

EPISODE 1018

“PP: The first thing that I thought it was, of course, we need routine, because routine is comfort. It’s comfort for adults and it’s comfort for children. It gives people expectations of what needs to happen.”

[INTRODUCTION]

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FT: Many of us are waking up this week to a new reality working from home. If you haven’t been doing this up until now, welcome. Welcome, everybody. Welcome to the community. But if you’ve got kids who are also home and maybe some elderly family, loved ones, you got a full house, you got to take care of everybody, how do you do your work? Can you do your work?

My guest today is a fellow mom and entrepreneur who has been quarantined for some time as residents of Westchester, New York, one of the epicenters of the pandemic. Pamela is by day an entrepreneur, a mom, a lifestyle expert. She's a mom of two. Her work consists of a lot of events on camera media. How is she making working from home work and her husband also working from home?

This will be a lot of our realities soon. I’m also going to work on a video to show you how behind-the-scenes I'm trying to make working from home work. Pamela has some amazing advice on how she’s homeschooling her children and how she's keeping to a structure and how to make the most of the current crisis. If you are losing hours, if you've lost your job and trying to find your way, how to pivot, how to take advantage of some of the needs right now, and how to serve them to bring in the income that you may have lost.

Here’s Pamela Pekerman. Pamela has a guide for us on all of her best advice.

Pamelapekerman.com/somoney. Here’s our conversation

[INTERVIEW]

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FT: Pamela Pekerman, welcome to So Money. How are you doing?

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PP: I'm doing. I want to say something more than that that I think we're all figuring this whole thing out as we go.

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FT: You have the great idea, I loved it, of dedicating an episode to helping working parents out there who are working with their children at home, whether you're an entrepreneur, you have been displaced from your work for your employer has shut down physical locations in New York City. Schools have been officially shut down until April 20th and probably my guess is through the rest of the year. A lot of us experiencing this for the first time. A lot of us have yet to experience it. Kids are still going to school.

But you up in Westchester, New York, which is one of the hot beds unfortunately for coronavirus, you have experienced this reality that a lot of us are just waking up to for quite some time, working from home with your children. Firstly, how are you doing? A week's gone by. Give us a report.

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PP: The sanity check. Yeah, we shut down last Sunday, so it's been a week and a half now. I think the first thing – The kids actually went to sleep not knowing what was happening, because they a made [inaudible 00:03:25] on Sunday night. When they woke up, they were expecting to go into their regular flow, and I'm like, "Hey! No, we're going to stay home." What I did the night before was just kind of think – Now, I should practice and say I have a first grader and a kindergartener, so this is different for, of course, every single age.

I took a little board. I took out some pieces of paper. I wrote some class offerings, your standard ones like math and reading and recess and English and whatever. Then for breakfast, what I did was the first thing that I thought of was, of course, we need routine because routine was is comfort. It's comfort for adults and it's comfort for children. It gives people expectations of what needs to happen.

We started to get out a routine, and then one of the things I did do out was I gave the kids the – I like to call it the false sense of power. By giving them the opportunity to each pick a class offering and then myself picked two of the classes to fill out the day, they felt like they were taking part in what otherwise could've been a very chaotic day. I wasn't about to give them, "Oh, pajamas for all of us every single day," because they needed a routine. But I also now needed to go into figuring out what the heck am I going to do.

[00:04:40]

FT: Yeah. Who's teaching them and how long and then how are you getting work done?

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PP: It's different now. But last week, I still had a babysitter come, so I still did all of the – We'll call it like the teaching, and she did more of just like the easier stuff, like if you just – They will read to her or they'll go outside with her and whatever. I still last week had four, almost five, solid hours of work and I have never been more productive in my life, right, when you have to focus in on five hours a day. I did the classes with the educational part. She took care of sort of the easier fluff parts.

This week, however, as of Monday, we asked the babysitter not to show up. My husband is also now working from home, and so we are kind of starting the week or ending the night and starting the next morning and saying, "Hey! This is what I need to make the next days work for me." He'll tell me, "I have these conference calls. This is like something that's nonnegotiable. Here's what I have as wiggle room." I'll say to him, like for example today, "Okay, I have this podcast I need to record at exactly this time, and the rest there's some flexibility here, here, here."

We're trying to tag team and that's new. But I should let your listeners know that I am very experienced at working from home and very experienced at pivoting and adjusting my entrepreneurial flow based on what's happening with the kids. I've been doing it for seven years since they were born, so that's just something that I figured out tools, so like routines obviously. This is extreme but the routines, the collaboration. I think it's really, really, really important, especially right now where there's likely two parents at home. Kids are at home, regardless of their ages, except for like the toddlers.

