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Question What has been the single biggest challenge to your wellbeing this past year during the pandemic?

Answer Watching my children miss their friends and activities and slowly isolate to their rooms over those first few weeks and then months. I worried about them constantly and while I was grateful to have secure employment, I was heartbroken not to be home helping them navigate remote school and heartbroken every time I had to tell them another camp or activity got cancelled.

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Question Wellbeing likely meant something different to you in 2019 than it did in 2020. The year of 2021 probably means something different yet again. What does wellbeing mean to you right now?

Answer Wellbeing to me is a combination of physical and mental health. It was tricky last year as COVID threatened physical health but not seeing friends and family threatened mental health. I cried at completely random times, my kids were irritable, sad, and frustrated. Finding a balance was challenging, but we took advantage of Maine's outdoor gifts, incredible summer weather, and our love of winter to spend hundreds of hours outdoors with friends. We

hiked, swam, biked, and skied our way to physical and mental wellness. Now we trust our bubble, continue to spend as much time outdoors as possible, and cheer every time a loved one gets vaccinated.

Question What is the gap right now between you and the place you would like to be in terms of your wellbeing?

Answer I feel like I really embraced taking care of myself over the last year because luckily being active outside is what brings me peace mentally, but unfortunately, I am still worried about my kids. I'm told this will be true for the rest of my life, but right now the factors affecting them are out of my control and I can't fix them with a run or a hike or a bike ride. Every positive case in the school may mean another quarantine and watching them miss out on things they love. Every coach or teammate exposed may mean weeks of physical activity and camaraderie missed. I'm tired of telling them more things are cancelled. It weighs on you month after month.

Question What is the one thing in particular that would make you feel better and overall healthier?

Answer This time of year is so hard as the snow is gone for winter fun, but the sun hasn't arrived for spring enjoyment. Hugs would help a lot! The more people who are vaccinated the more hugs I can get, so until the sun comes out and warms up, I'm going to hug my vaccinated friends and tell everyone I know to get vaccinated as soon as they can. And obviously, I would feel better if I wasn't so worried about my babies.

Question Is there one small step you would be willing to take right now to begin heading in that direction?

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Answer I have volunteered at the Cross Center and plan to do it again because it feels like actively being part of the solution to a situation I can't control otherwise. But that is about me needing to DO something and what I'm slowly coming to realize is that my kids don't always want to DO anything. They have figured out how to socialize with friends online, and they enjoy the downtime we never had as we jumped from activity to activity. It has taken me a year (and counting) to pause, breathe, and really hear them when they say they would rather not do my plan for the day. Reaching out to EAP helped me work through that but I didn't make it a priority to continue with them and I need to follow up to get support so I can give support.

Question What would be different 6 weeks from now if you were to consistently take that step?

Answer Well there would be a lot more people to hug! And if a whole lot of them are teachers and coaches and school staff, then we will reduce the interruptions and get our routines back. As for my kids, I think by having more tools to support them, asking what they need and respecting their answers, they will

feel supported and trusted, and maybe that is all anyone really needs.

Question What are you passionate about and what impact would feeling a greater sense of wellbeing -- however you have defined wellbeing -- have on you and the things you are passionate about doing?

Answer I am passionate about outdoor physical activity and it is EXACTLY what has given me my sense of wellbeing this year which is an incredible, positive cycle. The more I'm active outside, the better I feel, and the more I can do!

Question If you were to begin consistently taking that step how would you go about doing it? That is, what would be your specific plan for clearing the path of obstacles so this step would fit into your day?

Answer You have to prioritize yourself, which was hard at first because I was so worried about my family. But if you take two hours to go hiking, or 30 minutes to do yoga, or an hour for a bike ride, your family will still be there after. They might be a little more hungry, but you will be better prepared to engage with them, support them, and cook for them. I have an incredible spouse who knows I need this time, so between us, we meal prep, do chores, or throw laundry in at weird times so we can always carve out our time for activity. In addition, every day I will pause, breathe, and really listen to what my kids need and respect their answers.

Question Are you willing?

Answer YES!!

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