

Home Is Where the Heart Is: Reality, Ready or Not

I find it aggravating when celebrities, particularly reality stars, complain about their lack of privacy. They pursued that life and all that entails. All jobs have icky parts, and none of us get to choose only the fun stuff.

But I have tremendous empathy for the families of special needs children who are often thrust unexpectedly into the spot light and truly didn't ask to be on this reality show.

Most of us look upon our homes (the structure itself, but also the family that makes up our home), as a haven from the outside world. It's an environment to relax in, to recharge, to be oneself. So imagine for a moment, how muddled this becomes for a family with a special needs member. These families often undergo countless evaluations, not just of developmental milestones, but of the interactions of the entire family unit. Professionals, often well-meaning, are constantly "producing" exchanges and handing out lines of dialogue. Consider how difficult it becomes to improv, when you've been handed script after script.

So how can a breakout reality star maintain their sanity? Here are a few ideas:

1. Surround yourself with an entourage or bodyguards. Ask family members or friends to lend a hand periodically. Hire some help if you can.
2. Limit access. If you need 30 min to yourself, it is perfectly acceptable to say you will be in the waiting room during your child's therapy. You don't have to participate every time, or even watch.
3. Develop a thick skin if possible. Therapists and professionals are there to help and do have a wealth of information to share. They aren't, however, an expert on your family. Use what works for you. Ignore the rest.
4. Dress modestly, or at least keep your knees together. Ok, this might not apply. And come to think of it, a true reality star wouldn't do this either.

And, hey, Producer! Could you turn down the glare a bit? And be sure to get their best side.

"Home is Where the Heart Is" is a series of posts on www.ActivityTailor.com.

