)”. This was amplified by the intervening factor of having the laptop at home and in immediate proximity. One participant mentioned “Normally you turn off the laptop and leave the office and know the working day is over, and that I will only be contacted if there is an emergency. But in this situation, you quickly check your emails or you hear the ping so you go looking (I24)”. Being constantly available causes the domains to blur even further, thus making it harder

to consciously draw the line between work and family. Additionally, with the laptop set up on the table, one participant mentioned being “inclined to check my emails even late in the evening (I2) [...]”. During the study it was repeatedly mentioned that “when you’re already sitting at your laptop and doing some work, you may as well keep working a little longer (I6)” and that some were inclined to sit back down in the evening or on the weekend to continue their work. One participant, who works in HR, shared an interesting aspect from the company he works at, stating that “during the time of shortened hours, our employees were encouraged to not work more than 10% overtime. During the time of shortened hours and home office, those 10% were exceeded way more than when everyone worked at the office (I25)”, thus supporting the theory of finding it harder to call it a day at home. This occurred even if the employer did not expect people to be always available, as the pressure often stemmed from the individual’s own expectations. As one participant pointed out “I can’t just turn the computer off when I know that work keeps coming in. That has a lot to do with my sense of duty, I should have just turned it off, but that’s something I struggle with (I5)”.

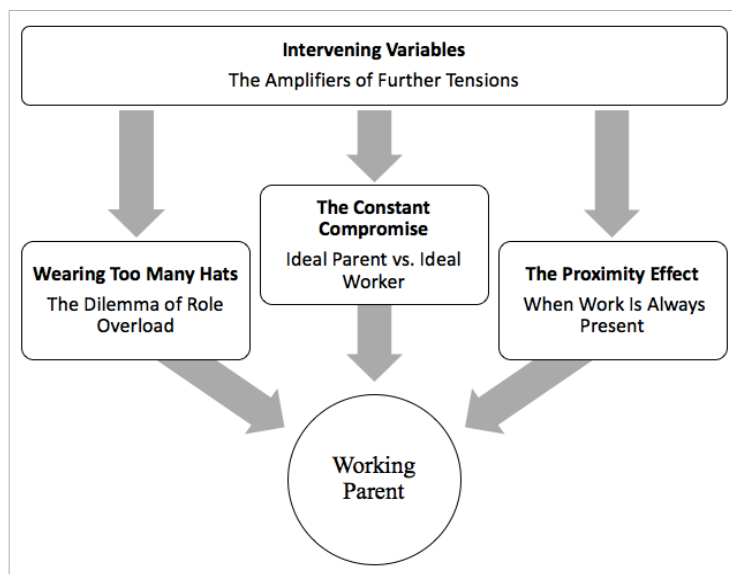
Moreover, when the temporal and spatial boundaries diminish and “it is not just work, it blends into your other life (I14)”, it is even harder to mentally separate the two domains. When lacking the physical distance, “work is always present in the private space (I24)”, making it more difficult to unwind. In the words of one participant, “For me, that was horrible – having my laptop on the dining table, always present, always in the back of my mind (I5)”. Certain participants, who set up their working space in the bedroom, found it especially hard to relax at night, due to having work right there present. As one stated “I would wake up in the morning and see work, I would go to bed in the evening and see work (I14)”. Moreover, one participant mentioned “when I receive a notification, even if it is not something I have to do urgently, it is still in the back of your mind (I8)”, thus implying that this being unable to unwind was partly fostered by the constant availability.

*(m) An Unwanted Flow of Information*

Finally, when boundaries diminish, an unwanted flow of information may occur, resulting in further tensions. With physical separation reduced to a minimum, interviewees argued that children and partners could overhear work conversations they were not supposed to hear and started to worry about things one would not want them to know of. Interviewee I10, a self-employed Consultant who lost most of her projects during the lockdown, stated that “this is very shocking and sad, as I used to guard them from those worries, and I really feel that this had an effect on them. [...] I do think it is a terrible thing – the worlds of adults and children to blur together like that”. This may also happen the other way around, with more private information being exposed to peers in the working environment than desired. Thus, it can be concluded that by having the boundaries blur and work physically present at all times, it was nearly impossible to keep the two domains separate to a large extent.

**A Framework of Tensions**

Figure 1 integrates all the above-presented findings into a framework of tensions, attempting to visualize the findings derived from the study. Dimension zero is presented at the top, as



concepts relating to Intervening Variables act more as amplifying factors on the other tensions, rather than directly impacting the working parent like dimensions one, two and three.

**Figure 1:** Proposed Model.

## 5. Discussion and Implications

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that working parents had to navigate through several tensions when work was embedded in the home domain during the lockdown. Therefore, this section is dedicated to proposing solutions that aim to alleviate those tensions. The lockdown situation was characterized by the loss of support systems and a multitude of responsibilities falling back onto the parents. Still, the specific challenges people were facing were highly dependent on each individual's situation. Parents with younger children face different struggles than those with children in school, as young children lack in attention span and can barely occupy themselves, whereas older children, while able to understand that the parent must work, require support regarding school work. The magnitude of tensions is also dependent on whether both parents are working, someone is a single parent and the overall spatial situation. The extent to which a person can freely choose when they do their work, the overall workload and how well one is equipped by the employer also adjust the tensions a person is subject to.

Thus, the lockdown situation is characterized by the convergence of a multitude of factors, hence it is extremely difficult to propose general solutions. However, there are certain measures that can be taken by organizations or individuals, that would help alleviate part of the tensions. The proposed framework of solutions presented below seeks to give implications for each of the four dimensions to foster a more manageable situation overall.

Table 2: Framework of Solutions

	<i>(0) Intervening Variables – The Amplifiers of Further Tensions</i>	<i>(1) Wearing Too Many Hats – The Dilemma of Role Overload</i>	<i>(2) The Constant Compromise – Ideal Parent vs. Ideal Worker</i>	<i>(3) The Proximity Effect – When Work Is Always Present</i>
<b>Explanation:</b>	Underlying issues, that determine the base situation and may influence the magnitude of further tensions.	Having to enact several different roles in a short timeframe may lead to an overload, thus putting pressure on individuals.	Trying to meet multiple obligations leads to compromising on certain aspects, and pressure to meet responsibilities may increase.	When work is embedded in home domain, boundaries diminish and unwanted blurring of domains may occur.
<b>Implications:</b>	(a) Properly equip employees (b) Establish dedicated working space	(c) Childcare shifts (d) Eliminate unnecessary distractions	(e) Facilitate flexible working hours (f) Maintain routine & structure (g) Create a weekly plan	(h) Put away working station at the end of the day (i) Turn off devices

**Tension 0** is concerned with the underlying lack of preparedness and uncertainty in this situation and acted as an amplifying factor for other tensions, thus the proposed solutions not only aim to relieve the first tension, but will in turn help to create a base situation that reduces the magnitude of further tensions. As an employer, one should *(a) properly equip employees* with the necessary devices needed for them to fulfill their job obligations. That way, people do not have to rely on their private devices for work and thus coordination issues can be mitigated, as well as better separation of work and family facilitated. Individuals should try to *(b) establish a dedicated working space*, even if it is just by setting up a separate table. By doing that, it will be easier to keep the boundaries from blurring, as this creates some physical separation between work and family and that working space will be associated with the worker role.

As for **the first tension**, the focus for the solutions lies on relieving some of the pressure of wearing too many hats, by aiming to reduce the number of role transitions. When both parents work from home, childcare could be approached with a *(c) shift system* during the day. Specific blocks of undisturbed work for one parent, while the other is on child duty, aids in getting tasks done that require higher focus, that might not be possible with the children around. By rotating childcare duty, both parents get their disturbance-free time and the load of interruptions and having to shift between the roles can be shared and thus minimized. In addition to that, by *(d) eliminating unnecessary distractions* like private devices while working, interruptions such as notifications can be eliminated and thus superfluous role transitions avoided.

**The second tension** is characterized by the trade-off between being the ideal worker and the ideal parent, and the proposed solutions aim to better facilitate compatibility of family and work. As the research showed, people had to restructure their working day around their children's needs and to utilize the periods of silence when they can focus on their work tasks. Therefore, they are highly reliant on being able to do the work when it fits their time frame. An employer should facilitate *(e) flexible working hours*, to give the employees the autonomy to

choose when to meet their work obligations. As a result, the risk of employees having to work simultaneously to taking care of the children and thus insufficiently focusing on work and reducing productivity is mitigated. Parents should try to give their children and themselves a *(f) structure and maintain routines*, by keeping up with as much of their usual routines as possible. Incorporating familiar routines and modifying them by adding additional elements like childcare or homeschooling helps to create familiarity and consistency and may act as a guide for people to not feel as lost. During times where many responsibilities collide, it may help to *(g) create a weekly plan* including all the tasks that should be concluded and fixed elements like meals. A plan can save time during the week, when trying to figure out what to do next. Finally, **the third tension** arises due to diminishing boundaries, thus requires tactics that facilitate better separation between the work and family domains. Individuals should *(h) put away their working station at the end of the day* and *(i) turn off their devices*, to consciously make that cut. By doing that, it will be easier to call it a day and if the laptop is not set up anymore, one may feel less inclined to sit back down and work some more. Additionally, by turning off devices, notifications will not interfere during after hours, thus it will be easier to unwind and get the mind off all the work that is waiting.

To conclude, the proposed solution framework does not attempt to cover and resolve all occurring tensions, it is meant as a guide to offer alleviation. Having support systems like kindergartens, grandparents and schools not available puts an immense strain on working parents, who still need to fulfill their work responsibilities. Thus, they are suddenly facing a multitude of responsibilities and it must be acknowledged that due to that, not everything can work out the way it usually does. A day only has so many hours, and it might just not be possible to meet all obligations 100% under those exceptional circumstances. Consequently, people will get frustrated and feel burned out after a while. Additionally, certain issues as for instance the underlying uncertainty are unpreventable in unprecedented situations like this and gender-

related stereotypes are societally anchored constructs, that cannot be changed by an organization or individual on its own. At the same time, certain tensions that occur due to a lack of preparedness may resolve themselves over time. For instance, schools might adopt a more consistent communication process after they have had time to transition and children will get more used to homeschooling, thus requiring less support from their parents. At the end of the day, the lockdown situation is a state of emergency, that requires exceptional dedication and measures. While some of the tensions can be relieved, even certain tactics and solutions will not make working from home with 100% of childcare responsibilities and no support systems a permanently sustainable situation.

## 6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

When viewing the results of this study, certain limitations must be taken into consideration. To begin, it must be acknowledged that the majority of participants are female, meaning that a certain bias has to be expected especially with gender-related issues. To further establish the role that gender plays in all of this, a more representative sample including a larger part of male participants should be considered to better understand whether they were aware of gender stereotypes putting pressure on females and to see if men find it generally easier to navigate through tensions or face less tensions overall. Furthermore, as only one couple was interviewed, the research mostly represents “one side of the story”. It would be interesting to run a study with working couples, to better investigate potential differences in the male and female perception and capture a more holistic view of the situation.

Considering the limitations mentioned, the above presented findings may act as an inspiration and give guidance for future research, and could be used as a base to be tested in quantitative studies.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Descriptions of study participants

Code	Gender	Age	Children	Working hours	Occupation	HO experience
I1	f	35	8y, 4y	full-time	Project lead research institute	None
I2	f	38	2y	70%	Assistant at national bank	None
I3	f	36	16y, 3y, 9m	20h	District councillor	Some
I4	f	37	9y, 7y	40h*	HR manager	Limited
I5	f	40	11y, 8y	30h*	Customer service employee	None
I6	m	43	12y	40h	Technical assistant	Limited
I7	f	39	5y, 2y, 2y	20h	Trade marketing FMCG	Some
I8	f	37	2.5y	30h*	Congress management	Limited
I9	f	41	17y, 9y	40h	Project management	Always
I10	f	48	15y, 14y	full-time	Self-employed Consultant	Limited
I11	m	40	6y, 4y	40h	Commercial director	None
I12	f	32	12y, 10y	part-time	Purchasing	None
I13	f	34	6y, 3y	40h	Social worker	None
I14	f	37	10y, 7y, 4y	22h	Social worker	Some
I15	f	37	12y, 8y	part-time	Communication department	None
I16	f	32	2.5y	40%	Customer service	None
I17	m	43	10y, 7y	full-time	Department manager	Some
I18	f	41	10y, 7y	part-time	Self-employed graphic designer	Always
I19	f	38	15y, 11y, 6y	40%	Insurance Broker	None
I20	f	40	9y	Full-time	Department head social affairs	Limited
I21	f	39	9y	part-time	Toy librarian	Limited
I22	f	49	14y, 12y	Full-time	Quality & risk management	Always
I23	f	41	11y, 8y, 4y	part-time	Tourist office	None
I24	f	40	21y, 11y	32h	Corporate communications	Some
I25	m	43	12y, 10y	full-time*	HR + Finance head	Limited

\*Kurzarbeit during lockdown: an Austrian concept for the temporary reduction of normal working hours and wages, developed to temporarily reduce labor costs and to keep employees during times of economic difficulties (WKO, 2020).

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

*This interview is part of a research project with the objective to find out how people with children navigated the tensions of having work embedded in the home domain and how they managed their boundaries between their work and family lives during that time. I want to talk to you about your experiences during the lockdown period when your children were at home and you had to work. Your participation is highly appreciated but completely voluntary, if you wish to stop this interview or you are uncomfortable answering a question, please let me know and we can move on. For analytical purposes, I would really appreciate it if I could record the audio of this interview, are you okay with this? Of course, everything you say will be treated with confidentiality and used anonymously for the research.*

To start off, please state your age and current family situation including the number and ages of your children, as well as briefly describe your current occupation.

### **General questions**

1. Please state your age and current family situation, including number and age of your children
2. Please describe your current occupation (position, obligations, part or full-time)

### **Working from home / Boundary management**

3. Pre-Covid19-lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work remotely? If so, did you use that opportunity? Why / Why not? What are the benefits of working remotely?
4. During lockdown, you had to shift to remote working fully, please explain your experience. Did you have to take up more responsibilities (homeschooling, child supervision,..)?
5. What were the biggest challenges during this situation for you?
6. If you worked from home previously, did working from home during lockdown differ from the previous experience? If yes, how?

7. When working from home, you brought work into your home surroundings, do you feel like that caused any issues / conflicts in either your family or work role and did you feel like you were inclined to work longer? Please explain.
8. If a second lockdown is being imposed (assuming it is not already when interview takes place) and you need to work from home again, what are some things that might make the situation more easily manageable? Any learnings from the first lockdown?
9. Finally, to finish this off on a good note, what were the positive aspects of the situation in your opinion?

## **Appendix 3: Interview Transcripts**

### **Interview II**

INTERVIEWER: Please state your name, age, current family situation as well as your current occupation and a quick description of your work obligations.

INTERVIEWEE: I'm 35 years old, I am project leader at a non-university research institute, I coordinate several research projects, some bigger some smaller. I work for 40 hours a week. I have two children, 4 and 8 years, one is in kindergarten and the older one is in primary school. As for our situation, the children are with me every other week, I am divorced and they spend one week at their fathers and the other at my place.

INTERVIEWER: Generally, did you have the possibility to do home office pre lockdown and what is your normal working situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Normally, we have to work from the office with specific times when we have to be present. After the divorce I tried to work more the week where my kids are at their fathers, so that I could work less hours when they were with me, because otherwise it would not be possible to work full time while also meeting those family responsibilities. Home office was not perceived very well in my office, we could take it for special occasions, like when a technician was scheduled for the day, or the chimney sweep or when children were sick, but in general it was a bit frowned upon.

INTERVIEWER: If it were not frowned upon by you employer, would you have used home office more? What are the benefits in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE: Well things like not having to commute saves a lot of time, my oldest walks to school himself, but my younger one has to be brought to kindergarten, which is quite the detour for me so it takes me a long time each day to get from home to the kindergarten and then to work, and in the afternoon the same thing. The commute was often really time consuming, so home office for me has a large time saving aspect, I have more time and can start working earlier. Additionally, in the office we're 4 people and one of them is often on the phone, so I have to sit with my headphones on in order to not be disturbed. Therefore, working from home also theoretically means a more quiet working situation in which I could concentrate better, which does not always work. I actually wanted to have one home office day per week at my work and even asked my boss about it, but he felt like we might not work enough from home and it was not received very well.

INTERVIEWER: Oh okay, well but during lockdown, you all had to work from home right?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, on that friday when the lockdown was announced, we were told we all had to start working remotely. And it was actually really nice of our employer, they paid for a taxi for us to take all our screens and all our things home. Home office previously cannot really be compared to the home office during lockdown, cause in the beginning as everyone was in the home office communication worked really well and everyone was really trying to make it work and stay connected. My boss even offered us to order a nice desk chair online, so we could sit nicely while working. From that point of view, we really were well equipped for home office. I was struggling a bit, as I live in a fairly small three bedroom flat, the dining room in my living room had to be converted to my working space everyday. I don't really have that much space

for a desk, let alone an extra room to really spread out. When lockdown started to lift, some of us had to go back into the office for a couple days, but those with children could work remotely longer. The situation then was a bit different, with some in the office having the usual business processes and social interactions at lunch, while others were at home making it quite difficult to keep the communication flow going. That was a really hard time as communication was hard.

INTERVIEWER: How was working from home during lockdown for you when your children were at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well we had the possibility to take special leave for child caring. But I quickly realized, that that would not last for the whole period of lockdown and I had to think of something else. My boss also noted, that we should use our accumulated time credit as well as remaining vacation one may have. I did not want to use up my remaining vacation time for home schooling and more stressful things, it was quite frustrating so I decided to just calculate how much I had to work extra during the one week in order to compensate for the weeks my children were here, to help bridge the time with the special leave until the end of June. As mentioned, the flat is not very big. My 4-year olds bed is right next to the small desk of my oldest, and in the living room is the dining table and the sofa and around 1.5 meters space in between – so it is really quite crowded. For the oldest, I had to do homeschooling based on a weekly planner with things to do every day. Also things like arts and crafts or just different work sheets. And that was really challenging when trying to work at the same time. You realize he is not making any progress and you constantly have to ask him to please continue with his home work, to which he would respond he does not want to and it would go on and on. It was really hard to balance both at the same time. What I did, was I tried to do the easier tasks while my children were around, like responding to emails. Unfortunately, it did not really get easier over time, I think cause frustration levels just kept rising on both my and my children's side, so I started a super basic reward system and basically allowed my oldest screen time until lunch time, but he had to do his tasks first. So if he worked quicker, he would get to watch TV longer. Then while he was doing his tasks, I would do my easy tasks again, like research work or quick meetings. And when he was occupied with screen time, I would move on to the tasks that required more focus. That worked, cause the younger one also could get quite annoying taking things from her brother or hopping in front of the camera while I was on a call, which is something I did not like really, cause even though my colleagues thought it was so cute, I felt like it may hinder me professionally when trying to push through with something. I also felt like they do not really see the stress that comes with having children at home, when you are trying to stay calm in front of the screen while they are throwing things in the back of the room, when you constantly have to mute yourself when they start screaming, that was really stressful for me. Sometimes I called my sister to help my oldest with his school work, that worked as well. At some point, it really did not work anymore and I had to write more hours than actually required in order to not use up my leave days. I did not really feel guilty, as I felt like I would otherwise be steering towards a burnout.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think would make the whole situation easier to balance family and work?

INTERVIEWEE: Well for me the time where I made a clear cut between work and family was the easiest, when I would work more one week so I could spend more time with my children when they were with me and we could use that time to go outside. As well as the more structured

approach with having a reward system with my oldest, that really helped not being too stressed out. For me, previously I thought home office would be working in sweatpants from the comfort of my couch, that completely changed. Now I realized that it is better for me to have a routine, as I am a very structured person. I would always dress up, sit at the table, take regular breaks and I tried to spend as much time outside as possible, like just eating lunch outside. What I learned is that I do not like the “chilled” home office, where you feel like you do not want to get up, it is not for me. I have to keep up the more formal approach as I would at work, I have not seen anyone for weeks but I did change my outfit three times a day, just for me to feel better. Additionally, I love doing sports so I could actually use my breaks for yoga or I would draw and be creative. I basically used my break time more productively for me. That made it much better for me, cause in that more chilled unstructured home office, I would just feel off and not really know where it came from. I also used to do many things at the same time, being in home office really led to me rethinking the way I work and I switched to being more focused on the things I do, and then taking breaks every hour instead of trying to do everything at once.

INTERVIEWER: How did that work when the children were around then?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually use my work laptop for private things as well, so I got an additional tablet from work so my children had something to play on. When they were on the tablet, I could focus on work and they were occupied. However, this also created a tension as I did not want them to spend too much time in front of the screen, while at the same time it made work easier for me. It really was a constant trade off between how much time do I need for work now, how much screen time do I want my kids to have – will they get even more annoying after. Theoretically, I could have worked for hours without interruption, if I didn't feel guilty about giving my children too much screen time and feeling like I neglected them. Having both children at home at the same time also just leads to discussions and disputes between them every 5 minutes, they are just siblings and annoy each other.

INTERVIEWER: So you just mentioned you use your work laptop for private purposes, did that lead to any issues or to be more inclined to work longer hours?

INTERVIEWEE: What I realized is that due to the fact that I have my children around, that just is not possible. When they are here, I have a really structured day and I need to work super focused during the windows that I can, and in the evening while I prepare dinner and put them to bed too much time passes, and I would not sit back down to work. Additionally, being in front of the screen for so much time actually stopped me from watching Netflix in the evening or checking twitter, as I just had enough so I would really just shut down the laptop after work and not use it until the next day. I have to say that I have a pretty good position currently, which gives me a lot of flexibility to shift my working obligations around, without that I am not sure how I would have handled the situation. To be honest, I never used to like homeoffice with children around, even when they were sick. You constantly run into situations where you have to send them away, beg them to find something to do themselves, to just give you a couple of minutes. And it was really hard to do that, I sometimes felt like a really bad mother doing that but sometimes you do not have a choice. Even when helping my son with his school things, while working, I never was fully present to help him and that really made me feel like I neglected being a mother. It is hard to find the balance, you do not want your kid to fall behind with school work, but you also do not have the time as well as knowledge and techniques to help them properly. That pressure is a lot. For the future, I would probably think about taking

advantage of emergency care opportunities. As this may relieve some of those pressures for a couple of hours and may take away the overlaps between work and family. The one thing that I liked, was that I had a lot of insight into what my oldest was learning at school at that time, as I was just helping him out here and then. It was a different perspective and I got to see a bit more of where he was at and what he was doing every day at school.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, thank you so much for your time and input!

## **Interview I2**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, please state your name, age, current family situation as well as your current occupation & a quick description of your work obligations.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 38 years old, I have a young daughter who was 2,5 years old when the lockdown started, who normally goes to kindergarten, which then was not possible from one day to the other. I work 70% currently, well that's officially. Home office was not possible for me before. I am an assistant at the Austrian National Bank and during lockdown, I had the problem that my colleague switched to a different job and we had not yet found a substitute for her. So basically I was in a situation where I suddenly had my daughter home all day, while also having to take up the work of another full time position. My husband had to work, so he was not at home.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that home office was not possible before lockdown, was it never a topic, not even in special occasions?

INTERVIEWEE: No, home office was never an option.

INTERVIEWER: If it were possible, would you have used that opportunity and why?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I have a very long commute. I live in the outer border of Vienna but my work is in the city center like most peoples, so it takes me an hour per day. Saving that time would be a great benefit. During lockdown, I suddenly was all alone, with no one to help me as my husband had to work 9 to 5 and grandparents as well as kindergarten were not accessible anymore, for obvious reasons. I would say one of the biggest challenges for me was to then also recruit and onboard a new colleague, and at first the infrastructure was not working so we had to do everything through private Whatsapp and skype chats. Generally, we had all technological infrastructure cause a year ago everyone was given a full home office equipment consisting of phone and laptop, but the beginning phase was just a bit trial and error. It takes some time to get used to certain processes and programs, many processes had to be adapted, we used to print a lot, now we had to find other ways to make it work from home. To onboard a new colleague fully during complete lockdown was definitely challenging and an interesting experience. The good thing was, that we started to rethink a lot of processes, like how can we be more efficient, are there other ways to do it, than the way we have been doing it in the past. At my work, the culture is very old-fashioned, only the people who are present are working, working long hours means being very dedicated and working hard. After a couple of weeks, even the bosses had to admit that they were surprised how well it was actually going, and that everyone did do their work, even though they were at home, some even had the impression people were working more than before. Overall, I do enjoy working remotely to some degree, but I would not want to do it all the time. That might be for someone who is really structured, but not for me. During

lockdown my days looked like this: I would wake up at 4.30 in the morning, to start working until my daughter would wake up, then I would have to take care of her while trying to work simultaneously. When she had a nap, I would use that time to work again, then in the afternoon I had to entertain her again, and after putting her to sleep I would work some more – and the next day the same thing, for 13 weeks.

INTERVIEWER: So you basically had to completely restructure your daily routine?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, completely. Suddenly I was alone and had the additional responsibilities of taking care of my daughter. For the first two weeks it was kind of surreal, you just went with it and pushed through. But over time I realized just how hard it actually was. It resorted in very bizarre and unpleasant situations, like your daughter standing next to you, crying saying “mom, please don’t work, not work all the time.” That was very hard for me, and it did have a consequence – I actually decided to quit my job.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so it helped you realize what you wanted and what you did not want. Going back to when you said you would work simultaneously to taking care of your daughter, how did that work out?

INTERVIEWEE: Well honestly it did not really. I mean every job consists of certain tasks that require higher focus and some tasks that are just routine, so I just did the tasks that did not need my full attention when my daughter was around. Sometimes she would sit on my lap, other times I would set up an old laptop in front of her, so she could “work” as well. It also resulted in me doing things I would not do before, I mean she is 2,5 years old, but at some point I just handed her the tablet so I could attend a call for 30 minutes without distraction. So at the end of the day, I just felt guilty, guilty for not being able to give my daughter the attention she wants, and guilty that I could not be fully focused on my job responsibilities. And taking care of myself was the last thing on my mind.

INTERVIEWER: So in terms of working you were somewhat flexible as to when you start and finish your work?

INTERVIEWEE: I do have fixed times where I have to be accessible, but to be honest I just insisted on a certain flexibility and understanding that it just does not work like that with a child at home. I try to complete all my tasks, but the when and how just have to be left up to me. Fortunately, no one did have anything against that.

INTERVIEWER: In situations where you are caught between trying to be the ideal parent as well as the ideal worker, how did that go and what factors influenced how you handled the situation?

