



Lessons Learned
and applied
for our benefit.

All of us have experiences that shape us.

The question is... how? How do we allow them to shape us?

Does a trial or a difficulty make us stronger... or weaker? Does it build us up, or tear us down? Does it motivate us to heights that before seemed unimaginable, or stifle our dreams?

I believe we choose what events in our lives mean.

WE... give them their meaning.

In this short booklet, you'll find a series of events in my life that have shaped me and built certain beliefs.

Here's the cool part.

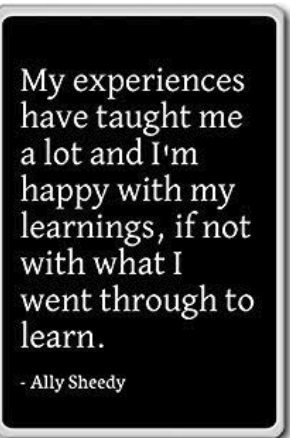
You can decide how my experience can shape you... and what beliefs you'll acquire.

Hopefully, they will shape you in a good way and build positive beliefs for you... just like they've done for me.

Enjoy.

Kyle Jetsel
Autism Dad & Husband

Oh, and PLEASE give me feedback.



One bad decision... one false move... and he plummets to his death.

Meet Alex Honnald. The world's most renowned free-solo climber.

What is a free-solo climber? It's a person that climbs mountains and cliffs (alone) with NO ropes. You read that right. NO ROPES or any kind of safety equipment that will protect them from a fall.

Nothing... nada... not a single thread of safety equipment.

And they climb the steepest, most sheer, freakin scary mountains you can imagine.

Like Yosemite's El Capitan; a 3,000-foot wall of granite:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96FUPTQeqYI>

How does he do it? By not panicking. "If you're properly trained, one sound, rock climbing decision is simply not that hard to make. Just keep doing what you are doing."



He says that he's not an especially powerful climber and his fingers aren't the best, but he has an amazing ability to keep from melting down. Thousands of times per climb, the choice is... make a good, sound rock-climbing decision...

Or DIE!

Does Alex get tired? Of course. Climbing a half-mile-tall, sheer cliff is exhausting.

Does Alex get nervous or scared? Absolutely.

Imagine you slide your hand in to a crevasse to get a hold and it has a spider in it with no place to go and ready to defend its space with a bite. It's happened.

Or you place your toes on a foot hold only to find it's wet with morning dew. Yep... slip... and you DIE!

But he doesn't panic. He doesn't melt down. He calmly turns to his training.

Time and time again, through hundreds of days of climbing per year, he does not die. One good little decision after another, many thousands of them, cling together to form the closest thing Honnald has to a safety net.

Just keep going and don't self-defeat.

Think about that. With THAT kind of sustained, consistent effort, Honnald says, REALLY hard things are doable.

LIKE... maybe raising kids on the spectrum... AND lowering stress and tension as you do it... AND restoring some sort of normalcy.

Can that be done? Is it even possible? By using Alex Honnald's formula, the answer is YES!

What were those steps again? Here you go.

Get trained, don't panic and make one sound, solid decision after another.

Here was OUR problem.

We knew what we SHOULD do. But when we got tired, or exhausted, or frustrated, or discouraged... we just COULDN'T do it.

We'd panic. We'd melt down.

I'll never forget the day I decided I'd refuse to panic. But just for one day...

No matter what happened - I made a commitment to stay calm and lean on the strategies and techniques I'd learned. I decided I'd use my training and not panic... and I found that - like Alex had said...

"One sound, decision - based on good training - is simply not that hard to make. One good little decision after another, after another."

That day - was incredible. Even though my son had a serious meltdown that day... we made it a fun day and ended the day with big-ole smiles on all our faces.

Then, I committed to just one more day... then just one more...

Sure, I got tired... even exhausted...

Sure, I had spiders bite my finger (over and over and over)...

Sure, there was dew all over the ledges making my journey slippery (especially when my son hit puberty and became a bit... well, violent) but I didn't melt down or panic.

I relied on my training and committed to the next sound decision.

But only the very next one.

Just like Alex.

And so far... I haven't died.

"THE THREE INNING RULE."

Have you ever just completely lost it with one of your children? They push the exact right buttons and send you over the edge?

Yeah, I know, I have too. And then afterwards you realize what you've done and you feel SOOOO bad because you know you shouldn't have yelled or overreacted or threatened to punish them for a year? I say "threatened" because you and I both know that it WON'T be a year, or even a month, or maybe even a week?

Am I the only one that has done that? If you've NEVER over-reacted please stop reading now... and START writing about how you've developed that much control and send me a copy when you're done so I can read it and learn from you.

But if you're like the rest of us, I'd like to share with you something I have learned to implement that I think may help. It's called the "three inning rule" and it's something I learned from... get this... playing competitive baseball as a kid. Let me explain:

When I was a young man playing more competitive baseball, I was typically a lead-off hitter.

That meant I was the very first hitter that went up to bat for our team. Since I knew my job was to get on base at all costs, I was very focused on just that.

There are 3 ways to get on base. First, and hardest, was to get a hit or get on base because of an error on the defense. Second, and a bit easier was to get them to throw 4 balls before 3 strikes so you could draw a walk. And the third and easiest (but also the most painful), way to get on base was to get HIT by a pitch.

That's right, guess who became an expert at getting HIT by pitches? Yep, it was me.

And no matter where I got hit, it always hurt. But instead of crying (which I wanted to do) I would turn the pain into anger. THAT way, I could retaliate by stealing a base, or spiking the second baseman.

I know, I know, it probably wasn't right, but at the time I felt somebody had to pay – since I was fuming and in pain – EVEN if it was my own fault.

In reaction to that anger – and in what I believe NOW was my coaches attempt to keep me from trying to brutalize some other poor little-leaguer – I had a coach teach me what he called the "three inning rule."

The "three inning rule" went like this.

You MUST wait three innings before you retaliate. At the time, the rule for me was... simply genius. I wasn't allowed to do anything until we were able to determine if I was hit on purpose.

If I WAS and we could determine that, I could retaliate – but ONLY after 3 innings of research. If I wasn't, and it was an accident (which it usually was – mostly because I crowded the plate) or we COULDN'T determine it was on purpose then we would label it “an accident” and I SHOULD NOT retaliate.

Simple huh? But the lesson I learned, and I still try to apply to this day is just like it was when my coach introduced the idea – simply genius.

When the pain was fresh, and the anger was full-tilt, I was hell-bent on retaliation no matter WHAT the reason. Three innings later when I was proudly showing off the growing bruise and the pain was subsiding, and I had (frequently) scored for our team, I was much more willing to let the accident slide.

Let me give you two examples of how I have learned to use the “three inning rule” in my life... and – in doing so – have SAVED myself from making what I believe may have been some big mistakes.

The first example was when my #2 son, me and my wife were all working together on a house-cleaning project. As we were working I made what – in my wife's mind – was a thoughtless mistake. As wives do, she “called me out” on it and... well... truthfully, she “TICKED ME OFF BAD.” Whether she meant to or not didn't matter. All that mattered was that I was seething.

Remember when I asked if your KIDS had ever just pushed the exact right buttons and sent you over the edge? Well, obviously, it can happen with spouses too, huh? Surprise, surprise?

BAM, the “three inning rule” kicked in for me full force, I kept my mouth shut and we finished the project. After a bit of internal seething, I calmed down, realized she really wasn't trying to be mean – more likely, it was a simple slip-of-the-tongue.

(Note: Later on, she even apologized – without it being initiated by me.) I avoided retaliating (for me, saying something I was SURE to regret) and the unintended consequences of what MAY have happened had I lashed out in anger were never realized.

One other really cool side effect was this: Later that day, I was confronted by my #2 son who said, “Wow, Dad. That was kinda mean of Mom.

Why did you let her get away with that?”

And I had a chance to explain to him that sometimes we say things we really don't mean and if I had fired back at her right then – when I was REALLY mad – I may have said something I didn't mean and caused a lot of additional problems.

THEN I had a chance to tell HIM about the “three inning rule” so he may be able to benefit from it sometime in his life. He said, “That's cool. I like that.”

WHOA! Now, let's back up. Did you catch that? My #2 son (all of 17 years old at the time) told me what I did was cool and that he liked it. Now, I'm not sure about you, but to me that is significant.

But this isn't really about my wife, right? So, how have I used this with my kids? Aside from the obvious (little kids whining, begging, crying for no reason – I'm sure you've got your own aggravations) there was a NEWER situation with my oldest son, Alek.

Keep in mind, Alek now had a year of college under his belt, he's lived on his own, worked hard to make money to live and pay for college, and all this – (sarcastically speaking) OBVIOUSLY – means he is much, MUCH, smarter than me.

Truthfully, I couldn't be prouder of Alek. He's an incredible young man. And I'm NOT saying that just because he's my son. Seriously, he's the kind of young man mothers want their daughters to marry.

But his independence and his "unheard of wisdom" for his age has fostered an unsavory side effect. He's also now an unqualified "KNOW-IT-ALL." Surprise, surprise, again?!

He is still a pleasure to be around, but it has become MUCH more common for him to talk down to myself and his mother, generally poo-poo any guidance or council we try and give, assertively disregard suggestions and often challenge what is being said and when discussions happen, aggressively defend his every (experience-limited) thought and decision.

Truth be told, I used to be able to playfully tease him about things (it WAS a two-way street because he'd simply tease me back) but now, since he's been back from college, I have had to completely stop playfully teasing because he seems to only get agitated by it now.

However, it is STILL – I guess in his mind – okay to goof on me. And THAT – having my son be able to dish-it-out... but NOT be able to take-it – has come off as real disrespectful. (And it's not just me – I have asked my wife and she has seen it too.)

And disrespecting me in my own home pushes me right up to the edge and has started to "TICK ME OFF BAD." Yep. You read that right.

Three Inning Rule, Three Inning Rule, THREE INNING RULE!

In my mind there is NOTHING that will TICK ME OFF, that will push my buttons and make me feel more like retaliating than a WISE-___, 19-year-old, know-it-all, typical kid, disrespecting me in my own home.

Three Inning Rule, Three Inning Rule, THREE INNING RULE!

Keep in mind, the LAST thing I want to do is just completely lose control and tip over the edge and say (or do) something that will drive him away, but dad-gummit, I'll be DANGED if I'm gonna just sit back and take this crap anymore.

Three Inning Rule, Three Inning Rule, THREE INNING RULE!

Seriously, I've been pushed to my extreme limit on a few occasions. Can you tell?

Hold on, slow down, Three Inning Rule, Three Inning Rule, three inning rule... aaaaaah...

(One Hour Later)

Okay, I'm back. Now that I've calmed down I want to share with you this:

It's really hard right when it's happening, but I am convinced (now that I'm calm) that it sure seems like getting defensive and DEMANDING respect WHILE IT'S HAPPENING is the WRONG thing to do.

What SEEMS to be the right thing to do is to now exhibit some patience. It SEEMS the only way now to have any ability to persuade him is to allow him to come to me when HE HAS decided I have something worth hearing.

YELLING AT HIM and telling him he's being disrespectful WHILE he's being disrespectful – I believe – will lead to unintended consequences... BAD unintended consequences.

I remember being his age, I remember wanting to be my own man, I remember expressing my contradictory opinions to MY father, and I vividly remember NEVER having him say to me – what I'm sure HE was thinking, "What a KNOT-HEAD kid. Does he realize how stupid and inexperienced he is?"

In retrospect, HAD he said something like this to me, it MAY have caused a serious strain on our relationship.

The example I saw, and my experience with my boys has led me to believe that we can never DEMAND respect from our children or FORCE them in to compliance with what we deem is "in their best interest."

