

DEFIANCE

WHEN AUTHORITY, CONSEQUENCES & OVERLOAD LOOK LIKE MISBEHAVIOR

NOW PEOPLE THINK WE'RE POOR.

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A DIFFERENT INTERNAL HIERARCHY

Chris was literally born without an innate respect, or even basic fear of authority. His internal hierarchy went something like this: Chris → Doctors → Dad → Toby (our dog) → Mom → teachers → principals → everyone else. He just didn't care. We had to teach him what authority was the same way you'd teach a child a foreign language: slowly, deliberately, and with lots of repetition.

THE SAN QUENTIN BEDROOM

One time, in a moment of parental desperation, we decided to “punish” him by stripping his bedroom down to nothing. And I mean nothing. San Quentin had more amenities. We even threw some of his favorite toys in the garbage. The next morning, we went in to talk to him, expecting remorse or at least confusion. Instead, Chris was calmly watching the garbage truck haul away his things. He looked at his empty room, then at us, and said, “Now people think we're poor” The message was... not getting through.

WHEN WE HAD NO LANGUAGE FOR IT

Chris was eventually labeled twice-gifted, special needs with a high IQ. He would become inconsolably angry for no apparent reason, and we had no vocabulary yet for what was happening. Words like preferred activities, perseveration, sensory overload, and deviation from routine weren't part of our world. All we knew was that our son was out of our control, and we were scared. Scared of our inability to understand him. Scared of the strain it was putting on us as a couple. Scared because nothing in the parenting books matched the child standing in front of us.

THE PART THAT MATTERS

But here's the part that matters for other parents:

KIDS LIKE CHRIS AREN'T “DEFIANT” OR “DIFFICULT.” THEY'RE WIRED DIFFERENTLY

WHAT LOOKS LIKE DEFIANCE

Kids like Chris aren't “defiant” or “difficult.” They're wired differently. Authority doesn't automatically make sense to them. Consequences don't land the way they do for neurotypical kids. Emotional storms aren't misbehavior, they're overload. And what looks like indifference is often a brain processing the world in a completely different way.

A CLEARER WAY TO SEE IT

Understanding that doesn't make parenting easier, but it does make it clearer. It gives you a framework. It gives you compassion for your child and for yourself. And it turns moments like the “San Quentin bedroom” into stories you can laugh about later, once you realize your child wasn't ignoring you... he was simply living in a world with rules only he could see.