

New Baby!

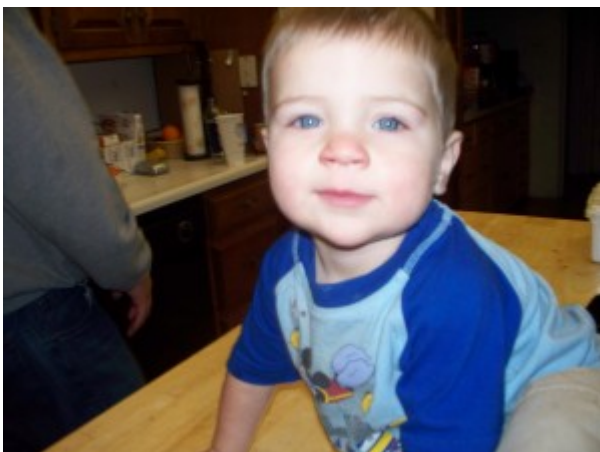
Made you look! Did you think I was going to say we were awaiting the arrival of our 5th child?

No such luck – probably wouldn't declare it for the first time on a blog anyway. I just wanted to share my son's first professional haircut that made everyone joke about him being a different baby – although "toddler" is a much more appropriate word here than "baby" – my son is all over the place, and the haircut made him look SO MUCH older! He's really cute with the haircut, but why do they grow up so fast!?! These pictures were taken only 4 days apart.

BEFORE:



AFTER:



Tool Man

My almost 17-month-old son has started using “tools”. When we put up the Christmas decorations, he started pulling chairs away from the table, pushing them over to the bookcase to try to climb and get at the nativity. Yesterday, he took down a wall hanging and began to use the hanger rod as a spoon for his mashed potatoes. When I told my dad about this mischief, he said that this behavior seems pretty smart. Yeah, I replied, smart like a chimpanzee! I really don’t remember the girls doing so much climbing, tool-using, or just general sabotage!

And another thing about little boys – the parental chasing. I always see moms chasing their little boys; running after them around the store, the zoo, wherever – and nine times out of ten, the kid being chased by the parent is a boy. I had a little boy almost a year and a half ago, and I’ve been wondering when my turn would come. Yesterday I got my answer. While I was getting my little boy dressed, he said an emphatic “NO!”, then turned around and ran from me. He dove under the dining room table, where I had to drag him out, kicking and screaming. So yeah, the chasing of little boys by their parents begins shortly after they learn to walk.

Ah, the toddler days again – feels like it’s been awhile, probably because the toddler in our family before our son was Disney, who is an almost perfectly behaved child. We often joke that Disney is [D.A.R.Y.L.](#) – remember that movie from the 80’s about a boy who is actually a robot? And she is a quick learner! We’ve been doing “sight words” with our Kindergartener Sammie, which are flash cards with words on them, like “orange”, “the”, “purple”, “my”, “I”, etc. Disney, who just turned 3, has been picking up the sight words as we

practice with Sammie! She knows all the ones I listed above and is also starting to work on letter recognition – 3 years old is pretty early to start reading! I just feel badly for Sammie, who has her own gifts but is also very competitive by nature – it might be difficult for her to see her little sister learning certain things faster than herself.

But the point is, Disney's toddler stage was barely noticeable, which is probably why her little brother seems like more than a handful – and I hate to tell myself this, but I think this is just the beginning!!

Parenting Pickle

My almost 10-year-old daughter has a friend I'll call Kathy. Kathy has been over to our house to play with my daughter for years, and we've never really had much of a problem. We've noticed lately that Kathy isn't as well behaved as our daughter's other friends, and she also is not as tolerant of my daughter's younger siblings. Yesterday, Kathy spent about 6 hours with our family, and it was a fun yet tiring day. It was one of the few times we've had an extra kid around and I've noticed extra chaos and strife; usually the extra kid(s) blend right in and sometimes even help out with the little ones. We took Kathy to the mall which is about 20 miles away, and we ate a Mexican buffet, bought the kids candy at the \$ store, and took the kids to the pet store.