The ONLY way we will have the ability to influence them is by patient persuasion, by selfless acts, by unconditional love, by being calm when they push our buttons, and by putting aside our own pride and hurt feelings.

And in just a few hours, THAT'S what I plan on doing.

Three Inning Rule, Three Inning Rule, THREE INNING RULE!

"Am I Delusional?" I Thought...

My wife and I love to watch "Kitchen Nightmare's" with Chef Ramsey.

If you haven't seen it - here's the pattern.

A restaurant is in REAL trouble - with very few patrons - they are losing money and they don't know why. Chef Ramsey comes in and asks the owners, "How's the food on a scale of 1-10. Typically, they reply with a VERY high number. Maybe a 7 or 8 they say.

Then... he tastes it.

And all HELL breaks loose because the food is horrible, and the restaurant owners are "blinded" by their belief. They BELIEVE the food is good - and maybe it WAS at one point... but not now.

Or they're "blinded" by their own "off-putting" management style. Everyone HATES them but won't tell them because then they'd be fired.

Their delusional "belief" won't allow any other option. It MUST be something else because it CAN'T be the food OR ME, they think. They've put "all their eggs" in their "the food is good at my restaurant" and "I'm a great owner" basket, that anything and anyone that challenges those belief's is going to have a real fight on their hands.



And each and every time their beliefs are challenged, they "fight back" with everything they have - even as all their results point to... YOUR FOOD IS DREADFUL and/or YOU'RE A JERK.

It's kinda sad...

For ME.

ME?

WHY? You may ask? Because I have some pretty seriously strong belief's in my life, too.

I have some belief's that if you challenged them, you'd be hard pressed to get agreement from me in any way, shape or form. You'd have a real fight on your hands.

So, here's the question I'm left asking myself. WHERE... am I delusional? In what parts of my life am I holding on to false beliefs that are hampering my ability to stretch and grow and get better results?

The last thing I want to do is get on Gordon Ramsey's possible "new" show.

Family Nightmare's.

Right?

I know it's a hard question to ask oneself... but how else are we going to uncover our flaws.

Because we all have them, right? RIGHT?

So, few nights ago, my wife and I had this discussion. It started at about 10:30 PM (I was about to go to bed but I shared my thoughts on this with her) and the discussion finally ended at about 12:30 AM.

She and I both were fascinated, interested and then... kinda nervous. Neither of us (even with each other's help - yep, in a kind way) were able to indentify any areas of delusion with ourselves or each other...

So, we decided we'd sleep on it and the next day the discussion continued.

Because we seemed to be lost in our own delusion (and couldn't see our flaws - are SURE SIGN of delusion, right?) we decided we'd use the same pattern for ourselves that Gordon Ramsey had used on his show, remember?

In what areas of our lives are we getting BAD RESULTS? In the case of the restaurants it was that their restaurant was losing money. THAT was the over-riding frustration. They were delusional about WHY?

So, where are we getting "not-so-good: results and what are OUR frustrations? What over-and-over cycles are we repeating that lead to frustration? And why.

Now, here's where you'd like me to share with you MY delusion, right? Because it's opened my eyes to some issues in my life that need work. I have some beliefs that I need to challenge for my own good...

But I'm not going to tell you what mine are. Nope, that's for ME to work on alone.

What I WILL tell you, however, is this...

Asking these kinds of questions is painful... and VERY revealing.

We're ALL messed up. Are we willing to face it? Are we willing to question beliefs that may be holding us back?

What's the worst thing that could happen? I could die trying?

It was just a few years before he passed away. My father – well in to his 70's – had telephoned me again with ANOTHER “get rich quick scheme” and was giddy with excitement to share it with me and see if I was... IN!

You've got to understand. Although my Dad had always been a great man, a great role model and had taught me more than any human alive – through the way he raised me, what he'd shared with me and through the way he lived his life and his example – there was still this one thing that kinda... sorta... drove me a bit... well, crazy.



My Dad, along with more virtues than I can name, had always been tempted by... that's right... “Get Rich Quick” schemes.

I'd watched for years – my whole life – as he'd find a new one... jumped on board with the joy of a kid in a candy store... worked at it a little bit... didn't see any results... and then repeated the cycle.

Over and over... and over.

At one point – I'm still not sure how – he even talked my Mom in to opening a store front wherein we stocked it – I'm sure with money we DIDN'T have – full of a pre-packaged food called Eureka. It was this “not necessary to refrigerate” MLM bag of space-age packed food you'd boil and eat (end of the world type stuff – at least it seemed to me) that was going to be the answer to all our financial prayers.

It wasn't.

And we were left eating boiled package after boiled package of “beef stroganoff.”

To this day, I CRINGE when I think of it. Want to see a weird reaction from me? Hand me a plate of beef stroganoff.

You name it – he tried it.

But it never worked. He never got rich. And here he was again... for the up-teenth time asking me to join him.

Lunacy... I thought internally.

In the most kind, respectful and loving way possible... I replied. “Hey Dad, don't you ever get tired of trying these “get rich quick” types of things? It sure seems they don't work.”

For a moment he paused... then I could almost HEAR the smile spread across his face as he said...

WHAT'S THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN? I COULD DIE TRYING?

I couldn't believe it. What!?

I left the conversation that day feeling frustrated... but unable to forget what he'd said...

My Dad? My wise old-man? The man I looked up to more than anyone? Why would he say that?

Dangit! What does he mean?

What's the worst thing that could happen? I could die trying?

But the more I thought about it, the less frustrated I became... and I became more... curious.

My curiosity then morphed in to fascination as I reviewed a few lessons my Father had modeled for me throughout his "wonderfully lived" life.

What I started to realize was this.

My Father believed that we should never give up... or give in... and he knew belief was one of the most powerful forces of human nature. Especially... belief in oneself.

I'll never forget when I was about 12 or 13 I had a conversation with my Dad after I had made a stupid mistake in a ball game that had cost my team a sure victory. Humiliated and embarrassed, I told my Dad that I wished the ball had never come to me; that way... maybe we would have won.

"No," my Dad told me. "If you're going to fail, fail on your own terms. Don't run and hide. Fight.

When things are going wrong you have 2 choices. One is to give up – and that will lead you to becoming something you don't want to be. The other option is to dig in and give it everything you've got. That's who you are... and that is what will lead you to happiness.

Contrary to what the world says, Kyle... results don't matter as much as effort."

There it was.

My Dad had more belief in my potential than I did. And he WASN'T going to idly sit and watch... he was going to TELL me... over and over and over... until I developed that same belief...

Until...

So, when my Dad said, "What's the worst thing that could happen? I could die trying?" He was simply LIVING what he'd taught me since I was a kid.

The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. His "quest" – no matter how ludicrous – was giving him hope and keeping him motivated and moving forward. It kept him happy and buoyant. He would NEVER give up or give in because THAT'S who he was – at his core.

A few years later my Dad passed away... and he died trying. And his message was not lost on me.

Or on HUNDREDS of others.

That's right. HUNDREDS who were in attendance at my Father's funeral seemed unable to contain their thoughts about how he'd ALWAYS left them with a smile on their faces.

When those that didn't know I was his son found out... I was bum-rushed as they COULDN'T WAIT to tell me how they'd positively affected their lives.

Over and over and over, I got hugs from people (a lot, I didn't even know) who described to me how he'd "spewed" happiness ALL OVER THEM.

My Father left a "wake" of happiness behind him. If you knew him, you loved him... and he left everyone he met a little happier, a little more elevated, and a LOT more uplifted.

He NEVER got rich financially, but he left behind something much more valuable. A legacy of people who WERE FORCED to feel his love and kindness and happiness. My Father ALWAYS seemed to understand...

What YOU GET... dies with you. But what YOU GIVE lasts forever.

AGAIN... I modeled him...

And decided that if something... anything... was important to me... I TOO, would be willing to die trying.

I have 2 sons on the autism spectrum. One of them is classified as more severe. He is still unable (or maybe unwilling) to show me much kindness no matter what I do.

I may never be able to help him conquer his meltdowns. I may never be able to help him effectively cope with the world around him.

I may never be able to help him live what many may seem to think is a typical life. I may never be able to help him experience the kinds of things that you and I take for granted.

But I can guarantee you this...

Just like my Dad... I will never give up or give in. I will go down fighting to the very last day to give my son every chance and every opportunity to experience as much joy and happiness as possible.

And just like my Dad, I'll be hopeful and happy and buoyant and spread as much joy as I can... as I go along for the ride.

My son has tremendous potential and I will always be by his side, quietly whispering... gently prodding... carefully leading... and always reiterating the belief I have in him until...

That's right... just like my Dad... I die trying.

And it WON'T be "the worst thing" that can happen... it will be...

The "BEST THING" THAT CAN HAPPEN.

They're bigger and faster and more athletic. I can't even get a shot off!

My Dad patiently listened as my 9-year-old self, complained about my basketball conundrum.

Then he said something that changed my life forever.

You need to understand, it was the late 1970's, there was a lot of racial tension in my neighborhood (or, what most people called, THE HOOD) and I was the only white kid who'd even DARE to force myself in to a game of hoops. I was determined I was going to be a star.

Who cares if I was white, couldn't jump, wasn't only slightly athletic, and was... well, - a STICK FIGURE - at best. C'mon, just look at the picture.

Well, THEY cared. There was NO WAY anyone was going to pick me on their team and if I DID get in a game they were going to make me PAY dearly... PHYSICALLY... and MENTALLY.

I was NOT "one of the gifted" on the playground courts of inner-city Dallas.

So, you can see why I was complaining.

Dad would have none of it.

When I finished my fuss-fest (that's what he later called it) he hugged me... told me he loved me... wiped away my tears and then, albeit in a kind and loving way, HE SAID IT!

DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER.

I didn't want to hear it then... but it BORED a hole in to my soul.

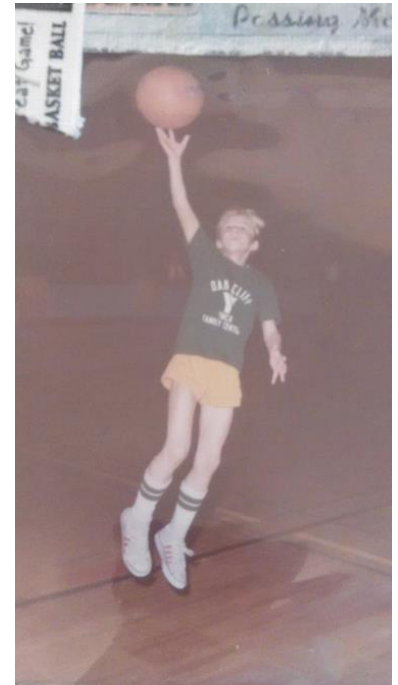
So, I went out and worked like a maniac. I mean, as much as a little, white, manic could.

It wasn't the LAST time I heard it... DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER. But it WAS the last time I heard it from him.

I heard it again and again - in my head - as I grew up and had difficulties arise in my life.

When times were really tough... DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER.

When life seemed too hard to handle... DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER.



When I considered walking out on my family because of the autism stress and tension... DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER.

Can you imagine?

Who says that to a 9-years-old?

I'll tell you who. My Dad. The wisest, most loving man I ever met.

My Dad has now passed. I miss him more than you can imagine.

But he's there with me every time I need him, whispering in my head... DON'T WISH IT WERE EASIER... WISH YOU WERE BETTER.

Let me now... whisper in your ear. The same way he did for me. In a loving, kind, helpful way.

Shhhhh... Listen closely (I'm whispering.) "Don't wish it were easier... wish you were better."

I hope it helps you as much as it helped that skinny, scrawny, unconfident, lost little 9-year-old stick figure named, "Kyle."

By the way, up until I quit playing basketball - in my late 40's - there was STILL no one that could guard me.