INTERVIEWEE: To be honest, in the beginning I was completely overwhelmed. Then I started to plan out the next day the evening before by blocking certain times for meetings, my daughter and planning pedagogically valuable activities for her so I do not have to feel as guilty. I also started to take time to go outside, into the forest, and to do that I had to have a clear structure so it fit into my day. Obviously, when my daughter needed my attention urgently, she was always the priority. But I have to admit, there were many times where I told her “not now, wait a minute”, it was not the way I usually treat her and I knew it. Well, there were more than one evening where I just cried in the evening. And it was frustrating, because ever since she was born I was fighting to not just be seen as “the one with the child” at work, proving that you are

a fully capable team member and suddenly, that comes crashing down and you are just the one with the child. And I constantly felt that and could not really escape from it. But you know, you have to look at it that way, it just is not possible to be everything at once, it does not work. Also, I know that the whole situation was hard on most people, it did not matter if you had children at home, if you were single, a lot of people were struggling. So I started to open up to people and talk about my struggles, and even though no one may be able to help you, just talking about it helped a little. From my colleagues at work, I had the impression that men tended to take the situation way better than I did, they were so much more calm and relaxed about it and I did wonder why that was. Maybe they just structured their day without worrying about doing chores or making healthy food for the children, I don't know. To me it seemed like that guilt component was not that present for them, but I obviously do not know how it actually was, that was just my impression.

INTERVIEWER: Coming back to your remote working situation, where did you work – did you have a desk or an office?

INTERVIEWEE: (laughs) I have been sitting at my dining table since March.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think having a separate space would have helped you manage everything better?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think it would have made that much of a difference in the beginning, but overall I would say yes. I am actually thinking about setting up a more permanent work station at home, as this remote working may now become a more regular thing in the future. I think having it properly separated does make a difference, as you actually still have that division between "being at work" or sitting at the dining table, where everyone eats.

INTERVIEWER: You said you actively set yourself a structure to better manage the situation, what are some other things you think may help you better navigate parenting and working from home?

INTERVIEWEE: I think I would take some time to really properly plan and structure everything right from the beginning to have fixed blocks for work and fixed times dedicated to leisure activities. I also would start to take more advantage of having everyday things delivered, so that things like lunch are ready to go and preparing that does not take up any of my time. Those are all things that I started thinking about as time passed, as it was not really relevant before. I would definitely also start to take more time for myself. During the lockdown, I had the chance to do a coaching program where we reflected about what I could do differently because it all was so overwhelming for me. And to really structure myself better, and to better plan things with my partner and to request more help from his side. I should not have to feel responsible for everything on my own. I also would recommend to everyone to just put away all work things in the evening, even though it takes some time and has to be put back the next day – it helps to just put it away and have a feeling of accomplished work. If I leave it sitting on my table, I am inclined to check my emails even late in the evening, and that is not the way it should be. I also would communicate the times I am available much better and I think I could have done that. Because my work did not actually pressure me to be fully accessible at all times, I think the pressure came from my own ambitions. Overall, I think I can see everything a bit more relaxed now. I knew that a second lockdown was coming, I just did not know how it would look. But honestly, I felt like I was so much better prepared and that it would work out.

I have to say that even though it was an immensely challenging time for me, in a weird way it was really great. Normally, as I am working most days and my daughter is still very young, I do not get to spend as much time with her as I would want. During lockdown I had her with me all the time, and I could observe her development more closely and that is something I would not want to miss. I learned to appreciate things more, be grateful for those moments. I would try to go about things with less guilt, I am trying my best, I am the best mother that I can be and I am the best employee I can be, and that should be good enough. The pressure is not worth it, at the end of the day no one will come up to me, pat me on the back and say "you did a good job, now you get a reward", and that is certainly not what I expect. But I have always been used to giving 150%, while studying, working I have been doing that since 20 years nonstop. And I just need to see that I am good enough, even if I can just give 120%.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely, even when it's 100%. And if you can only give 80% one day, that is okay too.

INTERVIEWEE: I think for things you are really interested in, a project that is close to your heart it is worth dedicating yourself to it fully, but it should not be a permanent state. It really affects health and also mental health. I am someone who tends to give too much, lockdown showed me just how good I am at that. It also showed me how much I can accomplish when I have to, and that some things just take time getting used to. It got better over time, I started to chat with colleagues over the phone, which can be just as nice as talking to them in person. I also learned to let things be, to let Saturday and Sunday be the weekend, and not additional working days. I also would want to use the weekends more efficiently, to prepare for the week, prep meals just to have things run more smoothly during the week when I work. Because while I tried to do the best for my daughter and work, I neglected myself – unlike many people who have gained weight during quarantine, I actually lost a massive amount of weight. Stress, not eating, it is horrible, and you know it, but you don't actually realize it until much after. But in the end, it did have positive aspects as well, and that's good. I think we all appreciate things more now, and in the end, at least for me, it made me stronger, even though I felt weaker at that time. It's cliché, but I think that "what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" does fit quite nicely.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for your time, we touched everything I wanted to talk about and I am very grateful that you shared your experience with me.

### **Interview I3**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, please state your name, age, current family situation as well as your current occupation & a quick description of your work obligations.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, so I am 36 years old, we have three children – we are a patchwork family – we have a 16 year-old, a 3-year-old son and a baby that is 9 months old, so basically newborn when lockdown started. I am a district councilor in Floridsdorf for the SPÖ, and when I am not on maternal leave, I am a qualified teacher for people with special needs, which I am not currently working as. So the past three years I was working for the district council, the amount of hours I have to work differ a lot depending on the time of the year, but the past months I worked around 20 hours a week, as the elections in Vienna were coming up.

INTERVIEWER: How did your working situation look before the lockdown, did you work from an office or from home?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually could always do a lot of things remotely, the only thing we did not have were online meetings. In politics, there are a lot of meetings, we would usually meet once a week for long meetings and discussions, with in-person attendance.

INTERVIEWER: What are the benefits of working remotely in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE: Well the benefit for me during lockdown was, that all of those meetings were online, meaning that I could easily just turn the screen away and do something else if things were being discussed that did not need my attention. I could decide myself, if I wanted to be focused or not. In an in-person meeting, I cannot just leave the room as I please, so that resulted in me sometimes just being physically present, but not really paying attention. I also had to bring my children sometimes to the in-person meetings, and when they would start nagging and whining, I had to go outside with them, meaning I was on site, but really no use for anyone, at home I can handle that much better. When the children start to scream, I can just mute myself and no one is bothered and I can turn the volume up, so I can still listen to it and follow the meeting better.

INTERVIEWER: And how did the situation change when lockdown started?

INTERVIEWEE: Well all the in-person meetings were called off, in the beginning we used WhatsApp and mails with 10 people on it, as no one had tools like zoom or go 2 meeting at that time. But then we started to have meetings virtually and got more used to it all. Overall, in March I was lucky that my husband was still at home, as he was on paternal leave, and could help out a lot. We actually had to move just as the lockdown was decided, so that was an additional challenge to figure out. So my husband started the moving process with our oldest daughter, and I basically stayed at home and took care of the younger children, while also working on several projects for my district. I would work from the dining table, and if I needed silence for calls and meetings, I would go into our bedroom, which was a bit weird as all colleagues saw that I was sitting on my bed. But I just did not have an alternative option, we did not have a separate space like an office. My children all have their own room, so we just did not have enough space for that. I did do a lot of work from the living room, but then my 3-year-old would often come over to me and look into the camera. But when I needed quiet time, I went into the bedroom – which still did not mean that I was fully undisturbed. I mean that is a disadvantage of working remotely, your children know that you are home, so they do not quite understand that you have to work – my 3-year-old would often pound on my bedroom door whilst screaming, I mean how long will you let him do that. Then I would have to excuse myself from the call I was in, telling them that I needed to look after my son right now. It was hard for him to understand, because I was home but I was not constantly available to him.

INTERVIEWER: How was that for you, trying to manage situations like this, where both work and family demanded your attention at the same time?

INTERVIEWEE: I was lucky that my husband could help out with the children when I had a really important meeting. When he was home after work, he could support me and look after them, as many of my meetings were actually in the evening. Oh, and he did not work from home, as he is working in a system-relevant position. And when he was not around, I have to

say that overall, my colleagues were all very understanding. I have been active in politics since like 2005, and have worked with some of them for 15 years, so they know me and they know my children, and I share a lot with them.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say are the biggest challenges of working remotely with children at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, the biggest challenges are when for example you have a meeting in the evening, you are prepared, the husband is taking care of the children and you're sitting in the bedroom waiting for the meeting to start. And suddenly, they push the meeting back an hour and you just can't wait for an hour. I guess that has been a big transition for many people, people without children may be more flexible and do not care when the meeting takes place. But as a parent with other obligations, I do need more structure and cannot just push everything around.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have additional responsibilities during lockdown that you did not have before?

INTERVIEWEE: Well my son used to go to kindergarten pre-lockdown, so when that was not possible anymore, it was a really big transition for me to suddenly have both him and the newborn around, all the time – that was additional work. I felt like I spent so much time in the kitchen, there was always someone who was hungry. Oh and mountains of laundry, it was a never-ending story.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say it got easier over time or are there some things that you think could help make a situation like this easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Hm, I have to say that I have a very optimistic stance towards the second lockdown, as the big aspect of moving is not relevant anymore. It sounds weird, but it we actually walked through hell with the moving process. I guess what would help a lot, is when playgrounds would stay open. That was a big issue for my son in the beginning, he is too young to understand so I always told him that the playground was broken, the playground is closed. I mean how do you explain that to a little kid?

INTERVIEWER: And how did you keep your son busy when you were trying to work?

INTERVIEWEE: In that phase where the moving process was ongoing, I have to admit that the TV was running – a lot. There was no other way. However, I realized that my son also had a phase, where he just did not want to watch any more TV. I guess as he was allowed to watch so much TV, it was not as exciting for him anymore.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel giving your son that much screen time?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning, I felt really guilty. Shortly after the birth of my newborn, I was much more involved emotionally due to hormones, and I really felt that it was horrible to give him that much time in front of the TV. But I then realized, that I also have to look after myself, I mean no one knew how long it would go on, I had to find a way that would allow me to relax a little and have some quiet time. I have to say that I am against being super strictly anti, I think that all the things I so not allow my kid to do, just gets more interesting and exciting for him. And I mean, there are programmes that actually are somewhat valuable – when my son watches things where they talk about numbers and counting, that may actually be educational. Still, in the end watching TV is just watching TV. I really had to grow with the situation, and

at some point I had to realize that no matter what I do, sometimes my son will just cry, and I had to come to terms with that. Overall, I feel like I am lucky that they are still so small, as I feel like it will not be such an impactful period in their lives, as they won't really remember it.

INTERVIEWER: That's actually all I wanted to know from you, thank you so much for your time and enjoy your evening!

#### **Interview I4**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, please state your name, family situation and describe your occupation in a few words.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay so as for age, I am turning 38 next month. My children are 7 and 9 years old, two boys. I am divorced, meaning that on weekdays the boys are with me, when I am working, and on the weekends where I have time off, they are with their dad. That is also the reason, why I had children at home when working remotely, which was challenging. I work at Greenpeace, I am a full-time employee so I work 40 hours a week in HR management.

INTERVIEWER: Pre-lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: We did have the opportunity to work from home, luckily Greenpeace is very employee-oriented in that sense. It is no problem when a child is sick and you have to stay home. We are all equipped with laptops, so it was possible before, yes. However, for the most part we were working from the office and only used home office every few weeks. Now it is the other way around, and we should stay home.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use that opportunity of working remotely before, and what are the benefits in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I did not use it as I have only been with Greenpeace for a year, so I wanted to get to know the job more, meaning I was present all the time in the beginning, so I could soak up as much knowledge as possible. The only occasions when I did work remotely, were when a child had to stay home or when I was feeling a little sick. I did enjoy working remotely, even though you cannot enjoy all the benefits when children are at home.

INTERVIEWER: And when lockdown began, you shifted to remote working fully – please talk about your experience.

INTERVIEWEE: Well the period where the children were home to, felt like a really long time. Luckily, I had a week off during that time and I for some time I had reduced working hours (note: Kurzarbeit Österreich), meaning I only had to work for 20 hours which was quite nice, as it helped with taking care of my children. Working full time with the children at home was very exhausting, as you try to satisfy all needs, and fulfill all your obligations towards your children but also towards work. Additionally, cooking, doing the laundry and certain private matters take time up too, basically it is just a lot of things at the same time. The challenge is that the day has not enough hours, and that certain caregivers were not available.

INTERVIEWER: That is exactly the aspect I am trying to find more out about, navigating between trying to be the ideal parent but also trying to be good at work. Can you explain more about the additional obligations you had, when the children were at home?

INTERVIEWEE: I had to cook much more, and just checking that they do not watch too much TV, and instead also do other things. Sometimes, I would just let them watch more, when I was in a call or a meeting where I had to be present. Then I would sometimes tell them to please just watch a show or play on the iPad and not come into the room. Obviously, I also oversaw them do their homework and exercises, or just other, alternative things like crafts. It was hard to let them go out alone, as playgrounds were closed and doing sports was also very limited. I also have to mention, that I do not have close family around, that could support me, it is me and my current partner, as well as my ex-husband who help me with the boys. But overall, there is no one I can just send them to spontaneously, there are also no other children that age in our immediate neighborhood, or they were afraid of meeting up due to Covid-19.

INTERVIEWER: Did you also have to assist your sons when they were doing their things for school, or did they do that independently?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah at least the older one, the younger was in pre-school at the beginning of lockdown and did not really have homework, so for him it was more about finding something to keep him occupied. But I had to help my older son, he had to learn new things in mathematics etc., where it sometimes took him some time to understand the path of calculation.

INTERVIEWER: How did your working station look, did you have a separate space for your work?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't have a dedicated office, but I work in my bedroom. While I work, my children are mostly in the living room and their bedroom.

INTERVIEWER: And that allows you to work without disturbance?

INTERVIEWEE: When I'm not in a call, I have to leave the door open so I know what they are doing. Otherwise, they would just think that they can do whatever they want and I won't realize it. But overall my working space is separated from where they are, so I do get to focus a bit better – while at the same time observing what they do.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have fixed working hours, or were you more flexible in that sense?

INTERVIEWEE: I do not have fixed hours, but I should be accessible between 9 am and 4pm. In between, I was flexible, and we did not really have a structure as to when I work. There were some recurring themes, I tried to get them to do their school work in the morning, simultaneously to me working, sometimes it worked well, other times it did not. My younger son is constantly hungry, so I also spent a lot of time preparing food, as I tried to not have him eat candy all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say it got easier over time? Did you have certain things you did to make it easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I think by now they understand that I work from home, that I have to do certain tasks. But we did not really have a system or anything.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned before, that you think working full time with the children at home would not really be possible, please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: I think you can't work full time in the sense of working for 8 hours a day with half an hour lunch break. In the office, that would work, but not at home. You constantly

have to do something in between, and interrupt the work you were doing, which in turn interrupts the work flow.

INTERVIEWER: Could you fully focus during the times when you were working?

INTERVIEWEE: Well whenever I had to do something that required my undivided attention, I would close the bedroom door, and let them know I need silence and give them something to keep occupied. The older one understands that, the younger one is very attached to me and needs a lot of attention, and that showed as well.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that in sum, you worked more hours due to being at home anyways?

INTERVIEWEE: Not at all, if anything I worked less hours. Maybe it feels like a longer time, as there are many other things you do in between, but in all honesty the 8 hours were not possible every day.

INTERVIEWER: To finish off, do you have any learnings or something that may help with the situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I think it would help if people were less afraid, so that children could meet up more. Especially my older son wanted to meet up with his best friend, whose parents said they were not comfortable and they should wait until the lockdown was over. Everyone is very cautious, also our neighbors, and it would help if everyone was a bit less concerned. Children are apparently not that likely to spread Covid-19. Another thing that would have helped a lot, would be if playgrounds stayed open. We spent a lot of time in the forest, which was beautiful as well, and on the Donauinsel – thinking about that, we did have a lot of good times. But I still think that the children were quite affected by the situation, not being able to really have social contacts, going outside, running around. Oh and another solution, we are moving – into a more sunny apartment with a terrace. Our current flat is not very bright, and we do not have an outdoor space. So now we are moving in two weeks, so we have more room and outdoor space. And I will also have a space for working, that is not fully secluded, but in a semi-separated niche and I hope that will help as well. I also spent more time looking into alternative activities for my boys, so that they can try out some new things as well.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, that actually concludes this interview, thank you so much for your time!

## **Interview I5**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could quickly state your age, family situation including age of your children, as well as current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 40 years old, I have two children - one 11-year-old and one 8-year-old, so during lockdown they were in first and fourth grade primary school. Normally, I am a part-time employee working 30 hours a week, in a wholesale electrical supply company in the back office of phone sales. I take care of electrical companies, and we sell power outlets and everything you need for a home building site. During lockdown, my hours were shortened, meaning I should have worked for 2 hours a day, which obviously is not the case when you are at home with your laptop. I'd say it was more work than if I were at the office, while additionally

helping my kids do their school work. At the beginning, I had to correct all the exercises myself, which is easier for the younger as he was only in the first grade, but doing all this for my older one was a bit more challenging.

INTERVIEWER: Pre-lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work remotely occasionally?

INTERVIEWEE: No, my employer never wanted that, it was never up for discussion. Additionally, one issue is the phone, we have a ring connection set up in the company, so when a colleague does not pick up the phone, I can take the call with my phone. In home office, I can only put my calls through to my mobile phone, but I am not able to respond to calls to others. And we do not have a phone system you can easily take home with you and connect with your headset. That is an issue, as many of our clients call us. I mean it could be done online, but to be honest the company just is not that progressive at the moment. Also, even though all the clients have internet, they prefer the personal touch of actually talking to someone and need consulting. Even now that we have a better phone system, and the first wave of lockdown is over, my employer want us to come to the office, they just prefer having us present and not working remotely.

INTERVIEWER: For you, what are the benefits of being able to work remotely, did you ever think it would be convenient pre-lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah absolutely. I live in the 22<sup>nd</sup> district in Vienna, and my office is in the 23<sup>rd</sup> on the opposite side of the city. It have to drive on the Tangente (note: highly populated street in Vienna) where traffic can be really bad and I have to take the children to school as well, it basically takes me 1,5 hours every day. So that commute is insane, and I often thought that I have no nerve for the commute and that working from home would be amazing, as I would just have to bring the children to school and save a lot of time and start working earlier. The time-saving factor would be immense. And that is what I imagined home office to be like.

INTERVIEWER: And during lockdown, you then had to work remotely – what was your experience like?

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say in the beginning I imagined it to be really great, I am going to be really structured, I will place my children at the table at 8am, same time they would start school. That did not work out, after three days the whole situation was very different, it just was not possible and my children did not play along. So, what I did was I would wake up at 5.30am, same as if I had to drive to the office, and would start working right away so that I had some quiet time to get work done before the children would wake up around 7.30 or 8am. As soon as they would wake up, it starts to get more complicated – one wants a hot cocoa, the other want something else and when they are finished, one wants an apple and the other some bread or scrambled eggs. And you're just fully occupied to satisfy the children's needs. When they were on their phones and tablets, I was relieved to have 1-1,5 hours of time to focus on work again. But at some point I had to tell them to stop doing what they were doing, and start working on their home work. With my older son, it was a bit easier but the younger one just did not want to do it and it was a big discussion every other day. There were a lot of disputes, I had to take the tablet away and scold him and set boundaries. For example that if he did not do his school work, he would not be allowed to play on the tablet for x amount of time. That was a recurring situation every 2-3 days for the whole 2 months, where it sometimes just escalated. The younger also felt like he had to do more than the older, so he got mad about that and it was a bit of a

competition between the two. And in the end, we did all the school work spread out over the whole day. We did one to two exercises then they could play, then they would eat, do some more work... and that would extend over the span from the morning to late afternoon. That really got on my nerves, because I was constantly interrupted, had to play some games with them. I was always relieved when my husband got home, and I could say okay, it's 5pm, I have earned a glass of wine because I cannot take it anymore.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you fit work in between all that?

INTERVIEWEE: The only time I could be fully focused on my work, was in the morning when they boys were still sleeping. Fortunately, it did work out that way, because with my work when a client wants an offer, it does not matter if I send it at 8am or at 4pm – it really does not matter. Anytime that something really urgent came up, I would try to do that quickly, but oftentimes there are some mails that do not require immediate attention and I would just delay those tasks to a later time, when there's a quiet phase again. When my husband was at home, I could also tell him to watch the boys if I had to do something that required my full attention, so that worked out more or less fine.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a separate working space at home?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I worked at the dining table in the living room.

INTERVIEWER: How was that for you?

INTERVIEWEE: It was not really comfortable, the table itself is not that big, and with all my documents for the office I took up a lot of space. But it was okay, as I knew it was only going to be temporary, so I could live with it. I just thought there are far worse situations, I was lucky to be able to still work and not lose my job due to the virus. I thought I had to make the best out of the situation.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say was the biggest challenge during that time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, the biggest challenge was to have both kids keep up with their school work and to not have them fall behind. That was important to me. I mean honestly, if I am not able to do some chores, that really does not matter, but the children had to be done with their things in time, so that school work would not pile up. So for me that was the most important thing, to have them do all their things they had to do in a day, because otherwise there was more work the next day, and that was challenging because the younger one often did not want to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you would say that all that time, what your children were doing was your first priority?

INTERVIEWEE: Exactly, because as for my work, those are tasks I do all the time and I will manage to do everything in time. I mean even when I'm in the office, it is not like I am permanently stressed and under pressure to finish things, there are less stressful periods with less orders and clients – that was the same when I was working at home, we just did not have that many clients so I knew I had everything under control. And when I have 2 hours of quiet time, I can also work more focused and more efficiently. But having my children meet all their school obligations was crucial for me, to not fail in that aspect.

INTERVIEWER: Usually, we have certain roles and attributes assigned to our work and family lives, when working remotely there is an overlap and with having your children there, you often have to transition a lot between the roles. Did you think that led to conflicts?

INTERVIEWEE: Conflicts, I'm not sure. Well I would say I had to scold them more often, telling them I needed just a couple more minutes. Or when a client called me, and they were super loud and I had to beg them to just be quiet, and of course I berated them after that telling them that I need to do those things for work, and that they should just stop talking when I was on the phone. Actually, yes that did lead to conflicts, when they cannot just be quiet for a couple of minutes. But I mean, they don't just do that when I'm working – they also constantly make noise in the background when my mother calls or I am talking to a friend, they always blabber along, I mean they are children. However, it did bother me more when working – because after all this is my job, and it is uncomfortable when I am talking to a client and the children start talking, it just is not very professional. But I guess that's life, it is what it is.

INTERVIEWER: I guess during this time, people were a bit more understanding of situations like that.

INTERVIEWEE: yes, also, I work in an industry where people are very laid back, so no one would take something like that badly.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned in the beginning, that you actually had your hours shortened, but did work more in the end, why is that?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I can't just turn the computer off when I know that work keeps coming in. That has a lot to do with my sense of duty, I should have just turned it off, but that's something I struggle with. Additionally, we are in a situation where we do not have as many clients, so I want to offer my best service to those we have, because at the end of the day, they are paying my salary. When they purchase our goods, our salaries are ensured.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say the whole situation got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: No, the more time passed, the worse it got. Well, I was just fed up with everything. It was the same thing every day, it was boring. You cannot do anything, and you cannot get out of it. I mean my younger son, at some point he did not even want to go outside, go for a walk, he just wanted to play on the computer. I had to basically drag him outside, so he would get some fresh air and would move a bit. You just go a bit stir-crazy, and that got worse the longer it went on.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that this period also had certain positive aspects?

INTERVIEWEE: The only positive thing I could see, would be that you can suddenly do all the things you put off before, like cleaning out our storage room, as the alternative activities were limited. Yeah, taking the time to do things like this, which you would never do otherwise, and to just get those things done.

INTERVIEWER: Is there something you think would help making the situation easier for you?

INTERVIEWEE: Actually, not really. I cannot think of anything, I guess it would just go exactly like before. It might even be harder if schools close now, as my older son is in a different school now and a higher grade, so it might get more complicated to help him out now, as his

school now uses different online platforms and tools, which take up more time and I think that would be complex. Therefore, I really hope that schools stay open, but who knows.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks, that concluded the interview – have a great day!

## **Interview I6**

INTERVIEWER: Please state your age, family situation and current occupation

INTERVIEWEE: My age is 43, I am married, we both work and my son is in third grade secondary school. As for my occupation, hard to explain, let's say I am a technical employee, but on a very abstract level, I am not that involved with technology anymore. Mostly system administration, internal trainings, things like that. Company internal information management, those are things I take care of.

INTERVIEWER: Before lockdown, could you do home office?

INTERVIEWEE: Well usually I work at the office, it has always been just the office, home office was not an option officially. Inofficially we could do it, no one ever asked and if you did not boast about it, it was not a problem.

INTERVIEWER: I understand, and did you work remotely from time to time?

INTERVIEWEE: Only in special occasions, when I had a worker scheduled to come by our house, or I had to take care of my son when he was sick, or sometimes when I needed peace and quiet to do work that required higher focus than usual. But overall only very rarely.

INTERVIEWER: What are the benefits in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE: Well the benefits are that it is more quiet, I don't have to commute, you can plan your time much more flexible at home. I can take a bit more time to go out to eat, take a longer break. I can do other things from home like starting the washing machine, doing laundry, all those things I can do in between working. I feel like efficiency and time management are much better when working remotely.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, and when lockdown you worked from home – how was that?

INTERVIEWEE: yes, in the beginning we switched to fully remote working from one day to the other, I have to say that I have always been equipped with all necessary technological and other tools to work remotely, so that was not an issue. I work mostly without any paperwork, where my laptop is, is my work station, so that was not a big transition and the infrastructure was given. What was new, was that I had the additional obligation to do the homeschooling with my son. That was challenging.

INTERVIEWER: What were the tasks you had to take up there?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, mostly getting him to actively do his things, so that he knows his tasks and gets the information he needs. The issue was that especially in the beginning, the communication channels of the school were extremely heterogeneous – there was not one tool they used. One class worked with Microsoft Teams, the other with moodle, other communicated through mail, others over the phone. One professor just printed a long list and gave that to the

students, saying they needed to complete everything until the end of lockdown. Basically it was very unclear and confusing. To plan out the time and manage deadlines, based on this chaotic flow of communication was quite challenging. At his age, you are not fully capable to structure your time that well to get everything done, so I had to support him in that sense. Also I had to check in always that he would hand in his work. He would finish his assignments, but would not hand them in, saying he would do it all at once, when everything is finished – and then he would forget. And I had to take care of lunch, that was additional, on top of doing the laundry and cleaning. I mean you have to clean more, when you're home more. Lunch, for me I would not have bothered to much, but with him around I tried to offer him something good and more nutritional. You can't only live off of McDonalds, sausages and pasta. That really kept me occupied, and it would have been easier without home schooling.

