

KINDNESS Matters October, 2026

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Date Thu 10/1/2026 6:11 AM

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Mini-hounds, Messes and Movement

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"Without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest."

Proverbs 14:4 (NLT)

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Falling

Even though Arizona's weather has not conceded that Fall has arrived, KINDness flowed like (iced) pumpkin spice lattes throughout September! I was honored to kick off the month speaking at a large MomCo gathering at Pantano Church in Tucson. I love sharing my story and Biblical wisdom to encourage others, so if you know a group looking for speakers, please let me know!

A new session of the "RADical KINDness" Bible Study brought autism moms together from across the country to dig into Francis Chan's new book *Beloved*. I was a guest on several podcasts linked here: [LightWork](#), [Parenting IQ Podcast](#), [Let's Plant Houses](#), and I attended meetings with leaders of disability ministries across the valley. We wrapped up the month with the first "KIND Connections" in-person parent gathering, which was graciously sponsored by [Joni and Friends Arizona](#). What a month of blessings!

At home, our family expanded by about sixteen pounds during the month, and no, it wasn't due to the pumpkin spice lattes. After losing our five-year-old hound dog Leia in December, I swore I would never get another pet. But a few weeks ago, I found myself perusing the local dog rescue listings and spending too much time scrolling dog videos on Instagram. I became the crazy lady who stopped random strangers walking dogs on the street, never

making eye contact with the human, focusing solely on petting their furry companion to release the dose of dopamine I craved.

Brady was fully on board with the idea of adopting another dog, but John was hesitant to take on another hard case, especially since we just replaced the carpet Leia destroyed in her first few years.

We decided to visit the local shelters one weekend just to “look”; at least, that’s what we told Brady so as not to give him false hope. We saw dozens of dogs, none of whom seemed like a good fit. However, when we met this little 16 pound mini-hound with ice blue eyes and a tail on permanent wag cycle, we fell hard. Even John said, “We have to take her.”

Brady, our resident movie fanatic, named her Ripley after Sigourney Weaver’s character in the film *Alien*. Ellen Ripley was a strong, smart, fearless female who overcame harrowing adversity. We don’t know anything about Ripley’s life before she was picked up as a stray and dropped off at the shelter, but considering she survived and found her way into our home, I think the name fits. Still, I sometimes wonder when she’s taking high velocity zoomies in the backyard if she doesn’t have a little space creature inside her too. Stay tuned.



Bless This Mess

One of the consolations I held to closely after our dog Leia died last year was a return to a cleaner, more organized house and schedule. Not that I’m a neat freak - more of an order enthusiast, a characteristic of my planner nature. I soothed my grief with tidiness, ignoring the simple truth that messes are often the product of the manifestation of joy.

Today, as I look around my disheveled family room, I see partially gnawed dog toys strewn about, bare tile where our rugs used to lay before they were rolled up and stowed safely away from puppy accidents, and shoes positioned on high stools to prevent their ultimate destruction. Yet, somehow the clutter isn't causing the hair on the back of my neck to stand at attention. I am easily absorbing the unkempt nature of my current living situation because of the joy Miss Ripley brings.

The lesson would have served me well when Brady was younger. Parenting Brady, especially after his autism diagnosis, left me rudderless on an open ocean of uncertainty. With so many unknown outcomes I longed for control, even if it was just the perceived control of the neatness and organization of my environment.

I blamed my lack of "craftiness" for my refusal to start major art projects with Brady at the kitchen counter. I picked up books and toys almost as soon as Brady set them down. I created systems of bins and drawers to convince my nervous system that I ruled over the chaos, not the other way around. Now that Brady is a teenager, I realize my tendency to prefer order may have robbed him of learning, enrichment, and just plain fun.

The proverb at the top of this month's newsletter is not a commonly repeated verse, but as I navigate house training a puppy who has possibly never lived inside, I am reminded that cleanliness may not always be next to godliness. In fact, an obsession with order can prevent the very work God means us to accomplish. A mess is evidence of action, of movement, of progress. I am not advocating that we should all surrender our vacuum cleaners and live like wild animals, but if a desire to keep our surroundings clean overrides experiences which help us grow into who God wants us to be, we may be throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

How thankful should we be that we have the people and possessions to cause our otherwise sterile lives to occasionally fall into disrepair? After all, we know God is not afraid of messes. He sent Jesus to live right in the middle of ours.





Fitness for All

Many KIND kids, including Brady, struggle with coordination, body control, and core strength. Occupational and physical therapy help, but usually focus on isolated muscle groups or skills, not a whole-body approach to fitness. When Brady entered middle school and had to participate in PE class, the gap in his abilities created social challenges as well. Each sports unit or fitness test was another opportunity for kids to make fun of him or leave him out.

We knew we needed to help him, but traditional trainers were not going to understand how to communicate and interact with him. Also, with all the other therapies and activities, I dreaded having one more commute to add to the list.

Thankfully, we met Makenzie and Dallas Klenke, founders of [Kenzie's Kids](#), a mobile adaptive fitness training program. As certified personal trainers and former special education teachers, Dallas and Kenzie believe "every individual deserves the opportunity to experience the physical, emotional, and social benefits of movement, regardless of age, ability, or fitness level."

Brady worked with several male and female trainers from Kenzie's Kids and loved them all. They showed up at our home with a wagon full of gym-quality equipment and designed workouts that were fun but also physically demanding. The trainers knew how to engage Brady during the hour by indulging him with conversations about his major passion - movies - and even helped him with specific skills related to the current sports unit in his PE class.

Brady's experience with Kenzie's Kids created a foundation of fitness awareness he may not have developed otherwise, and the home-based approach saved me valuable time and energy. Trainers work with children and adults of any age with unique needs in Phoenix, Tucson, and Indianapolis, and

are actively recruiting families in Pheonix looking for specialized enrichment and therapy support services.

Additionally, if you are in the Phoenix area, you can participate in **Kenzie's Kids Adaptive Fitness Day**, a family friendly event at Cardinals stadium on November 29th! Join other KIND families for a fun workout, followed by group seating at the Cardinals vs. Washington Commanders game. Click [HERE](#) for information and tickets, and check out the Kenzie's Kids website at <https://kenzieskids.com> to learn more about the amazing services they provide to KIND Families!



If you are a ministry leader, church volunteer, Christian school teacher or administrator, please join me at the Disability & the Church Conference in Scottsdale! I will be leading a breakout session and will host a KIND Families resource table during the conference.

Learn more and register [HERE](#)!



Starting today through October 5th, you can grab the ebook version of Finding KIND for FREE on Amazon! Click [HERE](#) to order!

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