Kathy's mother was supposed to come at 6, and since the kids had a late lunch, we were waiting to feed our kids until Kathy was picked up. Kathy's mother was late, and the kids got hungry, so we tried to stretch our planned dinner for 4 kids into one for 5. It didn't really work, there was some

squabbling about food, and Kathy's mother finally showed up around 6:25. On her way out, I called to Kathy who has asthma, "Do you have everything? Do you have your inhaler?" To which she responded, "I still haven't found my inhaler." (like she had told me she was missing it, but she hadn't!) I unlocked the car for her to look in there, and I went up to her mother's car and explained that this is the first I had heard about the missing inhaler. Her mother was extremely rude to me. We didn't find the inhaler, and they left, and I vented to my husband because I don't like when people are upset with me! He was sure that I had misunderstood; that Kathy's mom was upset with Kathy for losing her inhaler. After all, if her mother had told me at any time that Kathy has a tendency to lose her inhaler, she could have asked me to keep a special eye on it, and I would have! But not one word was said – I only know about the inhaler because I've seen her carry it; it was never explained to me.

So then today, our cell phone had some missed calls, and they were Kathy's mom. When my husband called her back, he was sure she had called because they had found the inhaler. No such luck. The frantic phone calls were Kathy's mom asking if we had found it yet and informing us (quite rudely) that if we did not find it, we would owe her \$47 for a new one. So my husband, now knowing that I had NOT overreacted to the rudeness last night, calls the mexican restaurant, and sure enough, they have it. He called Kathy's mom, who basically told us we would have to drive back out the twenty miles each way to get it. But it's Thanksgiving week, we have 4 kids, and my husband works during the day. So she hung up on my husband, and now I'm upset and writing a blog post about it. Here's the pickle:

Kathy is the real victim here. Her mother is mad at her and her friends and their family, and her mother's erratic behavior is going to isolate her daughter. As it is, Kathy calls our house about 20 times every weekend and is pushy

about being invited over – it’s hard not to feel like our house might be the only place to where she gets invited. But as a parent, I did not like the negative influence I saw Kathy having on my younger children yesterday, and that was *before* any conflict was had with her mother. My daughter’s birthday party is coming up, and I feel badly for both Kathy and my daughter if she isn’t invited. On the other hand, I feel this is more than just a parental conflict that can be overlooked for the sake of the kids. I feel a little bit taken advantage of – after all, we invited Kathy to spend the day with our family, and her presence did incur some minor costs. Nothing I would have thought twice about, until I was given flak about our fun day... and I’m 95% sure we told her mother we’d be heading out to the mall ahead of time also, so it wasn’t as if it came out of left field! Also, my husband and I are concerned about what Kathy’s mom might hold us liable for should we have any further incidents with Kathy at our house or in our care.

So do I let my daughter invite her to the birthday party? Should I say anything to my daughter about this conflict? Do I pay any bills I might get from Kathy’s mom for gas, etc? It’s just a shame this had to happen; my daughter has plenty of friends whose parents are on the same page with us; we take their kids out all the time without incident, and they even usually say ‘thank you!’. I honestly don’t feel like we did anything out of the ordinary here... Should I have gotten a babysitter and driven the 40 miles to get the inhaler myself? Honestly, if I had done that though, I might have THROWN it at her when I got back!

Puzzling The Night Away

Our 3-year-old Disney is really good at puzzles. Last night, she tried her first 63-piece puzzle, but she didn't quite finish it:



She got a pretty good start – that puzzle is particularly difficult. We were all enjoying a wonderfully peaceful evening since our little 5-year-old instigator had her first sleepover at a friend's house. She had a great time, and when she returned home today, the conflicts between siblings resumed immediately. There's always one in every bunch, I guess ☐

And today's lesson in everyday life: Coffee can dye a black dog brown. Don't ask me how I know that, but it was quite a mess.

GOOD LUCK BEARS!

I don't have any kids in high school yet, but when I grew up, high school football was a big deal, so I've been kind of following the local high school football team since we moved

here, even though there wasn't far to follow them... until now. Our Golden Bears will travel down to Columbus TONIGHT for their first high school football playoff game in school history!!

BEST OF LUCK GUYS – YOUR TOWN IS BEHIND YOU!!!

The Drama...

