

# Raising Boys

## *With Special Needs*



An Interview with Kayla Fay from [GoAskMom.com](http://GoAskMom.com)  
and Shannon Stoltz of [Living Life at Home](http://LivingLifeatHome.com)

[www.Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://www.Living-Life-at-Home.com)

Visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com)

## **IMPORTANT**

You May SHARE or GIVE AWAY this report

as long as you don't change or edit the report in anyway.

You do **NOT** have the right to Edit, Sell, Copy, or Claim Ownership to this report.

©2010 SheaKay Communications for Living-Life-at-Home.com

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.** You do not have any rights to modify, sell, or profit from this report.

**FTC DISCLOSURE:** Some of the resource links in this report may be affiliate links, from which the author will receive a small commission if you choose to purchase the resource. We only share resources that we are personally familiar with and believe may be of use to you.

Cover image: Shannon's oldest son, J

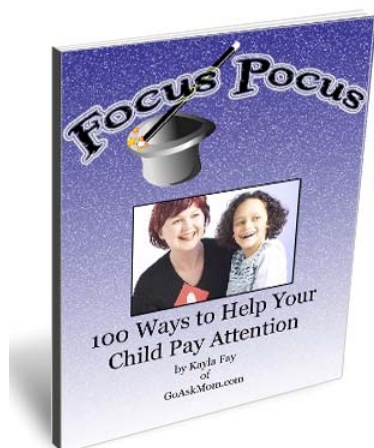
## Raising Boys with Special Needs

Raising boys and raising kids with special needs have been the most challenging parts of my parenting journey. Don't get me wrong. I love parenting, and I love my boys. But I'm not male, and never will be, and quite frankly boys think differently than girls do. At least mine do.

And then add in the special needs that both my sons and oldest daughter have, and well, let's just say I spend a great deal of time and energy trying to find the best way to help my kids succeed in who they are and in the world around them. And I love it, but it also helps to talk with others who have already been down the road.

Well, in this episode of the Living Life at Home podcast, I got to pick the brain of another mom who has been down this road of parenting boys and boys with special needs and emerged the other side – successfully! And she is generous enough to share her lessons learned with those of us who are still on the journey.

Kayla Fay is the mom of 4 boys, three of whom have ADHD Inattentive, and one with a learning disability and the mom behind the wonderful parenting site about raising kids with ADHD Inattentive, [GoAskMom.com](http://GoAskMom.com).



Kayla has also written several parenting books including [Focus Pocus: 100 Ways to Help Your Child Pay Attention](#) and [Waking Up from the Homework Nightmare](#) sharing her insights and experiences as a mom of 4 boys with special needs.

In this interview, Kayla and I discuss what it's like to parent boys to adulthood, and how to help our children who have special needs succeed through their school years and into adulthood. Some of the topics we covered include:

- How we can help our children focus, whether they have ADHD or not

Visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com)

- Tips for working with teachers and other extracurricular activity leaders
- The importance of routines and transitions, but also the importance of teaching our kids to be flexible, especially when they aren't inclined to be
- How to get to school activities, church, and sports activities with as few battles as possible
- How the food our children eat affects their focus and self-control.
- How time outdoors impacts our children's ability to focus and succeed in school.
- What battles are worth fighting and which are not.
- Memorization tips for students who have difficulty with spelling, bible verses, and other facts

Might want to grab a highlighter or a pad of paper and pencil though, Kayla's got some great tips and insights. Several of which I implemented right after our call – with results.

...*Shannon*



Shannon Stoltz, host  
Living Life at Home

To learn more about Living Life at Home, download episodes of the podcast, or ask a question, please visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com).

**Shannon:** Hi. This is Shannon from [Living Life at Home](http://Living Life at Home). Today's podcast is all about raising boys and raising kids who have some special needs and I have with us a lady who knows this path because she has done it with four boys, Kayla Fay.

Kayla and I met actually in a mastermind group that we're both part of. You may have seen Kayla on our website before sharing her [advice on getting through science projects](#), because with four boys she's gone through multiple science projects.

But, Kayla also has a wonderful story and some advice for us as parents with boys who might have some special needs, or girls actually too. So, Kayla, thank you for being here with us. Can you share a little bit about your family?

**Kayla:** Yes. We have four sons. Our oldest son just graduated from college and you may hear the Hallelujah chorus playing in the background when I say that. He is almost 24, he's looking for a job along with most of his graduating class I'm afraid.