“I've got hundreds of autism books on my shelf. I've read em all. But I still don't seem to have the happiness in my home that you do. WHAT THE CRAP!?”

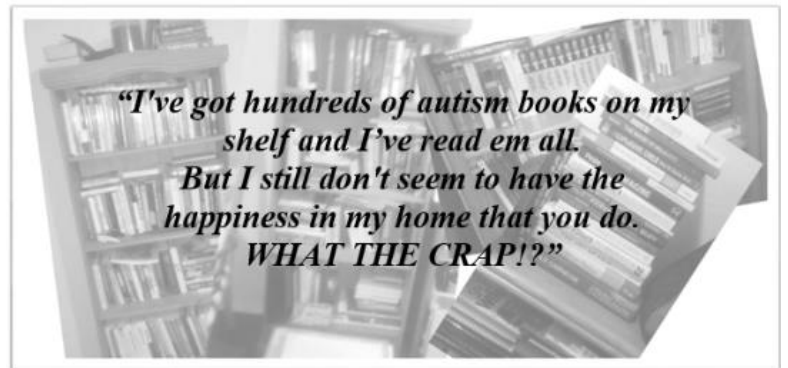
Yep, that's what Kaetlin said as we talked.

Too many of us autism parents think that the key to family happiness is consuming MORE information. It's so easy to slip into information overload.

It's everywhere, right? It bombards us daily from a million different angles every day:

- YouTube...
- Articles...
- Webinars...
- Books... more books... more books

I felt Kaetlin's pain. All those books you see in the picture - those are mine - I've read all of them... seriously... I get it.



But here's what's interesting...

Too much information WILL strangle and paralyze us... and keep us from applying what we've learned and reaching the family goal that we're pushing towards.

So... how do we protect ourselves from information overload?

How do we siphon out only the KEY nuggets of content that will push us further, faster...and shelve everything else that will cause overwhelm and confusion?

As I talked with Kaetlin, I couldn't help but be reminded of the difficulties we had trying to figure out WHAT to focus on that would give us the most "bang for the buck."

It took us YEARS to start to understand how to protect ourselves from information overload. Here's an excerpt from our free guide that explains the pains-taking way WE siphoned out what worked and what failed:

Once we started compiling all this great information we STILL had a problem in OUR family implementing it all.

First of all, the information was scattered. It was like I read the WHOLE "Harry Potter" series of books – all SEVEN of them – and was then asked to remember one detail from one book in the correct order – DURING a meltdown.

It was just too hard to implement. Especially for our family.

I couldn't even remember the information I needed to – when I needed to... and I was the one that had read all the books! How was I supposed to implement the right strategy at the right time? I couldn't.

Then I remembered a few years earlier when I had learned a valuable lesson about “internalizing” information and making it part of who we are as a person.

On this occasion I entered my boss' office to discuss a client. After making a few statements, my boss called me a PESSIMIST. “No, I'm a realist” I said. To which he replied, “That's what ALL pessimists call themselves. Realists.”

I was NOT happy.

I went out and found a book called, “the Power of Positive Thinking” and read it. BAM! There you go. “Now, I'm an optimist!” I thought... UNTIL... I found myself back in my boss' office discussing the same client a few weeks later.

After a few statements I THOUGHT were okay, my boss said it again. “There you go again... being pessimistic.”

Now, I was REALLY NOT happy. I'd already read the book, right? I KNEW the information. But I guess I hadn't internalized it...

So, I went back to my book and broke it apart in to ten separate lessons. Then I created a worksheet for each lesson and each week I focused on the specific worksheet and THAT ONE part of the lesson. Week 1, I printed out my worksheet and filled it in (and put it by my bead) and focused entirely on that one portion. Week 2, I did the same with lesson 2. Week 3, lesson 3.

On and on until after 10 weeks when I had covered each lesson. You get it, right?

But it didn't take that long for “others” to see the difference in me. You see, once I started placing a weekly focus on “ONE THING” that “one thing” became part of the core of who I was.

So, I thought, “Why not import THAT process in to our family. So, we did.

We started by creating a few rules for everything we discussed. First and foremost, we wanted to keep our focus on, “How can we effectively SERVE our boys on the spectrum and help them achieve their full potential.”

Our three rules became:

1. We will always do what's best for our kids on the spectrum... even if it's REALLY hard.
2. We will always do what's best for our family... even if it's REALLY hard.
3. We will always act in a “spirit of love.” ESPECIALLY when it's REALLY hard.

With these rules in place, every Sunday night we met as a family... and in fifteen minutes we did three things.

First, we asked ourselves, “What did we do RIGHT last week in association with our weekly focus?” Then, we asked ourselves, “What could we have done better?” And finally, we looked at our NEW weekly focus, each completed our worksheet and kept it next to our bed(s) so we could remember our focus for the week.

Make sense?

THAT'S how WE did it. For years and years - every Sunday night. We made mistakes, we learned what didn't work... and THEN... we learned what DID.

And that's what we kept.

Here's the GREAT NEWS for you. You don't have to spend all the years and read all the books anymore. We've done it for you.

Interested in knowing what we did. Reach out to us and ask.

P.S. Kaetlin is now THRILLED (her words) to be actually applying and getting results in her family.

What results do you want?

"If they kill you, you're in a better place."

He grinned sheepishly as he said it.

My Dad, the author of the ludicrous. Or was it... genius?!

I had just run home from basketball practice. More than a mile through what - at the time - was a TOUGH neighborhood... after dark... all by myself. Seriously, scary stuff.

It was my freshman year in high-school. I was all of 85 pounds, soaking wet. And, I was... an easy target.

So, there should be no question why I'd run, in a full sprint, that scary, mile past the 7-11 and the twelve hills apartments down Davis Blvd, cut through the corner church parking lot and then down Oak Cliff Blvd. and in to our house.

I was panting as I walked in, just happy to be alive and in one piece. Doubled over trying to catch my breath, my Dad walked in to the front room.

"Why are you breathing so hard?" He asked.

"I just ran home from basketball." I said, through heaves of breath.

"All the way from the school? Dang, that's kinda far. Why are you running?"

I looked at him with what must have been a sarcastic, yet respectful expression."

"Really, Dad? We don't live in the best neighborhood. I'm kinda scared I'll get caught and get beat up."

Somehow, I think... in hindsight... he must have known I was ready for his "pearls of wisdom" when he grinned and said, "You've been beat up before and you're all right. Stop running scared. Stand up straight and proud and stop looking like a victim. You're better than that."

As he turned to leave I ramped up - maybe looking for some sympathy - and said, "Well, what if they kill me?"

He stopped cold in his tracks, turned and asked me, "Are you being good, you're doing what you're supposed to, aren't you?"



When I said yes, he said it - yep... with a sheepish grin he said... "Then you'll be in a better place. You can't live in fear. Go get em, son."

I was shocked.

I was... honestly... a bit upset. It seemed ridiculous. It seemed cold and harsh. Where was the concern, the love the empathy?

I knew my Dad loved me... a lot. I knew he cared... a lot. I knew he wanted what was best for me. But this?

So, I started to think about what he'd said.

"Stop running scared. Stand up straight and proud and stop looking like a victim. You're better than that."

The more I thought about it the more I realized how "right" he was. I was energized by his confidence in me. I DID need to stop running scared. I'd never be a victim again. I was going to face my fear and step in to it.

It became a part of who I was.

When I felt the fear... any fear... I stood up straight, stepped in to it, and learned that I could face and conquer it.

And looking back, it led me to the most memorable moments of my life.

Geez, I could tell you stories of the things I did that I should have been too afraid to try.

To give you a quick idea...

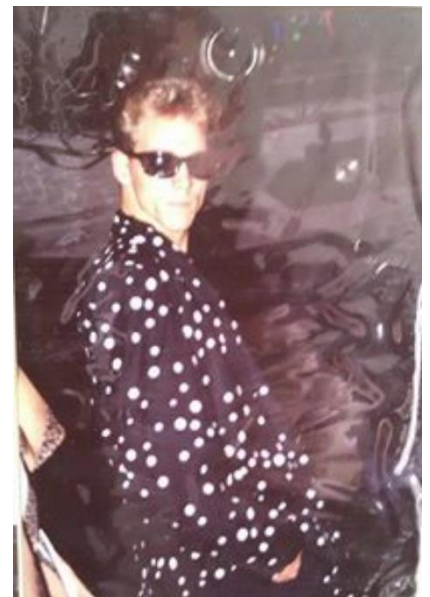
I runway modeled (that was a doozy - ask my wife about that one); I boxed for a few years (bad idea but SO many great memories); I tackled a guy twice my size - and held him down until they arrived - when he was running from the cops (they were VERY unhappy about that and threatened to arrest me, too); I even took a bus trip from Dallas to Chicago and back - all by myself - when I was 14.

But the two biggest fears I ever faced were also the two that provided me with the most long-lasting joy and happiness I've ever experienced.

The first huge fear was proposing to my wife almost more than 27 years ago.

It's been said that 80% of your happiness will be determined by who you marry. I married UP. I had no reason or belief to aim so high - and the fear was overwhelming that she'd see through to my terribly flawed inner self.

But I stepped in to the fear and asked...



The second huge fear was when our family was in peril. The stress of raising a family with two boys on the autism spectrum was ripping us apart. I was ready to leave. I was afraid this was my new life and I was afraid there was nothing I could do.

So... I stepped in to the fear, faced it head-on, and worked to bring back the joy and restore the happiness we deserved as a family.

Now, our family brings us more joy and happiness than I could have ever imagined was even possible.

All because of my Dad... Yep, my Dad, the ludicrous... genius.

His formula was SO simple... but SO effective.

What's the best way to put an end to self-doubt?

Do what you're afraid of...

Feel the fear... and then do it anyway.

And obviously, I haven't died.

But when I do... I'll be in a better place. And I CAN'T WAIT to see my Dad.

He's there right now... waiting for me... sheepishly grinning, I'm sure.

I'm Starting to Look Forward To It!?

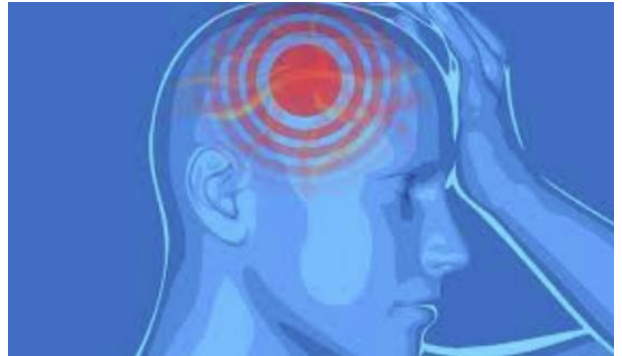
I really do believe that adversity makes us stronger. But something happened to me recently that's freaking me out a bit; AND, is starting to make me think – AGAIN – that I may be a bit... well, a bit OFF.

Check this out. Awhile back, I was in a serious car accident. Although pretty messed up – WHILE I was in the hospital with a neck brace on and in some reasonably uncomfortable pain – I found myself feeling grateful and planning the ways I was going to turn the difficulty in to triumph.

Now, that's not all that weird. A lot of people, I believe, try to find the silver lining in things that happen to them. But the situation I found myself in next is where I started to freak out a bit. Here's what's happening.

For those of you that don't know, I suffer from migraine headaches that average about one a week since I was 12. Although I manage them pretty well and am able to cope and function semi-normally when they happen, I still DREAD them.

It is exhausting. I especially dread them when they happen on Tuesday, which happens to be the night I meet a bunch of friends to play pick-up basketball. Try doing anything with a migraine – much less play basketball – with a migraine, and you'll know it's especially difficult.



Here's what you should KNOW.