I'm going on my third month as a youth group leader, and while I always enjoy myself at church on Wednesday nights, in recent weeks I've also felt a strange kind of dread. I couldn't put my finger on it until last night. There was a huge drama in our small group of 7th grade girls involving a friendship between two of the girls. The situation made for a lot of tension and was also a huge distraction from our lesson. After group, I mentioned this to the other 7th grade girls leader and the youth pastor, and neither seemed surprised, especially given the dramatic nature of a specific girl in my group – their words, not mine. I came home around 9 pm last night with 4 of my own little kids to put to bed while feeling entirely emotionally drained. I realized that even though I enjoy being a youth group leader for the most part, that strange sense of dread that I feel in the beginning of the week has to do with bracing myself for the weekly Wednesday night drama. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the other 7th grade girls leader's attitude has greatly improved since the beginning of the year. Also, a few weeks ago, two students were transferred into my group because their friends were in my group – so now I have the entire clique in my group, and I get to oversee and facilitate all of their various factions. Wonderful. I have a theory that the other leader was very discouraged and emotionally drained by these

girls and their drama by the end of last year, and so when I showed up, I was given the clique and their dramatics for my group. Ah, the joys of being the newbie. I'm happy to help, and I'm glad the other leader seems much happier, but I really need to find a way to encourage these girls to shift their priorities a little bit.

Complicating the matter is the fact that we meet in the youth pastor's office, so it's really hard to supervise everyone at once, especially when there is drama. I have girls wanting to poke through his drawers, lie under his computer desk, read his post-it notes and memos, and to sit on his desk. I'm starting to feel more like a babysitter than a small group leader, and the girls in my group are turning 13; it's not like they're little kids (which is what I'm dealing with all day and at night AFTER youth group).

Don't get me wrong; I do enjoy it; I'm just really frustrated right now. I really like the fact that it's something I get to do with my husband (the small group part is only about 40 minutes. For the rest of the two hours, we get to do things together), and I like hanging out with the other leaders and the girls when they're not acting crazy. I'm just saying that those times are getting few and far between. I need to find a way to focus the kids and also to get our group back to concentrating on the weekly lessons. We can still have fun while we do that, but step #1 will probably be to get us out of the pastor's office – I don't even know where to start if not there.

When I signed up for this gig, I failed to realize that aside from the long-shot of the Chicago Cubs making the World Series, my two favorite yearly live televised events – the Country Music Awards and the Academy of Country Music Awards – air on Wednesday nights. I cannot express how much I enjoy watching these shows, and it's kind of like an athletic event – it's not really the same to watch them after the fact. One year, I even did a live blog while watching one of these

awards shows, and it was hectic, but a lot of fun. Tempted as I am to call in sick to youth group next week, I could not look seven 7th graders in the eyes and tell them that I missed our group to stay home and watch the Country Music Awards, especially after the major drama that was this week. So next week, I will actually be avoiding cnn.com and the media from late Wednesday night until whenever I will get a chance to watch the recorded CMAs – which might not be until the weekend!!! Yes, I'm pouting, but I'm going to put my best face forward and just do it. But I reserve the right to complain about it all I want on my blog!!!!

Fun AND Free!

What's super fun for kids and free for parents? Well, free for parents who live in most parts of the country, anyway... **AUTUMN LEAVES!** Last week my kids had a blast playing with the leaves in the back yard. It might cost time and money to dispose of the once beautiful fallen leaves, but before they become a nuisance, there's no reason why they can't provide hours of family fun!





Halloween Whosits

Well, Halloween is just around the corner, and I have yet to pick out a costume. Err, costumes... um, for the kids, of course... Ok, I'm caught – I dress up for Halloween. However, I don't go all out. I take pride in wearing cool costumes that I can obtain on a shoestring budget. For example, I've wanted to reprise my Kindergarten Halloween costume for years ("Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz"), but I have yet to find the dress for free in my size (I'm not about to spend money on my own Halloween costume when I have 4 kids I'd rather see dressed however crazily they wish). I'm not too worried about my costume though; I always have a back-up Halloween costume plan. I have a witch's hat, complete with orange hair. And I can wear almost anything clothes-wise, which will ensure that I'm warm and comfortable, no matter what the Halloween weather up here in Bufu Ohio. Being a witch also means that my kids can do my makeup, however madly they would like to do it – all the more fun to add to one of my favorite holidays. So, my Halloween bases are covered... now I just have 4 little kids to deck out...

