

KINDNESS Matters September, 2026

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Dream Jobs, Sad Moments, and Lifelong Learning

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SEP 1



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"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"

Matthew 25:21 (ESV)



The Best Education

Over the summer, Brady secured his first paying job. Not just any job – his dream job. If you are familiar with our family's story you know that Brady is passionate (a massive understatement) about movies. When he asked if he could work at the small local movie theater, John and I were hesitant. How would he handle the social immersion of a customer service role? Could he follow rapid fire instructions? What if he was corrected harshly and a sad moment started? How could this child who never noticed a mess in his life, clean up after messy movie-goers whose popcorn trajectory was more likely to hit the floor than their mouths?

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Not surprisingly, Brady nailed the interview. I'm sure the theater owner relished his enthusiasm for the role, but was also short staffed heading into a busy season. The shifts were six hours long, another concern, but when I picked Brady up after his first day, he had an air of accomplishment and confidence that was almost as pungent as the aroma of popcorn that permeated the car.

For ten weeks he never complained about going to work. He had stressful days, he made mistakes, but his bosses were patient and he learned to adjust. At the end of the summer, the owner wrote Brady the sweetest note, complimenting his work and opening the door for another job next year.

No therapy, intervention, or instruction could have had a more positive impact on Brady than his time at the theater this summer. He showed maturity, resilience, and flexibility. He navigated difficult customers, unexpected setbacks, and less than glamorous tasks. And, he got to watch movies for free, which may have saved us more money than he made.

Brady just started his sophomore year, and he is lighter, more confident, and itching to get another job. Now that he's had a taste of employment, he's craving it. What a gift for him to view work as a privilege, and feel valued for his contribution.

The experience also reinforced a KIND parenting lesson I learned long ago. When Brady follows his passion, he can accomplish anything.



What is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria?

One of the presentations of Brady's autism is something I referenced above, something John and I called "sad moments" for lack of a better term. One minute he would be happy and content, and the next he would be in tears, hopeless, for no obvious reason. Time alone seemed to be the only salve for his hurting heart and not knowing how to help him broke mine.

As Brady got older and was able to articulate his feelings better, we started to see a pattern. While we couldn't always find a direct correlation, many times we could see his mood change after a refusal of a request, a change in plans, or a correction of behavior or actions.

His developmental pediatrician suggested his reactions could be due to Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria, or RSD, which is a common co-occurrence for those with autism and ADHD. RSD produces intense, painful emotional reactions to failure and rejection, either real or perceived.

This summer, I listened to a fascinating webinar about RSD by Dr. James Kustow, a psychiatrist and integrative psychotherapist in London who is considered one of the world's leading experts in ADHD. He taught that even someone's own negative self-talk can trigger an RSD reaction. This was a revelation that fit Brady's personal experience. Finally sad moments have a name: Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria.

Dr. Kustow provided many practical solutions for addressing attacks of RSD in the moment, including naming the trigger, pausing before reacting, and separating mistakes from identity. As caregivers, we need to accept RSD as a neurological response, not a weakness or character flaw. We should help our loved ones understand their triggers and assist them with scripts and systems to manage through the potential dysregulation before it escalates.

[ADDitude Magazine](#) is a fantastic resource for all things ADHD and RSD. You can learn more about RSD by clicking [HERE](#).



Parenting IQ Podcast with Dr. Kelly Cagle

As a podcaster myself, you may be surprised to know I subscribe to less than ten recurring podcasts. I only push the little plus sign if I want to be notified of new episodes, and that only happens when a voice consistently and significantly impacts my life.

The Parenting IQ Podcast on the Christian Parenting Network is one of those shows. Dr. Kelly Cagle is a former teacher, a PhD in K-16 education, an ADHD researcher, and a homeschooling mom of three boys. She is an author, coach, and speaker, and while her specialty is helping parents of neurodivergent children, her advice is relevant to anyone hoping to raise confident, capable, compassionate humans.

Dr. Kelly teaches her audience, whom she refers to as “lifelong learners” how “daily little moments” can change the entire family dynamic. She combines faith, science and experience to create powerful takeaways each week.

I was honored to record a show with Dr. Kelly that will air later this month, and you can learn more about her journey on *The KIND Families Podcast* by listening [HERE](#). Visit drkellycagle.com for resources and inspiration, and subscribe to the Parenting IQ Podcast on Apple and Spotify today!

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