I never have, and I never will look forward to the adversity of a migraine headache. It's a curse, NOT a chance to experience adversity so I can get stronger. I don't get it – I don't get what I'm supposed to learn from it – and I don't see how I can use it to help someone else by having migraine headaches – I'm just sick and tired of it.

BUT... recently... on a Tuesday... I felt a migraine coming on... and before I could even think about the DREAD of trying to hoop with a headache... I found myself thinking...

“Crap, I think I feel a headache coming on. Dangit, tonight is basketball. Forget this crap – I don't care if I get one or not because TONIGHT, if I get a migraine, I'm gonna play ball like nobody's business. TONIGHT is the night I'm going to defeat these migraines by facing them head-on. Bring it, migraine!!!”

Say what?! What did I just say?!

Let me tell you something about myself. Although I believe that adversity makes us stronger, I am NOT the guy that challenges nature. I KNOW I'll have my share of difficulties, but I don't really want to INVITE them upon myself. I'm not one to look for adversity opportunity. And I can't imagine anyone would.

But didn't my thought process – i.e.: Bring it, migraine!!!" – sound like I was "talking trash" to the powers that be. Did I just "TAUNT" the God of Adversity?

Let's get this out of the way right now.

Oh, God of Adversity.

Please forgive me.

Sometimes I think and even say things that are stupid, irresponsible and down-right wrong.

I do not seek after Thy wrath nor do I challenge Thy authority. (Using "Thy" – and capitalizing "Thy" as a show of obvious respect and reverence.)

Sometimes I get a bit arrogant but understand I am a mere mortal and prostrate myself at Thy power and Thy glory. Amen.

I'll let you know how this goes.

You Look Like a Model

Seriously, whether you are aware of it or not, you are a model – to your children. They generally learn their behavior, their mood, their ways of thinking and how they go about their business due to the way they see you do things.

Let me give two examples.

I – believe it or not – used to be a yeller. I yelled way too much. I know, I know, it's hard to believe but it's true. I think it's because I grew up in a home of yellers. I'm not making excuses because there are none, but the reason I used to yell is because it was effective. Things get done and kids straighten up when Dad yelled.

Here's when I realized it was no longer a good idea – even if it DID get results. One day when she was very young, Chloe, my sweet little – ONLY – girl got a bit upset at me for something and got heated up to a point where she exploded and started to YELL at me. In response I said, "Don't you yell at me little girl." To which she responded, "Don't you yell at me, big Daddy."

WHOA, from the mouths of babes, huh? Look in the mirror, Kyle.

Another time one of my boys – as he was asked to do something he didn't want to go do – said, "I don't want to go do this. It's really boring and a waste of my time." At the time I was a bit confused by his defiant attitude until a few weeks later when I heard MYSELF – when asked to attend ANOTHER, in my mind, unnecessary meeting – say to my wife in a complaining manor, "Seriously, another meeting? How many of these things are they going to call? I'm not going to any more unnecessary meetings."

There you have it – a teenager modeling his father's defiant behavior. Look in the mirror, Kyle.

Believe me, I have known this was the case from way back and had seen it many times – in OTHER parent-child relationships but had always either ignored or just plain rejected the idea in myself.

Maybe because no one likes to admit that THEY are the reason their children may be having issues. It's a tough pill to swallow.

Like I said, it's EASY to see and EASY to identify – maybe because it's less painful for us – in other's parent-child relationships than it is in our own.

I'll give you two examples – one that was a bit less dramatic and one that was VERY dramatic.

The first one involved a good buddy and his 5-year-old son who was a bit disrespectful to my buddy's wife. Once it got to be a bit too much for my buddy to take any more, he asked me a question by saying, "Hey, Kyle, my son is being disrespectful to his Mom.

Any ideas - because I don't really see that (Alek, my son, was 5 as well at the time) with your son?"

After asking him if he REALLY wanted to know and him saying YES, I answered simply by asking him a question. "Have you ever listened to the way you talk to your wife?"

At first, he was shocked, then a bit angered, then a bit confused. "Am I disrespectful to my wife?" He asked. "I don't know, are you?" I replied.

After a bit of self-introspection he decided he could be more respectful and set a new tone for how his son SHOULD talk to his wife. He decided HE would MODEL correct behavior.

I'm happy to say that a few years later he approached me at a birthday party and told me that based on his new approach towards his wife, HE was happier, HIS WIFE was happier, and his SON had figured out that treating his Mom better made HIM happier. Cool, huh?

In another more dramatic example, another set of parents I know (I'm reasonably close to them – at least for now – as telling this story may be risky) has an adult daughter that was involved in a "getting more abusive" relationship with her boyfriend.

I won't go so far as to say she was getting hit, but she had experienced some bumps and bruises. Her father was – as any father would be – furious and ready to pull out the gun as he said, "Why would she allow him to do that to her? She's better than that. Why won't she just END the relationship? Why does she keep taking him back?"

She (his daughter) answers all these questions with just four words: "Because, I love him."

Now, I don't want you to think I'm casting dispersions here, because I'm not. But I do want to give you as vivid a picture as I can, in regard to this couple's relationship with their daughter.

First, they LOVE her and are great and very generous parents to her. They have sent her to 3 or 4 different trade schools and colleges to help her discover a career. Each time she either finishes or drops out they accept her back and take care of her with loving, open arms.

Even as she gets older and wrecks the cars they buy for her (they buy her a new one) or spends more money than she earns (they bail her out of financial trouble) they always take her back, take care of her and love her. Because THAT'S what unconditional love is, right?

Did you catch that? Their love for her is UNCONDITIONAL. No matter what she does, they accept her back and take care of her because of love. Love is beautiful isn't it?

So, here's the question. Is it possible (through modeling) that she has been taught that if you LOVE someone, you should keep taking care of them and accepting them back no matter what they do?

Does she keep accepting back her bad boyfriend and taking care of him no matter what he does because she too is showing what she considers to be... unconditional love? I'm simply asking a question – NOT making a statement.

The truth is, I know how harsh that sounds, and I'd risk losing my friends if I actually mentioned my theory – and that's all that it is (a theory) – to them. But is that a possibility?

And if it IS a possibility and they decide there's a need (for her sake) to try and CHANGE the way they model unconditional love, what do you think may happen to their relationship with their daughter?

That's right, there would be some SERIOUS, SERIOUS, backlash.

Now before you start to believe I'm too critical of myself or others when it comes to modeling, that not the point. The point is simply to "Look in the mirror, Kyle."

Keep in mind, I realize our children don't learn EVERYTHING from us – I know they are affected by other people as well, especially friends.

I know they have the ability to model others as well as us.

I'm just saying if you want happy kids, it makes sense to model happiness. If you want motivated kids, it makes sense to model motivation. If you want respectful kids, it makes sense to model respectfulness. You get the idea.

The first time I heard my (17-year-old at the time) son speak to a group of parents whose children were affected by autism I was SHOCKED. I had no idea WHAT he was going to talk about going in to the event.

He had been asked to speak on HIS perspective (the perspective of an older brother who had 2 little brothers affected by autism) and I was prepared for the worst.

I was prepared to hear maybe how we relied on him too much; maybe how hard it was; maybe how we spent so much time and energy with his 2 little brothers with special needs that he didn't get the attention he needed; maybe even how he felt LESS LOVED than his brothers.

Again, I was prepared for the worst and was ready to take notes and try to repair the damage we may have done and restore his understanding of how much we loved him.

But that's not what he talked about at all. He talked about THIS: <https://thriveinchaos.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/At17.pdf>

If you read his eBook you'll see he focused on joy, finding laughter and finding hope in our home. It wasn't until after the event when I was approached by a complete stranger who said, "I can tell he's your son. His approach to what happens is JUST LIKE YOURS" that it even occurred to me (DUH) that he had picked up on our families' positive approach to facing difficulties.

It seems they don't just model our BAD habits, but maybe even some of our – for me, maybe few and far between – good habits.

Here's all I'm asking us to do.

The next time our child does something that we do not like, or we think we need to help him or her change, let's look in the mirror and ask ourselves, "Did he or she learn this behavior from me?"

But don't stop there. Look inside yourself and ask WHERE you may have exhibited similar behavior. Just because we're the adults doesn't mean we have it all figured out.

Listen, we ALL want to help our children grow to be happy, healthy, productive and kind adults.

Maybe we should “start ourselves” growing to be happy, healthy, productive, kind adults. Think about it?

There is no magic... in magic.

A few years back I was approached by a good friend's wife, who handed me a book and said, "Kyle, could you read this book and 'peel out' the good stuff for me? I don't have time right now to read the whole thing but know you're an avid reader. Would you mind?"

Although I didn't say "no" as I reached forward to grab the book – hey, it looked like a good one – I was (at least internally) SHOCKED at her request for a few "very specific" reasons.

First, the book was called, "Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World." At the time it seemed weird to me because (from the outside at least) it appeared – based on our conversations – that this MAY be an issue for their family and you would THINK she'd want to read it herself.

Second, I appreciated the thought that she trusted my judgment, but what made her think I could do a better job than her of identifying the "cliff notes" that would be most valuable – OR, that I had the time to read a book FOR her.

It led me to a few thoughts.

First: There is no MAGIC to magic.

Think about it. If it's REALLY magic, then it can't be explained... IT'S MAGIC.

But if it CAN be explained... and ALL magic can (remember the T.V. show called, Magic's Biggest Secrets Finally Revealed?) then you know that all "so-called magic" is a series of illusions and steps that lead to a desired result.

Once you learn the steps and acquire the skills you can do it.

Here's the magic to magic. You MUST acquire the skills for yourself and you MUST implement the steps yourself.

Second: Anything worth doing is worth YOU doing.

If YOU won't take the time to do it yourself, then it's not worth doing and you won't do it.

This book – for instance – is STILL on my shelf, unopened. "I guess it wasn't worth doing for me – OR for her, huh?"



This may sound harsh, and I don't want it to, but I find it interesting when folks complain about their "plight in life" and then do nothing to change their plight. As if complaining about it will fix it.

At least my friend's wife bought a book and gave it to me with a request. Even still, even if she HAD read the book, she would still need to do the hard part – and THAT is to implement what she learned.

I believe people like to think of "the lucky ones" or "the successful ones" as being pre-ordained and as having "a simple path." But in fact, most – if not all – marches toward good results are usually characterized by a slow and sometimes painful – sometimes monotonous – slog toward the finish line.

Most accomplishments in our world are the result of many, many small moments where we make simple good decisions.

The Hollywood versions of events (overnight success stories) are simply Hollywood versions of events. But in real-life, if you want to get the best possible results, it's a long path of putting one solid day of decisions after the other. Then (read sarcastically) it all comes together "OVERNIGHT!"

You're familiar with Jerry Seinfeld, right.

At the height of his career he was demanding – and getting – more than a million dollars an episode to film his sitcom.

Jerry Seinfeld SEEMED to be... that's right... one of "the lucky ones" or "the successful ones" that was pre-ordained and had "a simple path to overnight success." Nothing could be further from the truth.

As a matter of fact, Jerry Seinfeld is famous for sharing HIS secret, which is essentially that there is NO SECRET.

In Las Vegas every year they have a comedy convention where they have agents and managers and talent scouts who do seminars and have discussion groups where the objective is to help the comedians advance their careers.

When asked about the convention, Jerry Seinfeld had this to say.

"I would like to be in charge of that thing. I would get rid of all those people and I would bring all the comedians into a big room and I'd have a huge banner come down that says, JUST WORK! And I'd send everyone home. Everyone wants to know if there's some way of getting around all the work and I'm here to tell you: NO! If you want to walk the tightrope, that's what it takes."

It's not one step that's hard, or another step that's hard, or that ANY one step that is hard.

What can be hard is putting all those steps together. Anyone can get up and go to work one day – do it for 20 years and it's an accomplishment.