My oldest (going on 10) wants to be a 'bloody prom girl' (her

words). I say, go for it. It may not be the most innocent of costumes, but it could certainly be worse (have you seen Mean Girls? Remember the quote that begins, “Halloween is the one night a year when girls can dress...” This is not the type of blog where I would want to continue the quote, but let’s just say that I both celebrate and am thankful for my daughter’s kid-inspired creativity.

Our second-born, who is 5, wants to be a princess. Being a family with 3 little girls who love to play dress-up, that should be a cinch. We have a couple of tiaras to choose from, as well as princess dresses. The key will be to find one that she will agree to wear **over** her other clothes so she doesn’t freeze!

And our youngest daughter, who will be newly 3 by the time Trick-or-Treat rolls around, wants to be “Dora, and Boots, and Diego, and the Marshmallow Monkey.” I don’t think she remembers what it’s like to dress-up for Halloween – I don’t have the heart to tell her that she can only be one character. For now, we have a Dora costume ready and waiting, and we also have a back-up princess dress in case she decides she wants to be like her sisters.

The little dude will wear whichever costume I can find in the basement that is in his size – I’m thinking it’s a lion. I know I also have a size 18-months Minnie Mouse costume, but I am **not** going to dress my little man as a female character – poor guy has 3 older sisters and is already concernedly obsessed with headbands and necklaces. But that’s another blog altogether...

Happy Halloween!

Zip Line Zaniness

Autumn brings about a whole new breed of fun family things to do: pumpkin farms, hay rides, apple picking, playing in the leaves, corn mazes, haunted houses... the list goes on and on. A few weeks ago, during a visit to a local farm which boasts such fun fall activities as a corn maze, petting zoo, hay ride, and haunted corn maze amongst other things, my kids had a blast with the zip line. It's all fun and games, as they say, until someone gets hurt...

And while no one was seriously injured during the filming of the following video, my 2-year-old daughter has decided that the zip line is no longer for her. When you watch the following video, you'll see why. Her 5-year-old sister goes first and has a blast, but poor little Disney didn't fare so well. Don't worry if your instinct is to chuckle – she wasn't hurt, just a little frightened. After all, people must find these types of things funny. Isn't that the reason why America's Funniest Home Videos became a show filled with video clips of people getting injured?

He Is A-Ok!

Our little guy had his 15-month check-up with the pediatric nurse the other day. Yes, this is the same nurse who can be a harsh critic when it comes to things like sippie cups, bottles, and anything else she perceives as leading to bad oral habits in adults; namely smoking and drinking alcohol.

She gave our little Beeber a few age-appropriate skill tests, such as stacking blocks (he stacked them ALL, which is very impressive, even to the experienced nurse – might I consider sharing my Lego collection with a certain little builder in a few years?), following a flashlight with his eyes, and throwing and catching a tennis ball. He did really well with all of them, but I felt badly for the little guy because he did everything that was asked of him, but after he performed the test with each toy, he seemed to assume that he would then have his turn to play with them. But nurse Judy swiped them all away before he knew what was happening. It all became too much for him when she started poking him with that nasty wood-tasting gag stick – who can blame him for crying; I could never stand that thing either! And, in a true kid's toast to irony, he began to cry the moment the nurse asked, "Is he always this mild-mannered?" Then, "WAHHHH!". Hilarious!

Our 15-month old (and first boy of the family) is 31 inches long and 22 lbs. 11 oz. He is in the 40th percentile for height and 25th percentile for weight. This means that if you take a sample of 100 15-month-olds, my son is shorter than 60 of them and lighter than 75. He is the first one of my kids to be under the 50% mark. Two of the girls were around the 90-100% mark, so Beeber is a little guy! That's cool; you can be good at baseball if you're on the smaller side ☐

Overall, he checked out very well and impressed the nurse with his development. Although he gets into so much trouble at home with his constant climbing and desire to spill liquids and throw things, it's still a blast to witness this stage of toddler-dom. Case in point: