

This first week of April has been interesting for me. The many life-changes I've had to make in recent months were put to the test regarding my family ties, my children, and my grandsons. I was able to finally have some time to myself during the boy's spring break. Their grandpa, my ex-husband, came this way and stayed at our grown son's house while the boys visited with him there. I enjoyed my quiet house, with just me to care for.

When we were married, April was the busiest month of the year when it came to birthdays, anniversaries, Easter, etc. It has changed somewhat because all of my family is gone now. I'm still at an awkward stage when it comes to my former in-laws and family events. I love them dearly, so it wouldn't be right to just stop doing what I have always done. My ex-husband's parents celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year, a very special milestone. The Saturday before Easter, the entire family, minus myself, gathered to celebrate their anniversary. I left my gift for them at my son's house.

I knew this gathering was coming, so I was prepared for it. What I wasn't prepared for was the breakdown in communication between me and my three grown children. I won't bore you with the details, but from what I could gather, I'm the one with all the issues, and my two sons specifically made it clear that they didn't really want to spend time with me until they worked through a few things. I didn't hold that against them because I was right there with them. I didn't feel much like being around them either, for the same reason. I have been at odds with my daughter for some time, so adding her to the group didn't take much effort.

My best friend and confidante also pointed out that for some reason, whenever my ex-husband comes on the scene, things get stirred up and emotions run high. I have to agree with her on that score. I know I get anxious, simply because I know I have anger issues with him for leaving me to raise our grandsons alone. I'm at a pretty good place in my head concerning this hand I've been dealt but seeing him face to face just ticks me off. I accept this, and just try to make the best of it.

Unfortunately, I reached a point where I was quite angry with my children and my ex-husband, so I sent them all a group email sharing my thoughts on recent weeks, and I didn't hold back. I know you're only getting my side of the story here, so there are many missing pieces for anyone to truly understand. All I can say is that from my perspective, it has been just fine for my kids to tell me what I have done wrong, all the way back to when they were young children, but if I dare try to do the same thing back to them, I'm overstepping and not respecting their boundaries.

I told them that I hoped they were being as brutally honest with their father as they have been with me. I know they haven't, and that's the rub. Growing up, they all came to me when something wasn't going right, or if they had questions. I'm sure I didn't always do or say the right thing, but they felt like they could come to me. My ex-husband was a good provider, but he was emotionally detached most of the time. So, I guess, the curse that comes from my being close to my kids has given them free license to be a little too honest with me, very much hurting my feelings in the process.

My email to them was my declaration of freedom from their criticisms, and to also let them know that I love them with all that I am, but this mama is drawing a line in the sand. Much of what they have said to me is because they are still young and don't have spouses or children yet. They haven't lived through what I have, and I know I was pretty full of myself at their age. I'm trying to show them grace, because I do understand that I can be a hot mess. But I also believe I was the best mom I knew how to be, mistakes and all. If nothing else, I believe I have earned a certain amount of respect than what my grown children have shown me in recent months.

We're celebrating my oldest grandson's thirteenth birthday this weekend, and then there are a few more birthdays to come, and I am limiting my acknowledgements to cards this year. I've bent over backwards to please everyone for so long, I've just had it. And I am absolutely okay with it. The lines of communication have slowly started to open with my kids, so I am hopeful that we will reconcile our differences soon. Until then, I will lean on the everlasting arms of my Heavenly Father. To all the moms out there who understand, God bless you.

Blessings, Lisa Jo.