You can commit to being nice one-day, all day long – but do it for 20 years and you are a freakin saint. (Obviously, using the word "freakin" means I'm not.)

Many, many things in life are easy to do once, but nearly impossible to do forever.

And that leads in to my final thought which is this...

Third: I am SICK and TIRED of all the “One Minute” crap out there.

I’ve had it with this whole “One Minute” series of books and audio programs. There’s the “One-Minute Manager” the “One-Minute Millionaire” the “One-Minute Father” and the “One-Minute Entrepreneur” just to name a few.

FYI: It took ME a lot longer than one-minute to review each of them.

Nothing worthwhile can be condensed in to one minute. And believing the idea that all our problems can be solved “in one minute” or that there’s “a secret to success” or that you can give someone else a book, have them read it for you, and give you the “cliff notes version” and achieve anything is bordering on delirium.

Doing things the “right way” over and over and over... and over and over and over forever, is not easy, but in the long run it’s beautiful and will ALWAYS produce the “right” results.

Others will think it’s an overnight success story. Let them think that. You’ll know better.

I saw this sign and immediately relived the moment my wife (hesitantly) encouraged me to engage with her in "lowering stress" in our home AS we raised our kids.

I was becoming more absent (because it was easier than facing the turmoil) less of a father and husband to her and my other kids and was more a part of the problem than part of the solution.

My wife is an angel.

She helped me understand that by facing the problem and taking the right actions, we could get happier.

She also made me realize (I'm not even sure how) that by putting my family first... and serving them unconditionally, I could become my happiest self.

She was right.

I've never been happier, WE'VE never been happier, and our family is THRIVING.

P.S. We can show you what we did that worked... and is helping other families do the same. Just sayin...



“You don’t have a problem... you have OPTIONS!”

That’s what my Mom said when I went to her with a “serious” life decision.

I had just turned 16, and was ready to start dating, but I had, what I thought, was a serious problem.

Theresa and Sydney, both beautiful, both sweet, both seemingly interested in me. What should I do? Who should I date?

My Mom had noticed a change in me. Something “serious” was on my mind.



She sat me down and asked, “What’s going on, Kyle. You seem different.”

“I have a problem, I don’t know what to do?” Then I laid out all the ghastly details.

That’s when she said it.

“You don’t have a problem... you have OPTIONS!”

She was right then... and she was right so many times after... even though I never heard her say it to me again.

It became a way I looked at many problems... I mean, OPTIONS, in my life and changed my approach to how I handled difficulties.

“What are my options”, I’d ask myself when things got tricky. Instead of being “stuck” in a problem and not knowing what to do, I was now asking a question that demanded “thought” and “action.”

“What are my options?”

It’s an interesting way to look at problems, isn’t it?

So, here’s the question. WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

Anytime we have what we believe to be problems, can we ask this question? Because there’s ALWAYS something we can do... IF... we’re willing to “think” and “take action.”

So, here’s another question.

If there’s too much stress in your home, what are your options?

If you've tried everything the experts had suggested... LIKE WE DID... and it hasn't helped you either... LIKE US...

Maybe it's time to try something TOTALLY DIFFERENT.

It's what WE did that lead to our happiness and what we're now sharing with other families that is leading THEM to happiness


It's the "option" that has worked wonders for families – just like yours – who are "Battling Autism Stress."

Oh, and... "Thanks, Mom."

No one loves you like your Mom. No one CAN love you like your Mom.

If you want to be THAT kind of Mom to YOUR kids. Don't give up. Don't see your problems as problems and get stuck.

Do what MY Mom says to do and ask yourself, "What Are My Options."



There he was.

My 17-year-old son (on the autism spectrum) sprawled out on the floor... kicking and screaming... in full-on... EXPLOSIVE... melt-down mode.

Right in the front of the cashier's stations in Walmart.

With everyone staring and - quite likely - passing serious judgment...

A thought crossed my mind.

And it wasn't what you might think.

It started like any other trip to Walmart. The same kind we make multiple times a week. Hey, when your family goes through 15 gallons of milk a week, you're at Walmart what seems like every other day.

This time, my 17-year-old son had decided he'd go - so in addition to all the normal groceries, we were NOW fully stocked up on chocolate-chip pop-tarts, corn chips, strawberry syrup for his milk... and eggs (all his favorites.)

But from the very beginning, I could tell something was "not quite right."

Grumpier than normal, I could see him tipping more and more towards... the dreaded...

PUBLIC MELTDOWN.

I tried to hurry without being too obvious.

We ALMOST made it.

But then... as the cashier finished up... beep, beep, beep, as she scanned the last few items...it HAPPENED. And it was INCREDIBLY LOUD.

My son was triggered and completely lost it and went in to a FULL-BLOWN, EXPLOSIVE! melt-down.

AS he dropped to the floor with a loud scream and started kicking and screaming... ALL EYES... in what seemed like the whole store... were focused on us.

And it got worse.

So... I sat down on the floor next to him - real close - to comfort him. That's when the thought crossed my mind...

And I - but only internally - screamed it to myself...

"WHEN HE IS AT HIS WORST, IS WHEN HE NEEDS ME AT MY BEST."

Even as I noticed what appeared to be "the whole freakin store" standing nearby... craning their necks to see what the heck was going on... and watching... and judging.

I couldn't help but notice the "look of horror" many had on their faces as they watched a 17-year-old, scream and cry and kick... and a father who is sitting next to him trying to hug and love on him.



I could only imagine what was going through many of their minds about how horrible of a parent I was and what kind of father lets his 17-year-old son, throw "a fit" in Walmart.

What kind of father am I?

As I looked up and saw clear disgust in people faces... I defiantly thought. "I DON'T CARE."

What I cared about at that moment... was that my son knew that I LOVED him.

I didn't care about anything else... but the fact that he knew I was there for him - and that HE was more important than anything else - at that very moment.

So, for the next few minutes - what seemed like an hour - he was VERY unhappy. But eventually, I was able to sit him up and start to calm him. Once he settled down a bit, a Walmart cashier - carefully - came up to us and said, "Is your son on the autism spectrum?"

When I replied, "Yes, he is" she said to me, "If I EVER see anybody do that to you again, I'm going to PUNCH EM RIGHT IN THE MOUTH!"

Imagine that. A sweet little-old-lady-cashier wanting to defend me and my son - because she KNEW.

So, I calmly replied to her, "Please, no. They don't have any idea what we're going through. They don't understand. "

Then she asked me a curious question. "How can you keep from "lashing out" at those people for their judgment of you and your son?"

I didn't have time to explain it right then, but I want to tell you this...

When we can focus on the well-being of our kids and push our ego's aside... the rest of the world doesn't matter so much.

I would hope that I wouldn't judge other people. I think by nature, we're ALL a little bit judgmental, aren't we? But I would hope if I saw something like that happen, that I wouldn't be. But if I DID judge, then I would have to classify myself as pretty ignorant for doing that.

Because I - just like them - don't know what other people are dealing with...

Those people didn't know our unique situation - they didn't understand - and we CAN - and SHOULD - easily forgive.

Listen, we survived THAT meltdown and many before. And I want you to know that it's going to be okay.

Because, when we can put our kids on the spectrum first... when they know we love them more than we love anything... when we show them that when times get tough, we'll be there for them, patiently loving them...

They FEEL that... and everything's going to be okay.

I don't imagine it will never happen again... because it might. It won't surprise me if it does.

But I know how to manage it... and you can manage it, too.

Many of us have these kinds of experiences, but if we manage ourselves in a way that's best for our kids, they will FEEL our love - and that's the most important thing.

Still... a small part of me would have loved to see that little-old-lady-cashier... "drop a sucka like a sack a dirt."

Can you imagine?

There I was... about to get involved in a nasty “ROAD RAGE” incident.

It started like any other normal weekday. I had just dropped off my kids at school and rolled up to a stop at a 4-way stop sign right near the elementary... just as a truck stopped at the intersection to my left – at the exact same moment.

I knew the law. At a four-way stop if two vehicles reach the intersection simultaneously, the vehicle on the left must yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right.

So, like any good, law abiding citizen, I cautiously inched out in to the intersection and started on my way. Not so fast, Kyle.

The truck screeched his tires as he turned left in behind me – barely missed clipping the tail end of my car and pulled alongside me with FURY in his eyes and SWEAR WORDS on his lips.

I glanced over and realized... this could get ugly fast.

He was OUT OF CONTROL ANGRY... and I can handle myself just fine. I mean, I’d spent 4 years boxing and was in peak physical condition. This dude had BETTER take it down a notch, I thought internally.

I glanced over again to see – and again hear (through my, and his, closed windows) a spewing forth of swear words that would make a sailor blush.

Just like any red-blooded, American man would do, I sized up the situation. He was WAY-TOO-CLOSE to the steering wheel to be a man of any size (and I’m not a small man) and if he’s “out-of-control-mad” I knew he’d be easy prey if... “IT ALL WENT DOWN!”

As we rolled up to the next stop-sign, side-by-side...

I considered...

Then I rolled down my window – just as he did – and I craned my neck in his direction and calmly said,

“If I did something to upset you, I sure am sorry. It wasn’t my intent at all. ARE YOU OKAY?”

Wait!? What!?

The OVERWHELMING FURY in his eyes... well...

It absolutely disappeared in an instant.

He composed himself and said, “oh... well... that’s okay.”

And he drove off.

For a moment I sat there in stunned silence. THEN... my mind started racing. What had just happened? And how can I use this to my advantage? You know me, right? I'm always trying to – what my wife calls – “figure crap out.”

The very next day... yep, the VERY NEXT DAY, I rolled up to the same stop sign at the same time and guess who rolled up at the same time... again? That's right... TINY, ANGRY, truck driver guy.

Well, I sure wasn't going to make THAT mistake again, so I politely waved to him to go ahead.

Can you guess what he did?

He smiled from ear-to-ear and waved back at me, “no, you go ahead.”

Wait!? What!?

All of a sudden, we were now... “best of buddies?”

Wait!? What!?


So, here's the question I asked myself – because it worked so well to de-escalate a situation – and because my only sacrifice WAS MY OVERGROWN EGO...

How can I use this in MY family? Maybe with my kids on the autism spectrum?

What do you think my answer was? REALLY?

Now it's YOUR turn.

Go.



Then he did it.

During a meltdown, my son on the spectrum took a swing at me. Unable to duck out of the way in time, the punch caught me square in the side of the head - hard enough that blood starting dripping from my ear. Fireworks of pain went off in my head, and a familiar kind of fury started to boil over.

You've got to understand. Where I came from... you fight fire... with fire.

I came from a tough neighborhood. A neighborhood wherein if you DIDN'T express your masculinity in toughness, you would become a victim. Inner-city Dallas - in an area called, "Oak Cliff" was a sketchy neighborhood in the late 70's and early 80's.

In an area less than a mile from where I grew up, it was reported that in 1980, the "Twelve Hills" apartment complexes had some of the highest crime rates in America.

And that's exactly where my best friend and I, Gary Phillips, had spent the Summer's doing what we called, "Pool Hopping."

That's right, the heat of Texas Summers was SO blistering, we'd (literally) risk our lives going from complex to complex and diving in. NO, we didn't live there, but until we got "caught" we were as wet as any others kids.

"Caught" could mean one of two things. The "best" scenario was that the management came out and asked us to leave because we didn't live there. The "worst" scenario was that other kids would "COMPEL" us to leave... usually through force... and THAT scenario played out more than any other.

That's why we called it "pool hopping." There were 12 complexes... 12 pools... and until we'd been expelled from all... we were traveling to the next waterhole.

Occasionally, violence would erupt. More often than not, it was Gary and I that were left bloodied and bruised. But not until after we'd taken our own shots at the other kids.

