



Jemma

On a normal day I'm usually getting up, and getting the kids ready for school, heading to work... I work in marketing: the kids are getting a bit older: I've decided to do more hours so I've taken on a new job at work which is an events manager job, but at the moment I'm doing two jobs. It's almost like I'm being three people in one day: I'm the employee one minute, I'm the Mum when I get home and I'm a student in the evening.

I'm studying English language and literature degree. I was 24 when I decided to do distance learning, I was pregnant and I'd been made redundant. I've been studying for nearly six years now. I'm really lucky to have an incredibly supportive husband. He comes home in the evening, he knows that I'm studying, so he'll go in the kitchen and clean up. He's always tried to say to me, you know, 'Keep going. Keep doing it. You're doing the right thing. During my – what would have been my second or third year – I was pregnant, and I just found that I was falling asleep a lot while I was trying to study in the evenings. I had one day where my dad would take Josie, the eldest, just for a walk for me and I would sit there and read, so I had that time then during the day as well.

Around two years ago, my kids were obviously one and three years old, my husband was working nights. It was a really difficult time just to find the time to study. When I was struggling, I had to ask for some extensions and I contacted my tutor, who was really good at just saying I can have an extra week here, an extra week there where I needed and you know, they were really good at supporting that.

I think the first year, in terms of motivation, was easy but then as it's gone harder, it's been harder to stay motivated. One of the best things to do I've found to turn it around is to focus on aspects that you can find interesting. My advice to somebody who's maybe struggling with motivation would be that, you know, the end is in sight. Think about what – how good it'll feel when you finish, because that's certainly what drives me through.

One of the key drivers for me when I started the degree was that I wanted to be a role model to my children. You know, I wanted to be able to kind of come out at the end of it and say "Mummy's got a degree, look what I've done and look at how I've achieved it." My advice to a busy mum who's thinking about distance learning would be that, if you want to do it, you can find the time for it.

Often at big birthdays I suppose there's a sense of reflection of kind of what you've achieved, and there's a huge sense of achievement for me turning 30. So much has happened in those six years that I've been doing it, but it's been great: I've not regretted one moment of it now.

I feel like I'm a different person now than I was then. Things have been constantly changing, constantly moving, and I just hope that, you know, over the next six years, even though I'm not going to do another degree, I hope that I can achieve as much over the next period as what I've done in this period.

Go the distance.