



Raising Our Son

in a PARTNERSHIP
WITH GOD

By Kami Crookston

My vision of parenthood was one of perfectly behaved children who were always beautifully dressed and never got dirty. I quickly realized the image I cherished was a fantasy. I have grown to accept my messy house and runny noses because I know that they come with the most amazing blessings I could ever have. But what I never could have imagined was the struggle I would face while raising my children, especially my son Brad.

Brad came into this life as innocent as any child, but it didn't take long for us to realize that he was different. He couldn't go to nursery without my husband or me with him because he was too aggressive. As he grew older and played with other children, he needed constant supervision. When we sought help, we were told that we just had to be more consistent with him. We did everything we could think of: we researched online, read parenting books, and asked doctors and family members. Finally, when Brad started school, he was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, as well as a host of other problems.

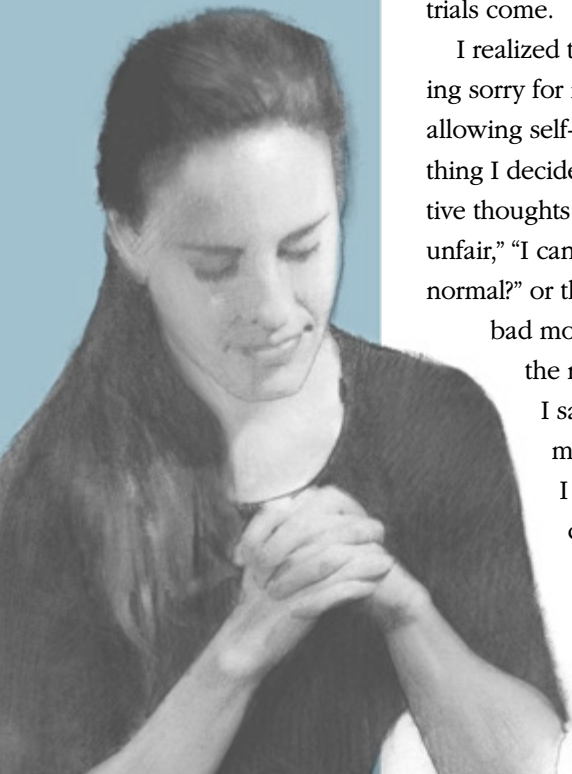
For the first time we felt we had hope. Now that we had a diagnosis, we could start a treatment plan. We were hopeful that Brad would respond well to a medication that had helped others. Unfortunately, Brad's behavior on medication was worse than without it, so he had to stop. I felt the last bit of my hope drain away.

One day when Brad was six, I faced one of his many daily tantrums. I wanted to give up. I went to my room for a moment to myself, and tears rolled down my cheeks. I prayed for the strength to be able to face the approaching bedtime routine. How could I keep doing this, day after day?

When I learned to use the spiritual resources available to me, I was flooded with ideas of ways to help my son and to better face my own trial.



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I felt like I was past what I could endure. Did Heavenly Father understand how hard it was? If He truly loved me, I reasoned, He would remove this burden from me and give my son a normal life. Those thoughts and feelings surrounded me as the trial I faced seemed to get worse instead of better.

The True Nature of Trials

I thought I understood trials. We were supposed to go through them like a pot being heated in a kiln. We'd go in and out of the fire, and then life would go back to normal until the next round of heating and tempering. But I had been facing this trial for years, and it was not going away. I felt the weight pressing down on me, and the feeling of helplessness brought me to my knees.

I then knew that the place I needed to go for comfort and understanding was the temple. By inspiration, I realized that we do not get to pick what trials we have in this life or how long they last. What we can control is the way we think and act when trials come.

I realized that the reason I was feeling sorry for myself was because I was allowing self-pity to fill my mind. The first thing I decided to do was stop any negative thoughts that crept in, such as "This is unfair," "I can't do this," "Why can't Brad be normal?" or the worst culprit, "I am such a bad mother." I worked hard to stop the negative voice in my head, and I saw that my real voice became more patient and loving when I was dealing with all of my children.

I also encouraged positive thinking. I began to think, "You are doing great," and I would give myself a compliment, such as "You kept your voice low and didn't yell. Way to go!"

Rely on God

After a particularly hard day, I asked my husband to give me a blessing. During the blessing I was reminded that I am a daughter of God, that He is aware of me and my needs, and that my son is a son of God. Brad was God's son first, and my husband and I have a partnership with God in Brad's behalf. I realized that I had not been using all the tools that the partnership provides for me. My husband and I had researched and discovered many resources to help us, but we forgot the most significant one: prayer.

I began to pray daily about how I could help Brad. When he was having an emotional meltdown, I would say a quick prayer for inspiration before approaching him. As I relied on God for my support and for inspiration for my son, I got a glimpse of what I could be and what I could do for him. I strived to follow Alma's words: "And this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God" (Alma 29:9).

The changes were immediate. I was flooded with ideas and ways to help Brad. I used family home evening as a tool and prayed for ideas about what to teach. I also read the scriptures with more intent and recognized the great parenting advice they contain. I began to be filled with hope and comfort.

As I continued to put into practice the idea that my husband and I are partners with God in parenting our children and using the tools that He has given us, I began to rely on God more and more. I realized that my knowledge of parenting could only go so far, but a loving Heavenly Father, who knows all things and loves my son more than I do, could help me become a better and stronger mother. And though I still sometimes falter, I know where to look for help. I understand now that some trials may not have a time limit on them, but if I keep my eye on eternity, God will help me.

Take Joy in the Little Moments

When times were tough, I learned to take time to feel joy in the little moments—the gifts—that are given to us. When my son cannot help but give me a kiss, I am grateful. When I watched my son ride the bus without anyone to sit with, I was blessed to have this scripture come into my mind: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). I knew that Brad was not alone and never will be.

We are an eternal family, and with the help of people who love us and our loving Heavenly Father watching over us, I can appreciate the small gifts given to me daily and feel the joy and happiness that we are meant to have. And with those small blessings and the help of the Lord, I can become who I am meant to be, no matter how long it takes. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

