

Life In Our Chaotic, Loving Home

Our home is a whirlwind of activity and love. With three children, the occasional neighborhood kid, four dogs, boarder pups, two smart-aleck cats, and a random spattering of chickens, it's often unpredictable.

Chaos can sometimes be comforting for those who thrive in it. Currently, our main source of chaos is our 14-year-old ADHD/ODD son. He is sweet and thoughtful, but only when he expects something in return. He is my bonus baby, and his birth circumstances, including his birth mother's unprescribed medication use, have contributed to his current struggles. Puberty has exacerbated his Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), making daily life challenging.

Despite our love for him, he is a compulsive liar and often steals sweets, which worsens his behavior. Authority is a constant battle, particularly with me, as I am not his biological mother, but consider myself his mom. The transition from being an only child to the eldest of three has been tough for him, compounding his diagnoses.

Adding to our dynamic is our wheelchair bound, handicapped 12-year-old, whom I physically birthed. He is our sensitive, anxious, and physically handicapped middle child. He brings a unique set of challenges and immense joy. His resilience and determination inspire us daily. Balancing his care with his anxiety, and the needs of his brother, requires patience and adaptability. We also have a sweet baby girl, who is seven and hasn't found a way to wreak havoc in our home, just yet.

Our son's condition has taught us all an invaluable lesson about compassion and strength, even his defiant brother. Despite his limitations, anxiety included, he exudes happiness and lights up our home with his smile. His brother, despite his aversion to authority, is protective and loving towards him, showing a tender, patient side that reminds us of the deep bonds within our family.

Despite their differences, he, and our 14-year-old, have bonded over video games, and became brothers instantly. Even through their bond, though, my relationship with each of them causes tension between them. Our 12-year-old is a momma's boy, who is always trying to keep me happy, while his brother often seems to try and do the opposite.

Understanding ADHD and ODD does not make handling the defiance and inattention any easier. Knowing right from wrong and choosing the latter remains wrong, regardless of the diagnosis. As a parent, I often feel like a failure. My job is to raise respectful, productive members of society, yet my 14-year-old would likely be deemed a delinquent today.

Both of my sons are in therapy, for different reasons. While one son defies and causes trouble, the other internalizes his issues, leading to anger and outbursts. Therapy has helped our 12-year-old son with his emotions and coming to terms with his disability. New issues arise daily with his brother, though, and he disdains the idea of therapy.

Discipline is unique for each child. A stern look can correct our 12-year-old, while none of the things we have tried with our 14-year-old seem to affect him in the slightest. Yelling induces tears and guilt in the former but leaves the latter unfazed and forgetful.

Life is chaotic in our home, but we somehow make it work. Some days I feel at my wit's end, yet we push through. Balancing our blended family is challenging, but we strive for stability every day. Parenting requires constant effort; taking a day off isn't an option, as it could disrupt the delicate balance we've achieved.

Living with a handicapped child, and one who fights us every day, has reshaped our understanding of normalcy and resilience. Every milestone and sweet moment are victories, celebrated by the entire family. We have learned to cherish the small moments and find joy amidst the chaos.

In our home, love is loud, and life is unpredictable, but it's ours. We embrace the chaos, learn from the challenges, and cherish the moments of peace. Every day is a new adventure, and together, we navigate the highs and lows, growing stronger as a family.