INTERVIEWER: Did you structure your day during that time to fit home schooling and work in?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, often me working and him doing his school work went on simultaneously, but in different rooms. Which was challenging as well, as I could not always see if he was working or doing something else on his laptop. I did have to get up and tell him what still had to be completed. It was always like "oh you're on YouTube" "Oh okay it's for school, but wait – there's a second tab open that's not for school". Keeping all that under control was challenging. Other than that, I did not really have a structure. My work was just a bit more spread out over the day, usually I would finish work at 5-6pm, but when working remotely I would finish around 7-8 pm, as I was doing non-work-related things during the day.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say you worked more during that time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes definitely, when you're already sitting at your laptop and doing some work, you may as well keep working a little longer. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: You said you worked in a separate room than your son, do you think that helped?

INTERVIEWEE: Well it was separated from where my son was working, but it was not a specific office – I worked on a little cabinet/table that I remodeled in my bedroom. Previously when I worked from home, I would do that from the dining table, but that was not sufficient anymore during the lockdown situation.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think the whole situation got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I think it did get better. In the end, I felt like he understood what he had to keep in mind and he could manage his time better.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any positive aspects you took from that lockdown time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I do see it positively. I would not have anything against doing it again in a second lockdown. It was a beautiful time that I would not want to miss.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe it will be like this again, who knows how long schools will be open. Is there something that you think would help make the whole situation a bit easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, what would help – which has gotten better over time, would be that the school focuses on one communication channel that they use. That was the biggest challenge

and could be resolved by using one outlet. Other than that, I don't feel like anything would have to be improved. I mean, of course there can be little improvements. But nothing was as bad, as I would feel the need to change it – also regarding my employer, it was all good. My son also said he would be happy about a second lockdown. I really enjoyed being able to structure my day fully autonomously, being able to sleep longer. My son also enjoyed doing online lessons, in English his teacher created specific videos that were on their school platform, Moodle, and he really liked it.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for your time, that is all I wanted to cover today.

### **Interview I7**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could start of by stating your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 39, will be 40 end of this month. I have three kids, my son is 5 years old, the twins are 2 years old. In January I started to work again, I work at a big FMCG company and I have worked there over 10 years now. But now, I switched to a new department for the first time. Previously, I was responsible for ice cream in the out-of-home area. Everything that is not retail, like gas stations, cinemas, restaurants, hardware stores all of that. Now I am in the foods team with all the food brands. It was a big jump for me, as the food section has a range that is unbelievable. I get an email regarding some product that I didn't even know existed, and you're like "Oh that's also a product I am responsible for". So now I'm in the Marketing team, not in brand building but in trade marketing, basically more on the sales side. I am responsible for displays. In the beginning of the year, we were three people in the team on the same level, two part-time, and one full-time employee. I work 50%. And since the beginning it was restructured a bit, and we got trade stories on top, which means preparing things for our key account managers so that they can go to our clients, when we have line extensions, new launches etc. There I got the regular shelf, basis products, soup packets, bouillon, plus liquid soups like canned one's. Basically a really wide range of products. And on top of that, trade media if we had some activation there. I think my last day at the office was the 10<sup>th</sup> of march, and since then I have been at the office once, at the beginning of September. The office is closed now, and it is going to take a long time – my boss said it is well possible that we'll be in home office for the next year. My employer is very strict with the measures, and was very quick to switch to home office. In the week before lockdown was even announced, we had a test home office day on Thursday to test all system to check if it all worked. And we went into home office on the 10<sup>th</sup>, two days before the press conference where the lockdown was announced.

INTERVIEWER: Oh wow, so you did not even go back into the office in august where the measures were not that extreme anymore?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, from mid-June on, we could go back to the office a few days, but under the premise that we had to do an online training, sign a declaration, wear a mask the whole day – and not a fabric one, but the official masks, having our temperature taken in the morning. We also have a one-way system in our office, the pathways are clearly marked, we have touch pens to press the button on the coffee machine. It is very strict, we have to keep two meters distance. We are in a larger office, with cubicles consisting of four desks, in order to comply with the safety measures you could only sit diagonally, as the distance would not be sufficient next to

each other. We were only allowed to have a max occupation of 35% in the whole office, and we also had to wear the mask at our table. Oh and we had to sign up in an excel and get the permission to go to the office. Per floor, only a limited number of people were allowed. So for a long time I just thought that it was not worth it for me, you had to keep a log who you were in contact with in the office. The initial lockdown phase was a catastrophe. I have three young children at home, two were not even two years at that time. And at work, the food products were in high demand at that time, so we just had a lot to do. And my husband works in consulting in the hospital segment, had a lot to do as well as he was working on a huge project that he had to finish. So he sometimes worked 60-70 hour a week, and working until 3am at night. So for 90-95% of my time working, I had to take care of three little children as well. I mean my employer was very flexible in terms of when we do our work and how we work, but instead of working my specific hours, I had my laptop on for the whole day, five days a week. Sometimes I worked in the evenings, sometimes I worked on the weekends, to somehow keep up with everything. Still, some things were neglected. I really have to say, that usually we have a great support system that helps out with the children. My mother in law is retired, but is not that old – I mean she's over 60, but like she's not as old as my mother for example, and she really helps out a lot, running errands and the like. My older one also sleeps over at her place a lot, also at my parents, they live a bit further away. But all of that just disappeared, and was not possible anymore. My father in law is high risk, so we met up once at Prater with my mother in law to go for a walk, she was wearing a mask all the time – but she just had to see the children. And I after the lockdown, in the last week of April I called the kindergarten, who did take good care of us during lockdown, they often sent over games or information, and I thanked them and the head of the kindergarten got the notion that I was not doing so well and offered to support us, even if it's just for a couple hours. So at the end of April, they were at the kindergarten for three hours – I could not go home as it wasn't enough time, but I just went for a walk, listened to some podcasts and went shopping. I have two Covid dresses now. The next week I also took vacation days, I did not take the special care leave as I had so much work to do that it was just not possible. In the end, we did it like this – I usually work three days, Monday Tuesday and Thursday, and I took Monday and Tuesday off, and spread the hours of Thursday out on the whole week, so I could get my work done while also somehow being able to unwind a bit. I did not have an off day anymore, I had my laptop on every single day.

INTERVIEWER: That is exactly also what I am looking into, cause I feel like some are more inclined to keep the laptop on and do work.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes exactly, because your work has to be done anyways. And my children have really started to watch TV during the lockdown period. Even the younger ones, the older did watch before when the younger ones were asleep. But my daughter literally would sit in front of the TV for two minutes, and would come over to me again. She was super attached, and sometimes I had a call, I was on mute with two screaming children on my lap. And in the worst case, another screaming child on the floor. It was really tough. Also, it took me until August to get better. It really took a long time, and I also got anxious thinking about another lockdown. Currently it is a bit better, meaning that my husband quit his job and is currently on job search. End of June he was done with his work, he quit in February but worked a lot during that time of lockdown. We decided that he would stay home in summer, as he had never been on paternal leave, so that was basically his time to catch a breath, and he only started looking for a new job after summer. He already had great interviews, as management consulting is highly demanded currently, despite Covid – also due to corona. So currently I have his support,

which is good. Also at work some things changed, my colleague who worked full-time switched departments – we currently have a hiring stop, so only people from inside the company can apply for the position, and that position seems to only be a sidestep for everyone as it has been degraded to assistant. Therefore, it is not that desirable for many. Meaning, we are missing a full-time employee, whose work has been divided between me and my colleague, plus an intern who is really amazing, but you cannot give her everything, but we do hope she will get the job, she just cannot be hired currently. Additionally, we have the issue that our boss broke her arm really hard in June, and went on educational leave in October. Her successor started in September, and would have had the handover with the previous boss at the end of September when she's back from sick leave. But exactly on that Monday when that would have started, the new boss went on sick leave. So basically we're missing two full-time employees, which is a lot for such a small team with so much work to do, and that is tough currently.

INTERVIEWER: I understand, also you said you started in January, so basically in the beginning you were still in an adjustment period as well.

INTERVIEWEE: Exactly, I had the advantage that I already knew many systems and processes as I have worked there a long time, and I knew a part of the people working there – but I mean when you're gone for two years, a lot changes, as I also had a longer maternal leave due to having twins. But everything else was new for me, I never had anything to do with displays. The good thing was that my predecessor switched to a different department within the company, so I could always contact her if I had any questions. But it still is much more, and now I had to take over snacking products as well, meaning that is on top as we are short staffed. So for the launch next year, instead of doing four trade stories, I had to do eight. Currently, it is just a lot. I am accumulating lots of overtime currently.

INTERVIEWER: How was the overtime situation during lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: I can't say if I worked more, as I stipulated with my boss that I will write the hours I would normally work. As I would work 10 minutes here, half an hour there and then three hours, so I couldn't really say how many hours it was. Just from my feeling, it felt like a lot more. But if it was more or less in terms of hours, I really don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able to separate and structure your work day, around your children being occupied or how did that look?

INTERVIEWEE: Well someone told me once that whenever my laptop is switched on, that's working time. And I could never unwind. As soon as I heard a ping, I would go to my laptop to check my mails, if it was 8pm or 10am. I think that I worked at least my normal hours, probably even more, I don't know. But I can say that work was always on my mind.

INTERVIEWER: When doing all that simultaneously, it is hard as you try to meet everyone's needs – work and family. And I think that is particularly hard being a mother while trying to work, it's a constant compromise.

INTERVIEWEE: Absolutely, I was really torn during that time, and very irritable with my children, as they would always start to scream exactly at the time I was in a call or when I had to finish something urgently. I did not feel comfortable as a mother at that time, as I felt like even the time I normally have to fully focus on my children, they did not have my undivided attention. Cause I always had on my mind that I still had to do all those other things, the

apartment looked like whatever. We normally have a cleaning aid that comes every other week, that wasn't possible as well – all the support you normally have just wasn't accessible anymore. Kindergarten, grandparents, the cleaning aid, my husband also went shopping for his parents as he did not want them to go outside. Also in terms of cooking, and that is something that stuck with me, we ordered food often, just because we did not have the time to prepare a meal. And currently, I have zero desire to cook, I cannot think of anything to cook, I do not want to cook, I do not want to waste time on it. And my children are at an age where they love everything made of white flour – pasta, pizza, gnocchi and all those things that do not take a long time. So I really feel like I do not have the aspiration to cook a fresh meal, of course I try to put vegetables on the table, but it is on an absolute minimum on the table.

INTERVIEWER: Previous to the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work remotely?

INTERVIEWEE: Well we were allowed to work remotely occasionally. And I think it will stay on a very frequent level for the future. I also think that employers realized that it can be an advantage for them, everyday we get coupons for lunch valued at 4.40€, so I think even that is a big cost-saving aspect for them. Now, only 13 persons are allowed in the whole building, also pre-defined persons that are allowed to go there, and if you want to pick something up, you will have to get the permission – it is super strict. I think that many companies also see it as a way of saving costs.

INTERVIEWER: What are the benefits you associate with remote working?

INTERVIEWEE: Well it is more quiet, you do not get disturbed by colleagues and you can do laundry and loading the dish washer in between. You can sit down however you want, stand up occasionally. You do not feel like you're being watched. On the other hand, it is also easier to be distracted, as you think of so many things you could do as well. That is the disadvantage. I have never been working remotely for such a long period, I guess that's the case with most people, my husband has always only been a day at the office a week, so he knew that situation and is used to working with a lot of discipline. When it is a new situation, it takes time to get used to it. I only realized the benefits after lockdown, when the children were away – I do not have to commute, I did not put on make up, which I used to do all the time when going into the office. So you don't have to think about that and clothes, which saves time. And you can sleep a bit longer, we could wake up a bit later whenever the children wanted to. Everything was a bit slower, the hectic was not a factor anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like it got better over time during lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, at one point I thought to myself that I can only do my best, and that has to be enough. And that way I took the pressure off myself, telling myself I have three little children, people at work know this, and are understanding. The boss of my boss also has children, my colleague also has two children – so there is a base understanding. Yeah, but I would say that the longer it went on, the harder it got. As soon as an end was in sight, it got better, I did put my children back into kindergarten as soon as they opened. If it would have gone on much longer, I am not sure what would have happened, maybe I would've steered towards a burnout. For me, the end of lockdown did not come a day too early. The time where it was uncertain how long it would go on was really tough.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there is something that might help make the situation more manageable?

INTERVIEWEE: Well what I can already see improved in this lockdown light version, is that the risk of children infecting the grandparents is seen as very low. Because this has been a big thing during the first lockdown, where you absolutely had to keep children away from older people, which they do not say anymore, as children apparently do not spread it that much. And that is a relief, as I now know I can use that support, the twins recently slept over at my in-laws, and that is a huge help. Other than that, I don't know. For me, depending on how long my husband's job search will go on, I may have his support, but currently it looks as he'll find a job soon. Then it will be similar, as he will be in the beginning phase of the job where we will want to prove himself. I really hope kindergarten will stay open. I think I would soon request the three weeks of special leave. I did not do that before, as I did not want my colleagues to be burdened with more work because of me. But I think I could not do it again. The positive thing is, that my children, at least partly are extremely addicted to the TV – meaning I could keep them occupied for longer times.

INTERVIEWER: Well, yes but then you'll probably feel guilty for giving them too much screen time.

INTERVIEWEE: Absolutely true, and that was 100% due to corona, we sometimes had the TV running for a large part of the day.

INTERVIEWER: Well if it keeps them occupied...

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and alternatives were lacking – the playgrounds were closed, you could not go outside for longer times, we did go for walks and thankfully we live close to Prater, sometimes we went to Donauinsel, but still it is a shitty situation.

INTERVIEWER: Yes I think it was a big transition for a lot of people, with lots of limits, which also is the aspect I am interested in – how people navigate through those tensions and what the biggest challenges were trying to be both the ideal parent and worker.

INTERVIEWEE: Also, I think that is exactly the point. That's something that is hard, even under normal circumstances. When you have children and you work, you feel extremely divided. When you do your job well, you feel like a bad mother – when you are a great mother, you feel like you are a horrible employee. I really felt that, home office has you inclined to work more, but I am trying to strictly separate it from now on, to let weekends be weekends. I used to always leave my laptop at the office over the weekend, because I only get paid for a certain amount of hours, why should I work more. I know that currently I am doing a lot of overtime, I have an all-in contract which basically means if I do not get anything out of it. And still, you feel like you're not present when certain meetings take place, and you are missing out on some information – as a part-time employee, it sounds nice, but it is not that great. In between having my children, I basically had my old job back, but here and there a few added responsibilities and a few less, but working 25 hours. It means having to work much more efficiently, you do not take breaks, you do not chat with a colleague for an hour in the kitchen – all of this does not work. So during that time, I did the work of a full time position in 25 hours. And you only get paid for the 25 hours. You're permanently divided, on the one hand you want to further your career, but then again who will promote someone who works part-time – my employer certainly not – and on the other hand I have extremely high expectations towards me being a mother. On top of that, I should have some time for myself as well – and all of that, that's really just a balancing act that is even harder in the current situation. Well as where do

you take away the time, you take the time you would otherwise have for yourself, because it is the easiest.

## **Interview 18**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, it would be great if you could state your age, family situation and describe your occupation in a couple sentences.

INTERVIEWEE: I just turned 37 yesterday, I live in a 50 square meter apartment. I have a 2,5 year-old daughter and live with my partner. I work in congress management, meaning I organize congresses for radiologists. This field has been hit very hard when lockdown began, meaning we are all on shortened hours, which has now been prolonged until March. In the beginning of lockdown, it was very stressful as a big congress should have taken place exactly then, meaning we had a lot of work to move everything online.

INTERVIEWER: Previous to the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work remotely?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we theoretically had the option to do home office – not permanently of course, but for special occasions when you had a doctor’s appointment scheduled, or something else came up, we did have the opportunity.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use that opportunity? What were the benefits in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I did use it. Well the benefits before lockdown? For example when I’m at home, I can quickly go to the doctors around the corner, or there is some coming by to fix something, the kindergarten is only a 5 minute walk away. I save the time of going to the office. You can also catch up on some work you couldn’t finish before. We did have the opportunity before, we also usually travel a bit, me not so much now that I’m a mother, but the younger girls still do.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so during lockdown the situation was a bit different, how was your experience with home office then?

INTERVIEWEE: Well during lockdown, in the beginning it was a big transition – my apartment is very small, so I did not really have the opportunity to set up a real working station. My dining table in reality is just a foldable coffee table. So I just set up half a table in a corner, very spontaneous without an office chair – actually even without a back. It was very small and crowded. The beginning of lockdown was okay, as children are very happy to be able to watch TV. It was not possible any other way, when you have work to do, you do not have an alternative option. If your child is doing crafts, you have to be present all the time, I tried. Sadly, often it was just a lot of TV and screen time. I also tried to give my kid books or other things, but screen time was the most effective. When summer came, I did not think it was that bad, as I did not have too much to do. I was only employed for a 10% position, meaning that officially I only had to work 45 minutes a day, as previously I was working a 30-hour-week. I mean that was officially, obviously, you worked more – but the chamber of labor does not need to know that. Sometimes I just wanted to do it that way myself, because otherwise too much work would pile up, and in 45 minutes you realistically can’t even go through all e-mails. In summer, I could also enjoy working 1,5-2 hours, but currently it is getting harder. Because even though kindergartens are open, as soon as the child has a runny nose or a cold, it has to stay home. And

my child is just so over watching TV, she just does not want to do it anymore, at least not when I would need some quiet time to work. I really am exhausted currently, we had a congress last weekend which we organized as an in-person event, that had to be reorganized as an online event in a matter of days with the new lockdown in place. So it was a very stressful time for the past two weeks, in addition the terror situation in Vienna – I really have to say it was extremely exhausting and a lot for me to take.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say is the most challenging thing of that whole situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, you do not want to be a bad mother for your child, but you're automatically more irritable and quicker to scold them – I am usually a very patient person, but during that situation it was hard. I mean you try to keep the children occupied. I really felt guilty towards my child, cause I couldn't give her the attention I wanted. Either you just leave work to the side for a minute, which has not been possible during the past 4 weeks for me, but usually I tried to just do the most urgent tasks to then take time to fully focus on my daughter, and then continue working in the evening when she was asleep. And challenging is as well, that you are just exhausted physically – you do not really get any physical exercise, I put on a lot of weight, I have insane back pains, as I do not have an office chair.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about your daughter getting so much screen time?

INTERVIEWEE: I just felt like there was not any other solution. It was dependent on the situation, sometimes I just really had to finish something urgently – if I had only a few tasks to do at work, I would absolutely take the time to look after my daughter, but at some points that just was not possible and I could not do anything about it. When it started to get warmer, we went outside a lot – I spent a ton of time outside at a park, playgrounds were still closed but at least we could get some fresh air.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that sometimes you would work longer, would you say that in total you worked more?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes a lot more. You're also connected to your work colleagues through Whatsapp, so you basically do not have a cut off point, like you would when you leave the office. I could get notifications 24/7, my work calls were redirected to my phone – so I was accessible much more. At some point I stopped picking up the phone, as it just was not bearable anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a work phone or was that on your private phone?

INTERVIEWEE: My private phone. I understand that when someone thinks of something that they'll text it right away to not forget about it, but when I receive the notification, even if it is not something I have to do urgently, it is still in the back of your mind. The computer, I also used it a bit for myself privately, and you automatically check e-mails.

INTERVIEWER: You worked from your living room, do you think it would have been easier if you had a separate office?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think so, as my daughter is young, I think if I were in a different room, she would have wanted to be next to me anyways. So I think it was actually easier to be in immediate proximity to her. Of course there were situations, when I was in a call and she would start talking, but everyone was very understanding and often in the same situation. When

someone is home to support you and to look after your child while you work, then it would be great to have a separate room – but like that, I don't think it would have made it easier. But if lockdown measures are being tightened again, I think it is going to be really tough for me – I honestly do not know what might happen, maybe I'll be close to a burnout.

INTERVIEWER: Is there something that would make the whole situation easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Honestly, I do not really know a solution. I do not have my parents close as they live in another country, so in that sense not much could change. I am also not that afraid of the virus, as I would stop sending my child to kindergarten – I would be more afraid of another full lockdown as of the virus itself. I also prepared for that case, I went to Müller (note: drugstore in Austria that also sells games, stationary, craft materials,...) and got a lot of arts supplies and games that I hid all, so when lockdown is being enforced I am ready for Christmas. Well lockdown in such a small space, with only a tiny balcony is horrible, especially with a child. And she does somehow understand what a virus is, and that it is dangerous – but she is too young to understand why she cannot go outside.

INTERVIEWER: Was your day structured overall, were you able to dedicate certain time blocks to work, others to your child?

INTERVIEWEE: When she was at home? Not at all, you cannot really structure it with a young child. You stay in your pajamas until lunch time, the routine is completely missing. And I mean I don't know, if I had a bigger apartment, if the grandparents were in close proximity, maybe it would have been easier. But overall, many things get neglected, like doing chores.

INTERVIEWER: And probably taking care of yourself.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, there's absolutely zero time left to take care of yourself. But I also have to say I have always been 100% a mother, I did not go to the gym or take evenings off to go out with my friends.

INTERVIEWER: To conclude, is there anything you would say was positive?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, the time that I had with my daughter. It was summer, it was the perfect time, work was not too stressful so I could really enjoy the time with her. We went outside a lot, cause it was so nice to get out after basically being locked in. I did enjoy that a lot.

INTERVIEWER: That actually concludes the interview, thank you so much!

## **Interview I9**

INTERVIEWER: Before getting into the question, can you please state your age, family situation and your occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 41 years old, my youngest is 9 years old and my older daughter is 17 – so basically in her last year of high school. The older is very independent, the younger one not so much, they are very different. And I do quite a lot of things in a mid-sized company, I do purchasing, logistics sometimes project management and I am basically the next person below our CEO.

INTERVIEWER: Do you work full time?

INTERVIEWEE: I work full-time, we are one of the very few companies that did not have to resort to shortened hours – not a single one of our employees, we even increased staff. It has to be said though, that we operate in the renewable energy field, meaning we were not really affected.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use to work remotely pre-lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: Actually, I do all of my work from home – it is not 100%, as my job also involves going to presentations, trade shows etc. – but my administrative tasks are fully done in home office. So of course I have to go to meetings out of home, but everything I can do, I do from home – my office is everywhere.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say are the benefits of home office?

INTERVIEWEE: For me or for the company?

INTERVIEWER: For you personally.

INTERVIEWEE: For me, well I am definitely flexible with regards to children, but also to my work. I am an early bird, my husband is too – meaning I start working at 5am. At that time, no one disturbs me. During normal working hours, my phone rings about 170 times, so working focused is quite hard. So the times before everyone starts working and after are the ones I can be very efficient, same goes for the weekend. Also, I am able to take my kids to doctor's appointments during the week and can do things like that. During lockdown, well my daughter is very independent, she's spoilt but she's independent. But the younger absolutely not. And of course it hinders and somewhat limits my work, as I am quite busy, but it is possible. For me, home office is the best possible solution.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that home office pre-lockdown differed from home office during lockdown – please explain.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, but I was lucky as I had all liberties. As I work in the energy industry, I could still go out to meetings if necessary, I was not locked in at home. The only thing that really bothered me was when my son was at home and needed my attention. My son, who grew up with me working from home the past 7 years, still does not understand that when I am on the phone, I am on the phone. My children know the advantages of me working from home, the older one appreciates it more than the younger, but overall they do. I mean there are lots of calls, where I don't care if they chat with me – but there are some when they just should not.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have additional obligations during the lockdown phase, like homeschooling?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes absolutely, as I said the older one is independent and I did not really have to help her much, sometimes I would go over and have a look at her work, but it was usually fine. My son though, is the complete opposite, he needs constant support. Thankfully, the workload was limited and manageable, but I am a bit afraid if another stricter lockdown is being imposed, that with him being in a higher grade now, it is going to be a bit more difficult for me. That's what I am a bit scared of, but I mean what can I do, I could hire a nanny, but I won't do that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work simultaneously to your son doing his school work, or how did you structure your work throughout the day?

INTERVIEWEE: It depends, I had my laptop on next to him. Normally, when the children are awake and home I work in the kitchen. When he is working, sometimes I sit next to him, sometimes I cook, sometimes I do work simultaneously – it depended on to what extent he needed my support. I mean he is smart, he just sometimes needs a bit more support as it was a new situation for him as well and there are so many things he would prefer to do, like watching TV, playing games, going outside and all that. In the beginning of the lockdown, it was harder as we were not able to meet friends and do a lot of things, and I think that has gotten better as it is not so strict anymore, and my son can meet his closest friends. So I think in the beginning it was a bit more challenging, as he needed more attention due to all this.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that you were inclined to work more during lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: I can't really say that, as I work from home all the time, but I think that generally I work more when I work from home, as I would from an office. My work blurs into my private life.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely, I think that is hard for many currently, who are not used to having their work and family lives so close together, that there may occur overlaps.

INTERVIEWEE: I think that definitely is an issue, at an office when you leave your day is over, when you are at home it is much harder to draw that line. And I would say that my husband definitely has an issue with this, but for me personally the advantages outweigh the negative aspects. I have been doing this for 7 years, and I would not want to trade places with anyone. If you're disciplined, you can do it. My sister is in the same company, for her it's easier to draw the line, but that may be because she has a very clear list of responsibilities, which I do not. With my job and my responsibilities, I think I cannot do that, if I would do something else, maybe – but I just have the feeling that I need to be accessible for a certain amount of time. And it does not bother me that much, I am awake from 5am to at least 10pm, maybe I won't pick up the phone at 10, but at 9pm I will. I feel like when someone calls me, they have a reason to do so at that time. Of course I pick up.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a structure for your day or some kind of system for your work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I have to say I have been doing this for so long. I regularly think to myself that I will create a structure for myself, as my work is so diverse. Like on Mondays I do this, on Tuesday I do that – but I have to be honest, I cannot do that. Maybe because I do not need it. I do a lot of things on the way, like in my car, I can schedule meetings etc., I also have a good memory. I would say I can use a lot of in between time very efficiently. I do not have a system, but I just use my time very efficiently.

INTERVIEWER: When your children are awake and you work in the kitchen, do you not feel bothered and disturbed?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I will do tasks that do not need super high focus, my work does not involve that many tasks that require extreme focus, most things I can do quite easily. Usually certain calls with my boss or a client really require the silence, then I cannot deal with my husband fighting with my son or when they chat loudly. In those situations, I take my laptop and lock myself in the basement, we have a fire door, so I would not even hear anything if it was the end of the world. But I can only do that when either my daughter looks after my son,

or my sister is over or my husband is home. If not, I have to be a bit more strict to him telling him I just have to have a couple of minutes of silence. And if something is very important, he should write it down for me.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say were the positive aspects from this period?

