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## The Strengthening of My Resolve Due to the Adversity in My Life

I have grown up with younger siblings in my life for as long as I can remember. From the very young age of one and a half and onward, I have had four more children enter my life every couple of years, one at a time. I have a very large family, and I can honestly say that I love them more than anything, and I couldn't be more grateful to have them in my life to the extent that I do. However, that doesn't mean that we don't have our stresses on a basis that is no less than frequent. Growing up, I have faced several periods of adversity with my family throughout the years, and everything has been less than simplistic, nearly always financially and emotionally.

Financially, I can say that up until now, my family and I have been less than stable, sometimes even more than others. My parents got married when they were 16 years old, meaning neither of them had finished school before they moved to Texas in the mid-1990s. Neither of them had a formal education until after three of my younger siblings were born, and even then, things were slow. My mother was the only one working before she went back to school after having my youngest brother, and so when we did have money, we didn't have very much to spend on little luxuries like family outings or things that smaller families are able to afford much more easily. We often found ourselves living on a paycheck-to-paycheck basis, sometimes barely having enough to pay bills and be able to buy essentials for groceries. Times like these became even worse when my mother got laid off from a few jobs she had during the summer months when us kids were home from school, leaving our family of six living off of unemployment funds from the government while my mom struggled to find a new job without a proper degree. I remember that a lot of the time, my mother would be out of the house job-searching, and my father would be on his computer most of the day or napping, so I spent a lot of my free time during those summer vacations helping take care of the kids and keeping a general eye on them, despite us being so young. I don't know if my father had searched for a job during those times, but it didn't seem like he was doing much, if I'm completely honest.

Shortly after this, my mother got a job she was able to stay with for a while, and she started going back to school for a college degree. A bit further down the line, I remember my mother telling us that she was expecting another child. I was a little over nine years old at the time, and I remember being very ecstatic towards the idea of another young Sasser running around the house. In contrast, I pondered in the back of my mind how my family was going to have enough money to support all seven of us after the baby was born.

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Fast forwarding about five years into the future, I find myself living at home with my family and taking care of the kids on a near constant basis. My mother and father are both working as teachers now, but we still face financial adversity on several different accounts. I remember being told about these hardships in private when I would ask about things along the lines of wanting to withdraw money from my bank account to buy something that I had wanted, along with my mother admitting to me that at one point she had used some of the money from my bank account to help her pay bills since our accounts were linked. I feel that working through my childhood with as little money as we had kept me going in some manner. I know for certain, though, that it has taught me to wait to have children until I'm not only financially able to raise them, but also ready on an emotional level to care for and love them as much as I do with my siblings.

I wouldn't exactly call myself the most stable person on an emotional level. There have been several times in my life that I can recall just wanting to break down and crying because I'm under stress from my family on a nearly constant basis, and I try my best not to let it show because I know that I'll only get the same response I do every time I try to tell anyone in my family about how I'm feeling. I'm the oldest of five children, and I'm just now moving on to college to try and better my education and work to become an elementary school teacher as soon as I can. My parents are both teachers, and they are often out late as a result of meetings and other faculty-related activities on their end, which means that I have to babysit my younger siblings for hours at a time every weekday, most of the time without warning. Most of the time these days, I'm on my computer working on classwork, as four of the five classes I'm taking as a full-time student are online via Blackboard, and I cannot constantly be on the kids' tails about taking care of their business. However, I feel torn between my responsibilities as a student and as a, to quote my mother, "surrogate mom" to my younger siblings. Nearly all of the time, my siblings will have some form of housework that they need to do, and when I instruct them to take care of their said responsibilities, they won't listen to me until I raise my voice to them, which upsets them greatly. I tell my parents this whenever I'm not doing house- or classwork, and they simply tell me that they've tried all forms of discipline that they know, and nothing supposedly works. I frequently have to raise my voice to my younger siblings, and this breaks my heart because I absolutely despise doing so. I yell at them more often than I like to admit, and I honestly don't feel like I can handle the stress of being a stand-in mom, a college student, and an older sister at the same time for much longer, if taking the stress of my family as well as my responsibilities to heart for nearly 12 years hasn't done me in already.

Being a member of a massively extensive family doesn't make things easy on any of us, whether it be financial issues, hectic event planning, or emotional hardships beyond anything any of us could imagine. I firmly believe that these times of adversity in my life, however, have shown the strength that I have had in order to carry on for so long, and how much I will have in order to continue carrying on being generally as well-off as I can, or rather, appear to be.

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