Our second son is in the Navy, he is deployed on a large ship, shall we say, currently in the Persian Gulf. Third son started his second day of community college today, he is 20, I think, I've lost count of how old my children are. And our youngest is starting his senior year, he's 17 and in high school.

So, the first three of our sons have been formally diagnosed with ADHD inattentive, and I really think our last one has it, but he's just compensated so well that he's never been diagnosed. That's who we are, my husband and I live in North Carolina with only two of the children left and then just fast forward to an empty nest

**Shannon:** That's a whole other process. I can't imagine what it must be like after spending years and years raising children, especially children with special needs and extra thought process needed for parenting them, and now getting to the point where you don't have that at home anymore. That must be an interesting transition for you.

**Kayla:** It is. It's been very interesting. It's not been near as traumatic and everyone warned us it would be, but it is very different and there are moments where I just feel that little hole in my heart that goes, "My kids have gone. What happened to them? They were here, I was just changing their diapers and now they're buying their first insurance policy for a car."

**Shannon:** Yeah, that's a different process.

**Kayla:** It really is different.

**Shannon:** I know I look at my oldest, who is 13 now, and I'm like looking at her and every once in awhile you get that glimpse of what she's going to be like in another four or five years and it's like, "Wow. Our household is going to be just very different then."

**Kayla:** Different is the word. It's much neater, I'm not sure it's any cleaner, but it's definitely neater. The quiet comes and goes, sometimes it's extremely noisy still because they come home and bring lots of friends, which is actually great.

**Shannon:** That sounds great. I like the idea of it being neater. I was actually just upstairs before our call asking my son why the blanket is laying in the middle of the kitchen floor. He had come downstairs wrapped in a blanket and apparently when he went to make his food he just dropped it there. I was like, "Could we move it to a more appropriate place?"

**Kayla:** If you succeed with that, please tell me your hint.

**Shannon:** I don't know. He's the one, for some reason I bought him new shoes a couple weeks ago or two months ago and within a week one of the shoes has gone missing and can't be found anywhere and the other pair of shoes that I bought for him are regularly found strewn throughout wherever it is that he left them. He just doesn't seem to have the ability to keep them in one spot or remember where he put them.

**Kayla:** As my mother would say, "Well, what they should do is the moment they walk in the door they take them off and they put them on the shelf." That is such a wonderful idea, and the operative word there is idea. It just never has happened at our house and we definitely have tried. But, oh well.

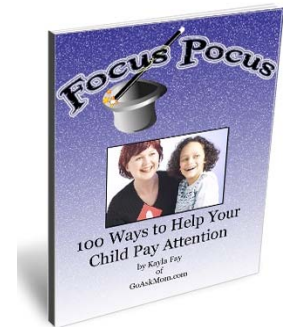
They have managed to graduate from college and still lose their shoes, but they have managed to graduate.

**Shannon:** There is that. One of the things that gives me such hope is when I go to your site, your site is called [GoAskMom.com](http://GoAskMom.com), and to hear your stories and your

descriptions of things like homework with tears and losing things or writing down the homework assignment but not bringing the homework home or the book home that goes with it and different stories like that, I can see my children in my household in those stories and it's such encouragement to know that somebody else has lived through some of this stuff.

Even though we home school we still have kids that take outside classes or go on field trips or to cub scouts or whatever it happens to be. Before a baseball game it's like, "Where's your hat? Where's your socks? Where's your shoes?" He'll walk out the door and the hat will be still left on the counter or whatever it is. It just seems to be a constant process to remind them and to have things in place so that they have everything they need to do whatever it is that they're supposed to be doing.

So, your site is just a big encouragement for me. You have an eBook in particular that I have read three or four times called [Focus Pocus, 100 Ways to Help Your Child Pay Attention](#). This book has been so helpful for me because you go through and you talk about things on how to help with memory and all these other things that you've learned along the way.



The idea of homework with tears, we've had situations where, even though we home school, sitting there at the table and just tears coming either coming in my case or my son's case on how to get all this done. That's one of the reasons I'm just so thankful to have you here so we can pick your brain on that.

*"Focus problems are not just for children that have ADHD."*

**Kayla:** Focus problems are not just for children that have ADHD. I've taught a seminar and I went through the room and I assigned each person a role. One adult was pretending she was a little girl whose shoes were too tight, one was excited because she was going home with somebody after school, and one was nervous because she had ballet practice with a mean teacher after school, one's father and mother had been in a fight that day.