If your kid is I would say five and over, you need to start creating boundaries and respect because, as you said, Farnoosh, this is not a two-week situation and this may very well not be a two-month situation. So if we're in it through the rest of the school season, I think that's something you should do is create boundaries, and your kids need to know that they need to respect your workspace. I'm sure that there's a lot of chuckles as people are listening. They're like, "How do you do this?" But you just do it, like you just do it.

Something that I actually created several weeks ago, having nothing to do with corona but thank God that I did, was we created a red, yellow, green system. If I'm in my office space and it is an emergency, they will slip a red piece of paper under my door, and that's when they know that if I'm on – It doesn't matter what I'm on. I will stop it. Pause the conference call, pause the meeting.

[00:07:24]

FT: Oh, no. My son would do red for everything. He wants a cookie, it's red.

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PP: But here's what happens over time. See. I just want to say I'm glad that I actually just happened to start this several weeks ago, again having to do with the coronavirus and what's happening now, is as time goes on, they start to realize, wait, they have to analyze. Is that a red or is that a green. For example, if it's a green, usually it just means they want a hug. They want

to say hi. They want to show me something. Something's exciting happening. If they're not sure, they'll make it a yellow.

All I can say, and again I'm sure there's a lot of parents like, "Oh, my god. That's not going to work," this has worked for me. Find a system that works for you. But also, I believe that boundaries and respect flow both ways. So if you are in a space with them, teaching them doing something, if you can, if you can, and I say if with a big if because I know that's not possible for everybody, don't be on your phone, because give them their respective. If it's 20 minutes of reading time for them and you promised them that, be there.

But if you have to have your phone, because that's the reality of life and I get it, there are – I'm an entrepreneur. I can literally do some things at night when they're sleeping. I can do other things before they wake up. But if that's not in your frame of work, then just let the kids know, "Look, mommy and daddy are going to have our – My phone by the side because it's important in case somebody calls." That's a big thing about boundaries and respect.

Honestly, just trust that your kids will rise to the occasion as you laugh potentially at what I'm saying. But trust that they can rise to the occasion. I feel like if they're over the four or five mark, they can do it. I have an almost six-year-old and an almost seven-year-old, and they are kind of rising to the occasion.

[00:09:14]

FT: I love that reminder. It's true. Your kids are capable of more than sometimes we think. Remember, your kids, if they've been in school and now they're home, they're used to schedules and routines and following rules and having people be expect things of them, so continuing that I think is not going to be a huge disruption to their normal life, and so you're right. Having that schedule, offering some also like free time. We have some hours like – We do this now in the morning where my son – We go through it together, but he likes to write it down. He feels like you said. It's false sense of control. He writes it down or he draws it out because he's not fully spelling yet. Then we leave a little bit of playtime in there like whether it's quiet time or free time.

Then, yes, I have to just realize that I cannot work a full 8 to 10 hours a day anymore. Maybe it's four hours. Maybe it's five hours if I'm lucky, and then the rest of it is going to have to be dedicated to family time. I would give one piece of advice also to parents who are working from home that you have some sort of auto reply. I'm going to start doing this. Auto reply to all my business emails. I'm sorry. I won't be able to get back to this email at my usual pace, because I'm – Or I'm only working between the hours of 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM and all other emails will get addressed after hours, because that's just the reality and that also buys you some grace period just to say to people like, "Don't expect the usual work flow from me or the usual pace from me. I just can't wait."

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PP: But also remember that everybody at this point is in the same boat and so – Now, some people – Again, look, if you still have help coming, it's different if you have a live-in. It's different. Like I said, last week was one story when I had five hours of somebody here taking care of my children that I knew and trusted. Now, it's nobody. We're even not allowing the grandparents in the house right now for their own safety, of course. What this week will bring will be new.

Again, I've been working from home from several years, and now my husband is home. It will be interesting dynamic to see how tag team goes. I will say though, I think, I hope that it'll actually bring couples closer together, because you will also see what the other person does and learn to respect and understand how their business flows, especially if one is an entrepreneur and one is not. It'll be very interesting to see how each of you operate in that space.

