

The storm before the calm

By Tim Linscott

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I came home the other night and the sound of silence filled my ears. It was eerie, unusual and not the norm in my home.

I braced myself for the onslaught of audio that usually greets me: a television up way too loud, kids screaming and chasing each other with my wife raising her voice to calm the waters.

On this day, however, I was cautiously waiting and nothing happened.

My oldest daughter, Adaline, sat in a recliner, crocheting, listening to One Republic (a rock group I listen to) on her headphones. A typical nine-year-old would be listening to One Direction, a pop group, and watching some pre-teen show like, "Shake It Up."

Adaline is a bit of an old soul.

Over holiday break this year she started getting bored. She wanted to learn how to sew on a sewing machine but being a busy time of year, my wife didn't have time to show her. Addy grabbed some thread, a needle and scraps of material and learned how to sew.

This night she was working on a purse. She makes book covers, purses, keychains and various other items after homework and reading, her other favorite hobby, are done.

She looked up from her crocheting, smirked and lost herself back in the music.

Adaline is very driven and determined. I have never met a harder working, more driven child. She has published a book, organized several charity events, learned various skills (like sewing) and still finds time to read a good book or crochet a handbag for a friend.

With the silence in the house starting to sink in to my senses I began to panic. It was quiet. My son was quiet and that meant there was some mischief afoot.

My son, Elijah, was diagnosed with Autism and needs to be kept track of constantly. He is very spirited, active and boisterous. When he is quiet it is usually the 'calm before the storm.' I can usually hear him as I come up the front stairs before I even get in the house. I realized I didn't hear him singing, running, playing his drum set or the loud yells of his sisters crying out, "Elijah, stop that!"

I peeked in his bedroom door and he looked up from his play table, holding a handful of his action figures, or 'guys' as he calls them, and grinned broadly, showing his teeth. "Hi, Dad-dee" he said through his toothy grin.

I listened outside his door and the Avengers, Dr. Doom, a robot from a fast food kid's meal and two Hot Wheels cars were making a plan.

The last thing I heard was the entire Avengers crew, arch-nemesis Dr. Doom, the robot and both cars assembling at a local pool to play, have hot dogs and then go to school.

I was pleased with his style of play and went to check on Olivia, my middle daughter.

Her door was left ajar and I could take a look from a distance at what she was doing without her knowledge. She was dressed in an oversized floppy sun hat that had a tiara taped to it, two

feather boas and about 10 plastic necklaces around her neck, an old flower girl dress on, five bracelets on each wrist and costume jewelry rings on every finger. Her Barbie sunglasses were on, keeping the glare of the flashbulbs away.

“Why thank you all for coming tonight. It is so great to see you all. I hope you enjoy the movie,” she said as she looked into a full-length mirror. I noticed she had her sister’s good pageant shoes on (Adaline has been doing pageants on various levels for several years and we own play shoes and ‘pageant shoes’) and standing on a red towel.

I popped my head in the door to say hello and without embarrassment or alarm, Olivia said, ‘Hello Dada. Welcome to my movie premiere.’ She was all gussied up for the red carpet (thus the towel) debut of her new movie, a bio-pic about the life and times of six-year-old Olivia.

I love her free spirit and how she is six. She doesn’t want to be 12 like some kids or just can’t wait until she is an adult. She’s six and loves every second of it.

I finally tracked down my wife in the kitchen. She was unloading boxes from the move. Like myself, she can’t sit still in the silence and not be productive.

There is always something to be done at home and staying busy keeps our batteries charged. Debra is much better at relaxing and unwinding than I am but the dichotomy of our relationship works in that regard. She keeps me slowing down a bit, I keep her speeding up and we meet in the middle.

“It is quiet in here,” I told her. “I know. It is weird,” she said.

We just stood in the kitchen listening to silence. I enjoyed the silence, the peace and quiet and the family all under one roof.

The next night I came home and could hear my daughters arguing.

“I told you those are my good shoes and you can’t wear them,” Addy yelled, trying to snag a modest cream colored pump from Olivia’s grasp. Olivia tugged the opposite direction asking to borrow them.

From his room I could hear my son pounding on his drum kit and singing from the top of his lungs.

We put the drum kit in his room but he wants us to hear him play throughout the house.

My wife yelled over the top of the television, which was blaring a show on Nickelodeon. She attempted to get the girls to resolve the shoe issue as the microwave went off, her cell phone rang and the general chaos of life filled my senses.

I sat down in the recliner and soaked it all in on this night. Sisters argue and little boys need to pound a drum kit now and again.

It was noisy. It was loud...it was life. I enjoyed the noise. I enjoyed the calamity.

I know someday the kids won’t be in the house and we’ll sit in silence, waiting for them to call or have the grandkids call to wish us a happy birthday, happy anniversary or ask when we are coming for Christmas.

Enjoy the days of silence with your family but also enjoy the moments of frenzy. It is moments such as these that make up the best times of our lives, or so we will say when we are older, but the hardest times of our lives in the here and now. No matter the time with your family, enjoy it, remember it and cherish it.