None of those children could pay attention, only one had ADHD but every single one needed to be met at the level of, "I can't pay attention. You've got to help me, teacher." So, when we talk about focus and we talk about paying attention we really do need to remember that it happens to all of us. If we're bored in church, if we're bored in a staff meeting, if we're just so tired how do we focus?

[Focus Pocus: 100 Ways to Pay Attention](#) comes from that in our family and just in me working with a child with ADHD, with my husband. With lots of children I do deal with on a regular basis, how do we help them focus whether they have ADHD or not.

**Shannon:** Right. That is an important point. My oldest daughter has some sensory issues and so if there's something that is overwhelming her from a sensory point of view she just can't deal with anything else around her, it doesn't matter how much she wants to focus on it. Or if she gets overwhelmed emotionally if there's too much work or too much pressure, we've had to equip her with tools to get through these things and that's been another piece of it.

Now, my youngest daughter is incredibly bright, but she's also incredibly obstinate and strong willed. If it's not something she wants to do then it isn't going to happen. We've had to continually work with her on focusing through stuff that she doesn't want to do even though she needs to do, so that's a good point.

Why don't you share for us just a little bit about how if you can remember back now when your boys were young and you first started realizing that things weren't necessarily like you imagined they would be? I don't know how to say that. I know how I was like, but I don't know how to say that politely

*"...work together and we can make enough modifications or accommodations ... that we can keep him off medication for as long as possible"*

**Kayla:** Well, I think our son that's probably the most severely inattentive is our second son and he was the son that introduced us to the whole concept that you can have ADHD and not be hyperactive, because he was this great kid, never got in

trouble, never had his name on the board, but when he was in kindergarten he would forget his book bag every day.

He would get in the car and not have his shirt on to go to school. He was just in la la land constantly. He was so very bright and he was able to move through school until third grade, and we actually took him out half way through third grade. We blamed it on the teacher because he wasn't doing well, so I brought him home to home school him. There were some problems in the classroom, I'm vilifying myself, but even at home it was just like, "Hello? Do the next one. We're doing the math here."

But, the next year, God bless this woman, his teacher pulled me aside, we'd known her for many years and she said, "I think you might want to have him evaluated for ADHD." I said, "You're kidding?" She introduced me to the inattentive part and I didn't do anything about it. Meanwhile she made some changes in the classroom because he would just sit there.

She would write things on the board and he would copy part of it, but not all of it. He just didn't hear what she said. He would not bring the right books home, as we talked about many times. He just didn't have stuff when he got to school, he couldn't find his lunch money. So, she started making changes inside her classroom that were extremely beneficial to him without him being diagnosed.

She put him in a certain place in the room, she began going by him every once in awhile and just patting him on the back and making really good eye contact with him. She got him a little, it's like a box that goes around his desk and she got it for several kids so they wouldn't single him out and that way it limited his field of vision when was doing seat work and made him just look at his paper.

Just little things that she did made a world of difference. Meanwhile however, because of his homework, and it was always his homework throughout school, his grades just were dropping. We realized that she really was right and we had him evaluated. He was definitely ADHD inattentive and we went from there.

It was interesting, this teacher told us, "I'm not telling you to get him evaluated to put him on medication." She said, "At this point I think that the two of us can work together and we can make enough modifications or accommodations inside the

classroom and at home that we can keep him off medication for as long as possible, or maybe always.”

So, that was very interesting and we did not put him on medication until he was in the eighth grade. Then he always stayed on it a very short time because he hated it. I do have a child that is on medication today, so every kid is different when it comes to medication.

**Shannon:** Right. That’s a personal choice for families and for that particular kid. It’s good to know that you had somebody who was willing to work with you on finding solutions and to help him be successful in the classroom situation.

Have you had situations where you were the one having to educate the teacher or the person, like in my case my son would be going to a class once a week or whatever it is, have you had situations where you had to let them know that he needs a little bit different treatment?

### **On Communicating with Teachers**

**Kayla:** Every year. For one thing he had what was called a 504 plan and it’s for kids who don’t have learning disabilities, but they have physical disabilities, which ADHD is considered a physical disability as opposed to a learning disability. At the beginning of every year I would contact the teacher, we’d set up a meeting and I would say, “I’m your new best friend because I will be emailing you every day back and forth. Trust me, it’s for your benefit as well as mine.”

Of course, after you work in the schools the teachers knew me from being there back and forth from year to year, so they didn’t view me as a threat. We had really good teachers. We are so blessed to have unbelievably good teachers. Only once did I have a teacher that was a little bit belligerent about all of it, but that helped me to get an insight to the other side.

