

Stay-at-Home Mom

Fei Qiu

BEFORE YOU READ: Have you heard of the job title, “stay-at-home mom.” List some of the responsibilities for someone with this job.

Arriving in This Country Was Hard... and Then It Got Harder!

I remember arriving in the U.S. at the end of 2019. It was a cold night. Every family was preparing to celebrate the New Year, and we had come to the unknown world. At that time, my daughter was two-and-a-half years old, and my son was six months old. We did not have any relatives or friends in the U.S., and we couldn't speak much English. In those early days of 2020, it was hard for us to adjust to being in a new country. We had no idea how much harder it was about to get.

When I was in Japan, I had a full-time job. My daughter went to daycare starting at six months old. She spent almost the whole day there until 6 pm. Every year, my mother came from China for a few months to help me with the children.

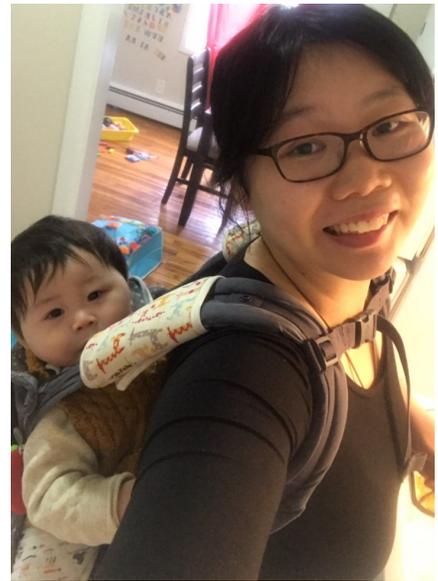
In the U.S., my life is very different. Every day after my husband goes to work, my main task is to take care of the children and do housework.

I did not adapt well to being a housewife. Facing the endless washing, cooking, cleaning, and crying children, I was exhausted.

During the first two months of 2020, I could still take my children to nearby supermarkets or parks. I did not have a U.S. driver's license, so I took the children out in the stroller. Even though it was winter, being outside in the fresh air was the happiest time for us.

Crafts, Cookies, and Dumplings

As Covid-19 infections increased, and people here did not have the habit of wearing masks, we spent less time outside. My daughter did not know why she could not play outside. Sometimes, she cried and had a rebellious attitude with me. To distract



her, we made crafts, cookies, and dumplings together. This made the time go by faster. I was always carrying my son on my back and playing with my daughter while he was sleeping. Over time, I began to feel pain in my lower back.

Fear and Anxiety

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wanted to return to Japan or China, but it wasn't safe to travel. My mother was very worried about my mental condition. Although there is a 12-hour time difference, she still insisted on video-calling me every

day. She would "watch" my children on video while I cooked or did housework. At that time, we used WeChat. To add to our anxiety, the U.S. government was planning to ban WeChat. This threat cast a shadow on our lives. If WeChat was banned, how would I contact my family?

A Break from the Isolation

By May 2020, the weather was getting warmer, so the children could play a little on the patio. I planted some mini tomatoes and cucumbers to please them. It was my first time gardening. At the same time, my Japanese neighbor introduced me to a program that provided online story time. The teachers were very gentle and kind. Although my children could not speak English, the teachers always prepared several interesting stories and songs to teach them. When my daughter showed her paintings or crafts to them, they gave her great encouragement and praise. This activity brought hope into our daily life and gave us a chance to communicate with others. It greatly relieved my fatigue and depression of parenting alone.

When my daughter started attending in-

person pre-school, I registered for adult education English classes. My daughter sensibly said that since neither of us could speak English, we should study together. My English classes are fantastic. My teachers and classmates are patient and friendly. Every day feels meaningful now.



A Great and Respected Occupation

I learned something very important in my first English class. When people introduced themselves, they said their profession. When it was my turn, I didn't know what to say. The teacher told me that in English I am a "stay-at-home mom," which is a great and respected occupation. Her words moved me deeply.

Life is a journey of practice for me. The road can be difficult, but I try to learn everything on the path. To be honest, when I had a full-time job, I thought that being a stay-at-home mom was not hard work. However, when I became a stay-at-home mom, I learned it is very hard work. Sometimes, I need time to breathe. I wish I could go to the cinema, read a novel, or just talk with friends.

After coming to the United States, I have experienced many firsts in my life, and I have gradually adapted to my new job as a stay-at-home mom. Looking at my healthy and happy children, I think I am doing well in my new job.

AFTER YOU READ: Who and what was helpful to Fei Qui during this challenging time?

Fei Qiu's home country is China. She moved to Japan to attend university, and she worked for a Japanese power company for six years after graduating. She came to the U.S. at the end of 2019 due to her husband's job transfer. Now she is a stay-at-home mother and a student at Shoreline Adult Education in Branford, CT.