Something else, and I think this kind of goes without saying, is rise and shine. I mean, the reality is if you're not an early bird and I'm not – I haven't been the last few years. I've been quite – I get exhausted with my kids and with work, and so I don't wake up the way I used to pre-children. But you better believe that I am going to be at that like 5:30, 6:00 AM rise, because how else is it going to be possible.

[00:12:19]

FT: Right. Or drinking coffee at four o'clock in the afternoon because it's going to be a late night because you're going to be up till midnight, getting all the work done that you couldn't during the normal work hours.

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PP: Yeah. Or, again, we if collectively – Again, everybody, and I know everybody's employer, everybody's situation is different. But if you have the right employer, hopefully they are creating some framework that will allow their business to thrive and keep their employees. If you are, by the way, the boss, keep your employees happy. You want them back when things turn to some level of normality.

A friend of mine worked at sales force, and he said that they gave – I don't know if you heard this. They gave all of their employees \$250 in order to set up a home office that is convenient. I just thought, "Yes, yes." Again, is that that something that every small business entrepreneur can do? No. But if you have the opportunity and you are a sales force type business, do that for your employees, because I think that brings me back to kind of even what I'm trying to do with my business, which is focus on the community and focus on the heart.

I was supposed to host a large event this week for mom entrepreneurs at Bloomingdale's. I have the next one scheduled in June. Those have now both been postponed, which means I lose sponsorship dollars. But I also need to – Aside from figuring the finances, that I also need to figure out how do I continue to serve my community and obviously serve my wallet, and so I am going into Zoom meetings and Zoom events and IG lives that will be sponsored and figuring it out.

I think that something that – As I started these IG lives, which just started a few days ago because I realized there was a need for people to talk and share their highs, their lows, their sanity, all of that, I do these like 9:00 PM mingles, I realized that we need these forums. But also, people are in need of ways to think about reinventing their careers, so I talked to a teacher who's now going to start virtual teaching and other people. There are different – I think that Gary Vaynerchuk just said the other day, he's like, "Now is that time for invention."

[00:14:42]

FT: Right. The last recession really kicked off this whole idea of side hustles, because we lost our jobs, the jobs that we thought where we're going to retire in. We were going to – Or get the pension and then that didn't happen, and so we really started to see the benefits in stringing together multiple revenue streams or even having one extra revenue stream while having a nine to five because we just need to. Just like our portfolio of stocks, we need to diversify our income streams.

That's great to hear that you are able to pivot to online to continue to stay relevant to your community and stay engaged with your community and make some money. Let's be honest. That's helpful.

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PP: Look. I mean, at the end of all of this, we still need to pay bills, right? I mean, I love the debate this week where our bills are all going to be paid and covered. But I don't know how that's happening, so we still need to figure out how to pay bills. That's a very real concern. I would say for us at this point, we'll be fine. I will be okay but for how long? Business has changed, and as different countries shut down, and between my husband and I if we're engaged in business with a country that is completely shut down and not working, today it's okay. Three weeks, four weeks, a month from now, it's less okay.

I do think to your point, it's really important to sit back and reflect on how can you not be on a one-funnel system, like where else can you create a side hustle. For all you know, that side hustle may very well flip in three, four months and become your main.

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FT: Yeah. I mean, Martha Stewart. People have different opinions about Martha Stewart, but you cannot debate that she didn't build a very impressive empire and that started as a side hustle. She worked on Wall Street, was doing parties and caterings on the side, and there you go.

Now, you have very generously provided a free download for our listeners to get all of your advice, if you're staying at home with your children, during all these school closings. Tips to navigate working from home, managing the kids, and also some suggested class offerings that can help educate and entertain. Go to pamelaperkeman.com/somoney.

Pamela, I've been wanting to have you on the show for some time. We met at an event, and I was immediately like connected with you. I think as a mom entrepreneur, we really synced up, and so tell me a little bit about how you got started in this, as I think a lot of people want to learn how to make a business out of basically who you are.

[00:17:26]

PP: No. Yeah. I come from a media background. I have been doing editorial and TV segments for nearly two decades now. Prior to my children, it was predominantly in the fashion and accessories space, so I've done the Good Morning Americas and the Fox & Friends and some fun stuff with QVC and HSN. As I like to say, I can sell ice to Eskimos, which is a good thing.

After I had my kids, I just kind of took a moment and thought, "Where am I now? Where is the media?" I'm always like reflecting and I'm very good at pivoting and feeling what's going on in our culture. This was eight years ago. I thought, "Okay, the media is changing. Everything is so transparent. You have to be as authentic as possible, and so I need to go on air or online or whatever and talk about what I know." What I know right now, seven years ago, six years ago, was I was a mom of 202. I had back to back Irish twins and I used to call them, I still do, barnacles on my feet, and so I started to create these concepts of timesaving tips for busy moms.