More often than not, we didn't throw the first punch. But the pain always seemed to tip us in to some kind of vicious fury.

Neither Gary nor I were big kids, but we made up for it with heart... and commitment... once the pain tipped us in to that fury.

We dished out a few butt-whoopings. And yeah, we took a few butt-whoopings. Okay, maybe more than a few. We TOOK a lot more butt-whoopings.

But NOTHING ever prepared me for when my son on the autism spectrum, hit puberty. I understood why adversaries might take a shot at me... but... MY OWN SON?

But he did. That day.

He took that swing.

And even though I was quick enough to duck, that punch caught me full-force in the head and blood was dripping from my ear.

An explosion of pain went off in my head, and a familiar kind of fury started to boil over.

But this time I caught myself.

I made a different choice.

I refused to get sucked into the conflict.

Instead of striking back, I looked at my son through tears of sadness and in a gentle, almost pleading voice said...

"Please don't hit me. I love you."

It was a turning point in both our lives.

THAT was the day I learned that I had the capacity to manage my emotions. He didn't. At least not at that point in his life. And knowing I could manage my emotions - no matter WHAT was happening in my life - has been an absolute blessing to both of us... in more ways than I can possibly express.

So, this morning, I was washing dishes with my "Scrub Daddy." I love his bright "never-ceasing" smile.

No matter how hot or cold I make the water, no matter how hard or soft I scrub, no matter how much soap I drown him in, he keeps smiling. He manages his emotions beautifully.

But THIS morning as I scrubbed out a small cup full of left behind ketchup, I noticed "my buddy" with - what looked like - blood running down his face... but STILL smiling.

Memories of that painful experience flooded my mind and the same kind of tears filled my eyes. But they were only the same because they were wet and streaming from my steel-blue eyes.

They were no longer tears of sadness, rather they were tears of joy for the lessons learned and the happiness we now have in our family.

Thanks, Scrub Daddy, for reminding me...

That it is a beautiful moment when we start to realize our "worst days" are truly our "best days" because THAT'S when we're stretched and forced to grow.



We all have events in our lives that seem to feel like a complete injustice and we all have an understanding of some sort of crushing weight.

But as we lift that weight, we become stronger and stronger. I'm not saying it's not painful, because it is. It's not easy to lift the weight of pain and suffering.

Thanks, Scrub Daddy, for reminding me...

That as we lift the weight attempting to crush us; when we resist letting it "press us down" and create hope and faith that things will get better... that's the day our lives change, and we can start to give a gift to others because of our deep UNDERSTANDING of pain and suffering.

Thanks, Scrub Daddy, for reminding me...

The problems we have are gifts. If wasn't for all that stuff that is so hard and that we hate the most, we wouldn't have what we LOVE the most.

Thanks, Scrub Daddy, for reminding me...

AND, for your bright, happy (bloody) smile.

I SLAMMED on my breaks and stopped within inches of the mini-van in front of me. Glancing in to my rear-view mirror, I thought, "This could be bad if someone is following too close behi..."

Before I could finish the thought... SMASH!

Knocked completely unconscious for "I don't know" how long.

Until a guy tapped on my window and SCREAMED, "Oh my gosh, are you okay" and I regained consciousness only to have a WAVE of pain SHOOT through my left arm and the entire left side of my body.



THEN... I remember without being able to hold back, letting out a horrendous, "OOOHHHHHHH" due to the immense pain. What had happened? Where was I? Why was I covered in white fluid?

Up until that point, it was like any other day. July 3rd, 2013, a beautiful, sunny day. Wake up, shower, grab a muffin and a cup of milk and hop in the car to drive the 5 or so miles to work. Like any other day...

Until...

As I passed through a busy intersection I was SHOCKED to see a completely stopped mini-van, just a few feet beyond the green light.

Because I TRY to drive carefully, I had left enough space to stop... but barely.

THAT'S when it happened. SMASH!

Once I regained consciousness – AFTER I yelped in pain, of course – I immediately started reviewing my body. Right arm, check; Right leg, check; Face, a bit sore but seems okay; Left leg, hmmm – not so good; Left arm, I. CAN'T. MOVE. MY. LEFT. ARM.

DAD-GUMMIT, that hurts. (Yep, I actually said that – I don't curse – ever.)

And... why am I covered in white liquid? Does an airbag have white liquid in it? Cause the airbag is blown. I'm confused.

An onlooker was able to pry open the door and I was able to (with tremendous pain shooting through my left side) climb free from the wreckage.

I looked back and saw my car SANDWICHED between the mini-van that had suddenly (for WHAT? Reason) stopped in front of me and a small un-recognizable car wedged in to my trunk.

Why was I wet and covered in white liquid and WHY DID THAT MINI-VAN stop so suddenly on one of the busiest roads in Boise during morning rush-hour.

As I sat on the curb next to the Police officer, DAZED and confused, I was SHOCKED in to reality when I heard the Police officer, talking to the driver of the mini-van say, "So, you stopped to let some ducks cross the road?"

Then as he pointed at me, he said, "You know that guy right there could have died, right?"

Wait. WHAT!?

I guess the adrenalin started pumping because I stood up quickly... okay, maybe I JUMPED UP and in to the face of the mini-van driver and screamed, "YOU STOPPED FOR DUCKS!!!?"

Now, I'm not a huge man, but by the reaction of the Police officer, I think – in retrospect – that my actions MAY have come across as a "THREAT" to that mini-van driver's life. I mean, as much of a threat as a seriously damaged, accident ravaged, "I-can't-move-most-of-my-body" guy could be.

And it WAS a threat. I was furious.

In a split second, he had chosen the life of ducks... over mine.

DUCKS?!

OVER A HUMAN LIFE??!!

I sustained major damage to the left side of my body. The ringing that started in my ears that day has never stopped ... and progressively gotten worse. More than 5 years later I STILL have nerve damage that prevents me from doing some things with the left side of my body. I could have DIED!

DUCKS?!

OVER A HUMAN LIFE??!!

The thought and lesson have never left me.

What's more important. A duck's life... or mine?

So... what's more important to me?

When I'm watching T.V. and relaxing and my son Jack, asks me for help to find, "A shoe." Who loses one shoe?!

In a split second, what's more important to me?

T.V. or Jack, knowing and showing I love him?

Jack is. I hop up and help him.

When my son, Ricky (on the autism spectrum) is dragging his feet getting ready for Church and I KNOW we're going to be late. In a split second, is Ricky more important... or others perception of me more important?

Ricky is. I am patient and kind and loving as he S L O W L Y gets ready.

When my son, Erik (on the autism spectrum) has a major meltdown at Walmart and others are staring and judging as he cries and kicks and yells. In a split second, is Erik more important... or being embarrassed that strangers may think I'm a bad parent more important?

Erik is. I get down on his level and hug and care for him. Nothing and no one else matters.

Here's the question. In those split seconds, what's more important to you?

The life and love and helping your child on the spectrum reach his or her full potential... or something else? ANYTHING else?

I think I know the answer.

I think YOU know the answer. But do THEY know that based on our actions?

Are they getting that message?

P.S. FYI: The white liquid covering me after the wreck... was the MILK from my cup that splashed all over the car.

How do I know? A few weeks later at the junkyard – when I opened the car door to retrieve important papers from the glove box and smelled the overwhelming odor of sour, curdled, milk.

Mystery solved.

MEN... It's Time to Serve. And LOVE It.

Read at your own risk. This is personal and deep (for me) but I feel compelled. So, here you go.

Early on in my wife's pregnancy with our twins more than 10 years ago, I had a horrifying thought.

Now, you should know that I have different types of good, bad and meaningless thoughts all the time. Usually, I simply try to put the bad ones out of my mind and usually, I simply forget. Then, I assume it's just a random thought.

When I DON'T forget, however, I typically start to pay more attention and address the thought and "do something about it."

Maybe it's just me, but I believe there is a higher power communicating with me and moving me in different directions.

But when I got this thought when my wife was pregnant, I was not only unable to forget about it, but the more I tried, the more I was convinced that the horrible thought was a premonition.

What was my premonition? As bad as this sounds, it was this...

My wife would not survive childbirth.

I know, I know. It's horrible, it's wacky and I felt like I was doing something wrong for even thinking that way. But I couldn't shake it.

Then after about 3 months, my wife was put on complete bed-rest.

Hard enough as it is, but it seemed to be a "sign" that my premonition was true. I was internally getting more and more scared.

Then... with almost 6 weeks left, she was required to be in the Hospital full time for safety. AGAIN, it was an additional sign that my premonition was to become a reality.

Keep in mind, I was afraid to tell anyone of my premonition – especially my wife or kids. What could I do? I had nowhere to turn.

Without anyone knowing, I was suffering deeply. I could not fathom the idea of losing my wife – the woman I love, I cherish, and had grown to love more each year.



I privately cried each night, I poured out my heart in prayer multiple times a day, I begged and pleaded that she would be spared and be able to stay with me and the kids. Internally, I was a mess.

It was the most emotionally and mentally painful and taxing experience I have ever gone through.

Even as I suffered, I became more convinced that I should prepare for the inevitable dreadfulness.

So, I did.

I cried, I prayed, I begged and started to come to grips with the fact that I would be left alone with my kids.

But... as part of my preparation, I also SERVED my wife with the purest form of love I knew.

There was NO WAY she would NOT KNOW how I felt about her.

On weekends our family was at the hospital almost every waking hour of the day. And I went to be with her at least twice a day during the week. I'd get all the kids to school, head in to work, take her lunch every day, go back to work, head home to grab the kids and we'd ALL go and spend the rest of the day with her.

If I was to lose her, I was determined that she would know and FEEL my unending love for her.

As all this was happening, I noticed something about myself that I had never really understood before.

Before this event, I was a bit, well... maybe a bit selfish. But now, I had completely lost myself in the service of my wife and kids.

No longer was my life even remotely about me. It was about giving her a lasting feeling that she was loved and it was about how I would "ensure" my children remembered her and knew she loved them.

All the things that used to matter (I'm a bit ashamed to say this, but they were about me – selfish thoughts about my needs) no longer mattered to me. What mattered now was only her and my children.

Let me give you what may appear to be a trivial example – but what may do the best job of helping you understand me before this incident.

Before this life altering event when I would come home to dirty dishes in the sink, I would wash them. I would do all the things that husbands who try to be helpful would do. I would help with dinner or with laundry or whatever – but basically, I was simply putting in the work and going through the motions.

Internally, I seethed.

"Why isn't this done during the day" I thought. "Isn't it her job to get this stuff done while I'm at work?" WHILE I was helping, I was internally mad that I had to help and that it wasn't already done.

I'm not proud of it, but it's true. I was helping for all the wrong reasons – because I was "supposed to."

But as this event transpired, I felt the change.

I WANTED to serve her and the kids. I WANTED to spend every waking minute I could with her. I WANTED to do whatever it took for her to KNOW – by my actions and feelings – that she was unconditionally loved.

Then, a remarkable insight.

After months of silent suffering, with only about a week left before the doctors would schedule the birth of my twins, a good friend SAW something in me that made him ask me, “Dude, are you okay?”

After I answered with the obligatory, “I’m fine” he persisted. “You seem like there may be something going on with you. Seriously, are you okay?”

After I relented and FINALLY told him of my circumstances he said something to me that completely changed my outlook and gave me hope.

He said, “Maybe you had this premonition because you needed to feel this pain and change something in your life. And maybe... just maybe, if you can learn the lesson you need to learn without losing your wife, maybe you don’t have to lose her.”

I was astounded and now filled with something I had completely lost.

I had lost HOPE that she would be spared and stay with us.

But now, I was completely energized with the thoughts we had discussed.

Now, I was determined to learn all the lessons I could from the experience and KEEP my wife and family together. Suddenly, I was... EMPOWERED!