Every year we would say, “These are some things that you need to watch for.” Of course some of it was outlined in his 504, but we just kind of gave them a run down, especially for the second son, of “This is what you’re going to be dealing with. This is how we can help you to help him and we can help you to not pull your hair out by the second week of school.”

**Shannon:** By the second week of school, that's funny.

### **On The Power of Routines & Setting Expectations**

**Kayla:** He was just a case and we were disorganized, but like I said, extremely bright. He's the one in the Navy and he is defending your country. He is doing so very well, but he has one thing to do and that's fix computers. That's what he does all day long.

Bootcamp was great for him, all the school was great for him, because it was just one thing all day long. He didn't have to think about anything but that one thing. He didn't have to think about, "Where am I going to eat? What am I going to eat? How am I going to pay my bills? I don't have the rent to pay. I don't have a dorm to go back to." It was all done for him, so it was perfect for him.

**Shannon:** That's interesting, because I remember reading in one of your books or maybe on your site about this particular son that joined the military. He was the child that really needed routines a great deal. Is that correct?

**Kayla:** Yes. He was the one that when we were on vacation he would say, "What are we going to do today?" and it was almost a frantic question. We travel quite a bit and he was always, "What are we going to do?" It was almost, "Please, help me."

So, we would say, "This is our schedule for the day. Now, it might change, but this is our schedule. We're going to have lunch about 1:00, we'll probably eat at McDonalds because it's cheap. After lunch we're going to go to this particular place and you should probably take this with you." It just made him feel more comfortable.

We didn't realize that for a long time with him, but he really needed a game plan, something he could fall back on because his life felt so disorganized and so chaotic and his brain didn't like it, his brain wanted order, it wanted consistency, it was craving it. So, being in an unfamiliar country with unfamiliar languages and unfamiliar situations he really wanted something he could hold onto it. That's what we did with him.

**Shannon:** That piece really resonated well for me. The fact that the knowledge that your son needed those routines, you were able to do that for them, but then he was still able to find a place for himself as an adult and to be successful even still needing

those routines was really encouraging to me, because really early on when my oldest daughter was 18 months or two years, somewhere in there we realized that the tantrums, the problem situations, could easily be avoided if we told her ahead of time, "This is what we're going to do. This is what to expect."

We laid things out for her so that she could do the transitions and then we if we were going to change we said, "We're going to go do this now, we're going to do this in five minutes." We'd have to give her warnings like, "In five minutes we're going to go." Because if we did it abruptly, life was very difficult.

She needed that mental transition, but she also needed the, "We need to follow through this..." She knew what she was going to be doing during that period of time. When my second son came along his world is different and he is highly reactive. We've worked with him a great deal on this. So, he would go and he would need the routines.

He needs as much consistency as possible and we're not a consistent family. In fact, my husband has an allergic reaction to the word "schedule". So, I have to really set things, "This is the routine. These are the expectations for the day." That really helps him process, but then if there's too much change he starts melting down quite a bit.

So, I've wondered, now he's 11, how that's going to translate once he's an adult. It's helpful to hear that story and know that as we teach them to live within themselves and be successful in who they are and these coping skills to get through these different situations that they will then find their successful situations outside the family.

### **Teaching Children to Be Flexible**

**Kayla:** And they will. One of the important things is, like I said, we traveled, one time we traveled for a month and he just had to suck it up and know that it's not going to be the same every single day. This is the way life is. Life isn't fair, life isn't as ordered and as scheduled as you want it to be. We'll give you the tools to handle that as best we can.

I think making him be flexible was a big key as he got older to him embracing change and embracing different places and being able to enjoy it a little bit more and

enjoy himself a little bit more, because you know if you do the same thing over and over again, maybe that's me projecting, but to me that's just boring.

**Shannon:** Oh, I agree totally. That's been a hard thing for me to realize that I can just go with the flow for the most part, but then I have gotten to the point that I've realized that I've built certain routines and I don't like those routines messed with, it's almost like I've taken on some of the kid's stuff. Maybe it's because I know I'd have to manage all this extra stuff if my routines get messed up too much. Baseball season throws me off every year because I can't routine it very well, so it's a lot more management I think.

### **Special Needs During Sports Seasons**

**Kayla:** Soccer season was that way with us. In fact, we were talking about the sports equipment, one of my favorite stories. Our first son loved to play soccer and we were on the way to a soccer game one day and running just a little bit late. We were almost half way there, we certainly didn't have time to go home and he started just panicking.