As time went on, I evolved into space. I realized it was really going into more of support for mom entrepreneurs, and so I started this YouTube channel. It's youtube.com/pamelapekerman, where I started hustle like a mom chats and I would call up entrepreneurs that I adore, the founder of Mable's Labels or the founder of Rockets of Awesome. I would have them share their business advice and their both mom life and entrepreneur life tips on time management, and

that kind of evolved into what I have right now, which is these series of events called Hustle Like a Mom in the tri-state area.

I had have, it's hard to say which one right now, a partnership with Bloomingdale's where we have five events later for 2020 in different markets around New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Women come and they are either startups or they've already been in business for a few years, and we educate them with panels and breakout sessions and everything from PR to self-branding, marketing, and how do you collaborate with others. It has really honestly filled my soul in a way that my career had never previously done. I like to say that I'm the mompreneur BFF and I thrive when others thrive.

I literally – Even right now, you guys can't see me but every single that I am wearing and touching is created by a mom entrepreneur. So if you are a mom entrepreneur, I want to know and share your business. I still go on TV. I still do TV segments. Obviously now, with the way everything is going, I'm certainly pivoting more into more digital content. I'm going to be starting, like I said, Zoom sessions and every night at 9:00

PM IG live just for a sanity check and sharing products and how we're doing it and what we're doing as moms and busy entrepreneurs.

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FT: I mean, that's it, right? I think the big takeaway from a career standpoint and from an income-earning standpoint is that you need to have – You need to straddle both the Internet and also the in-person. Who knows? Down the road, the Internet might be the thing that becomes attacked or threatened, and so you need to be able to also do what you do and be tasked at like throwing events and going in person and having all the people skills to do that. This is a real test of our ability to adapt. You've done it beautifully.

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PP: I think so and I – We think back – I come from – My family is from the Soviet Union, and so I can tell you just the most insane from worst stories to living through communism, and so that

sort of sense of adaptability. Okay, this is happening. Now, here's what I'm going to do. It's part of my DNA, and I do think that those of us who can just see what's happening and see different opportunities because there's always opportunity, right?

At the end of the day, like we said, you need to pay your bills. Where are the opportunities? What is needed right now? Right now, we need comfort. We still need connection. We need some sense of community. What was your special sauce? What is your skill set that can feed into community connecting, supporting people virtually? Are you an accountant? Great, I need you but I'm not going to your office right now. Like, "Are you – Were you working at the beauty counter at Saks? Great. Can you tell me a self-care ritual in a video?" Then you figure out a model where there are sponsors behind it because they will come. They will come. It's all possible.

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FT: Any financial changes that you and family is making during this time? People are asking me, "Should I just keep to my budget as is or is this really a good time to kind of go into an austerity plan?"

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PP: I guess it really depends on how close you live from paycheck to paycheck. Obviously, that's what I would say. I mean, have we made any changes? Not yet. Will we? It's possible. I mean, again, like I said, I'm not having the nanny right now but I am paying her, because she depends on me. But we haven't really made any changes as of now. But, again, we've been – We're in it 10 days, and so ask me in 10 weeks. I mean, look. Obviously, things are cancelled, so we're not spending on vacations, if you will. But we haven't any changes as of now.

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FT: That's true. There are some expenses that they're just going to naturally go away. I looked at my bill from last month, and a lot of the disposable income was going to things like rideshares and food delivery.

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PP: There you go. People might find that they actually might be saving in certain avenues. I mean, I know that's not exactly the righter side of things right now, but you're not going to be going to Starbucks if that was what you were doing. Guess what? That's another \$10 in your pocket.

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FT: Exactly.

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PP: I think for anybody who's worried, maybe sit down and think about all the things you're actually not going to be spending on. You're not going to be spending on the movies if you go to the movies. You're not going to the restaurants. Believe me, as somebody who cooks 75% of the food that we eat if not more, your restaurant bills – Great, you're not spending on that anymore because at least if you're in New York as of right now, they're closed.

[00:24:06]

FT: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. We're getting very creative. The one thing I will say that's a good about living in an apartment building is that if I ever need some like ingredients, like I can probably email my neighbors and have it within seconds. That's kind of a nice thing. We can lean on each other, and that's probably going to happen, is we're going to have to start like getting to know our neighbors a little bit.