INTERVIEWEE: To be honest, I think I see the whole situation way too negatively as that I could think of something positive. I know you should say something like more time with the family, but I cannot really say that as me and my husband are both in system-relevant jobs, meaning we just had to work. My parents live too far away, but we still saw each other occasionally. The only positive thing my daughter saw, she loves the situation – having assignments and just handing them in at certain times, she'd like to have that all the time. And that for me is a positive thing, I am less stressed in the morning to get them to school. I guess it relieves me of that stress in the morning to get them both to school in time. But that's it. I am too much of a social person, as I could see the good things. What I see is the impact on economy, the restaurant industry, culture, ... Oh – I do know a positive aspect. Not for me, but for everyone else who may not have been able to work remotely previously. I hope it is a pivot point for many companies, to realize that home office works, that people do not just do their work when they are present at the office. It is also a huge cost-saving factor. During my seven years, I had 4 days when I took sick leave - and one of them I was actually at the hospital. If I feel a little sick, I will still work, I don't have to take sick leave. As I am at home and can turn of my laptop anytime if it gets too bad, and that's not an issue I can still do my work the next day. And I really hope people can see that now, just thinking how much cost-saving potential this has.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for taking the time.

## **Interview I10**

INTERVIEWER: Please start of by stating your age, current family situation and describe your work in a couple of sentences.

INTERVIEWEE: Sure, I am 48 years old. I live with my partner, the father of my children – we're not married but we live together. We have two children, our son is 14 years old and our daughter is 15 years old, so they're 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades at school. My partner and I both work, I am self-employed and I am a consultant and my background is work psychology.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, how was it pre-lockdown – what was your normal working situation, did you work from home occasionally?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, my mother would come to our house some afternoons to take care of certain things, so my partner and I did not have to do everything alone. I took over two days, my partner one day and my mother two days. That's for when either our children need some attention, or they need someone to drive them somewhere. I used to be away quite often, I would go in the morning and come back in the evening. Sometimes if I had to do certain things like checking e-mails I would do that from home or at the office.

INTERVIEWER: Did you prefer working from home or the office in those situations?

INTERVIEWEE: I prefer the office, but I would work from home occasionally when the children were asleep at night, or early morning before leaving. But usually I would work quite

a lot on the go, in the train, at the client's office, on my way home. Firstly, it was a question of space – I don't really have the space at home to work. And I felt like I would be a disturbance to the things going on at home, like my mother taking care of my children, just so we don't bother each other, they do their thing and I do mine.

INTERVIEWER: And when lockdown started, how did that situation change for you?

INTERVIEWEE: When lockdown started, I switched to home office immediately. I was really scared of getting Covid-19, so I did not leave my apartment for weeks – except for a quick walk very early in the mornings. Other than that, I was at home. The children were home as well, my partner as well. So we really had to arrange ourselves with that situation. We did not have the desk space, my workspace is very small and literally in my literature shelf in a small nook. At first I started working at the dining table, but it quickly became apparent that that was not going to work, as constantly someone will walk in and want something. And my children did need a lot of attention, I mean they were scared as well, and frustrated that they could not go to school anymore. Also, I thought that my children were going to be able to share a computer, that did not work as well. So my partner fortunately had two computers at his office that he could bring home – so at first it was a phase to just get everyone a device, and a work space. My partner decided to work at his office, as no other employees were there so he would not risk being exposed to the virus, and it would have been very hard for him to create the right working environment at our home. For me it was a bit easier so I was at home, that way I could also support my children with their home schooling tasks, and they did need quite a lot of my help there. Some teachers really over did it with the teaching material, they were overwhelmed especially regarding their computer skills – how do I generate a PDF, how do I upload it, how do I download something. In my little nook, that has never been intended as a working space, I worked from there. I think the spatial division really helped. However, I was door-to-door with my daughter, as the nook is adjacent to her room, so I sometimes had to open the door as I would just not get oxygen otherwise – so we had to arrange ourselves there as well. The children were insanely cooperative, I did not imagine it like that before. But they were shocked – they saw how much me and my partner who are both self-employed are fighting with those uncertain circumstances. Over night, I lost practically 80% of my projects. And that was a very tough situation for me. And I think it was a huge disadvantage, that the children were so close and could witness all of that. They could overhear every conversation with my partner, every call – they witnessed everything, all of our worries and needs, all of the things you don't want them to know of. And in a normal situation they wouldn't. They would be in school. That was tough, I realized that every time my children now want to buy something, they ask me if they are allowed and if they can spend the money. They never did that before. And to me this is very shocking and sad, as I used to guard them from those worries, and I really feel that this had an effect on them. Does my mom still earn money, does dad still earn money, or will we suddenly not be able to pay rent. What I do now, is that whenever I get a new project, I will openly tell that to my children, to give them the security that I do work, that the situation has become better and I do earn money. Just so they do not need to worry. I do think it is a terrible thing– the worlds of adults and children to blur together like that. I do not want this for my children yet. They're in puberty a very sensitive phase, they should not have to worry about their parents financial situation.

INTERVIEWER: So would you say that not being able to strictly keep work and family life separate, was one of the biggest challenges?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes absolutely. Also, finding that mutual understanding of everyone's situation. And rearranging ourselves as a family, who does what – how do we divide chores when everyone's at home. My partner left in the morning to go to the office, and for him it was crystal clear that I do all house work. He took it for granted. But honestly, just because I work from home it is not obvious that I do all things like laundry and loading the dish-washer – I have to work as well. I felt like I had to justify me doing work, especially when I did not actively work on a project but used the time to prepare myself and think of ways to improve my offer to earn money in the future.

INTERVIEWER: What were the additional obligations that you were facing during the time of lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, one thing that was very apparent was that one caregiver was out of action. My mother used to be an important helper. She would cook, sometimes prepare meals for several days, she would do the laundry and grocery shopping – all those things suddenly were not done anymore. At the beginning of lockdown I told my children that we need some sort of structure, we wake up and eat breakfast at 7.30 am. Then everyone does their work. I did not want everyone to sleep in until lunch, and then realize that there is still a lot of things to do. In terms of cooking, I wanted to divide it up – I will prepare lunch, and they take care of dinner – that worked really well. They were extremely helpful, cooperative, sometimes when I was on the phone at 7.30pm they would knock lightly on the door, stick their heads in and say “mom, dinner is ready, can you come?”. It was such a relief, and it also was an activity for us – the cooking as well as the eating together as a family. The children would talk a lot about school, what was happening, what was not working. We do usually eat breakfast together, even before lockdown and we would try to have at least one adult present for dinner – but that has become even more important during lockdown. Just that time together and the exchange. I definitely did a lot more house work during lockdown, and also more chores piled up. When more people are at home, you need to buy more groceries, you need to cook constantly. I felt like I needed to load the dish-washer 3 times a day. The children also had to do certain physical activities for school. They would do yoga together or some sort of strength training.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like over time it got easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Even at the time when schools opened again, my children did not have school on the same days, so there was someone home all the time. The first day when both children were at school the same day – I normally don't drink alcohol, but I have some egg liquor in my fridge, I really thought about drinking a shot of that liquor in the morning – I did not do it, but still. It was such a huge relief when both were at school, I felt like some of the responsibility had been lifted of. I just felt so responsible for me and my company, also my children that the family works – that there's food on the table, that no one will get too frustrated, that the children keep up with their school work. I see myself as a very emancipated person, but in this situation you can't hide from that stone-age role picture. The woman cooks, the man leaves the house – you are thrown back into that situation. And I think many families were facing that situation, where men would isolate themselves from some responsibilities and say well home schooling is none of my business. And I am also very active in my children's school as a parent representative, so that was some additional work as well – telling the school that there is too much to do for the children. On the other hand, trying to come up with ways to move further with my company. It was just a massive amount of things going on at the same time and a lot

of responsibilities. So I was very happy when my children were back at school, so part of that responsibility was lifted of. That responsibility for their academical performance – of course it is technically my childrens responsibility to do their school work and keep up, but I felt like I could give that responsibility back to the teachers. I do want to say though, that I know I am in a privileged role. I can help my children with their school work – we were able to provide them with computers, I know of children who only had their smartphones. We have an apartment of a certain size, we really missed having outdoor space like a terrace or a balcony, but we were able to shut the door when we needed some quiet time. So many people were facing much bigger issues, financial worries,... I was relieved that my children were not that young anymore. I am pretty sure that I would not have been able to continue my work and secure my financial future in the same way if I had children in primary school or kindergarten. I have no idea how I would do that.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned you missed a balcony and a terrace – are there any thing you think may have helped making the situation a bit easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes sure, a different living situation. A house with a garden is something completely different than an apartment in the city. I realized that when I could go out again in summer, and I talked to some people about their experience during lockdown and they would tell me all the things they did in their gardens. I felt extremely confined. The only time I got some fresh air was in the early morning on my walk. I love living in the city, but in this situation it was horrible. You could not use any of the amenities a city had to offer – like everything cultural. Before the lockdown I never really thought about our living situation or that there was anything wrong with it – now I do think about how it might be nice to have a house somewhere a bit outside the city, with outdoor space. It just let me to rethink that situation, that I did not do before.

INTERVIEWER: To finish off, what were the positive aspects of that lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: There were many positive aspects. What I did not mention, we transitioned quite well and quickly into the situation, and I think that is partly due to us spending 7 months in south America 6 years ago. During that time, we did home school our children, and I think that helped as they were a bit more used to working independently. It was also really nice to get more insight into what my children do. I would also say I felt a lot of solidarity with regards to certain colleagues and the working situation. I also think even though it was tough, for the first time my children got a sense of what I do as a consultant, as it is a job some people cannot really picture what it means. It was great to spend so much time together, the exchange and just the family time we spent together that we would not have had otherwise. But it was always accompanied by that uncertainty of not knowing what's next.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for taking the time!

## **Interview I11**

INTERVIEWER: Please start off by stating your age, your family situation and describe your work in a couple of sentences.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 40 years old, I have two children 4 and 6, one in kindergarten and one at primary school. I am a commercial director at Siemens, and I do a lot of project management.

INTERVIEWER: Before lockdown, what was your normal working situation? Did you have the opportunity for home office?

INTERVIEWEE: I used work from the office all the time. I did have the option of home office, but due to the tasks I have to do, I feel like productivity is higher at the office. I have to look at a lot of contracts, have to communicate a lot with our sales employees and have meetings to find solutions to certain problems, and I feel like that works best face-to-face. It's a big advantage than to do something like that over teams, also I have a lot of documents at the office that help me and that I need, I could not take all that home.

INTERVIEWER: How did that situation change when lockdown started?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I was one of the first persons, I am a safety representative at the company, who sent all my employees and apprentices to work from home a couple of days before lockdown, as I felt like the situation was going to get worse. So I worked from home, also as kindergarten and school closed the children were home as well. It was a transition for the family, where is the working space, the kids need room to play as well – we have a big apartment but still. For me the only possibility was to work from the bedroom, and that was really uncomfortable. When you wake up and immediately see the desk, it just is not nice. And even though we are a large technology corporation, there were some issues in the beginning phase especially with connections as we have to use programs like SAP and management tools that need a strong connection to perform.

INTERVIEWER: So you worked from the bedroom, was that so you will not be disturbed?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it was quiet there, but you still sometimes feel like someone is there and you do hear certain noises from outside, you are a bit distracted occasionally, but not too bad. I just felt a bit restricted working from the bedroom. When lockdown was lifted and the children went back to school, I could work at the dining table and that was much better. The biggest issue though was the connection, as you want to do the work and you want to perform your tasks, but you cannot do it because the connection is too weak and it just takes so much longer. And at the office productivity was just so much higher, you can concentrate better, you see everyone, it is more social – you are more excited to work & everything works much better.

INTERVIEWER: As you said, some tasks took longer when working from home, but your work has to be done anyways – would you say you were inclined to work longer hours?

INTERVIEWEE: Uh – well I think that heavily depends on your mindset. I have signed a contract, stating how many hours I work, of course I can work overtime. But my thoughts are that my days are sometimes more busy, other times less busy – so I feel like I can use the hours I have more flexible, if I work more one day, I can compensate that by working less when business is slow, at the end it is balanced. If I have more work, I do that, in the end it will be balanced out.

INTERVIEWER: And you mentioned the children being home during lockdown, how did that work out?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I mean I worked, and my wife took care of the children.

INTERVIEWER: So your wife had the time to look after the children?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes she's a teacher, it worked out really well. For her, it was a bit more stressful.

INTERVIEWER: Well I got the feeling that you are not a big fan of home office, did you see any positive aspects of it?

INTERVIEWEE: I do not like home office, I am really against it. I just enjoy being social, seeing everyone at work. I like to communicate. I just don't want companies to go into the direction of mandatory home office – at least keep it optional. The personal touch is missing in home office, that you have a coffee with a colleague, that you have lunch together, that you forge friendships, find solutions together.

INTERVIEWER: Going back to your children, how would you say did they feel in that situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I think there were a lot of absurd situations for children – I mean the playgrounds were closed. We have a big garden, with a trampoline – then you see the neighbor's kid at the fence watching, but they cannot come in and join. I think it will have a big effect on the children, one we have no idea of – but I am sure it will affect them growing up.

INTERVIEWER: Okay thank you so much.

## **Interview I12**

INTERVIEWER: Thanks for taking the time, please start off by stating your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay sure. I am 32 years old, I got my first child at 21 years old, 1.5 years later I got my second child. So currently one is in in 4<sup>th</sup> grade primary school and the other in the second grade of secondary school. Lockdown she was in the first grade, and the transition from primary school to secondary school was hard in itself, and then came the lockdown. I mean she never had to write an e-mail before, suddenly she had to do that. Coordinating all of this was horrible. We only had one laptop, we usually don't need more. My husband studies, so he had to attend his classes from home, and needed a laptop as well – it was a catastrophe. I was working from home, so I needed the laptop, the children needed it and my husband needed it and we had to coordinate that everyone can be online at their needed times. Sure, we could do some things like Zoom meetings on the phone, but printing and writing stuff just works better on the computer. I work for the Stadt Wien, in Purchasing, I manage allocations and offers, some book keeping, basically non-stop tasks that I need a screen for. I am lucky that I work flex time, and that I have a great supervisor. They told us we had to be available between 8am and 3.30 pm, but my supervisor said that we could start whenever we wanted. With my children, I could not work when they were doing their things, so I started working at 6am. Just so I can work without disturbances, until around 8am when everyone would wake up and eat breakfast. Between 10am and 2pm was always the most challenging time.

INTERVIEWER: We will go into more detail about that later, I just want to ask first – did you have the opportunity to work from home before the lockdown as well?

INTERVIEWEE: No. We also were the last ones to switch to home office. One of our managers does not take the virus that serious.

INTERVIEWER: Were you even equipped to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I need to use my private phone, private laptop, private printer. We do have a certain way to access our company computer through the internet, so I had my desktop from work like that which was good, as everything was in the cloud. So I did not need any tools or programs on my laptop itself.

INTERVIEWER: And before lockdown, did you ever want to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I enjoy going to the office, I do not have a separate space at home, and by going there, I have that separation which I prefer.

INTERVIEWER: So when you worked from home, did you work from the living room then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I worked at the dining table, after a week I had the most terrible back pain. I did not even have a mouse, and I usually work with two big monitors, suddenly it's a small laptop. I do not wear glasses or have back pain usually, but through that situation my posture has gotten horrible.

INTERVIEWER: How did your day look?

INTERVIEWEE: Well in the morning I prepared breakfast for everyone, then I went grocery shopping during lunch break & I would cook, then I had to help the children with their school work, so I basically could only start doing house work at around 10pm.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say was the most challenging during that time?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, the various channels different teachers used to communicate the assignments. One wrote e-mails, another used teams – before the hand in of one assignment, you already get another. I mean even for PE, we had the task to document daily how the children stay physically active for at least half an hour. Every day I had to take a video, edit that, compress it and send it to the teacher, deadline is 7pm – every single day.

INTERVIEWER: Oh wow. And as you mentioned, children do not know how to write an e-mail and upload things – so basically you had to take over those parts?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes exactly, I had to prepare every e-mail, check the attachments, check if the recipient is correct – of course my children did all they could do, but still one says this, the other says – they constantly ask things, can I watch TV, can I do this, can I do that, I still have to do that, I got another e-mail. That was going on non-stop.

INTERVIEWER: So while they were doing their school work, could you even concentrate on your tasks?

INTERVIEWEE: No, the only time I could work was between 6am and 9am, in between I would only move the mouse 90% of the time. I just did not work. Of course, I could keep my output level, as I worked very efficiently in the morning, but still I had to answer calls in between and finish certain tasks, and work has priority.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that in home office you are inclined to work longer hours?

INTERVIEWEE: I am generally someone that prefers working 10-12 hours. I enjoy working, I am the most productive from 2-3pm onwards, for me there is nothing better than working in the afternoon when it is starting to get dark. Then, no one interrupts me, and I can really work

productively. But working longer hours was not really possible, and doing overtime would not have made sense.

INTERVIEWER: Generally, when the children are around, can they occupy themselves?

INTERVIEWEE: Ohhh, well the girls fight a lot. And the only time I can get some quiet time is when they are on their phones watching YouTube or TikTok videos.

INTERVIEWER: Do you then feel like you give them too much screen time or are you just relieved?

INTERVIEWEE: Honestly, by now, I just do not care anymore. I don't have the strength anymore. I had to remind them to do things constantly.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like you were more irritable during that time?

INTERVIEWEE: Absolutely. The division between work and family diminishes. Sometimes when they were doing exercises where they did not need my help, we would all sit at the table and I could work. But those were only things like crafts and very rare – even then they may start to fight about one taking the color the other wanted. But they did have to continue with all topics and learn new things for school, so I really had to play teacher a lot. Overall, there were some situations where I enjoyed having everyone together and everyone doing their part.

INTERVIEWER: When you're talking about things you enjoyed, are there other aspects that you would say were positive?

INTERVIEWEE: Well academically, definitely – the teachers agreed that the student worked so good and neatly as never before. I did try to keep all deadlines, of course it was stressful and a lot of pressure, but I did have more time to help them with everything. Usually I would come home at 5pm and then I would start to do all house work, there would not be much time for looking over their school things. And you also see that when looking at the grades, they were way better, of course it was difficult but it was positive that I could help my children stay on top of their work.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything that you think would help make the whole situation more bearable? I guess in your situation a second laptop would go a long way.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah absolutely. Well I think what would make everything easier for a lot of people, would be that those with children would switch to part-time in home office. As we just need the time to properly support our children with their school work.

INTERVIEWER: And in terms of space, do you think a separated working space might help?

INTERVIEWEE: I do think that would help, cause then I could just close the door behind me and not be interrupted by everything that is going on. Headphones on, and I would not care about what is going on outside my door. Then I would tell my husband that he'll have to take over. A different spatial situation would absolutely help.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that having a structure would work?

INTERVIEWEE: I think that it's impossible with children, we got e-mails from school throughout the day and with different hand-in times, different workloads. Even when they had a week off school, they would get the assignments for the next week in advance – so the kids

were taught that even though they are on vacation, they have certain tasks coming up, and it is their own fault if they read the e-mail while still having off days. When you're on vacation, you shouldn't bring your laptop, as you may be inclined to check your e-mails and then you know what is coming, and you have it on your mind.

INTERVIEWER: You also said that you forwarded your calls to your private phone, was that an issue for example that someone called in the evening when you were already off work?

INTERVIEWEE: Well thankfully, in my job, no one calls after 3pm. So a call in the evening won't ever happen – at 6am it might, but not in the evening.

INTERVIEWER: And with your private laptop, did you always see your work mails or was that not an issue?

INTERVIEWEE: I had to switch a lot between my work and private mail account, as school would send emails to my personal address, while I obviously got work-related things to my work address. So I actually had the settings so that I would be notified when I got an email to my personal account when I was working. But I did not have that setting the other way around.

INTERVIEWER: We might be facing another lockdown with schools closing, what would you do then?

INTERVIEWEE: I would still send them to school, I mean they do have supervision for children that need it, as they cannot fully close. I would send them. Because I can't do it, I can't work and supervise the children. It would be risky, as I forgot to mention that my grandfather lives with us who is over 90 years old. And he needs certain attention as well, during the first lockdown he was at the hospital for the most part, but currently he is here as well.

INTERVIEWER: Oh wow so that is another responsibility on top of everything.

INTERVIEWEE: Well yeah, that's why I said I am a great example for all that. Oh and I have another thing that would make it easier, if the communication from the school was more homogeneous. If I did not have to collect all assignments in different channels, if everything was in one place – that would save us a lot of time and would just relieve some of the chaos.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much!

### **Interview I13**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could firstly state your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Sure. I am 34 years old, I live with my husband and two children who are 3 and 6 years old. I work full-time as a social worker for the Stadt Wien.

INTERVIEWER: Before lockdown, were you able to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Normally, 5 days a week, 40 hours a week, we are at the office.

INTERVIEWER: Did the topic come up?

INTERVIEWEE: No not until recently.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think it might be nice to have the opportunity?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I also tried to bring it up with my employer, as we do have certain tasks to document conversations, as my main responsibilities lies on the communication with clients. And I wanted to do those documenting days remotely – so basically at home. As my children are very young, and I did suggest that about 2 years ago but they told me it was not possible in our situation.

INTERVIEWER: Were you equipped for home office?

INTERVIEWEE: We are very slow when it comes to technical progression, we did not have the platforms to ensure that data is protected, as we do work with highly sensitive data. I think that was one of the reasons why it was not possible, the other may be that up until recently it was not clear if we were allowed to use a private laptop or not.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and when lockdown came, how did the situation change?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning, we worked three days a week at home, two at the office – divided into teams. Now, it is more at home, and they really want most of us working from home – and to basically have no physical contact to our clients, if possible. Of course there are special cases, where it might be necessary but overall that's the situation.

INTERVIEWER: When you work from home, what does your day look like, as I assume your children were home?

INTERVIEWEE: I am flexible with regards to my working hours, so I start work quite early. I work from 7am to 3pm, currently they are not at home as they are in kindergarten and school. I have to be accessible over my phone during certain hours. But currently I am doing mostly tasks like documenting and writing reports.

INTERVIEWER: IN the beginning of lockdown, were your children at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes. It did take some time for us to coordinate everything. In the beginning at work we had a lot more video calls, and I did try to take calls with clients the days I was at the office – as I wanted to protect my privacy, and I did not want clients to see that I have children and what they look like. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it did not, and they would hear my children in the background. That was really challenging.

INTERVIEWER: That is exactly that, it is challenging to manage both work and family roles at the same time. Did you have a separated working space?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually moved in between the first lockdown and now, and in the beginning I did not have an office or a separated space. It was a challenging situation, we were not used to that. The children did not understand that even when I am present, I am working and that they shouldn't get in front of my webcam and that they should be quiet. Now, I have a separate room and it is easier to keep work and family separated, I can close the door and it is a sign for the children that I am working. I feel like the children did learn to understand that I sometimes work even when I am at home sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you keep the children occupied?

INTERVIEWEE: During the first lockdown we were lucky that we had a small house – my parents due to their age and being in the risk group they were not allowed to take care of the

children – but at that small house we had a garden. So I could send them outside to play for a bit, it was spring so that was good. My children are really nice and they are not that hard to keep occupied, they would just play playmobil for two hours, so that worked really well. They are used to independently finding things to do, I do not know how other people do that with children you have to constantly have an eye on.

INTERVIEWER: Oh so you were really lucky that they could keep themselves busy. What would you say was the biggest challenge during that time everyone was at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh the working hours. For the children it was a really long time, to know that mom is not available for us for so many hours. That was one thing I struggled with, I wanted to be there for my children but also perform my tasks for work. It was hard to coordinate both, so you do not feel like neglecting either work or family.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about that, did you feel like you managed to do both?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning it was a lot of chaos, for the first two weeks. But I think after that, it did get better. My feeling is that this time that is both working time as well as time I should take care of my children, it blended together, which is what made it so hard.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that affected your focus at work?

INTERVIEWEE: Definitely. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could you keep your usual schedule from 7am to 3pm during that time, or did you maybe even feel inclined to work longer hours at home?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning, that was the case. I felt like I had to finish this, or do that as I may not have found the time to do it before as I had to do something else at that time. But the good thing is, all of the minutes I work are being recorded. So for me that was not a big issue, and my supervisor was okay that if there is something family-related I have to attend to and cannot work for 30 minutes, that is absolutely fine.

INTERVIEWER: That's great if they are understanding. Is there something that might make the situation easier? Did the separate room help?

INTERVIEWEE: That did help, yes. We have the problem that my husband has classes to attend to and we only have one laptop so having another laptop would have helped as well, then we could have coordinated better. But other than that, I cannot really think of something. As I said, fortunately I have children that are easy-going and we had outdoor space, so I think that helped us. Going outside was an anchor we had, where we could get a breath of fresh air, I'm thinking about all the families in small apartments in the city, that aspect is much more limited.

INTERVIEWER: To finish off, what were the positive aspects of the time?

INTERVIEWEE: We got closer as a family. It was great to see how we all got used to one another and were considerate to leave room for everyone. Also when the children said they needed me, to give them that time and attention, just like they would give us space if we needed it. It was beautiful to do certain activities as a family. I also saw more of my children, you see what they are able to do, what they tell you and all those things.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for taking the time!

## **Interview I14**

INTERVIEWER: Please state your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay. I am 37 years old, my husband and me have three children, one 10 year-old, a 7 year-old and a 4 year old. I am a social worker, mainly acting as a proxy/representative for adults. I work 22 hours a week and my husband works full-time. So we have that classic split of me working part-time and him being the main breadwinner and not at home as much.

INTERVIEWER: What was your normal working situation pre-lockdown, did you have the opportunity for home office?

INTERVIEWEE: We always had the opportunity to work from home occasionally, but I do not have an office at home – as we have three bedrooms for the kids. And all of my documents and work material is at the office, and if I work from home I had to prepare really well to bring everything I would need for the day, as opposed to having everything available at the office. All the technical infrastructure is not an issue, I have that, but all the paperwork and mail is at the office.

INTERVIEWER: Meaning you did not use that opportunity, as it did not make sense for you?

INTERVIEWEE: Sometimes I did when my children were sick, so I could check my e-mails and be accessible over the phone, but not that I would have a full working day at home.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, but when lockdown started – how did that change?

INTERVIEWEE: We had split up our team into different shifts, so I was in the afternoon team and therefore not allowed to go to the office in the mornings. During that time my children were all at home and I had to be accessible nevertheless.

INTERVIEWER: Could you work while they were at home?

