

My grandson

Ever since the day I found out I would become a grandmother, I was overjoyed. My little one, was going to have his little one. Nine months later, I held baby Ali in my hands and felt so fulfilled. It was at the three-month mark when he went into an epileptic shock. The attack left him with nerve blockages and a compromised brain.

For a long time, I prayed to GOD each day to make my grandchild just like other normal children. He looked just like normal children, walked just like them, ate just like them. But, he banged his head against the wall sometimes, would get uncomfortable around people and took a long time to learn his ABC's.

d

From the start, I was his main caretaker. My son and daughter in law never truly understood the care a special needs child requires. They could not understand his tantrums, his behavioral problems, and his developmental issues. I would spend my entire day taking care of him and then some. My friends always used to blame my daughter in law for birthing such a child, some even thought I made up his disability so I could get money from my son for Ali's medicines. But I never let these comments bother me.

Our family dynamic was far from ideal. As Ali grew older and older and as his developmental problems increased, the atmosphere in our home grew tense. My son would sit and talk to his older one about his day, and expect the same from Ali. My daughter in law would ask her elder son for help with groceries and expect the same from Ali. They would grow frustrated when they would realise he was not the same. Soon, my husband and I moved away with Ali..

At my age, one looks forward to spending time with one's spouse and oneself. To be rid of responsibilities of the youth as the child now takes care of the parent. But for me, I was a mother again. And a child, meant financial responsibility. A responsibility I had not prepared for but nonetheless ready to embrace.

So we started small. My husband started driving auto rickshaws and we started earning our daily livelihood. It was difficult. Some days there was barely enough for one meal and some days, not even that. But our priority was always Ali. The doctor had emphasised the importance of nutrition for the sake of Ali's improvement.

So now my days consistent of taking care of Ali who is growing up too fast. We go to Prabhat together in his grandfather's auto rickshaw. Sometimes I stick around with him. I stick around to speak with other shrugging mothers who often look up to me. I counsel mothers who have children with debilitating conditions that may never recover. I count my stars each day that my ali can walk and eat on his own.

I think life throws a lot at us. We all have a picture perfect idea of our lives, but almost always, it never goes to plan. So that is not in your control. But what is in your control is how you respond to that situation. Whether you take it in your stride, or whether you let it tear you down. Take it from a new mother at 66, life and its surprises are a beautiful beautiful thing.

P.S. as you can probably tell, Ali hates pictures!
- Sarifa (Ali's grandmother)

Blog by: Yamini Mehra