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PP: But from a distance.

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FT: From a distance, of course. Yeah. Leave it by my door. Just knock three times and leave it on my doorstep.

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PP: Yeah. I will say I think you mentioned neighbors. I think it's really important to mention that both for ourselves but also as an example for our children, now is also a time for us to show them what it means to be a community and what it means to be a good citizen. I think if you're practicing social distancing, know that you're not doing it for yourself, because you're probably in your 30s or 40s or even early 50s and you're fine. But you're doing it for the people who could be impacted if you or I could be what they call now they're calling the silent killer, the carrier who doesn't have any symptoms. I mentioned this because I sit on the board for an organization called the Vasculitis Foundation, which is a group of rare autoimmune diseases that cause inflammation. We had an emergency call over the weekend to discuss how can we serve our community, and the best way we can do that is by reminding the public that I'm going to do for you what I hope you will do for me, which is I'm going to keep my distance and help flatten out the curve.

That's actually a huge public announcement that many of these autoimmune disease communities are working on is to say, "Please do for me what I would do for you." Kids will see that. By the way, the other thing you can do is donate to your food banks. Donate money. They need money. They've been doing that here in Westchester like hardcore for about two weeks. We had the National Guard roll in last week to help families in need in our communities. Because when schools close down, it's not just, "Oh, my kids are home." Think about the kid who depends on going to school for their food. Why not have that conversation with your children and say, "It's not just about us." Especially the older ones who might be whining, right? You have a teenager at home, "Oh, this is terrible. I can't see my friend. I can't go to the movies." Bring them down to reality and say, "Well, let's do this as a community." I don't know. Make a class out of it, if you need to do.

But I think it's also about reminding yourself that we're all in this together, and it's not going to be easy and there will be financial hurdles for many of us to address and employers unfortunately –

I was just reading this the other day. Some people that are just not really letting their employees get work from home or haven't figured out a system that works, and so the employees are going to work.

[00:26:59]

FT: Just to recap everything, so much great advice. Again, if everybody wants to get more from Pamela, go to her website, pamelapekerman.com/somoney. She's got a free download for you, but I'm looking forward to employing a lot of this. I need – This is kind of like a selfish reason to have had you on the show, because I'm at the beginning of this and I really need all the advice, so things like having a schedule, sticking to schedule, sticking to all of the rules and the framework and showing respect to your kids and vice versa. Very important.

It's an opportunity to also, if you're working at home with your partner, with your spouse, to really get more behind the scenes of their day-to-day and perhaps get closer through that. Although I will say I talk a lot for my job. My husband does not. He's a software developer, so I don't know how much that energy would mix in close quarters but I think I might annoy him a lot. But it's important to the extent that you can have breaks. Limit your work. You'll be more productive once you know you're going to have these three hours to work and only these three hours. You'll be surprised how much more you get done. Yeah, look at ways that you can maximize your skills online and turn that one revenue stream into three or four.

People are asking me right now, Pamela, "How can I recover once this is all over?" I'm like, "Don't wait for it to be all over to start making moves, right?" Use this opportunity now or not opportunity, but use this time now to create basically more freedom for yourself so that when this does subside and it will, that you'll be on the other side of it really equipped and hitting the ground running.

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PP: Yeah. My prediction aside from obviously that there will be in nine months from now a baby boom is that I believe that – It's going to happen. I believe that there will be an interesting up kick in entrepreneurs. I believe that people will realize that there is actually a benefit. Obviously,

once kids go back to school and things somewhat resume back to normal, there will be a benefit to working from home. I even think that some of employers might like it, because maybe that will lower some their cost of operation.

It's not going to work for everybody but, A, I think people will find their entrepreneurial – Their soul. B, I think a lot of employers will see that they can't function and have happier employees if they give them flexibility.

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FT: Here, here. Pamela, thanks so much for joining us. So timely. We really appreciate that you came on so quickly with all this relevant, timely advice. Good luck to you and your family and stay in touch.

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PP: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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FT: Thanks so much to Pamela. To download her free guide, go to pamelapekerman.com/somoney. You can learn more about her at pamelapekerman.com, and let me know how you are making and working from home work. Email me, farnoosh@somoneypodcast.com. I would love to include your advice in my upcoming content and videos to help us all navigate this and thrive. Thanks much for tuning in, everybody. More on Friday, answering your coronavirus-related questions. Don't miss out. I hope your day is So Money.

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