The night before the day of our twins birth, I didn’t sleep a wink.

I endlessly prayed she would be spared. I begged and pleaded to the Almighty that I would have a second chance at becoming the kind of husband and father my family needed.

That morning, with a few hours to spare before I had to go to the hospital, I fell to my knees AGAIN to beg and plead. Believe me, it’s not hard to beg and plead under these types of circumstances.

As I stood to go be with my wife, I felt overwhelmingly comforted that my wife would be okay.

It was the most magnificent feeling I’ve ever felt.

And she was... and is... okay. My twins are now healthy, and happy.

But I had been changed forever. The lessons I learned from this experience were too many to count. However, the most important lesson I learned and the reason I’m sharing this story now is to challenge us all to this...

Let’s all put aside our selfishness and ego.

Let’s all stop worrying about OUR rights and start focusing more on our responsibilities.

As men, we have the responsibility to love our wives and children and there is no better way to show them than to happily and willingly SERVE them.

I am MUCH happier now than I was ever before, and I think my wife can FEEL it, when I do the dishes because I LOVE her and want to serve her.

When she's taking a nap and I fold a few loads of laundry, I FEEL great about doing it (with absolutely NO seething) because I am serving the woman I love.

And the more I willingly serve her and my children the more I know THEY KNOW they are loved.

And fellows, just so you'll know – There's a SERIOUS side effect to all this...

The more you serve your family because you love them, the more they'll love you. It's an eternal cycle.

Now... I want to plead with you to try this – and start TODAY!

Lose yourself and focus completely on serving your wife and kids for just one straight week. Just 7 days.

Do it because you love them and do it with the attitude of love and service. I don't care if anyone notices or not. Do it because of the man you are. Do it because you can.

I promise you that if you will, you will become a changed man internally.

You will be happier, love more and deeper and find that others will do the same for you.

I also promise you that you will develop a deeper, happier relationship with your wife and kids.

No other success in life can bring you more happiness or take the place of success in your own home.

SERVE well, serve hard, serve with love and no conditions. You will LOVE it.

Oh, and for you women reading this, show him that you appreciate him. You can get your man to do ANYTHING if you love and serve him as well. It's a two-way street.

Our Kids Are Like Velociraptors - How About Yours?

Recently I had a conversation with a co-worker who told me, in dealing with his 6-month-old daughter – who was screaming and crying uncontrollably because she wasn't getting what she wanted – that he was calmly rocking her to sleep, and gently telling her, "You won't outlast me, Sweetie."

I absolutely LOVED IT.

Let me explain by telling you about a scene from the movie, Jurassic Park.

In Jurassic Park there was a scene where the guys who are charged with keeping the dinosaurs safe – and the people safe at the same time – are discussing how smart the Velociraptors are.

Their example was that the Velociraptors were systematically testing the fences in which they are caged in different areas to find weaknesses and how they KEEP ON testing and KEEP ON testing and KEEP ON testing until...

Well, the fact is, in the movie, the Velociraptors NEVER stop testing their boundaries until they eventually escape and gain way too much control of the island.

Here's the point. Kids are like Velociraptors in that they constantly test their boundaries. AND they are like Velociraptors in that they KEEP ON testing and KEEP ON testing and KEEP ON testing until...

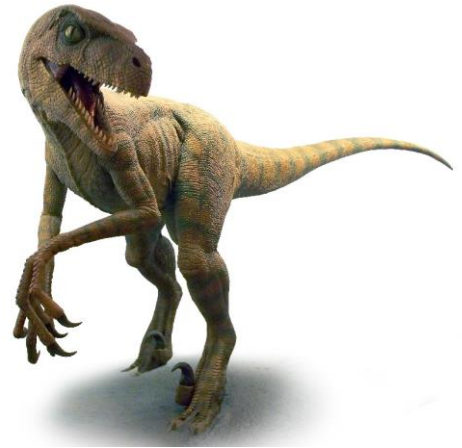
There were three reasons why I LOVED how my co-worker had handled himself.

First, he was calmly rocking her to sleep while she was screaming and crying. I don't know about you, but when my kids are freaking out screaming and crying – it's hard to be calm. I think we've ALL been there.

Second, quietly and calmly saying, "You won't outlast me, Sweetie" is absolutely genius for two reasons.

If he keeps doing this consistently, his little girl will start to realize as she grows that when she throws a fit, or cries because she doesn't get her way, or however she tests her boundaries, she WON'T be able to win by "breaking him down" through persistence – and it may save him some of those events from even happening in the future.

This is one of the very best ways Velociraptors... I mean, kids... get what they want. They pester and pester and pester until we have no energy left to fight and then they eventually escape and gain way too much control of the island have free reign to make more and more decisions without parental guidance and may start to make bad decisions; the kind that if we were involved in... they possibly would not make.



The second reason, quietly and calmly saying, “You won’t outlast me, Sweetie” is absolutely genius is because it’s an affirmation that can only help us in the future. When we constantly tell ourselves that we can’t be outlasted, we may START TO BELIEVE that we can’t be outlasted... and THEN, we will find a way to fulfill what we believe.

And when we absolutely BELIEVE that we can’t be outlasted, maybe, just maybe, we can’t. And we’ll be able to stand our ground when the Velociraptors... I mean, kids... are systematically testing the fences in which they are caged... I mean... testing their boundaries in different areas to find weaknesses.

That way we can effectively resist... and continue to appropriately parent when they push us to the point of exhaustion and we have no energy left to fight.

The final reason quietly and calmly saying, “You won’t outlast me, Sweetie” is absolutely genius is because when they don’t outlast us – and we lay them down in bed and they’re sleeping all cute and such – there is such a sense of accomplishment it’s almost a bit overwhelming.

No kidding, I’ll never forget how I felt the day I overheard my #1 son tell my #2 son – they were about 6 and 4 years-old at the time – the following...

“Stop throwing a fit. If Dad sees you, you WON’T GET WHAT YOU WANT, YOU’LL MAKE DAD MAD, AND HE’LL MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A TERRIBLE DAY. I know, because that’s what he does to me every time I get all crazy.”

Seriously, my oldest son, at 6 years-old, had already decided that HIS Dad wouldn’t be outlasted. And that EVERY time there was a fit to be thrown, there would be consistent consequences – the kind of consequences that were no fun for anyone.


Here’s the bottom-line.

It takes a LOT of effort either way.

We’ll either have to put in the effort when they are young – and WE are a bit younger and have more energy. OR, we’ll have to put in the effort when they are older – and we’re older – and they have more energy and more desire to “get their way” and WE have less energy and are less able to resist the CONSTANT badgering and pestering and whining that may occur if they even THINK that we can be “outlasted.”

By the way, if you don’t recall, eventually the animals completely took over Jurassic Park and forced the humans to leave to simply survive.

Want to survive? Tell yourself – OVER and OVER and OVER and OVER – and let your kids HEAR you say – OVER and OVER and OVER... and OVER, “You won’t outlast me, Sweetie.”



Why are people so hard to get along with? Why are they SO seemingly stupid? Why do they frustrate us SO much?

The reason is simple.

Almost always... the reason is...

But first.

Let me share a story—a parable, really—that I heard from author Jack Christenson to make this crystal clear.

One of Jack's great passions in life is raising hunting dogs. He tells the story of a beautiful German short-haired pointer that was a "brag dog"—a dog so good, so obedient, and so well-trained that its owner can't help but "brag her up" to all his friends.

And this dog was the brag dog of all brag dogs.

One day he loaded up the dog, his visiting son-in-law, and a few of his buddies into his truck and headed to a hunting club for a competition. For the entire 45-minute drive, Jack went on and on about how great the dog was, and how she was going to steal the show. By the time they arrived, his friends were sick of hearing it. It was time to "put up or shut up."

When they got to the club, Jack released the dog from its kennel to run around free for a few minutes while he checked in and was assigned to a field. When he returned, he gave the dog a hand signal to jump into the truck—but there was no response. And no amount of coaxing could get the animal to move; something was off, but he couldn't figure out what. Eventually he helped the dog into the truck, and they drove to their assigned field.

Once at the field the dog wouldn't run; she wouldn't hunt; she wouldn't do anything but sit right by Jack's leg. His son-in-law and buddies started to make fun of him for this "great brag dog" that wouldn't do a thing.

Something was wrong. Really wrong.

He sent his friends off to work with their own dogs in another field while he tried to solve the mystery. He gave the dog a command to walk, but she barely moved. Somebody nearby shot a bird, so he gave the dog a hand signal to retrieve—the very essence of what this dog was created for and trained to do.

No response.

He became so agitated that he practically screamed at his beloved pet, "Dumb dog, just go do what you are supposed to do!"

Still nothing.

Finally, he sternly commanded the dog, “Get down there and get that bird!”

The dog walked slowly to the bird, picked it up—no enthusiasm, no life—and dropped it as his feet.

By this point his anger was boiling over. He ordered the dog to jump back in the truck.

It wouldn't move.

So, he lifted her up and gave her a frustrated shove—not abusive, but with some attitude—into the kennel.

As you can imagine, the ride home was long and full of ridicule from his friends. The greatest brag dog of all time had been a complete flop.

When he arrived home, he performed his usual process of running his hands through the dog's fur to check for ticks or other bugs. He started with his hand under the dog's throat, then slid it down the front of the neck and onto the breastbone. As he did this he felt something wet... and when he looked at his hand, it was covered in blood.

Uh oh.

He looked closer and saw that the dog had sustained an injury (apparently, while running free) that left a deep gash that went through the muscle all the way to the bone. Further inspection showed a similar bone-deep gash on the dog's front leg.

His brag dog wasn't obstinate, she was in pain.

He took the dog to the vet who explained that while this wound was recoverable, it wasn't something that could be stitched up—it had to heal from the inside out. That meant that the wound had to remain open, where the dog could lick it and allow the natural antibodies in her saliva to slowly heal the wound. He would have to be careful with the dog for a good long while—no more competitions or showing off for his buddies.

And you know what? It turns out that people are a lot like that.

THAT'S the reason people seem so hard to get along with.

Almost always... the reason is... THEIR WOUNDS.

When people make poor behavioral choices; when they are SO seemingly stupid -- more often than not it's due to deep wounds. Not physical wounds, but spiritual and/or emotional wounds. They're not bad people; they just have unresolved wounds that keep them from living up to their potential.

Don't we all?

I have a kind request of us all.

Can we PLEASE be patient and understanding with each other? It will make us (you and I) - and even others... all of us... happier. -- Kyle (Autism Laughter Dad)

Wow... That HURT.

A few days ago, my son on the spectrum, Ricky (unknowingly) said something that dismayed me.

He ran in to the kitchen and said, "Dad, I'm going have a kid, maybe name him Kyle Jr." then he smiled, giggled and ran off. Obviously, this SHOULD have made me proud, but "the thought" that Ricky may never be capable of understanding marriage and/or having children disheartened me deeply and sent me – I'm a bit ashamed to say this – but it sent me right up to the edges of depression.

I immediately went and read something and was able to feel MUCH better immediately.

THEN I realized I had NEVER posted what I had written and just re-read... so here goes:

Same Worries – Just a Different Parent

We've probably all experienced some sleepless nights worrying about our kids futures. We've also all probably experienced some sort of DENIAL or even REPRESSED that what and who our kids are – may last them a lifetime.

Certainly, we all HOPE they will eventually "grow out of it" or "there will come a cure" or they will "reach a higher level of cognition" – at least a baseline that allows them to be minimally productive by the world's standards. But who knows?

I was recently reminded of this as I had a conversation with Steve who wondered aloud, "What will their future be like? What will they be capable of? Will they ever be able to hold a job – get married – have kids? Will they be able to experience the joys that come with those things? What will happen to them when I get too old to care for them?"

A lot of what's and what if's, I know.

So, how can we come to grips with what may turn out to be what some may consider, a "limited life?" Because of their special circumstances, so many experiences left un-experienced; or joy left un-joyed; or friends left un-friended; or life left un-lived; OR – trials left un-tried; or difficulties left un-faced; or misery left un-experienced; or growth left un-grown?

How can we learn to come to grips with it and not allow it to dominate our thoughts and lead us down an unproductive path?

Well, I'd like to suggest a few ideas for you to ponder. Keep in mind, this is just me – I am not a doctor or a psychologist or psychiatrist or a spiritualist. I am just a father who wants what's best for my two boys on the spectrum; a father who struggles just like you; a father who's unwilling to just let it be – I have this disease called "OVERTHINK" that forces me to find meaning in everything – even if there is none.

Read at your own risk.

I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE: We are the ones that worry – not them. Let's look at worst case scenario (WCS) – but only briefly --

What if... your child stops progressing right now – or happens to regress? What if the level they are at now is as cognitive as they'll ever be? What if that happens? Can you deal with that? Can I deal with that? Yes, we can – as long as...

We do everything we can to "Help Them Live and Achieve to Their Fullest Potential" – whatever that potential may be.

Because we have no idea WHAT their potential is, creating expectations for THEM can be a trap – for US – and them. We can't control what they are capable of becoming – but we CAN control our ability to help them live and achieve to their fullest potential.

If Erik and Ricky (my two boys on the spectrum) have already reached their full potential right now – or even REGRESS, I can STILL work and learn and grow to make sure they have every opportunity to experience as much life as they can.

I am not motivated by their progress; I am not motivated even by their effort – or their lack of effort. I am motivated because I love them, just the way they are.

If you can live with "WCS" – and you CAN – whether you are aware of it or not – ANYTHING above and beyond what they are capable of NOW is icing on the cake; THEIR CAKE.

I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE: We have been charged with something unusual, very challenging and HIGHLY REWARDING. We were given these children because we are capable. At the risk of sounding arrogant – believe me, this is an area of extreme humility for me – OF COURSE, I would have two boys on the spectrum – I am just the man for the job. "I will not be given more than I can handle."

NOTE 1: I'm not sure, but sometimes I wonder if I believe "I will not be given more than I can handle" because I say it so often – or I say it so often "because I believe it" – but it serves me either way.

NOTE 2: If this duty IS more than I can handle... and you know it – PLEASE don't tell me!

I remember, as a teenager, my father telling me that "Fear, Worry and Doubt cannot exist in the same mind as Confidence and Faith." I believed him then – it worked – and I believe it more than ever now.

I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE: These are special children. They require special attention. As they get that special attention, they thrive.

Maybe not in the way you and I would prefer, or hope – but in a different way. They experience fun; they experience happiness; they experience joy. Maybe not in the same ways we get to – but in THEIR OWN ways. Come to think of it, not even you and I experience things the same way.

For us to imagine or project that they are "missing out" is fruitless. Who says?

I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE: It is not only your children that are special. Those of you that have been chosen to care for, love and selflessly serve your special children are more than capable. You have been CHOSEN. Chosen to be the caregivers of these magnificent spirits; Chosen to learn and grow WITH them; Chosen to help them live and achieve to their fullest potential.

I believe that as we accept these – possibly lifetime – challenges, as we lovingly GIVE – we GET. The reward for us – is in the giving. The reward for them – is in our giving.

Here are some thoughts from one of my previous writings, titled: The Reward is in the Giving. It reads:

When it comes to our children – really when it comes to anything – it's not what you get that is the REAL reward. It's what you give and in giving what you BECOME that is the REAL reward.

Think about that.

If we do things based on the expectation that we will get a return reward from the person we serve it can be a recipe for disaster. Especially in our case – hey, the reality here is that some of our kids will never be able to say, "I love you." And building in your own mind that they will ever be able to say or show you that they appreciate your effort can set you up for disappointment.

Let me explain what is happening to you – and hopefully me – right now.

As we selflessly serve our children out of love we are BECOMING. THAT... in a nutshell is more of a reward than anyone else could ever supply. The tireless way you go about servicing those you love is helping you to become a unique and very powerful individual – if you let it. It's up to you to decide what you become. You completely control your reward.

I am reminded of a passage from one of my favorite books, "As a Man Thinketh" by James Allen, where he reminds us not to fret or fight, but to accept and learn and grow from our circumstances. AND he warns us to what may happen if we do not.

"Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself. In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of "fighting against circumstances"? It means that a man is continually revolting against an effect without, while all the time he is nourishing and preserving its cause in his heart. That cause may take the form of a conscious vice or an unconscious weakness; but whatever it is, it stubbornly retards the efforts of its possessor, and thus calls aloud for remedy.

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances but are unwilling to improve themselves. They therefore remain bound."

Well said, James – VERY WELL SAID.

Steve, you have been chosen for this unusual, very challenging and HIGHLY REWARDING assignment and I know you are capable. Your children are blessed to have you as their father and will thrive as you give them love and guidance. THEY – are in GREAT hands.

Sometimes we must remember what we already know, huh? Thanks for reminding me, Ricky. I feel better already.

Do you have, "Yeah, But" syndrome?

Recently I saw a comment that reminded me of our families "early days" of struggle and discouragement.

We had developed what we later deemed "Yeah, But" Syndrome. Let me explain.

There was a time when we thought we had tried everything. We'd tried the autism doctors, the therapists, the psychiatrists and psychologists and the counseling and the ABA and, well... everything.

If there were an "expert" that had anything to do with autism, we had tried them. And we had the debt to show for it. But NOT the happiness.

It seemed there was no one else who could give us any advice or help. "We must be a unique case", we thought.

We were - in retrospect - unconsciously giving in to the thought that "THIS" was our new life. A life of struggle and stress. F O R E V E R.

Then, our family's happiness - or lack thereof - would not be any fault of ours.

To combat having to take any responsibility, we developed, "Yeah, But" Syndrome."

Someone would share with us what was working for them and before we'd even try it, we'd say...

"Yeah, but... you don't understand. We have two sons on the spectrum."

Another parent would ask, "Have you tried this?" And we'd reply...

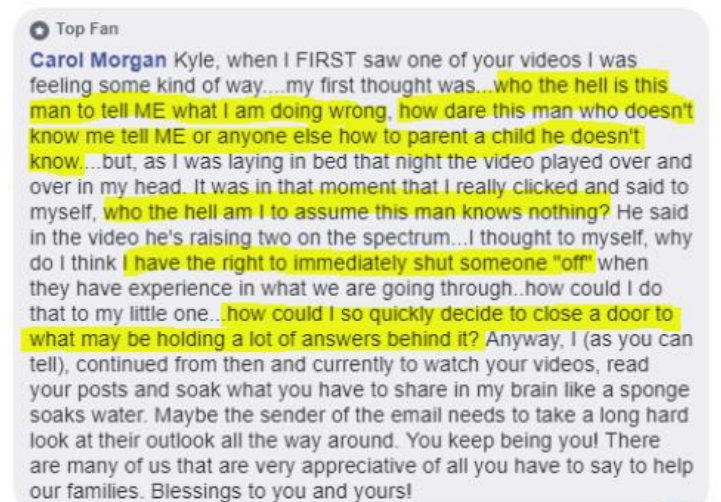
"Yeah, but... one of our sons is an introvert the other an extreme extrovert. We're different."

We'd read a book or an article and without trying anything we'd say,

"That all sounds great. Yeah, but... one of our sons is barely verbal and the other WAY TOO verbal. We're unique."

Yeah, but this.

Yeah, but that.



We always had an excuse for dismissing advice or options or... well, even TRYING.

For us, it took a catastrophic event for us to even TRY anything else. Yep, we were THAT HARD-HEADED and unteachable. We were the opposite of humble.

Our arrogance was keeping us from helping our two sons on the spectrum.

Looking back now, we're SO GRATEFUL... for that catastrophic event... and our eventual awakening.

That 4-hour, horrible, devastating meltdown FORCED us to rethink "Yeah, But" syndrome - and open our minds again.

You know the one, right? The one where it feels like the house is on fire, being hit by an earthquake, and being struck by a tornado all at the same time.

That's why, when I saw this comment from Carol, I immediately felt hurt inside as I recalled our mis-perceived notions and failures and then was thrilled beyond belief that Carol shared her eye-opening story.

Obviously, Carol was already a bit more open than we were. It's a testament to her humility.

Thanks for your comments, Carol. And to all of you who keep me motivated to share what we've learned by commenting and liking what we feel compelled to share.

We only feel compelled do this because we SO BADLY want for you what we have as a family.

We've felt and lived and know the struggle and pain and discouragement that can be present.

AND... we've also felt and lived and know the happiness and joy that CAN be experienced (yep, same exact family) when you open your mind and become teachable and start to understand and apply a few principles that can make an astounding difference.

We hope you see our family's happiness and it inspires you to keep searching.

Helping your family is now what drives OUR passion and it's why we do what we do.

Brotherly love... it's a beautiful thing

This is my #2 son, Zak and his younger brother Erik.

Zak is busy. He attends College for two-thirds of the year and when he is at home for the "off-season" he is busy working and earning money so he can continue his College.

Generally, when he is working, he leaves on Monday morning (very early) and travels all over the North West re-flooring gyms. Then he returns (usually very late) Friday nights.



Weekends are short for him and he does very physical labor that drains him (you can see it in his body language) so weekends SHOULD be a time for him to rest.

I'm really proud of him and the work-ethic he's developed. He's a good man. He's caring and kind and funny and the kind of man you'd want for your daughter.

But this past weekend he did something that - again - reminded me of "just how exceptional" he really is.

I have two sons on the spectrum. Erik is the older of the two and - for lack of a better description - can be volatile and difficult.

Erik generally prefers to be left alone and would probably be in heaven if he could just stay in his room, watch super-hero movies, and eat eggs, pizza, waffles and - of course... candy - for the rest of his life.

So, imagine my surprise when Zak and Erik "made plans" to hang out together... all day Saturday... just the two of them... out of the house.

Turns out, Zak had created a list of options of things they could do together and let Erik decide the sequence of events and schedule of their adventure.

And it included things that were - at least in the past - uncomfortable for Erik. Things like, going to the Mall, and a restaurant for lunch, and the arcade full of wild, loud kids.

A little nervous, I asked Zak, "Are you sure you're okay with this? What if he has a meltdown or gets agitated for some reason?"

Even though, just the Friday night before, I had watched as Zak - as we had attended a minor-league baseball game surrounded by "thousands of loud, screaming fans" had kept Erik happy by calming him, whispering silly

things in his ear and even had him playfully yelling out quotes from movies - even though they didn't always make sense - at the players on the field.

"Don't worry, I got it, Dad. I know what to do. I've watched you for years and I can handle it. Plus, I think he's excited... and I'm excited to share the day with him." Zak replied.

Still, deep down, I was cautious and nervous that something would go wrong and Zak would be put in a very difficult position and be left picking up the pieces.

Turns out... they returned Saturday evening and Erik had one of the biggest smiles I've ever seen on his face.

Zak didn't HAVE TO spend his Saturday entertaining his brother, Erik.

Zak didn't HAVE TO risk facing a meltdown or a difficult situation by taking Erik to places where he knew he was more liable to have difficulties.

Zak didn't HAVE TO spend his limited time with his brother on the spectrum. I'm sure there were a hundred other things that could have been more fun for Zak - maybe even a good nap.

But he did.

And in doing so he added to Erik's, joy... and he added to our family's joy... AND... he'll never know how full my heart was and is as I've watched it all.

When I asked him, "Why did you decide to spend the day with him, he simply said, "He's my brother and this is a way to show him I love him."

Those simple words... at least in my mind... showed what kind of man he is...