

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Case Study 2

The Watson Family

Sarah Watson, age 37

How did my life end up like this? Stuck with three brats, mum is always on at me for something, and a useless boyfriend that can't provide for all of us. I'm not even 40 yet. I feel about 90.

My ex was useless too. Paul's dad. He disappeared when Paul was only a year old. Said he was too young to be tied down, and I was always yelling at him. Said I was too high maintenance. Men are all the same. When he left, me and Paul moved in with my mum as we had nowhere else to go. Didn't realise I'd get stuck looking after her too. She was diagnosed with Parkinson's a few months after we moved in. I get extra money from the social now though, for being a carer, so at least it's good for something. It's not much but I got some nice new jeans last week from it. I deserve a treat for all the crap I put up with. Mum says I'm too rough with her, but she takes too long, and I haven't got time with the kids crying downstairs. We get a carer in five mornings a week now. The social sent her to help me. Saves me having to get mum up and dressed, but I reckon she's always spying on me. She just needs to do her job and mind her own business.



I met Martin on a night out seven years ago. Really spoiled me and bought me presents. Mum said I shouldn't take advantage but why shouldn't I have nice things? He didn't even mind I had a kid and he moved in with us a few months later. Then, the problems started. Paul was really playing up at school, so I had to keep him in check. Martin says you can't slap your kid but it's the only way they learn. No-one is going to tell me how to raise my own kid – who does he think he is? Paul's not even his! Mum was always interfering too, but she knows to keep her opinions to herself these days. She's lucky to have me looking after her. Anyone else would have put her in a home years ago.

Martin always wanted us to be a proper family, so we had our son, Ben, a couple of years after he moved in. But I was left on my own all day looking after everyone when he went to work. I spent all day stuck in here with mum and a yappy baby and he couldn't even make dinner properly when he got home. Then the school was always phoning to say Paul had been in another fight. It felt like one thing after another, and everyone was always looking to pin the blame on me.

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Ben is five now and thankfully knows to keep quiet, out of the way and not cause me grief. Me and Martin fight a lot, but I wouldn't need to shout if he just did things right in the first place. It's just a slap. He's a man he can take it. He's so soft he doesn't even fight back. I know I probably shouldn't hit him, but if he did things right in the first place I wouldn't have to. He makes me like this. We've got a little girl now too, Grace, a year old. She's always crying. Just like her dad. Paul was never like this when he was a baby. Martin pays a childminder to take her away a few times a week so I can get a break. First good thing he's done. I'm too young for all this stress. I can't cope and no one seems to care. If they just helped me, I wouldn't have to get mad.