INTERVIEWEE: That was really challenging and exhausting. As my middle child was in first grade, when lockdown hit he didn't even know all the letters, could basically calculate not further than to 10. It was a weird thing, I did not have to fully work during that time, but I did have to be available if anything urgent came up, all while giving my children a structure. It was important to wake up at a certain time, get dressed and then I had to be available from 8am on.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think a more structured approach helped the situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I do think so. I think certain structures and routines are important for children, fixed waking up times, fixed bed times, fixed eating times. I think it helped the children, as it was not time off, there were things that had to be done. And it was important that we, me and my husband, had time to unwind in the evening when they were in bed. I think it helped, but maybe because I am the type of person that really need that structure as well.

INTERVIEWER: So your day was somewhat planned through. What were the additional responsibilities that you had with regards to things like home schooling during that time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well yes, I mean overall the priority were my children. At the same time there was work, I felt divided a lot. I mean of course I had to perform urgent tasks immediately,

but when there was something that did not have to be done right away, I would sometimes do it in the evening after the kids went to bed or on the weekend. Sometimes I went to the office Saturday and Sunday afternoon to finish some tasks, those that need my full attention and focus. I have mentally ill clients, and phone calls are often disputes and a bit more wild. I had to plan those, and have 15 minutes of quiet time, where no one can come into the room. I had my working space in the bedroom, and during those times no one would be allowed to enter.

INTERVIEWER: Did that work?

INTERVIEWEE: Depends on the age of the children, the older two understood. But the youngest, if she needs support she will scream for as long as it takes to get my attention. At 4 years old, understanding that mom needs to have a conversation over the phone and cannot be interrupted is hard, if not impossible.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel more irritable during situations like this, where work and family clashed?

INTERVIEWEE: Absolutely. I was a nervous wreck. I did not have enough time to fulfill all needs. Children are often impatient, and a first grader does not have the discipline and structure to do his school work on his own. He often threw tantrums when I told him he had to do certain exercises. Then you hear him in the next room screaming and crying, and you should focus on your work and write e-mails without having to reread a million times. It was a very demanding and exhausting time. Also the working situation, I have my desk in my bedroom. I would wake up in the morning and see work, I would go to bed in the evening and see work. Maybe it would help having an office, where you could just shut the door. Additionally, my husband is a craftsman and he went to work as usual, so it was just me with the kids at home.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so you were alone with all the obligations. You mentioned that you prioritized your children mostly, and said that you had to catch up on work in the evening or on weekends. Was that the case only during lockdown or is this normal?

INTERVIEWEE: No usually I do not work on weekends. Sometimes I may check some mail in the evening, but then that's more voluntarily if I don't want to work as much next week. But during lockdown, it was due to me not being able to get everything done during the day as I could not fully focus. Or sometimes I would wake up earlier and use the time until the kids wake up. Work blurred into my family life. And that was incredibly exhausting. It also depends on the age of the children, my oldest was fairly independent. My first grader, his teacher sent YouTube videos to explain new calculations, but it did not feel right – if they would learn things this easily by watching a video, they would not need to go to school. I am not a teacher. What bothered me was that everyone took for granted that I would take care of all of that. And if my work performance would be affected did not matter.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that is frustrating. Also, it is not just meeting work and children's obligations. I mean then you have to take care of the household as well, it is a lot at the same time.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and it was important to us to keep the usual eating times and I wanted to offer my children a good meal. I have to say, that with house work, my husband supports me a lot, when he came home he did help out a lot around the house. As I was in the afternoon team, my husband could sometimes shift his working hours so that Thursday afternoon and

sometimes Wednesday afternoons he would be at home and I could go to the office to all the tasks there with all my documents available. Those two afternoons were my silver linings.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say were the biggest challenges?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, living up to the standard that I expect of myself. The phase of home office was quite long, about two months, and I mean if I have a bad week or two, that is okay. But not being able to work how I would usually work over a long period of time was hard. As I represent mentally-ill adults, I have a lot of responsibility towards them as well. And it's not work that always repeats itself, that consists of the same tasks everyday – it's hard to do from home. You have to be fully attentive. Also, I never wanted to be seen as the colleague with children, the one who's rarely around. I wanted to be seen as an equal employee. Just think about how many women just kept going. They had so much going on at the same time, but they just did it without complaining. I did not even know where to complain. And I did feel sort of mad, when restaurant opened up again but no one mentioned anything of schools opening. Also when they closed, that was a couple of weeks before easter break & I thought well it's two weeks, then there's easter break and then they will open again. I thought two weeks, and it's okay, I will be fine. Over longer periods it gets really hard, as you only have so much power reserve.

INTERVIEWER: Is there something that you think may help make the situation more bearable?

INTERVIEWEE: Hm, well. We don't have a digital repository of our documents, we still work with paper. So that's why my job just is not ready to be performed from home yet. I would have to bring all the paperwork home, but where do I put it? I would need a cabinet with a lock as those documents contain confidential information and I have to handle those with discretion. I do not have the opportunity to store those documents accordingly. And also, working in the bedroom, in the evening when going to sleep it is not relaxing. That separation is missing. I said I did not really use the opportunity of home office before the lockdown, that was also because I want to go to work. Because then I am someone else. I am Marcella, not mom. And at home, there's always something distracting – oh I could quickly do laundry, oh let me load the dishwasher. It is not just work, it blends into your other life.

INTERVIEWER: To finish off, were there any positive aspects during this time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well yes – it was beautiful to have those afternoons with the children. The weather was mostly really nice, and we live quite close to the forest. I often thought, poor people and children living in big cities. We live in Vorarlberg, it is more rural, and I really came to appreciate this. And the children, they were outside literally every day, as the weather was just so nice. That was beautiful. But I also have to say that the highlights of the children where they meet others their age, like handball training, music school – all that was not possible, so I felt a bit bad for them. And then I felt like I had to compensate for that too, the amounts of books I ordered, as libraries were not open either, all the crafty projects I thought of, just to make it a bit more diverse. That also challenged me as a parent, to offer them various activities and give them sort of a structure. My youngest, for him it was hard, he would sit down and throw a tantrum when it came to doing his school work, and I mean obviously he would not do that at school, but at home he does. And then the 4-year-old, she will not draw for hours on end, and I also could not just place her in front of the TV while the others are doing their school work, that would be unfair. And you also do not want to let them watch too much TV, especially not

in the morning. It was hard to fulfill all the needs of the children while also trying to be seen as an equal employee, that was exhausting. Also really frustrating, how it was just taken for granted that it should work out. Only people in system relevant jobs could send their children to school, and there was no way around it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes true, I mean there was the special leave to take care of children, did you consider requesting that?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually never thought about doing that. Because in the beginning, I thought – well, two weeks, that's not going to be the end of the world. But then two weeks turned into more weeks, and I was in the middle of it. Also, I would not want to be a burden for my employer as well, as work still needs to be done. Oh also what I forgot to mention, in the last couple weeks where it was possible again, you could register the children for certain days at school, and the head of the school actually made me feel like I was not capable of taking care of my children at home and somewhat took it upon herself to judge my situation. She also tried to persuade us, that at home it is much nicer for the children, as they had to follow such strict rules at school. Also, at school they would not go over school things and correct the children's exercise, as that would give them an advantage over those who are at home. And that really made me mad. Also what was frustrating was that schools stayed closed, while so many other things went back up to normality. There was just so much frustration during that time, and I did not know where to blow off some steam.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thanks for telling me, to me it is valuable input. Thank you so much!

## **Interview I15**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great, if you could start off by stating your age, family situation and briefly describe your current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 37 years old, I have two daughters one is 8 and the other is 12. I work – actually used to, I put in my notice at the end of October, but I worked in the communication department of an institute for social services.

INTERVIEWER: Before the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: When lockdown started, I did not have any other choice, I share an office with a colleague so we had to find an arrangement, as we could not both be present. To me, the whole experience was horrible. It was an extreme load to carry. I have to say, I never worked from home before that, it was not something we could do. So I was very inexperienced with that as well. I also blog in my free time, which is something I did from home, but actual working is a very different situation. With everyone home, there was so much going on and it was hard to get it all under control – I wanted to run away.

INTERVIEWER: What were your associations with home office previously?

INTERVIEWEE: I thought it would be great to structure my day how I wanted – I imagined it as something nice. That was not how I felt during lockdown. I also have to mention, we do not have the spatial requisites, we do not have a separate office where you can close the door if you want some quiet time. But I am not even sure, if that would have worked – my older daughter had actual online classes and had to stick to her usual schedule, so she needed my help at

specific times. In the beginning I honestly thought the whole situation would be much easier, than it turned out to be. My husband had home office and shortened hours, which helped at some point, as he only had his meetings and calls during specific time periods, and more free time than usually. I had to stick to my schedule, start at 8am in the morning, I did work part-time. Also, the additional factor of home schooling takes up a lot of time and effort, and the fact that my older daughter had online classes, also took a lot of the flexibility away.

INTERVIEWER: That's the aspect I am really interested in as well, how home office was so different during lockdown, with all the additional obligations. To what extent did you have to support your kids with school stuff?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes so the younger one is in primary school and every week we would go to pick up a pack of exercises for her to do throughout the week. Her teacher was very demanding, so she really sat there doing her work for 4-5 hours. It was a mix of all subjects, and in total just a bit much, others felt the same way. Maybe the teacher felt like she had to cram in everything she still had to do, it was the last year she was the teacher of this class so maybe she had a lot of remaining things she still had to teach them, it just felt really crammed. And in the second grade, you cannot expect of your child to do all the work independently, so she needed my support and I will absolutely give it to her. But working simultaneously was just tough, and I guess that was also a reason why I handed in my notice, it really tested my boundaries. That only became obvious to me when working at home, usually you go to work do your thing and you do not think about it too much, it is just a routine. But at home when all those things collide, and you do not have an outlet, you start rethinking a lot of things.

INTERVIEWER: Also, as you have those additional obligations at home and it all comes together, it is really hard to separate. You also mentioned before that you do not have an office space – did you work at the dining table?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we all sat at the dining table except for my oldest, as she had the online classes with video which she did mainly from her room, where she has a desk. Usually she would do her home work at the big table as well, but in this situation it was not possible. With everything going on at the same time, I was extremely irritable.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a certain structure or routine everyday?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, based on experiences I knew that in the afternoon everyone finds it harder to concentrate, so to me it was important to get most things done in the mornings – that goes for me as well as my children. But actually, I could not structure my day the way I wanted to, as it just was not that flexible and if my daughter needed something she would often need it urgently.

INTERVIEWER: So work-wise you were also not very flexible with your hours, like finishing something later that day when you need to help your daughter for half an hour?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning, there was zero flexibility. It was a new situation for everyone, and there were so many changes all the time, it was hard to adapt. Also, there were many urgent tasks that had to be completed right away as I worked in communication, so I could not just say well I'll do it in the afternoon. Unfortunately, I never had the best relationship with my boss, we never really got along – and in this situation, she was not very understanding

and there was pressure from her part as she felt like work had to be prioritized, and everything else had to wait. Well, she does not have children.

INTERVIEWER: I just wanted to ask that, if you think that maybe this is also why she was lacking an understanding of the situation.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes exactly, even previously she did not understand what it was like to not be able to prioritize work all the time, and in this situation that was really noticeable. And in the beginning, she gave us zero wiggle room, I tried to ask for some flexibility but no chance. Her point of view was also, she used to do a lot of home office as she liked the silence and can focus better, but she did not understand that home office meant something different for everyone, especially during lockdown.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that it is really hard if the boss is lacking empathy for your situation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am sure there are many people who managed to keep on track with everything, but I just was not one of them. Sure, we got through it, but still. It got a bit better over time, as the workload decreased and my hours were shortened as well and the overall pressure was not as apparent anymore. Then I went to my boss and told her I could no longer do it and there had to be a change, so she did allow me to be a bit more flexible with my hours and I could structure my day better. I realized that in the evening when my children went to bed, I could actually get things done much more efficiently. Doing it like that, made it much more bearable.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that except from what you just mentioned, that the situation overall got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, of course we all got a bit more used to it all. The children also needed some time to adjust. But I have to say, the relief came when school started to partially open and I could alternate between home office and office days. Even when no one was home, I went to the office and I was so happy about it. It really helped to separate work and family. For me, that was horrible – having my laptop on the dining table, always present, always in the back of my mind. Going to the office, doing my work and going home and to just be done with it. I also have to say, I am not one of the people that do their dream job, who enjoy working and put all their heart and soul into it. To me it was more of a means to an end. I worked part-time as we could use the extra money and I wanted to work a bit – but it was absolutely not my passion. And I think that also had an impact on the whole situation, as I really did not appreciate work entering my home domain.

INTERVIEWER: I get that! And in combination with all the additional obligations, it really gets tough.

INTERVIEWEE: I also felt like it took me twice as long to finish a task as it would usually, because I was distracted and there was so much going on at the same time. I could not understand how others do it. Additionally, as I was fighting with my position with me not getting along with my boss and me not actually doing something I am passionate about and not being able to separate it from my private life anymore. But in the end, it led me to rethink my situation, something I may not have done if I were stuck in my usual routine, and I came to the

conclusion that this is not what I want to keep doing. So it helped me to take that step and hand in my notice.

INTERVIEWER: I guess then that is the silver lining, that you realized that you do not need to stay in a position you do not like.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, also no matter how tough the situation was, I realized how good it was for me to have distance from my boss. So it kind of opened my eyes.

INTERVIEWER: Are there other things you would say were positive in this situation?

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say that for the family it was a beautiful time to bond. My husband usually leaves home in the morning and gets back in the evening and it has been like that for years – we never knew it any other way. So for the family it was a beautiful experience to have everyone at home, and he thankfully had quite a light workload so for him it was more of a prolonged vacation. I mean we did notice the money factor with him working less, but honestly it was worth every cent. For him and for me to see how the girls enjoying having their father eat breakfast with us, at lunch and at dinner was really great. That is the positive aspect, for the family. And for me that I managed to take the next step and get out of an unpleasant situation. The flip side of this was that as my husband was home, I often vented to him so he realized how much the situation actually put a strain on me. After a week of watching me work and take phone calls he actually asked me why I put up with this. I had to lock myself in the room, so he would not take the phone from me and tell my boss his opinion. That was hard on my children as well, as they could witness closely that I was not doing okay. My older daughter wrote me motivational notes. And I guess that was hard, having everyone see how hard it was for me, you do not want your kids to worry about you. On the other hand, in the end I showed them that you do not have to put up with it and you can get out of it and I hope that sticks with my daughters, that they do not have to put up with everything. Now, I am much more relaxed and at ease with the thought that schools may close again.

INTERVIEWER: That is great that you can be more relaxed, let's see if they decide to shut down again. That is all I wanted to ask you today, thank you so much for your input!

## **Interview I16**

INTERVIEWER: Please start by mentioning your age, family situation as well as your current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, I am almost 33 years old, I live in Feldkirch with our 2.5 year-old daughter and my husband. I went back to work a year ago in customer service at a logistics company and I work 40% a week.

INTERVIEWER: Before lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home or what was your normal working situation?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I work in Switzerland, and even the transition to home office came a bit later than in Austria. So even though Austria was in lockdown, I had to go to the office. But my daughter's kindergarten was closed. Luckily, I could arrange with my husband that I'll be at the office half a day, while he would look after our daughter – he did have the opportunity to work from home.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever think home office would be good for you?

INTERVIEWEE: I never thought that our company would allow it, but of course with children it would be great to be flexible sometimes and if you have someone taking care of your child it is nice. You do not need to get ready, it is a time saving factor.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work from home at some point?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes after a couple days, we were also transitioned to home office fully.

INTERVIEWER: Were you equipped to transition seamlessly?

INTERVIEWEE: The only thing you had to have at home was a stable internet connection, everything else I could bring from the office – so that was given.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a separate working space?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, as my husband also worked from home we needed two working spaces. So I actually sat at my kitchen table for nine weeks with my child next to me and my husband in another room.

INTERVIEWER: How did that work out?

INTERVIEWEE: I have to laugh when thinking about it. It was really challenging, she was merely two years old and the mother is a crucial caregiver. When I was not on a call, I tried to occupy her with games. But I have to be honest, the iPad and YouTube Kids were a constant companion when I had to focus on work.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about giving her the screen time?

INTERVIEWEE: I did not feel good about always trying to keep her occupied with something else. I felt guilty not being able to give her the attention she needs and telling her to wait for me to finish whatever I was working on. I really did not feel comfortable doing that. My hours were shortened – it still felt long and I was always relieved when the six hours were over. Even when my husband was home, he tried to take over occasionally, but my daughter knew that I was home so she wanted the attention of both of us.

INTERVIEWER: I think that for a child that age it is really hard to understand that you are home, but not available.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, and she also could not grasp why she could not go to kindergarten, and she was too young and we could not really explain it to her.

INTERVIEWER: Also, with younger children, they cannot occupy themselves that long – what is your impression of that?

INTERVIEWEE: Ah yes, I'd say maximum 20 minutes. It took a lot of games and activities to get her through the day.

INTERVIEWER: And in terms of your work, did you have some flexibility as to when you work?

INTERVIEWEE: Generally, the structure at work is that we have to work on certain queues that fill up constantly, and you only have a certain time frame to complete them. My team and

boss were super understanding, if I was not immediately available all the time. That was great, also when kindergarten shut down while I still had to go to the office, they told me I could just work the hours I managed, and the rest would be paid absence. So I really had the support from my employer. No one said that I had to work more or more efficiently. I mean calls are extremely hard to do with constant background noises. So my husband sometimes went outside with her, and in that time I tried to get as much done as possible.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel inclined to work more when the laptop was around anyways?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, work was always visible. I felt inclined to sit back down to work in the evening and get somethings done, as I could focus then. And I mean I also felt a certain responsibility towards my employer.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that it got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well after the lockdown kindergarten opened back up, but for some weeks I still worked from home. Then it worked much better, but I mean I did not have the additional obligation there to take care of my daughter. With her home I was really stressed.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there is something that would make the whole situation easier?

INTERVIEWEE: I am back in home office again, and in between the first and second lockdown we arranged a little office space at home for me to work. So now I can close the door, be more focused and keep work and family more separated.

INTERVIEWER: Overall, were there positive aspects you can think of?

INTERVIEWEE: What was really positive was that we live in a corner with three townhouses, all owned by families with children. And we were all in the same situation, so the children could play together outside and overall it really helped us to bond better with our neighbors. Also that the children spent more time together and got to know each other better. So that was positive. But I have to say, now with the second lockdown being imposed, if they decide to close the kindergarten again, I think it is going to be much more challenging. It is the beginning of winter, you cannot go outside like you could in spring. It gets dark earlier. I think it is going to be tougher, at least that is what I am expecting.

INTERVIEWER: True, let's see what they will decide. Those were all my questions, thank you so much for taking the time.

## **Interview I17**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could start off by stating your age, family situation and briefly describe your occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 43 years-old, soon 44. We live in Altenstadt, in a house with garden. We have two children, my daughter is 10 and my son is 7 years old. I have been working in Switzerland in the same company for the past 23 years. I am a department manager, directly reporting to our CEO. We supply packaging material for the pharma industry. Currently we have a lot of big projects going on, also due to the Covid-19 situation as it does obviously impact the pharma industry a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Oh I understand, so you have a lot of work to do these days. How was the situation before lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: That is a great question. No, our boss is a great guy, grants us a lot of flexibility but when it comes to home office he is still very old-school. He wants to have all his sheep in sight. Which is funny as he is rarely around himself. Our office is not directly at our production site, but in an office building couple minutes away, but he still wants us to be present. With the corona situation, that did change though. Mid-march we were all sent home, and worked from home for a about 7 weeks. And I think it did get through to him that it is not that bad. I have to say, it really worked out great, all our employees were very dedicated and did their work, we did not have any issues with slacking. We did get a lot of praise internally. Our markets are also in Asia and America, so sometimes we would work quite early or late in the day. And I think that opened his eyes a bit, and now we are allowed to occasionally, for individual days work from home. Even though he said he does not like it that much.

INTERVIEWER: Before the lockdown situation, was it ever a topic? And would you have wanted the opportunity, how would you have benefitted from working at home?

INTERVIEWEE: No it was not really talked about. When someone had a doctor's appointment, they could stay home but it was a bit frowned upon. As for benefits, it takes me 25-30 minutes each day to get to work, so it would save me the commute. You do not put too much effort into your looks anymore, you don't dress up as stylish, so that is also a time saving factor. Another advantage, I never had that before as I would leave in the morning and get back in the evening – I never had lunch at home. That was great, especially when you have children, you have the opportunity to eat lunch and dinner together as a family. Oh and you suddenly can get things done, you would not usually do – little things around the house, or you can run errands quickly, all the things that could otherwise only take place in the evening.

INTERVIEWER: When lockdown started, and you transitioned to home office, were you all equipped well?

INTERVIEWEE: We are well equipped, previous to the lockdown we would travel a lot – so everyone had a phone and a laptop with VPN to access the server. So all the technical infrastructure was given.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and did you have a separate office at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well the situation is like this, we have a house with a separate office – but my wife is self-employed, so she used that office. I did not want to work at the dining table or in a children's bedroom. We have a little shed next to our house, that is insulated and heated, so I arranged my working space in there. Just so that I could have a bit of distance between my family and work.

INTERVIEWER: So you could really focus in there without the distraction of everyone around.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, but I mean children would come in anyways whenever they needed something. We agreed that they would look through the window if the door was closed, so I could signal them if it was or was not a good time to come in. Sometimes they did come in when I was on a conference call, but I mean during that time when we had online meetings, most of the time someone would have children in the background screaming. So many people

were in the same situation, so I think that is why the overall understanding and lenience was much higher.

INTERVIEWER: Overall, did you have to support your children with school work?

INTERVIEWEE: Partly. But as I work full time, and my wife works less, she took over most of the school work. But sometimes my children would come and sit in the shed while doing their school work. But the majority definitely did my wife, she also helped them before the lockdown.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like you were inclined to work longer hours from home compared to when you're at the office?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes definitely. It was very apparent that so many worked longer hours, we usually work a lot as well. But when you go to the office, and you leave, you make a more conscious cut. At home, the laptop is set up, you can keep working when the weather is bad. Or I would sit back down in the evening and work for another hour or two. Maybe also working a bit differently, I did occasionally open up a beer if the task allowed. Also many people shifted their work differently over the day, they would take a longer lunch break or go for a quick run, and then would continue working later.

INTERVIEWER: So did you have the flexibility to shift your working hours or do you have certain hours you have to be available?

INTERVIEWEE: We have certain blocked times, where we have to be available and present, that was not fully clear to everyone during the first lockdown, but they did enforce that for now. Thankfully, as I have my phone I am available even when I am outside for a bit.

INTERVIEWER: Do you turn the phone off in the evening?

INTERVIEWEE: Actually no it is always on, and I am always accessible. It is always present, but that is not due to the lockdown, that is always the case.

INTERVIEWER: Okay – I have one more question, you did mention some things already, but what were the positive aspect of that period?

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say, we had a great time, it was really cool. What is happening in the world is tragic, of course, do not get me wrong here. But us four as a family had a fantastic time. The weather was great, we could go outside a lot, in the garden or the forest. We had a really beautiful and intensive family time. We made the best of the situation, we never felt frustrated about not being able to go out. As a lot of things were cancelled, business trips as well as leisure activities, you had a lot of time on your hands. It was a period of slowing down, deceleration. I really enjoyed that time. When I started going back to the office, I thought it was too bad that period was over so quickly.

INTERVIEWER: Well let's hope that your boss also rethinks the whole home office topic and maybe you'll have more opportunities like that in the future.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I mean for certain meetings it is required to be present at the office, but I think with the technological progression nowadays, it is possible to work from anywhere. Working from home requires a certain level of discipline, but overall it is rewarding and can bring a lot of flexibility if used right.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for taking the time!

### **Interview I18**

INTERVIEWER: Please start off by stating your age, family situation and briefly explain your occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, all clear. I am 41 years old, my children are 10 and 7 years old. Yes. I am a graphic designer and self-employed, I have had my own office for years. Having a family, I work practically part-time, depending on the ongoing projects. I usually work half days plus one or two afternoons a week. That is the usual workload without corona. And during the first lockdown, my daughter was in the last grade of primary school and my son in the first grade. So she just got into first grade secondary and therefore a different school.

INTERVIEWER: So you said you have your own office, is that at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we live in a house and I have a separated area that is my office. As a graphic designer I do not need too much equipment, I need my laptop, printer and some documents. I always did it like that, even before having children, as I just realized I did not need much.

INTERVIEWER: What is the benefit in your opinion of having an office basically at home?

INTERVIEWEE: It has extreme advantages. Occasionally I miss having the exchange with people, of course I talk over the phone, but it is not the same as physical contact with fixed colleagues. The big advantage, especially with children, I am always home. I am home when they get home from school, when a child is sick, it can lay down on the couch and I can still work. It is very straightforward. If the school needs a parent to join for a hike or certain activities, I am available. I really appreciate that flexibility.

INTERVIEWER: So you can arrange your days fairly flexible, and are not tied to fixed times – obviously depending on the workload.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, sometimes there are phases where you need to do a bit more, sometimes it is less busy. But I have to say, even when I had my children, I was not on maternal leave. I felt like I could not afford to. I am self-employed, if I take a break, I lose projects and it is much harder to get back on track. And I need to keep the business running. That is why during certain periods when the children were younger, I would work more in the evening, and that was tough. Even during lockdown. And I guess the lines between work and family are more blurred with my job. I have my computer running all the time, the children were at home – I could not focus on either work or family. I felt really divided. When the phone rings, and my children need me at the same time, it is hard to prioritize.

INTERVIEWER: That is exactly the aspect I am intrigued by, having to meet the needs of children and work at the same time. And I guess in your situation, being self-employed also make it harder as you cannot slack, as soon as you do less, the business is at risk. Can you explain a bit more about your situation during the lockdown with the children at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well we had different phases. In the beginning I had a lot of project going on, while having the children there who also had to do their school work – so I did that

simultaneously. The younger was too young to independently do his things. He would sit at the table with his sister, but he would always call for me and I would come running. I realized it did not work like that, he needs my support. So I started waking up early, work 1-2 hours until the children would get up, then I would try to find a quiet period during the day or get back to work in the evening, when they were in bed. They are old enough to occupy themselves when they are done with school work, so they do not need my constant attention and I could arrange work around that. They play a lot playmobil and they like to draw, listen to podcasts. Also as we have a garden, we had more opportunities for activities, and did a lot of creative DIY projects. We kept occupied. After 2-4 weeks, my workload was reduced a lot, but it was okay for me. I do not have the financial worries, as my husband has a stable job and supports the whole family. So I could take that extra time to focus on my family, to prepare a real meal for lunch and to support my children better with their school work. I also felt like my children handled the whole situation really well, I thought they would get much more frustrated. I also felt like it was a nice experience for them, to not always have a full schedule.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent did you have to support your children with their school work?

INTERVIEWEE: I rarely had to help out my daughter, I think she was well prepared to work on her things independently. As for my son, he got a bit more frustrated with it. He enjoyed going to the classroom, and having someone explain it to him and not being distracted by everything at home. It got harder to motivate him, and I felt like it was also a bit boring to him with exercise sheet after exercise sheet.

