

Family 101

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A few years ago my husband and I along with our children, moved back to Lebanon. Upon returning, I renewed friendships with a few people I grew up with. When we were young, I envied their family life.

They seemed to have everything. Their parents had 'regular jobs'. They had one, maybe two siblings, a beautifully decorated home, a mom who was always put together with perfectly coordinated clothing in the latest styles and a dad that played golf and coached little league. They even had grandparents who attended ball games, birthday parties, and never missed an opportunity to spoil their grandchildren with extravagant gifts.

I would always compare their 'normal' life to my 'not so normal' one. My dad owned a janitorial business which meant every day after school and homework was completed; we would head out to clean the offices all my friends' parents were leaving for the day. It was always extra fun when me or my little sister would run into one of our classmates sitting in his mother's office chair.

Me: "What's up, Nathan?"

Nathan: "Hey, Becky."

Me: "Can you hand me your mom's trashcan? I need to replace the liner."

Nathan: "Here you go."

Me: [under my breath] 'I hate my life'

Our house was very warm, but crowded because there were 6 children and 2 adults living under one roof. Alone time was non-existent.

My mother's idea of putting on her face was using a little mascara and a quick draw of the brow pencil.

When it came to fashion, mom went for comfort. She didn't mind to alter her wardrobe if it meant her kids could have a coveted pair of overpriced jeans.

My dad? Well, he didn't play golf. He had enough of the sport after caddying for years as a teenager in Pennsylvania. And the one time he considered coaching my younger brother's t-ball team, he backed out when overheard a lady scream, "Rip his head off!" during a pee-wee football game. He looked up to realize she was talking about my adorable, bespectacled little brother who could barely see the opponent through his oversized helmet.

Oh and my grandparents were even more entertaining. They didn't live close so we only saw them once a year. My dad's mother- a little Italian spit fire- referred to my mother's family as, "Dumb Irishmen", was the most embarrassing (I mean entertaining).

On one of her visits, my parents thought it would be a great idea for grandma to take me to get a training bra. I will never forget standing in the intimates section of Cain-Sloan with my grandmother making me try 20 different training bras on... over my clothes. When we finally found one that fit, she shook her head and said, "Uh no, Rebecca. You girls have your mothers' chest." She walked to the cashier while I stood there with my TeenForm Pretty Please, fastened over my hot pink t-shirt completely mortified.

Yes, long ago I prayed for a normal family. But today, I'm thankful that prayer went unanswered.

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