INTERVIEWER: When you work simultaneously to the children doing their work, can you focus on the things you are doing?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I can focus anyways, but the hard part is when you get a call, and you need them to be quiet for 10-15 minutes, then they sometimes get a bit uneasy and start pounding on the door like a toddler asking for attention. That situation was recurring, that I had to tell them to give me some minutes – and that stressed me out, as the person on the phone often catches what is going on and of course you do not want that. It made me uncomfortable. And I was a lot more easily irritated, as they are at an age where they should know better. And I would sometimes make them feel that.

INTERVIEWER: You already started mentioning some things, but what were the positive aspects of the situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Each of my children have their own hobbies, they do not have a fully booked schedule, but still a lot of activities were cancelled. Usually they spend two afternoons a week with their grandparents, that was cancelled as well. So it was a lot of extra free time. And I enjoyed that free time, knowing that no one will stop by, you do not need to leave. It felt a bit like a haven, we have a big house and everyone can close the door when they need a minute to themselves. Usually, the days are quite similar in terms of my husband leaving in the morning and coming back just in time for dinner, then the children are often tired and will go to bed soon. We got to spend so much more time together, even if my husband was working a lot – those moments in between, having lunch together, having my daughter bring him coffee, we enjoyed being just us four. That was a valuable experience. And also seeing that our children bonded together and were happy with the situation. It was a time to really catch a breath and collect energy. Usually every day is filled with activities, and you do not have that much time

– it would all be focused on the weekend, and then you would feel the need to utilize every second fully. Overall for me it was not a huge transition to work from home, as I always do that, so I think I had it a bit easier. It was also weird, how quickly we got used to the situation. When lockdown was lifted, it felt weird again. Of course it was great to see close family again, but we could also appreciate us as a family and that we have it really good just the four of us. I also appreciated having a garden, having the space for children to go outside, be closer to nature. Compared to people in a bigger city like Vienna, we really had a lot of opportunities in that regard.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds like you really made the best of the situation. Thank you so much!

### **Interview I19**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could start off by stating your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, I am 38 years old. I have three children, my oldest is 15, the middle-child is 11 and the youngest just started school and is 6 years old. I am employed by an insurance broker for 40%. I usually work from the office there.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask that next, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes we were always equipped to work from home, it was important for our employer to give us the flexibility to work from home if need be – especially with children at home. I never really used that though. To me, when I stayed at home it was because either me or a child were sick, and working simultaneously to that is not possible.

INTERVIEWER: When the first lockdown was imposed, you transitioned to home office?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we all stayed at home. But I have to say, we have an office where clients stop by, so it was important that someone was present there, which was often my boss. For the first week I was at home, all 3 children were at home and it was not possible. After I told my boss that either I can come back to the office, or he has to give me off time – but I cannot work from home.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, can you explain a bit why, what were the challenges?

INTERVIEWEE: Sure. The main reason was that everything was new and unorganized, everyone found it hard to transition. Teachers were struggling, children were struggling and as a parent you had to sit next to them and gather all the information from the different platforms. It was really chaotic, and it took so much time to structure everything and come to a point where you can actually start doing the exercises. Honestly, it took up so much of my time, that I could not work simultaneously. I had to separate it - so I would ask my children to occupy themselves for two hours, just so I could get some work done. Simultaneously was impossible. Also, having three children at home, all kids have their own needs. My oldest was in her final year so you had to make sure her grades were okay, my middle-child is quite chaotic and needed a lot of support. And my youngest, even though she was not at school yet, she cannot just occupy herself for that long. When you are present as a mother, you have to give them your attention,

you are the first contact for everything – if they want to drink something, if they want to eat, if they are looking for something. When you are present, they require your attention and you have to answer them. Working simultaneously really does not work. And in that situation, I got extremely irritated as I knew I had to get work done, and it is hard as a mother as you lash out more easily, which is not a good feeling. It does not matter what they ask, you are irritated – and when you work with constant interruption, it takes you so much longer to finish tasks. Then I would be frustrated that it took so long.

INTERVIEWER: And you are divided, as want to meet both your children needs as well as your work obligations. And I think it is a lot of compromise and feeling guilty. And you said you said you had enough after a week?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I decided for myself that is was not possible to continue like that, and I talked to my boss. Thankfully he was understanding and gave me the opportunity to come back to the office. The problem then was that the children were still at home – then my sister and I worked alternately so one could always look after the kids. We supported each other and helped to bridge the times they children would have been left unattended. It would not have been possible otherwise.

INTERVIEWER: During the times when you worked from home, did you have a separated space?

INTERVIEWEE: Not at all, I sat at the dining table in our living room area with my laptop and tried to work there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it would have helped if you had a separated room?

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe for a short amount of time yes, but I do not think that in the situation I was in a separate room would make that much of a difference. For an hour or two I guess, but my problem was that they needed my attention. Of course you can tell them to watch TV, but that is not how I want to handle it and that has never been my approach.

INTERVIEWER: When you were at home, are you flexible with your working hours?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I sometimes waited until my husband was at home and I could take two to three hours to focus on work. Often I would work in the evening, and not during my usual hours.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel inclined to work longer hours?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I could not. I worked less hours total and way below under the efficiency level I usually have.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you think may help make the situation more bearable?

INTERVIEWEE: Well it would be easier if the children were not at home. Then I could structure my day and be focused on work even when at home – then it would work.

INTERVIEWER: To finish off, what were the positive aspects of the whole situation for you?

INTERVIEWEE: Positive, generally during the first lockdown I thought it was nice to have that deceleration, just an overall less busy time. That was relieving and I did think that was positive.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say the situation got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: I really felt that the frustration level got unbearable by the end. In the beginning, we took the time to focus on our family and bond, but the longer the situation went on, the more frustrating everyone got. And then you could really feel the tensions rising.

INTERVIEWER: Okay thank you so much for your time and input!

## **Interview I20**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, it would be great if you could quickly state your age, family situation and current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay yes. I am 40 years old. I am a department head for social affairs in our city, full-time. My son is 9 years old.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, before the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, technically I always could work from home, I did use that occasionally, but only on occasions when my son was sick. My work consists of a lot of workshops and team discussions, that is why it is mostly in person. Things like data analysis, I would sometimes do from home, as it is more quiet there and I can focus. But mostly I was at the office.

INTERVIEWER: When lockdown was imposed, did you fully transition to home office?

INTERVIEWEE: Not 100%, I had some days at the office, just because there were administrative things I had to do there and I am also a member of the crisis/corona team, meaning I had to go to the office occasionally. But I would say 80% were home office days. And in March and April with the strict lockdown, I was mostly home.

INTERVIEWER: I guess your son was home as well?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes exactly.

INTERVIEWER: And how was that for you?

INTERVIEWEE: (laughs) Well, there's two aspects. For my son, the lockdown was great in terms of school – he has some issues with concentration and he just got a new teacher and it was a bit complicated and he was neglected. So, the lockdown was great in the sense that I could homeschool him, and give him the attention he needs. And with one child, we were in a privileged situation. We have a big house, the weather was nice. And he is very straightforward with his school work, so we could enjoy the situation and the 1 on 1 schooling. I would sit at the table and do my work, he would sit next to me and do his work. I think the fact that he is an only child, was a bit hard as time passed, in the beginning we could keep him occupied with certain projects. But then there was a phase where you could feel that the social isolation affected him, I mean two adults just do not do the things another 9-year-old would do with him. Overall, I have to say we have overcome those 9 weeks unscathed. And also with the aspect that for my son academically, it was a good thing.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent did you have to support him with his school work?

INTERVIEWEE: I had to support him a lot. The teachers did prepare things for every day, but if he would have only done that, it would not have been enough. So, I spent the evenings planning out the next day, searching for learning material and extra exercises for him. Also, trying to bring in some English, as the teachers mostly focused on the basic subjects reading, writing and mathematics. For certain subjects, they did not offer any materials. So, I did have to invest a lot of time to find applicable material to enrich his experience. I have to admit, I do not hate doing things like that – I am a pedagogue – for me it was exciting to get back into that educational topic, even if it was with my own child, which based on experience is different. With one child that was easy. And I had the flexibility that I could work whenever I wanted, my employer did not care if I worked in the morning or the afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: Okay meaning you could arrange your day yourself. Would you say you were inclined to work longer hours from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I always brought work home, as there are certain tasks that I just prefer to do at home. And the first thing I do in the morning is to check my work mails, the last thing before going to bed is checking my work mails. But this does not affect me that much.

INTERVIEWER: I just wanted to ask, so you find it easy to separate yourself from work and do not struggle with it constantly being at the back of your mind?

INTERVIEWEE: I do not struggle with that, I always worked like that. If I have to finish something, I will do it on the weekend. I enjoy working, I am passionate about the work I am doing. It is a valuable experience, and it is a really cool job – of course there are days where things are not that much fun, but that's normal. I don't monitor the clock, I just do my work. Like I said, when I want a break I can unwind and let work be work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, because I think that is something a lot of people struggle with, to make that cut when working from home. How was it for your kid, that you were at home, but you were working and not constantly available?

INTERVIEWEE: Sure, he sits next to me and he does not care if I am on the phone with our mayor – if he needs help solving a calculation, he will ask for my help. I am convinced, that meeting the children's needs regarding school and meeting work obligations is not fully possible. You need to have that coolness to be okay with not everything working out perfectly. To tell your kid, well we'll solve it in 15 minutes or to tell the mayor, give me a second my son needs me. But not everyone can do that, so I think overall that does not work simultaneously. And the thought of schools closing again, does not worry me personally, as I think we'll manage just fine, but I think that it is extremely tough on some people. Many women just do not have any vacation days left, but cannot work from home – and I can appreciate that I am in a privileged situation. Also, that I am able to support my child, that I know how to teach him things, which many do not. I understand what the teacher wants, but some people who may not be fully fluent in German just do not have any chance. And that is a tough situation. I have a partner that works in the events industry, meaning he had a lot of free time and could support me and look after my son. Home office on its own is a great thing, if it works – but with children and their needs it is not just overwhelming, it is not possible for many. There was a time when I was alone with my son, without a partner – I cannot imagine how it would have been, if this lockdown happened then – without someone who can carry a bit of the load. That is a challenging situation for many, also psychologically. I am lucky to have an employer that is

understanding and allows for flexibility – many do not and think their employees do not work when they are at home.

INTERVIEWER: Is there something that may make the whole situation a bit easier?

INTERVIEWEE: Well over all, I think that all the employers that do not trust their employees to perform just as well at home as they would at the office, really have to rethink their stance. Also, management levels are often male-dominated, and I really feel like we fell back a bit. I feel like they trust women even less, as women have to do housework as well. But at the same time it is taken for granted that women do it all and meet all obligations. And I think this role stereotype is being enforced immensely. That trying to meet all obligations, is really tough. I think when you're young, that pressure is extremely high as you want to have a career, want to show your employer how good you are. At the same time the expectations are really high.

INTERVIEWER: That is an interesting aspect, because overall it may be harder to have a career as a woman especially with children, and not the lockdown is imposed and everyone just expects the woman to meet all obligations, work, family and do all house work. And I think that alone is extremely frustrating.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, also you are not really taken seriously. And in that situation where you carry twice the load as usual, many are scared to accept that – as they have their ambitions, and think they will get through it one way or the other. As it would be a weakness, when in fact it is a strength, as you are able to manage family and work. I think the pressure and expectation that this has to work, leads to it not working feeling like you failed and that you can't even do that.

INTERVIEWER: I also think it works for a certain time, pushing through. But it is not a permanent situation. And now, we are steering towards another lockdown.

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say, I am usually a positive person throughout – but I feel like the situation currently with all the changes every day really affects my mood. I enjoyed the time before, and as a family we had a great time. But now, the overall mood is frustrating. I find it hard to go to the office and be positive. And right now, it is not fully winter, so it is not dark at four – but it already feels much heavier and more depressing. And if it gets darker, the weather gets worse and foggy – I may need to think about prophylactically taking anti-depressants. It just does not get easier, and the situation is characterized by so much uncertainty. And thinking about the effects it may have on children in the future, you do not want to think about it. And we live in a country where we are safe and have everything, but still a situation like this is really unsettling overall.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I think it will take a lot of time to actually see the extent of the effects this situation has. That was actually all I wanted to ask you today, thank you so much for taking the time!

## **Interview I21**

INTERVIEWER: Please state your age, family situation as well as current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: Sure, I am 39 years old, our son turned 9 just recently. I am part-time employed as a game pedagogue in Graz, we operate a toy library and cooperate a lot with schools, the city,.... We do workshops and training, all around the topic of toys and games.

INTERVIEWER: Previous to the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: I did actually do a part of my work from home before the lockdown as well, all tasks like answering mails and making certain plans. I did prefer doing that at the office though, as I could just work with less disturbances there, but I did have the opportunity, used it sometimes and was equipped for it. It just allowed for more flexibility and me being able to plan my day better if need be. I do prefer the office though, as I am easily distracted especially by house work or everything else you can do at home, so I can better focus at work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, when lockdown started, did you fully transition to home office?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we were very unprepared, no one knew what we should be doing. Usually our work includes working with children and planning those days, so a large part of our work was not relevant. Of course I could plan seminars, but I would not know when I would be able to actually implement them. I used the time to catch up with work that may have been neglected before, but that was limited as well.

INTERVIEWER: I understand, so the nature of your job includes a lot of events and in-person tasks. Were you well equipped for the transition technically?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, but my son needed a laptop occasionally for his school work, so we had to share my laptop. When he had a video call with his teacher, I did not have access to a computer.

INTERVIEWER: How did the home schooling work out?

INTERVIEWEE: We would pick up a packet of exercise sheets from school, and his teacher set up a platform where they posted little tasks, like sending them a text message in English, singing a song or doing an exercise. They really tried to get the kids engaged on multiple levels, they would do video calls with smaller groups, so the teacher could talk to them. And with the exercise sheets, we would drop them off at school when they were filled out and get the next package. In the beginning, it was a bit chaotic as the information stream was on so many different channels, like email, text, zoom – but then they implemented school fox, and used that to communicate which made everything a bit more structured.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent did you have to support your son with his school work?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I have a child that does not like going to school at all. We tried to give him a schedule at home, with all the things he had to finish in a certain period – he could freely choose what to do when, but he had deadlines for the tasks. And mostly either me or my partner were sitting next to him. So for the three hours he did his things, I had to support him to keep him motivated.

INTERVIEWER: Were you flexible with your working hours then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes technically, I did work simultaneously though. It was hard to work and being constantly interrupted by having to support him - those constant interruptions really put a strain on my productivity. I felt like I could have accomplished so much more, if I were able

to better structure my day and if the added responsibility of home schooling was not there. There was just a lot of potential for conflict. I was in my role as a mother, while also having to act as a teacher – in addition to that, I had to meet my work obligations and take care of house work. I felt very irritated and unbalanced. I wanted him to keep up with his school work, but I also did not want to be so harsh that it could affect our relationship, I just felt really divided. And not being able to give him the attention and the affection he needs in certain situations, because I guess sometimes he needed the mother who said okay let's take a break and do something fun, instead of the teacher role. Technically, my work did not put any pressure on me to finish certain things, I was very privileged in that sense, but I do have that expectations of myself that I want to meet. My partner took over two days of supporting my son with his school work, but I have to say I was always listening to what they were doing. I was in a different room, but I could still hear them and did not fully focus on my work, even though I could have. And then my son would call for me as his father was not patient enough or did not explain it well enough, and I felt obligated to react.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned being in a different room, how was your work station set up?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we live in a house with lots of space as well as outdoor space, that really helped during this time. We have an office, where me and my husband have our working spaces and our son did his school work at the dining table and would play in the living room. So, in terms of space, we were able to spread out and separate everything quite well. And if someone needed some time alone to unwind, it was possible for everyone. Also, thinking about a possible second lockdown, I am more relaxed as I feel like my son is a bit more independent with his school work.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that the situation got easier over time?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I think that everyone got a better idea of how things could work out and how we can structure our days around each other. So that helped everything to run more smoothly.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you think makes the situation easier?

INTERVIEWEE: I think what helped us a lot was the possibility to go outside, also the spatial situation in the house. Having access to nature was really nice. In an apartment without the possibility to go outside, not sure if I would have handled that situation that well. I also think it helped to appreciate more what teachers actually accomplish every single day at school. I think many realized that it is not that easy to supervise and teach children. Especially when you also do not have the knowledge to support your children or you just do not know how to properly explain it.

INTERVIEWER: To conclude, what are the positive aspects of that time period?

INTERVIEWEE: Definitely that we got closer as a family, and to see that we can manage to get through tough situations. That we can rely on each other. And also that extra time was nice, I could get some things done that I neglected before – we had time to rearrange our home and also took time to play with our child. It was a time to rethink what is important in life, for me being outside, being together with my family and I do not need to have a full agenda. It was a time to unwind and take things slow.

INTERVIEWER: Perfect, thank you so much for taking the time!

## **Interview I22**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, could you please state your age, your family situation and briefly explain what you do for work.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay sure. I am 49 years old, I have two children. My daughter turned 14 and my son is 12. I studied biology and got a job in the pharma industry and work in quality and risk management. I have worked from home for the past 14 years, with occasional business trips as our clients are in the US as well as Europe.

INTERVIEWER: What were the reasons you decided to work from home fully?

INTERVIEWEE: Before having children, I commuted to work for an hour every day. So I said I wanted to work from home twice a week, to save that time. When I had children, it was clear that I could work from home and I was always able to perform my tasks remotely. The nature of my work also means that you are out and about a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a separate working space at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that is the prerequisite to be able to work from home, it is also stipulated that I need to have an adequate working space, and I have an office.

INTERVIEWER: When lockdown started, your children were at home – did that change your situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, usually they leave in the morning and come back in the evening, they eat lunch at school. What changed, was that I had to prepare lunch every day. That is a challenge, as I work full-time and am in a global position, so I had to plan the time for cooking. We live in Vorarlberg, so delivery options are very limited and I cannot order pizza every day. Also, if it is just me, it does not matter if I eat at 3pm or at 1pm, also I usually don't cook for myself, I either eat leftovers or a quick sandwich. But with children, it has to be more structured and regular and they will be hungry around the same time every day. My time is usually very booked with meetings long in advance, so if I don't block a period to prepare lunch, I often do not have the time to cook. So that was the challenge, I sometimes prepared the meal while I was in a meeting but that is not the ideal situation as I cannot fully focus on either task, and sometimes burn the food, that did happen. The second challenge was that children had to transition to home schooling, I had to support them and make sure they get all the information they need and keep up with their work. My daughter was more independent, but you still had to support them so that they do all their things as it was a new situation to them. They were used to me working from home, they know that there are occasions where they cannot interrupt me and they understand and respect that. In the second half of the lockdown, my kids also started with virtual lessons, and we got another laptop so that we had four fully equipped working spaces so that everyone was able to meet their obligations, be it work or school. All four of us were doing their own thing, and it was a funny situation. The kids had their technical difficulties in the beginning, as they were not used to the programs but as I am used to working with Microsoft teams and the like, I could support them and show them how things work, so that was not that challenging for me. So my responsibility was more about getting them to keep up, I tried not to interfere too much as I felt like that would teach them to be more independent, that worked really well with my daughter. But my son, I had to support a bit more and go over

his work occasionally. Overall, we had some extra time as leisure activities were cancelled and it was a slower time and it worked out well. We live in a large apartment in a more rural area, with lots of possibilities to go outside and into the forest.

INTERVIEWER: Are you flexible in terms of your working hours?

INTERVIEWEE: Two thirds of my time are occupied by meetings, and I have to be available then, those meetings are mostly spread out between 8am and 6pm, I have certain gaps in between but it is expected for me to be available all the time. During the lockdown time my employer was really understanding towards people not being able to be fully accessible, especially for people with smaller children and they were more lenient in that regard. I also have to say that in all the situations where someone had a their kid show up on camera, it was never uncomfortable, it was mostly funny. A colleague of mine tried to implement a traffic light system at home – she had a green flag on her table, when her kids could come in any time, a orange one where they could come if they really needed her and a red flag when she was busy and had an important meeting. Funny enough, they would always come when the red flag was put up. So that did not work out at all. Overall, we were really lucky that we had all necessary infrastructure and that the transition was not that hard, as my kids were used to me working from home. Most people were not as prepared, my son has a teacher in mathematics, she is Russian, and she would hold online classes explaining math formulas with a thick Russian accent and no visual aid – it was just her in front of the camera talking, no whiteboard, no slides. That is not how children learn mathematics, so she was not prepared and was lacking the knowledge of all the different tools Teams offers.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that you are more inclined to work longer hours because you work from home, or are you that used to it, that you can really separate yourself from work in the evening?

INTERVIEWEE: That is tough. Six years ago I took on a very global role, meaning that I work with clients from all over the world. That leads to someone from Japan sending an email at 6am, while the people in the states will be more active when it is technically the evening for me. That makes it really hard for me, so it leads to me having meetings at 7pm on a Friday. Also, the weekend is shortened to basically one full day, as clients in the states work until Friday night and those in japan start late Sunday. That increases the pressure and the workload immensely. I often check my emails again at 8pm and sometimes I will finish some work then. I do think you need discipline in a home office situation, I have to get dressed, I have to give my children some sort of structure, as I do not think it would be bearable otherwise. One thing that is hard when you work from home, is that you often have back-to-back meetings – and obviously you do not have that physical aspect from walking from one room to the other, so you do not really get a second to catch your breath. You switch the topic from one second to the other, and when you sit in meetings back to back for six hours, sometimes your focus is affected. I think you just have to be built for that whole situation.

INTERVIEWER: What were the positive aspects?

INTERVIEWEE: It was a time of deceleration, more time in the evenings for the whole family, as that leisure stress was not that present. I also think that it helped the children to be more independent and it was good for them to experience a new learning situation – usually at school they learn things passively, someone explains it and they have to listen. During that period, they

had to do a lot of things on their own. Also, they had to learn a lot of things related to the computer, how to work with Microsoft office programs, scanning things, creating PDFs that gave them digital competencies as well.

INTERVIEWER: Well, those were all the questions I have prepared, thank you so much for your input!

### **Interview I23**

INTERVIEWER: To start off, it would be great if you could state your age, family situation and briefly explain what you do for work.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay. Well I am 41 years old, I am married to my husband who is 44. We have three children who are 11, 8 and 4 years old. I work at the tourist office in our city, and did not have to work that many hours during the first lockdown while my husband is employed at a spice company and did work from home as well. The five of us live in an apartment with four rooms that fortunately has a garden. It is really crowded in our apartment anyways, and now I should be giving my children a separate working and playing space, according to our government, and I mean that is not possible with our limited space.

INTERVIEWER: Before the lockdown, did you work from the office?

INTERVIEWEE: I work part-time, usually from the office. But I also do city tours on my own, where I often need to prepare a lot of things when it is about a certain topic, so I often did that from home. But overall, the home office situation was only due to covid-19.

INTERVIEWER: what were your expectations of home office before the lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: I actually never said that I wanted to work from home, I have three children so naturally I spend a lot of time at home. For me, being able to leave home and going to work with a team was nice. So for me it was never really an option.

INTERVIEWER: When lockdown was imposed, you transitioned to homeoffice, how was that situation?

INTERVIEWEE: My husband claimed one of the kids bedroom as his office space, so he could shut the door and have the silence he needs. I worked in our bedroom, at a small desk with a laptop. I have to say, I was not equipped by my employer, but I did have my private laptop and all infrastructure to perform my work. I did try to get work done during the day, whenever I felt like my kids were occupied. I have to say, I proofread a lot of texts, answer a lot of emails and thankfully do not have to take that many calls. Because with the children around, there is often someone screaming or needs something from me every five minutes which means I need to interrupt work. My colleagues knew of my situation with three children, so they were understanding and it did not matter if someone was making noise in the background when I was talking to them. It was difficult to arrange it with three children, my husband has a job with lots of client contact, so he often needs silence. And one parent has to be accessible to the kids, so that was mostly me. But as I had to work as well, it was hard to arrange that. Having three kids, both parents working in an apartment with four rooms is not an ideal situation. As for my job, obviously the tourism office was closed during lockdown, so we worked on ongoing projects or created new one's, writing info mail and creating brochures.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, your children could they keep themselves occupied?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I would not say they cannot occupy themselves at all, but especially with two children in a home schooling situation I found it hard to also meet their needs and give them the support they required from me. The kids often played together and I could get some work done, but, how can I explain. When you are at the office, you are gone. When you are home, you are present and they feel like you are available at all times. You cannot expect a 3-year-old to understand that her mother is answering some email, she did not care, if she wants attention, she demands it. She was too young to understand, with the older two it was easier to explain to them. I feel like it might be a bit easier, when you have more space and for example have one parent work from the basement or a space just a bit more secluded – we did not have that opportunity, it was all crammed into our apartment. Also, of course we were not prepared in that sense, it was never planned that one of us works from home for a long period of time. Permanently, that home office situation would not be for me.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent did you have to support your kids with home schooling?

INTERVIEWEE: In the beginning, it was very chaotic as no one was prepared. They had a weekly plan with exercises, and overall it was a bit like an extended homework. My kids always look for the easy way out, so if they do not get something immediately, they will ask for my help – sometimes if I give them some time, they will find the solution themselves. My son is a good student, but when he was at home he could not manage to do it, for him it was a huge transition and the new learning situation was not for him. A teacher also explains things differently, I will have to take a look myself and explain it my way. Also, I am their mother not their teacher, I know that they learn more from someone else. With me, they may throw a tantrum after five minutes and give up, because I am their mother, they would not do that with a teacher. Having to learn things in a different environment was hard for them, I also felt like they had a lot of work. We did not wake up as early as we would usually, but we did try to keep the routine with waking up, having breakfast and doing the school work before lunch.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that structure helped?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes definitely. They also tell us to do that for second lockdown. Children need a structure so they can stay on track. I am sure that helps. I also think it is important for the kids to know now is the time to do the work, and in the afternoon we can play, procrastinating does not make it easier. They also had one day a week, where they would have to pick up the new exercises and hand in the ones from the week before, that was good as they needed certain deadlines otherwise they would not have done it at all. Home schooling is not ideal, I am not able to explain it as well as a teacher, and I know that there are so many parent who are not even able to explain it at all. And I think many children fall behind. I also think that is the crux, balancing working from home while also supporting the children with home schooling, as I think it is important to most parents that the children keep up with school. So basically I had two jobs, in addition to doing house work, cooking and going grocery shopping. In that sense, you really had to carry multiple loads at the same time. I was lucky as I did not have to work 40 hours, but it was still challenging. Also, not everyone has the technical infrastructure. If the children have online classes, they would need a computer as well and when you are working, I mean who has a laptop for everyone at home? My son did not really have online classes, as many of his class just did not have the necessary equipment for their kids.

INTERVIEWER: Now with the second lockdown starting tomorrow, how do you feel about it?

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say I am taking the things as they come. I have less work to do now, and I am thinking about taking that special care leave we'll see. My friend said the good thing is that it gets dark so early, so you can tell them it is time to go to bed.

INTERVIEWER: That is one way to look at it, it also means less opportunities to send the kids outside.

INTERVIEWEE: True, I have to say that really helped during the first lockdown. The weather was so nice, we ate outside a lot and it was great to go out. We were able to send the kids outside on their own, to run around in the garden or jump on the trampoline. We really appreciated that during that time! I think it is going to be hard for the youngest, the older have their school routines, but the youngest will be inside and may bother my husband who should focus on work or may try to get my attention while I support the others with their school work, but it will work.

INTERVIEWER: What are the positive aspects of that time?

INTERVIEWEE: I think that time was slowed down a bit. When you are in the middle of it all, it is sometimes hard to see the positive side, but thinking about it, it was a time for us all to unwind. All the leisure activities and obligations were cancelled, it was a lot of extra time. I am lucky that we all get on well, that we had a really great time as a family. Of course, sometimes it creates tension when you are crammed into a smaller space 24 hours a day, chaos everywhere but still. What was nice as well, was that you tried out new things that you may not usually do, we baked bread with my children, they were playing old games – it was nice to see that simple things were enough to entertain us and keep us occupied. I did not have any issues finding fun activities and keeping busy, the hard part was managing all the different needs and interests and keeping everyone happy. To be able to say, we did have a good time and to keep a certain harmony within the family. And we managed to do it once, we'll be able to do it again.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely, I am sure you will handle the second lockdown as well. Thank you so much for your time!

## **Interview I24**

INTERVIEWER: Please start off by stating your age, family situation and explaining briefly what you do for work.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 40 years old, I have two children the older one is 21, the younger is 11. During the lockdown, my husband could not work, my daughter was home from university and my son had home schooling and I had to work from home. I work 32 hours in corporate communications at a large institute for social services.

INTERVIEWER: Before the lockdown, did you have the opportunity to work from home?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I was fully equipped for it. I did sometimes do some work from home, as my job involves certain ad-hoc tasks, that have to be done right away. So I had to do that in the evening or on the weekends. It was also great with a child, as I was more flexible if he got home earlier, then I could work from home.

INTERVIEWER: When lockdown began, you transitioned to home office fully?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, from one day to the other. In the beginning it was very chaotic. I have to say, that was partly due to the pandemic massively affecting the way our company operates and therefore there were a lot of things that had to be communicated, which is my job. I write the texts, I formulated all the measures that were taken and I had to prepare all the informational emails. It was really stressful and we did start off by doing a lot of work on the weekend before the lockdown officially started. Then, my son came with the additional responsibility of home schooling. And he would not let his father explain things, he would not let his sister explain things, he only listened to me. So that was pure stress. I had to work, I had to support him whenever he needed it. At first, I went into my daughter's room so I can work undisturbed, but that did not work at all as I had to help my son. So I went to work from the dining table. That was extremely exhausting, as it is our living space, and everyone was around. Working and simultaneously teaching your kid, I found that really challenging.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent did you have to support him?

INTERVIEWEE: Well the main thing he needed was that I would sit next to him. Then he could do his things. Of course he did not always want to, but it did work. I felt like the school did a good job, we had enough information and the communication flow worked really well, I always knew what I had to do with him. So often I would explain something to him and then continue working. Fortunately, I am fairly good at getting back to work and those interruptions did not affect me too much. My daughter would often sit with us at the table, my husband would vacuum. Sometimes I felt like I had to run away and not come back. But somehow it worked out. I would often just put on headphones and listen to music, so I could not hear them talking and it would block out all the background noise and then I would feel better. The big advantage was that in the afternoon my son did not have to do any school work and my husband could spend time with him, so I could work in peace.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned you used your daughters room, did you think that separation helps?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that was the intention, I thought by doing that I would have less disturbances around me. But I could overhear them talking downstairs and realized that my son wanted me to help him, so I would run downstairs to take over and it was extremely exhausting to switch between the floors. That is why I then set up my working space at the dining table. And of course it was good to be closer to my son and not having to run up and down the stairs, but the issue is that with my computer set up, work is always present in the private space. Work was so present, it was always right there – I had a monitor, and of course I did not put it away as that would have been too much hassle. That really bothered me. You do not have any kind of separation between work and family anymore. And they kept calling all day, from morning to night. And they would always call right when we were having lunch or dinner, no matter at what time we were eating.

INTERVIEWER: Was it expected of you to be available all the time?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, I think it would not have been too dramatic if I wasn't. I could have told them not now, but I knew that it is often important and things that had to be done urgently, so I wanted to do it right away. I think that is partly because I had the expectation towards myself that I wanted to be available.

INTERVIEWER: So you also worked in the evening?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes sometimes, especially in the beginning as there was just so much to do and they had so many meetings and I had to wait for them to finish their discussions so that they tell me the final things I had to put into words. Then I had to send it to all of them to approve or adapt the text according to their wishes and then I would have to put it online – that process can take a long time and sometimes it took until the evening.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel more inclined to work longer hours when at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, extremely. Normally you turn off the laptop and leave the office and know the working day is over, and that I will only be contacted if there is an emergency. But in this situation, you quickly check your emails or you hear the ping so you go looking. You had to really consciously turn everything off or else it was always there. The problem as that the workload was really heavy suddenly, so felt like I would not be able to finish it all so I did work on the weekends if it was necessary. I envied my husband who did not have to work at all, he was frustrated that he could not work but I had so much to do. It was a weird situation.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that it helped a lot that your husband did not have to work? To keep your child occupied?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I have to say that that was a huge aspect, I was very fortunate to have him home and take over the entertainment program for my son in the afternoon. My son could not meet his friends and I would not have known what to do with him all day, of course he'll get bored at some point if he's playing in the garden alone. Days on end the two of them would play soccer together in the garden.

INTERVIEWER: Would you also say that your spatial situation helped?

INTERVIEWEE: I mean yes, that is pure luxury. We have a house, I had a space if I needed to shut the door and some time to focus. And being able to go outside, we have a large garden, my son could run around. Also, we only had one child at school. From what I've heard from others with three younger children, I would have probably lost my cool. Having my son alone was exhausting sometimes, I do not want to imagine how it would have been with more children or how it would have been in a small apartment without outdoor space.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that a separate office would have helped as well, to not have work present all the time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes absolutely. We also did arrange a small working space for myself in the meantime, as we did anticipate this situation to go on a bit longer. So now we are better prepared for the second lockdown, I have my working space where my computer is and it is not in the living room anymore and that for me is a huge relief. You can sit on the couch without feeling like you are being watched by work. We are really privileged to have that amount of space that allows me to have my working station. And my son will do his school work at the desk in my daughter's room from now on, so he is close to me and on the same floor if he needs me. And as my husband cannot go to work right now, we clearly told our son that his father is the main contact for him as I just need to focus on work. We'll see how that works out. But I have to say it is a bit my fault, that he always turns to me for school issues. It was always my thing to help him as I did like to do it from the beginning. So, he felt like the only one he could ask was me. Overall me and my husband are much more relaxed about the whole situation. Last time, there

was so much uncertainty, also regarding my husband's job, would he get paid, now we know all is good. And I mean we do not have much choice, we just have to keep going.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that winter and the colder temperatures will make it a bit harder, as the possibilities to go outside are more limited than during the first lockdown?

INTERVIEWEE: Well yes that will be the case. But we will still go outside when possible, go for a walk every evening. And I mean even if it not a valuable, educational thing – sometimes we may just need to turn on the TV. And you do feel like you are just trying to get a quiet minute and to keep your kid occupied, but that did occur as well, when my husband started to go back to work some days.

INTERVIEWER: To conclude, what were the positive aspects of that time?

INTERVIEWEE: We ate so much great food. My husband had so much time and he was bored so he would prepare a lot of food that we could enjoy. I have to say, as a family we had a great time. Of course, during the day I had my phases were I was extremely irritated when I felt like everyone was enjoying themselves while I had to work. But overall the four of us had a good time, we went for a walk almost every day. And that was a rare situation before, that we take the time to do something just the four of us. It felt like time slowed down a bit, all that pressure of managing the everyday stress and taking my son to practice etc, all that was not an issue anymore. We had a lot of extra time to unwind. Some people said they felt lonely at some point, I never had that – I was talking to many colleagues on the phone, I was on a constant exchange and I had all of my family at home.

INTERVIEWER: Those were all the questions I had prepared for today, thank you so much for taking the time!

## **Interview I25**

INTERVIEWER: It would be great if you could tell me your age, describe your family situation and briefly explain your current occupation.

INTERVIEWEE: I am 43 years old, married and we have two children, one is 12 years old and the other is 10. I am the head of finance and HR of the Messe Dornbirn, for us as a company it was a tough situation. We are in the second phase of shortened hours, during the first lockdown I was able to arrange myself so I could be home when the children were home. My wife works as well, she works at the hospital so for her it was not easy to take time off.

INTERVIEWER: Before lockdown, was your normal working situation at the office, or did you have the opportunity to work from home as well?

INTERVIEWEE: I did have the equipment to work from home, but did not really use that for full days of work at home, more like if there was something I had to finish in the evening. Without wanting to sound arrogant, but I do have a lot of responsibility in my position and sometimes I am required to work a bit more and then I have the opportunity to do that from home. During the first lockdown phase, we did close the office and tried to fully transition to home office, which mostly worked out but sometimes I had to go to the office, if I needed certain documents. But all meetings and jour fixes were held online.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so the technical infrastructure was given?

INTERVIEWEE: Not really, I did have to use my private resources and could access my work through a VPN, not through a device of my company.

INTERVIEWER: Was that an issue?

INTERVIEWEE: For us it was an issue, as the kids needed access to devices occasionally, I was able to borrow an older laptop in addition to the computer I have, so that everyone could access things whenever they needed. But if they had virtual classes, it would have been an issue as we do not have a webcam and the old laptop would not have been sufficient for that.

INTERVIEWER: So during lockdown you worked from home, how was that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, my workload in the beginning was still quite high, even though we had shortened hours, as in my position I had to deal with the topic of shortened hours. Sometimes there were situations, when I was working and the children needed my help for their school work, sometimes I was in a meeting and could not give them my full attention, so it was a challenge to balance both of that. I tried to wake up early and get a lot of work done until the kids would wake up, then I would take a break from work until they were settled with their school work, then I would get back to work. When doing that simultaneously, there were overlaps where I had to help them out as well. I have to say the children were really cooperative, and did their things without bigger discussions and struggles.

INTERVIEWER: What did their home schooling look like?

INTERVIEWEE: It was mostly certain packages per week, with exercises they had to complete during that week. My son also got access to certain apps, where he could deepen his knowledge. For my daughter, a lot went through google classroom and I felt like it was mostly focused on the main subjects. She only had one virtual session during the first lockdown, but I do think that this will become more relevant during the second lockdown and all the teachers are better prepared and can utilize the possibilities better. We are also privileged in a sense, that both me and my wife have the capabilities to support our children with their school work, we know how to do the things they are doing and we can help them out if they are stuck, which some may not be able to. Overall I think my children managed to handle the situation well and could keep up easily. Not relating to home schooling, but we were also really lucky to have access to outdoor space, so we could go outside. If I think about families locked into their apartments without outdoor space or just a small balcony, I think that must have been really hard. So we were fortunate to live in a rural area with lots of opportunities to go outside while staying safe and within what was allowed.

INTERVIEWER: You said you worked simultaneously, did you have a separate working space?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. They worked at the dining table, and I had a separate room with my working space so I could close the door if I needed to. But I also realized that it was still really hard to keep work and family separated, it was a tough situation for the company, that we never faced before and sometimes I had to pick up the phone during lunch. And then I realized that my son would get quite sad and frustrated about the things I said. So I realized I had to be a bit more careful and separate those talks from my kids.

INTERVIEWER: That is exactly the point, when you bring work home it is so much harder to keep work and family separated. Not just to keep it away from your kids, also to call it a day. Some were inclined to work more hours, as they were home anyways and did not have anything to do.

INTERVIEWEE: I have to say, for myself I usually do not struggle with that. During the first lockdown it was hard in the beginning with the additional complexity of the new shortened hours, but overall I can let work be work and keep it separate from my private life.

INTERVIEWER: What was the most challenging thing for you?

INTERVIEWEE: The uncertainty. On the one hand not knowing how it will continue with school and on the other hand at our workplace, within our industry there was so much uncertainty regarding how it will go on, if it will go on. That was the biggest issue, and I think many people struggled with the same thing, dealing with that big uncertainty factor. When the rumors started, that there was going to be a second lockdown, I immediately went out to buy another laptop so that we are prepared. But overall I have to say, I am more relaxed. You know all the processes and the systems. Also, the children are a bit more prepared for the situation, as they know how it went about the last time. So, I see it much more relaxed. Also, my wife had an operation two weeks ago, so she will be on sick leave and home for the whole period of that lockdown. So we have a bit of an advantage this time. What I realized is that a lot of employees who wanted to do home office before, now do not want to do it anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Well yes I think that was the case with many, as the expectation of home office and what went down during lockdown often differed heavily.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, also many just said that they were not able to keep work and their private life separated, they were inclined to work more and check for work emails. What was interesting for me, was that during the time of shortened hours, our employees were encouraged to not work more than 10% overtime. During the time of shortened hours and home office, those 10% were exceeded way more than when everyone worked at the office. That is a sign for me that it is harder to call it a day at work for some, and that did surprise me.

INTERVIEWER: What are the positive aspect of that whole situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we bonded a lot as a family, the four of us. We did enjoy the time together. It was a period where things slowed down a lot, we had more time to ourselves and we really enjoyed that time to unwind. That was a really positive aspect. Also, by being home and helping my children with their school work, I got a bit more insight into what they are doing and learning and being able to support them – that really helps, also mentally. And seeing how well we worked as a family, how we got each other's back. Even when the situation at work was uncertain, I knew I could come home and could get my mind off things.

INTERVIEWER: Great, thank you so much for your time.

## Appendix 4: Representative Quotations to Substantiate 2nd-order Themes

2nd-order Themes	Representative 1st –order Evidence
<p><b>(a) The Disadvantage of Inadequate Preparedness</b></p>	<p>'As mentioned, the flat is not very big. My 4-year olds bed is right next to the small desk of my oldest, and in the living room is the dining table and the sofa and around 1.5 meters space in between – so it is really quite crowded.' I1</p> <p>'I have been sitting at my dining table since March.' I2</p> <p>'I am actually thinking about setting up a more permanent work station at home, as this remote working may now become a more regular thing in the future. I think having it properly separated does make a difference, as you actually still have that division between “being at work” or sitting at the dining table, where everyone eats.' I2</p> <p>'I would work from the dining table, and if I needed silence for calls and meetings, I would go into our bedroom, which was a bit weird as all colleagues saw that I was sitting on my bed. But I just did not have an alternative option, we did not have a separate space like an office. My children all have their own room, so we just did not have enough space for that.' I3</p> <p>'I did do a lot of work from the living room, but then my 3-year-old would often come over to me and look into the camera. But when I needed quiet time, I went into the bedroom – which still did not mean that I was fully undisturbed.' I3</p> <p>'I don't have a dedicated office, but I work in my bedroom. While I work, my children are mostly in the living room and their bedroom.' I4</p> <p>'We did not have the desk space, my workspace is very small and literally in my literature shelf in a small nook. At first I started working at the dining table, but it quickly became apparent that that was not going to work, as constantly someone will walk in and want something.' I10</p> <p>'Also, I thought that my children were going to be able to share a computer, that did not work as well. So my partner fortunately had two computers at his office that he could bring home – so at first it was a phase to just get everyone a device, and a work space.' I10</p> <p>'So I worked from home, also as kindergarten and school closed the children were home as well. It was a transition for the family, where is the working space, the kids need room to play as well – we have a big apartment but still. For me the only possibility was to work from the bedroom, and that was really uncomfortable. When you wake up and immediately see the desk, it just is not nice.' I11</p> <p>'The biggest issue though was the connection, as you want to do the work and you want to perform your tasks, but you cannot do it because the connection is too weak and it just takes so much longer. And at the office productivity was just so much higher, you can concentrate better, you see everyone, it is more social – you are more excited to work &amp; everything works much better.' I11</p> <p>'Coordinating all of this was horrible. We only had one laptop, we usually don't need more. My husband studies, so he had to attend his classes from home, and needed a laptop as well – it was a catastrophe. I was working from home, so I needed the laptop, the children needed it and my husband needed it and we had to coordinate that everyone can be online at their needed times.' I12</p> <p>'Sure, we could do some things like Zoom meetings on the phone, but printing and writing stuff just works better on the computer.' I12</p> <p>'No, I need to use my private phone, private laptop, private printer. We do have a certain way to access our company computer through the internet, so I had my desktop from work like that which was good, as everything was in the cloud. So I did not need any tools or programs on my laptop itself.' I12</p> <p>'Yes I worked at the dining table, after a week I had the most terrible back pain. I did not even have a mouse, and I usually work with two big monitors, suddenly it's a small laptop. I do not wear glasses or have back pain usually, but through that situation my posture has gotten horrible.' I12</p> <p>'We are very slow when it comes to technical progression, we did not have the platforms to ensure that data is protected, as we do work with highly sensitive data. I think that was one of the reasons why it was not possible, the other may be that up until recently it was not clear if we were allowed to use a private laptop or not.' I13</p> <p>'I actually moved in between the first lockdown and now, and in the beginning I did not have an office or a separated space. It was a challenging situation, we were not used to that.' I13</p> <p>'We have the problem that my husband has classes to attend to and we only have one laptop so having another laptop would have helped as well, then we could have coordinated better.' I13</p> <p>'And all of my documents and work material is at the office, and if I work from home I had to prepare really well to bring everything I would need for the day, as opposed to having everything available at the office. All the technical infrastructure is not an issue, I have that, but all the paperwork and mail is at the office.' I14</p>

	<p>'Also the working situation, I have my desk in my bedroom. I would wake up in the morning and see work, I would go to bed in the evening and see work. Maybe it would help having an office, where you could just shut the door.' I14</p> <p>'We don't have a digital repository of our documents, we still work with paper. So that's why my job just is not ready to be performed from home yet. I would have to bring all the paperwork home, but where do I put it? I would need a cabinet with a lock as those documents contain confidential information and I have to handle those with discretion. I do not have the opportunity to store those documents accordingly.' I14</p> <p>'I also have to mention, we do not have the spatial requisites, we do not have a separate office where you can close the door if you want some quiet time.' I15</p> <p>'Yes, we all sat at the dining table except for my oldest, as she had the online classes with video which she did mainly from her room, where she has a desk. Usually she would do her home work at the big table as well, but in this situation it was not possible.' I15</p> <p>'Well, as my husband also worked from home we needed two working spaces. So I actually sat at my kitchen table for nine weeks with my child next to me and my husband in another room.' I16</p> <p>'Not at all, I sat at the dining table in our living room area with my laptop and tried to work there.' I19</p> <p>'My work consists of a lot of workshops and team discussions, that is why it is mostly in person.' I20</p> <p>'Yes, we were very unprepared, no one knew what we should be doing. Usually our work includes working with children and planning those days, so a large part of our work was not relevant. Of course I could plan seminars, but I would not know when I would be able to actually implement them.' I21</p> <p>'Yes, but my son needed a laptop occasionally for his school work, so we had to share my laptop. When he had a video call with his teacher, I did not have access to a computer.' I21</p> <p>'It is really crowded in our apartment anyways, and now I should be giving my children a separate working and playing space, according to our government, and I mean that is not possible with our limited space.' I23</p> <p>'My husband claimed one of the kids bedroom as his office space, so he could shut the door and have the silence he needs. I worked in our bedroom, at a small desk with a laptop.' I23</p> <p>'I have to say, I was not equipped by my employer, but I did have my private laptop and all infrastructure to perform my work.' I23</p> <p>'I feel like it might be a bit easier, when you have more space and for example have one parent work from the basement or a space just a bit more secluded – we did not have that opportunity, it was all crammed into our apartment. Also, of course we were not prepared in that sense, it was never planned that one of us works from home for a long period of time. Permanently, that home office situation would not be for me.' I23</p> <p>'Also, not everyone has the technical infrastructure. If the children have online classes, they would need a computer as well and when you are working, I mean who has a laptop for everyone at home? My son did not really have online classes, as many of his class just did not have the necessary equipment for their kids.' I23</p> <p>'Not really, I did have to use my private resources and could access my work through a VPN, not through a device of my company.' I25</p> <p>'For us it was an issue, as the kids needed access to devices occasionally, I was able to borrow an older laptop in addition to the computer I have, so that everyone could access things whenever they needed. But if they had virtual classes, it would have been an issue as we do not have a webcam and the old laptop would not have been sufficient for that.' I25</p>
<p><b>(b) The Uncertainty Factor</b></p>	<p>'Unfortunately, it did not really get easier over time, I think cause frustration levels just kept rising on both my and my children's side' I1</p> <p>'No, the more time passed, the worse it got. Well, I was just fed up with everything. It was the same thing every day, it was boring. You cannot do anything, and you cannot get out of it. I mean my younger son, at some point he did not even want to go outside, go for a walk, he just wanted to play on the computer. I had to basically drag him outside, so he would get some fresh air and would move a bit. You just go a bit stir-crazy, and that got worse the longer it went on.' I5</p> <p>'The time where it was uncertain how long it would go on was really tough.' I7</p> <p>'But it was always accompanied by that uncertainty of not knowing what's next.' I10</p> <p>'Also when they closed, that was a couple of weeks before easter break &amp; I thought well it's two weeks, then there's easter break and then they will open again. I thought two weeks, and it's okay, I will be fine. Over longer periods it gets really hard, as you only have so much power reserve.' I14</p> <p>'Because in the beginning, I thought – well, two weeks, that's not going to be the end of the world. But then two weeks turned into more weeks, and I was in the middle of it.' I14</p> <p>'There was just so much frustration during that time, and I did not know where to blow off some steam.' I14</p> <p>'In the beginning I honestly thought the whole situation would be much easier, than it turned out to be.' I15</p>

	<p>'I really felt that the frustration level got unbearable by the end. In the beginning, we took the time to focus on our family and bond, but the longer the situation went on, the more frustrating everyone got. And then you really felt the tension.' I19</p> <p>'I have to say, I am usually a positive person throughout – but I feel like the situation currently with all the changes every day really affects my mood. I enjoyed the time before, and as a family we had a great time. But now, the overall mood is frustrating. I find it hard to go to the office and be positive.' I20</p> <p>'And if it gets darker, the weather gets worse and foggy – I may need to think about prophylactically taking anti-depressants. It just does not get easier, and the situation is characterized by so much uncertainty. And thinking about the effects it may have on children in the future, you do not want to think about it. And we live in a country where we are safe and have everything, but still a situation like this is really unsettling overall.' I20</p> <p>'The uncertainty. On the one hand not knowing how it will continue with school and on the other hand at our workplace, within our industry there was so much uncertainty regarding how it will go on, if it will go on. That was the biggest issue, and I think many people struggled with the same thing, dealing with that big uncertainty factor.' I25</p>
<p><b>(c) The Female Penalty - Caught in an Outdated Stereotype</b></p>	<p>'From my colleagues at work, I had the impressions that men tended to take the situation way better than I did, they were so much more calm and relaxed about it and I did wonder why that was. Maybe they just structured their day without worrying about doing chores or making healthy food for the children, I don't know. To me it seemed like that guilt component was not that present for them, but I obviously do not know how it actually was, that was just my impression.' I2</p> <p>'Other than that, I don't feel like anything would have to be improved. I mean, of course there can be little improvements. But nothing was as bad, as I would feel the need to change it – also regarding my employer, it was all good.' I6</p> <p>'And rearranging ourselves as a family, who does what – how do we divide chores when everyone's at home. My partner left in the morning to go to the office, and for him it was crystal clear that I do all house work. He took it for granted. But honestly, just because I work from home it is not obvious that I do all things like laundry and loading the dish-washer – I have to work as well. I felt like I had to justify me doing work, especially when I did not actively work on a project but used the time to prepare myself and think of ways to improve my offer to earn money in the future.' I10</p> <p>'I see myself as a very emancipated person, but in this situation you can't hide from that stone-age role picture. The woman cooks, the man leaves the house – you are thrown back into that situation. And I think many families were facing that situation, where men would isolate them from some responsibilities and say well home schooling is none of my business.' I10</p> <p>'Well, I mean I worked, and my wife took care of the children.' I11</p> <p>'So we have that classic split of me working part-time and him being the main breadwinner and not at home as much.' I14</p> <p>'What bothered me was that everyone took for granted that I would take care of all of that. And if my work performance would be affected by that, did not matter.' I14</p> <p>'Just think about how many women just kept going. They had so much going on at the same time, but they just did it without complaining. I did not even know where to complain. And I did feel sort of mad, when restaurant opened up again but no one mentioned anything of schools opening.' I14</p> <p>'Also really frustrating, how it was just taken for granted that it should work out. Only people in system relevant jobs could send their children to school, and there was no way around it.' I14</p> <p>'Partly. But as I work full time, and my wife works less, she took over most of the school work. But sometimes my children would come and sit in the shed while doing their school work. But the majority definitely did my wife, she also helped them before the lockdown.' I17</p> <p>'Also, management levels are often male-dominated, and I really feel like we fell back a bit. I feel like they trust women even less, as women have to do housework as well.' I20</p> <p>'It was really challenging, she was merely two years old and the mother is a crucial caregiver.' I16</p>
<p><b>(d) The Drawback of Fast Role Transitions</b></p>	<p>'Even when my husband was home, he tried to take over occasionally, but my daughter knew that I was home so she wanted the attention of both of us.' I16</p> <p>'But at the same time it is taken for granted that women do it all and meet all obligations. And I think this role stereotype is being enforced extremely. That trying to meet all obligations, is really tough. I think when you're young, that pressure is extremely high as you want to have a career, want to show your employer how good you are. At the same time the expectations are really high.' I20</p> <p>'You constantly run into situations where you have to send them away, beg them to find something to do themselves, to just give you a couple of minutes. And it was really hard to do that, I sometimes felt like a really bad mother doing that but sometimes you do not have a choice.' I1</p> <p>'But I have to admit, there were many times where I told her “not now, wait a minute”, it was not the way I usually treat her and I knew it. Well, there were more than one evening where I just cried in the evening.' I2</p>

	<p>'Well I would say I had to scold them more often, telling them I needed just a couple more minutes. Or when a client called me, and they were super loud and I had to beg them to just be quiet, and of course I berated them after that telling them that I need to do those things for work, and that they should just stop talking when I was on the phone. Actually, yes that did lead to conflicts, when they cannot just be quiet for a couple of minutes.' I5</p> <p>'Absolutely, I was really torn during that time, and very irritable with my children, as they would always start to scream exactly at the time I was in a call or when I had to finish something urgently.' I7</p> <p>'Well, you do not want to be a bad mother for your child, but you're automatically more irritable and quicker to scold them – I am usually a very patient person, but during that situation it was hard.' I8</p> <p>'With everything going on at the same time, I was extremely irritable.' I15</p> <p>'It made me uncomfortable. And I was a lot more easily irritated, as they are at an age where they should know better. And I would sometimes make them feel that.' I18</p> <p>'Working simultaneously really does not work. And in that situation, I got extremely irritated as I knew I had to get work done, and it is hard as a mother as you lash out more easily, which is not a good feeling. It does not matter what they ask, you are irritated – and when you work with constant interruption, it takes you so much longer to finish tasks. Then I would be frustrated that it took so long.' I19</p>
<b>(e) The Parent-as-Teacher Trap</b>	<p>'I felt very irritated and unbalanced.' I21</p> <p>'Of course, during the day I had my phases where I was extremely irritated when I felt like everyone was enjoying themselves while I had to work.' I24</p> <p>'It is hard to find the balance, you do not want your kid to fall behind with school work, but you also do not have the time as well as knowledge and techniques to help them properly.' I1</p> <p>'Well, the biggest challenge was to have both kids keep up with their school work and to not have them fall behind. That was important to me. I mean honestly, if I am not able to do some chores, that really does not matter, but the children had to be done with their things in time, so that school work would not pile up. So for me that was the most important thing, to have them do all their things they had to do in a day, because otherwise there was more work the next day, and that was challenging because the younger one often did not want to do it.' I5</p> <p>'But having my children meet all their school obligations was crucial for me, to not fail in that aspect.' I5</p> <p>'It might even be harder if schools close now, as my older son is in a different school now and a higher grade, so it might get more complicated to help him out now, as his school now uses different online platforms and tools, which take up more time and I think that would be complex.' I5</p> <p>'Thankfully, the workload was limited and manageable, but I am a bit afraid if another stricter lockdown is being imposed, that with him being in a higher grade now, it is going to be a bit more difficult for me. That's what I am a bit scared of, but I mean what can I do, I could hire a nanny, but I won't do that.' I9</p> <p>'Also, that I am able to support my child, that I know how to teach him things, which many do not. I understand what the teacher wants, but some people who may not be fully fluent in German just do not have any chance. And that is a tough situation.' I20</p> <p>'Home schooling is not ideal, I am not able to explain it as well as a teacher, and I know that there are so many parents who are not even able to explain it at all. And I think many children fall behind.' I23</p>
<b>(f) The Guilt Component</b>	<p>'We are also privileged in a sense, that both me and my wife have the capabilities to support our children with their school work, we know how to do the things they are doing and we can help them out if they are stuck, which some may not be able to.' I25</p> <p>'I wanted him to keep up with his school work, but I also did not want to be so harsh that it could affect our relationship, I just felt really divided. And not being able to give him the attention and the affection he needs in certain situations, because I guess sometimes he needed the mother who said okay let's take a break and do something fun, instead of the teacher role.' I21</p> <p>'I mean you try to keep the children occupied. I really felt guilty towards my child, cause I couldn't give her the attention I wanted.' I8</p> <p>'I did not feel good about always trying to keep her occupied with something else. I felt guilty not being able to give her the attention she needs and telling her to wait for me to finish whatever I was working on. I really did not feel comfortable doing that.' I16</p> <p>'I did not feel comfortable as a mother at that time, as I felt like even the time I normally have to fully focus on my children, they did not have my undivided attention. Cause I always had on my mind that I still had to do all those other things, the apartment looked like whatever.' I7</p> <p>'When they were on the tablet, I could focus on work and they were occupied.' I1</p>

	<p>'This also created a tension as I did not want them to spend too much time in front of the screen, while at the same time it made work easier for me. It really was a constant trade off between how much time do I need for work now, how much screen time do I want my kids to have – will they get even more annoying after. Theoretically, I could have worked hours without interruption, if I would not have felt guilty about giving my children too much screen time and feeling like I neglect them.' I1</p> <p>'It also resulted in me doing things I would not do before, I mean she is 2,5 years old, but at some point I just handed her the tablet so I could attend a call for 30 minutes without distraction.' I2</p> <p>'So at the end of the day, I just felt guilty, guilty for not being able to give my daughter the attention she wants, and guilty that I could not be fully focused on my job responsibilities. And taking care of myself was the last thing on my mind.' I2</p> <p>'In the beginning, I felt really guilty. Shortly after the birth of my newborn, I was much more involved emotionally due to hormones, and I really felt that it was horrible to give him that much time in front of the TV.' I3</p> <p>'Sometimes, I would just let them watch more, when I was in a call or a meeting where I had to be present. Then I would sometimes tell them to please just watch a show or play on the Ipad and not come into the room.' I4</p> <p>'When they were on their phones and tablets, I was relieved to have 1-1,5 hours of time to focus on work again.' I5</p> <p>'And my children have really started to watch TV during the lockdown period. Even the younger ones, the older did watch before when the younger ones were asleep.' I7</p> <p>'Absolutely true, and that was 100% due to corona, we sometimes had the TV running for a large part of the day.' I7</p> <p>'That's something that is hard, even under normal circumstances. When you have children and you work, you feel extremely divided. When you do your job well, you feel like a bad mother – when you are a great mother, you feel like you are a horrible employee.' I7</p> <p>'The beginning of lockdown was okay, as children are very happy to be able to watch TV. It was not possible any other way, when you have work to do, you do not have an alternative option.' I8</p> <p>'Sadly, often it was just a lot of TV and screen time. I also tried to give my kid books or other things, but screen time was the most effective.' I8</p> <p>'And the only time I can get some quiet time is when they are on their phones watching YouTube or TikTok videos.' I12</p> <p>'That was one thing I struggled with, I wanted to be there for my children but also perform my tasks for work. It was hard to coordinate both, so you do not feel like neglecting either work or family.' I13</p> <p>'At the same time there was work, I felt divided a lot.' I14</p> <p>'But I also have to say that the highlights of the children where they meet others their age, like handball training, music school – all that was not possible, so I felt a bit bad for them. And then I felt like I had to compensate for that too, the amounts of books I ordered, as libraries were not open either, all the crafty projects I thought of, just to make it a bit more diverse. That also challenged me as a parent, to offer them various activities and give them sort of a structure.' I14</p> <p>'And you also do not want to let them watch too much TV, especially not in the morning.' I14</p> <p>'When I was not on a call, I tried to occupy her with games. But I have to be honest, the iPad and YouTube Kids were a constant companion when I had to focus on work.' I16</p> <p>'Ah yes, I'd say maximum 20 minutes. It took a lot of games and activities to get her through the day.' I16</p> <p>'I have my computer running all the time, the children were at home – I could not focus on either work or family. I felt really divided. When the phone rings, and my children need me at the same time, it is hard to prioritize.' I18</p> <p>'Of course you can tell them to watch TV, but that is not how I want to handle it and that has never been my approach.' I19</p> <p>'And I mean even if it not a valuable, educational thing – sometimes we may just need to turn on the TV. And you do feel like you are just trying to get a quiet minute and to keep your kid occupied, but that did occur as well, when my husband started to go back to work some days.' I24</p>
<p><b>(g) Children's Non-stop Demand for Attention - Parenting as a Full-time Job</b></p>	<p>'During lockdown, I suddenly was all alone, with no one to help me as my husband had to work 9 to 5 and grandparents as well as kindergarten were not accessible anymore, for obvious reasons.' I2</p> <p>'Suddenly I was alone and had the additional responsibilities of taking care of my daughter.' I2</p> <p>'It resorted in very bizarre and unpleasant situations, like your daughter standing next to you, crying saying “mom, please don't work, not work all the time.” That was very hard for me, and it did have a consequence – I actually decided to quit my job.' I2</p>

	<p>'I mean that is a disadvantage of working remotely, your children know that you are home, so they do not quite understand that you have to work – my 3-year-old would often pound on my bedroom door whilst screaming, I mean how long will you let him do that. Then I would have to excuse myself from the call I was in, telling them that I needed to look after my son right now. It was hard for him to understand, because I was home but I was not constantly available to him.' I3</p> <p>'Well my son used to go to kindergarten pre-lockdown, so when that was not possible anymore, it was a really big transition for me to suddenly have both him and the newborn around, all the time – that was additional work. I felt like I spent so much time in the kitchen, there was always someone who was hungry. Oh and mountains of laundry, it was a never-ending story.' I3</p> <p>'So for 90-95% of my time working, I had to take care of three little children as well.' I7</p> <p>'I really have to say, that usually we have a great support system that helps out with the children. My mother in law is retired, but is not that old – I mean she's over 60, but like she's not as old as my mother for example, and she really helps out a lot, running errands and the like. My older one also sleeps over at her place a lot, also at my parents, they live a bit further away. But all of that just disappeared, and was not possible anymore.' I7</p> <p>'But my daughter literally would sit in front of the TV for two minutes, and would come over to me again. She was super attached, and sometimes I had a call, I was on mute with two screaming children on my lap.' I7</p> <p>'The only thing that really bothered me was when my son was at home and needed my attention. My son, who grew up with me working from home the past 7 years, still does not understand that when I am on the phone, I am on the phone.' I9</p> <p>'And my children did need a lot of attention, I mean they were scared as well, and frustrated that they could not go to school anymore.' I10</p> <p>'The children did not understand that even when I am present, I am working and that they shouldn't get in front of my webcam and that they should be quiet.' I13</p> <p>'Oh the working hours. For the children it was a really long time, to know that mom is not available for us for so many hours.' I13</p> <p>'Depends on the age of the children, the older two understood. But the youngest, if she needs support she will scream for as long as it takes to get my attention. At 4 years old, understanding that mom needs to have a conversation over the phone and cannot be interrupted is hard, if not impossible.' I14</p> <p>'Yes I can focus anyways, but the hard part is when you get a call, and you need them to be quiet for 10-15 minutes, then they sometimes get a bit uneasy and start pounding on the door like a toddler asking for attention.' I18</p> <p>'And my youngest, even though she was not at school yet, she cannot just occupy herself for that long. When you are present as a mother, you have to give them your attention, you are the first contact for everything – if they want to drink something, if they want to eat, if they are looking for something.' I19</p> <p>'When you are present, they require your attention and you have to answer them.' I19</p> <p>'When you are at the office, you are gone. When you are home, you are present and they feel like you are available at all times. You cannot expect a 3-year-old to understand that her mother is answering some email, she did not care, if she wants attention, she demands it.' I23</p>
<p><b>(h) The Pressure of Professionalism</b></p>	<p>'It was difficult to arrange it with three children, my husband has a job with lots of client contact, so he often needs silence. And one parent has to be accessible to the kids, so that was mostly me. But as I had to work as well, it was hard to arrange that.' I23</p> <p>'That worked, cause the younger one also could get quite annoying taking things from her brother or hopping in front of the camera while I was on a call, which is something I did not like really, cause even though my colleagues thought it was so cute, I felt like it may hinder me professionally when trying to push through with something.' I1</p> <p>'And it was frustrating, because ever since she was born I was fighting to not just be seen as “the one with the child” at work, proving that you are a fully capable team member and suddenly, that comes crashing down and you are just the one with the child. And I constantly felt that and could not really escape from it.' I2</p> <p>'However, it did bother me more when working – because after all this is my job, and it is uncomfortable when I am talking to a client and the children start talking, it just is not very professional.' I5</p> <p>'Also, I never wanted to be seen as the colleague with children, the one who's rarely around. I wanted to be seen as an equal employee.' I14</p>

<p><b>(i) The Home Schooling Burden</b></p>	<p>'That situation was recurring, that I had to tell them to give me some minutes – and that stressed me out, as the person on the phone often catches what is going on and of course you do not want that.' I18</p> <p>'The issue was that especially in the beginning, the communication channels of the school were extremely heterogeneous – there was not one tool they used. One class worked with Microsoft Teams, the other with moodle, other communicated through mail, others over the phone. One professor just printed a long list and gave that to the students, saying they needed to complete everything until the end of lockdown. Basically it was very unclear and confusing. To plan out the time and manage deadlines, based on this chaotic flow of communication was quite challenging.' I6</p> <p>'Well, what would help – which has gotten better over time, would be that the school focuses on one communication channel that they use. That was the biggest challenge and could be resolved by using one outlet.' I6</p> <p>'Some teachers really over did it with the teaching material, they were overwhelmed especially regarding their computer skills – how do I generate a PDF, how do I upload it, how do I download something.' I10</p> <p>'I mean she never had to write an e-mail before, suddenly she had to do that.' I12</p> <p>'Oh, the various channels different teachers used to communicate the assignments. One wrote e-mails, another used teams – before the hand in of one assignment, you already get another.' I12</p> <p>'Yes exactly, I had to prepare every e-mail, check the attachments, check if the recipient is correct – of course my children did all they could do, but still one says this, the other says – they constantly ask things, can I watch TV, can I do this, can I do that, I still have to do that, I got another e-mail. That was going on non-stop.' I12</p> <p>'Oh and I have another thing that would make it easier, if the communication from the school was more homogeneous. If I did not have to collect all assignments in different channels, if everything was in one place – that would save us a lot of time and would just relieve some of the chaos.' I12</p> <p>'Teachers were struggling, children were struggling and as a parent you had to sit next to them and gather all the information from the different platforms. It was really chaotic, and it took so much time to structure everything and come to a point where you can actually start doing the exercises. Honestly, it took up so much of my time, that I could not work simultaneously.' I19</p> <p>'In the beginning, it was a bit chaotic as the information stream was on so many different channels, like email, text, zoom – but then they implemented school fox, and used that to communicate which made everything a bit more structured.' I21</p> <p>'The kids had their technical difficulties in the beginning, as they were not used to the programs but as I am used to working with Microsoft teams and the like.' I22</p>
<p><b>(j) The Downside of Multitasking</b></p>	<p>'What I did, was I tried to do the easier tasks while my children were around, like responding to emails.' I1</p> <p>'Then while he was doing his tasks, I would do my easy tasks again, like research work or quick meetings. And when he was occupied with screen time, I would move on to the tasks that required more focus.' I1</p> <p>'I mean every job consists of certain tasks that require higher focus and some tasks that are just routine, so I just did the tasks that did not need my full attention when my daughter was around. Sometimes she would sit on my lap, other times I would set up an old laptop in front of her, so she could “work” as well.' I2</p> <p>'There were some recurring themes, I tried to get them to do their school work in the morning, simultaneously to me working, sometimes it worked well, other times it did not.' I4</p> <p>'[...] That really got on my nerves, because I was constantly interrupted, had to play some games with them.' I5</p> <p>'Well I will do tasks that do not need super high focus, my work does not involve that many tasks that require extreme focus, most things I can do quite easily. Usually certain calls with my boss or a client really require the silence, then I cannot deal with my husband fighting with my son or when they chat loudly. In those situations, I take my laptop and lock myself in the basement, we have a fire door, so I would not even hear anything if it was the end of the world.' I9</p> <p>'And it's not work that always repeats itself, that consists of the same tasks everyday – it's hard to do from home. You have to be fully attentive.' I14</p> <p>'And at home, there's always something distracting – oh I could quickly do laundry, oh let me load the dish-washer.' I14</p> <p>'But working simultaneously was just tough, and I guess that was also a reason why I handed in my notice, it really tested my boundaries.' I15</p> <p>'I also felt like it took me twice as long to finish a task as it would usually, because I was distracted and there was so much going on at the same time. I could not understand how others do it.' I15</p>

	<p>'In the beginning I had a lot of project going on, while having the children there who also had to do their school work – so I did that simultaneously. The younger was too young to independently do his things. He would sit at the table with his sister, but he would always call for me and I would come running. I realized it did not work like that, he needs my support.' I18</p> <p>'And when you work with constant interruption, it takes you so much longer to finish tasks. Then I would be frustrated that it took so long.' I19</p> <p>'Yes technically, I did work simultaneously though. It was hard to work and being constantly interrupted by having to support him - those constant interruptions really put a strain on my productivity. I felt like I could have accomplished so much more, if I were able to better structure my day and if the added responsibility of home schooling was not there. ' I21</p> <p>'Because with the children around, there is often someone screaming or needs something from me every five minutes which means I need to interrupt work. ' I23</p> <p>'Working and simultaneously teaching your kid, I found that really challenging. ' I24</p> <p>'Sometimes there were situations, when I was working and the children needed my help for their school work, sometimes I was in a meeting and could not give them my full attention, so it was a challenge to balance both of that. ' I25</p> <p>'When doing that simultaneously, there were overlaps where I had to help them out as well. ' I25</p>
<p><b>(k) The Imposed Early Bird – An Attempt to Make It All Work</b></p>	<p>'I did not really feel guilty, as I felt like I would otherwise be steering towards a burnout.' I1</p> <p>'During lockdown my days looked like this: I would wake up at 4.30 in the morning, to start working until my daughter would wake up, then I would have to take care of her while trying to work simultaneously. When she had a nap, I would use that time to work again, then in the afternoon I had to entertain her again, and after putting her to sleep I would work some more – and the next day the same thing, for 13 weeks.' I2</p> <p>'For the first two weeks it was kind of surreal, you just went with it and pushed through. But over time I realized just how hard it actually was.' I2</p> <p>'So, what I did was I would wake up at 5.30am, same as if I had to drive to the office, and would start working right away so that I had some quiet time to get work done before the children would wake up around 7.30 or 8am. As soon as they would wake up, it starts to get more complicated – one wants a hot cocoa, the other want something else and when they are finished, one wants an apple and the other some bread or scrambled eggs. And you're just fully occupied to satisfy the children's needs. ' I5</p> <p>'The only time I could be fully focused on my work, was in the morning when they boys were still sleeping. ' I5</p> <p>'My work was just a bit more spread out over the day, usually I would finish work at 5-6pm, but when working remotely I would finish around 7-8 pm, as I was doing non-work-related things during the day.' I6</p> <p>'Sometimes I worked in the evenings, sometimes I worked on the weekends, to somehow keep up with everything. Still, some things were neglected. ' I7</p> <p>'In the end, we did it like this – I usually work three days, Monday Tuesday and Thursday, and I took Monday and Tuesday off, and spread the hours of Thursday out on the whole week, so I could get my work done while also somehow being able to unwind a bit. I did not have an off day anymore, I had my laptop on every single day.' I7</p> <p>'Yeah, but I would say that the longer it went on, the harder it got. As soon as an end was in sight, it got better, I did put my children back into kindergarten as soon as they opened. If it would have gone on much longer, I am not sure what would have happened, my I would've steered towards a burnout. For me, the end of lockdown did not come a day too early.' I7</p> <p>'But if lockdown measures are being tightened again, I think it is going to be really tough for me – I honestly do not know what might happen, maybe I'll be close to a burnout.' I8</p> <p>'I am an early bird, my husband is too – meaning I start working at 5am. At that time, no one disturbs me. During normal working hours, my phone rings about 170 times, so working focused is quite hard. So the times before everyone starts working and after are the ones I can be very efficient, same goes for the weekend. ' I9</p> <p>'With my children, I could not work when they were doing their things, so I started working at 6am. Just so I can work without disturbances, until around 8am when everyone would wake up and eat breakfast. Between 10am and 2pm was always the most challenging time.' I12</p> <p>'No, the only time I could work between 6am and 9pm, in between I only moved the mouse 90% of the time. I just did not work. Of course, I could keep my output level, as I worked very efficiently in the morning, but still I had to answer calls in between and finish certain tasks, and work has priority. ' I12</p> <p>'I mean of course I had to perform urgent tasks immediately, but when there was something that did not have to be done right away, I would sometimes do it in the evening after the kids went to bed or on the weekend. Sometimes I went to the office Saturday and Sunday afternoon to finish some tasks, those that need my full attention and focus.' I14</p> <p>'Or sometimes I would wake up earlier and use the time until the kids wake up.' I14</p>

	<p>'I realized that in the evening when my children went to bed, I could actually get things done much more efficiently. Doing it like that, made it much more bearable.' I15</p> <p>'So I started waking up early, work 1-2 hours until the children would get up, then I would try to find a quiet period during the day or get back to work in the evening, when they were in bed.' I18</p> <p>'I had to separate it - so I would ask my children to occupy themselves for two hours, just so I could get some work done. Simultaneously was impossible.' I19</p> <p>'Yes, I sometimes waited until my husband was at home and I could take two to three hours to focus on work. Often I would work in the evening, and not during my usual hours.' I19</p> <p>'I did try to get work done during the day, whenever I felt like my kids were occupied. I have to say, I proofread a lot of texts, answer a lot of emails and thankfully do not have to take that many calls.' I23</p> <p>'I tried to wake up early and get a lot of work done until the kids would wake up, then I would take a break from work until they were settled with their school work, then I would get back to work.' I25</p>
<p><b>(l) The Struggle of Calling It a Day</b></p>	<p>'I think having it properly separated does make a difference, as you actually still have that division between “being at work” or sitting at the dining table, where everyone eats.' I2</p> <p>'If I leave it sitting on my table, I am inclined to check my emails even late in the evening, and that is not the way it should be.' I2</p> <p>'During lockdown, my hours were shortened, meaning I should have worked for 2 hours a day, which obviously is not the case when you are at home with your laptop.' I5</p> <p>'Well, I can't just turn the computer off when I know that work keeps coming in. That has a lot to do with my sense of duty, I should have just turned it off, but that's something I struggle with.' I5</p> <p>'Yes definitely, when you're already sitting at your laptop and doing some work, you may as well keep working a little longer. Absolutely.' I6</p> <p>'Yes exactly, because your work has to be done anyways.' I7</p> <p>'And I could never unwind. As soon as I heard a ping, I would go to my laptop to check my mails, if it was 8pm or 10am. I think that I worked at least my normal hours, probably even more, I don't know. But I can say that work was always on my mind.' I7</p> <p>'I really felt that, home office has you inclined to work more, but I am trying to strictly separate it from now on, to let weekends be weekends. I used to always leave my laptop at the office over the weekend, because I only get paid for a certain amount of hours, why should I work more. I know that currently I am doing a lot of overtime, I have an all-in contract which basically means it I do not get anything out of it.' I7</p> <p>'You're also connected to your work colleagues through Whatsapp, so you basically do not have a cut off point, like you would when you leave the office. I could get notifications 24/7, my work calls were redirected to my phone – so I was accessible much more. At some point I stopped picking up the phone, as it just was not bearable anymore.' I8</p> <p>'I understand that when someone thinks of something that they'll text it right away to not forget about it, but when I receive the notification, even if it is not something I have to do urgently, it is still in the back of your mind. The computer, I also used it a bit for myself privately, and you automatically check e-mails.' I8</p> <p>'My work blurs into my private life.' I9</p> <p>'I think that definitely is an issue, at an office when you leave your day is over, when you are at home it is much harder to draw that line.' I9</p> <p>'Well I enjoy going to the office, I do not have a separate space at home, and by going there, I have that separation which I prefer.' I12</p> <p>'The division between work and family diminishes.' I12</p> <p>'In the beginning, that was the case. I felt like I had to finish this, or do that as I may not have found the time to do it before as I had to do something else at that time. But the good thing is, all of the minutes I work are being recorded.' I13</p> <p>'Work blurred into my family life. And that was incredibly exhausting.' I14</p> <p>'And also, working in the bedroom, in the evening when going to sleep it is not relaxing. That separation is missing.' I14</p> <p>'It is not just work, it blends into your other life.' I14</p> <p>'Even when no one was home, I went to the office and I was so happy about it. It really helped to separate work and family.' I15</p> <p>'For me, that was horrible – having my laptop on the dining table, always present, always in the back of my mind. Going to the office, doing my work and going home and to just be done with it.' I15</p> <p>'Yes definitely. It was very apparent that so many worked longer hours, we usually work a lot as well. But when you go to the office, and you leave, you make a more conscious cut. At home, the laptop is set up, you can keep working when the weather is bad. Or I would sit back down in the evening and work for another hour or two.' I17</p>

	<p>'And I guess the lines between work and family are more blurred with my job.' I18</p> <p>'Work was so present, it was always right there – I had a monitor, and of course I did not put it away as that would have been too much hassle. That really bothered me. You do not have any kind of separation between work and family anymore.' I24</p> <p>'That is why I then set up my working space at the dining table [...] work is always present in the private space.' I24</p> <p>'And they kept calling all day, from morning to night. And they would always call right when we were having lunch or dinner, no matter at what time we were eating.' I24</p> <p>'Yes, extremely. Normally you turn off the laptop and leave the office and know the working day is over, and that I will only be contacted if there is an emergency. But in this situation, you quickly check your emails or you hear the ping so you go looking. You had to really consciously turn everything off or else it was always there.' I24</p> <p>'Yes, also many just said that they were not able to keep work and their private life separated, they were inclined to work more and check for work emails. What was interesting for me, was that during the time of shortened hours, our employees were encouraged to not work more than 10% overtime. During the time of shortened hours and home office, those 10% were exceeded way more than when everyone worked at the office. That is a sign for me that it is harder to call it a day at work for some, and that did surprise me.' I25</p>
<p><b>(m) An Unwanted Flow of Information</b></p>	<p>Oh yes. It did take some time for us to coordinate everything. In the beginning at work we had a lot more video calls, and I did try to take calls with clients the days I was at the office – as I wanted to protect my privacy, and I did not want clients to see that I have children and what they look like. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it did not, and they would hear my children in the background. That was really challenging.' I13</p> <p>'But they were shocked – they saw how much me and my partner who are both self-employed are fighting with those uncertain circumstances. Over night, I lost practically 80% of my projects. And that was a very tough situation for me. And I think it was a huge disadvantage, that the children were so close and could witness all of that. They could overhear every conversation with my partner, every call – they witnessed everything, all of our worries and needs, all of the things you don't want them to know of.' I10</p> <p>'And to me this is very shocking and sad, as I used to guard them from those worries, and I really feel that this had an effect on them.' I10</p> <p>'But I do think it is such a big thing that's not good – the worlds of adults and children to blur together like that. I do not want this for my children yet. They're in puberty a very sensitive phase, they should not have to worry about their parents financial situation.' I10</p> <p>'That was hard on my children as well, as they could witness closely that I was not doing okay. My older daughter wrote me motivational notes. And I guess that was hard, having everyone see how hard it was for me, you do not want your kids to worry about you.' I15</p> <p>'But I also realized that it was still really hard to keep work and family separated, it was a tough situation for the company, that we never faced before and sometimes I had to pick up the phone during lunch. And then I realized that my son would get quite sad and frustrated about the things I said. So I realized I had to be a bit more careful and separate those talks from my kids.' I25</p>