"Mom, I can't find my shin guard." I said, "Son, I know you put them both in the car, I saw them." "I can't find them." Just panicking, just going ballistic. One of his brothers starting laughing and pointed, he had both of them on one leg. He still hasn't lived that one down, that whole la la land thing.

### **How Nutrition Affects Behavior**

Sports will really throw you off. We mentioned before when we were talking about nutrition a little bit, it will really throw their nutritional needs off too and that's something that you can't with ADHD kids in particular, but any child can't do that. They need to be eating good. They need to be eating fruit, they need to be eating fresh vegetables, McDonalds does not cut it.

I've already told you once that we go to McDonalds occasionally in our family, especially when we're traveling, but you have to be giving your children a good well rounded meal and you need to be planning it somehow or another, especially with kids that have special needs. It's really important.

**Shannon:** In your book [Focus Pocus](#) you have a whole section there on your nutrition tips with that and I was really thankful to see that because we've learned along the way, and it depends on the child, that nutrition makes a huge difference on their behavior.

I felt really bad because my third son who has a variety of learning and developmental related special needs I couldn't find the nutritional blends that were working for him. What worked for my oldest daughter and my oldest son wasn't working for him. Nothing was calming him and keeping him flat lined, keeping him in that realm of normality of emotions.

Finally, we discovered copious amounts of fruit. Fruit is a big deal for him. As long as he has fruit to snack on all day long he is the most even keel, wonderful child in the world. If I run out of fresh fruit or we're out of fruit within 24 to 36 hours it's a Jeckle and Hyde thing, he just becomes really explosive, really reactive, really emotional and I have no idea why. I've never had all that tested, but it was amazing to me just the differences.

Now my husband is like, "We're out of fruit. You need to get more fruit." Because it makes such a difference. Before he wouldn't let me buy it because he doesn't like fruit, only I like fruit, so now it's like, "We're out of fruit. You've got to get fruit, Zachary is going to go nuts if you don't have fruit." So, that was really cool.

But, you also have some things in there about Omega 3's. How has that played in your world?

**Kayla:** We gave our kids Omega 3 for a good bit of time. They don't take them now, but I wish the oldest one in particular would because he's the one that's on medication. The other ones they're big now, you can't tell your 20 year old, "Here take your vitamins, your Flinstones for today."

But, it really did help, it made a difference. It didn't make a huge difference and maybe it was the placebo effect, but if it was that's fine, I don't care, it worked. It just seemed to take the edge off and help them focus just a little bit more. We found a good brand that we liked that you can still get, it's at [GoAskMom](#), but it's called MRM and we really liked it. They took it and it didn't give them the fishy breath and that stuff, it was easy to swallow.

As they got older they just really resisted taking any. That's why all through their lives have emphasized eating correctly. We're not fanatics about it, we really aren't. It's not something like that, but I do try to cook from scratch and a crock pot does wonders. I cycle through the same menu like every two weeks we do the same thing. It's the same old same old, but McDonalds is the same, it's got the same menu as it did in 1972.

**Shannon:** Right.

**Kayla:** We always say, "We do the same thing as McDonalds does and you go there." On Monday we have chicken, on Tuesday we have something with group beef, on Wednesday we eat at our church, on Thursday we have something with fish, on Friday we have something without meat.

*Great Meal  
Planning Tip  
for Busy Moms!*

Now, we don't do this anymore, but when my kids were all at home I had a schedule and that was the way that I functioned and we would just keep cycling through that same old menu. I tried to cook stuff that didn't have additives, MSG in particular just makes my kids very sluggish and it's in everything. It's in SpaghettiO's, it's in chicken noodle soup, so you really have to watch.

Like I said, a crock pot is great. You just throw a couple things in there, put it on in the morning and in the afternoon when you've get home you cook some rice to go with it and throw it on the top, make a green salad and you're done and give them fruit for dessert. Almost always if we have dessert at all, it's fruit. We very rarely have anything like cake.

In fact, our sailor just before he deployed had a birthday and we gave him a little party and when it came time for the meal we brought out a huge salad with birthday candles in it, because, if you give him a choice between a salad and birthday cake or anything with sugar, he will always choose the salad to this day. I wonder if it has something to do with his body knowing what he needs, because he will choose the fresh vegetables.

When he was little he would go out in the yard and eat the green onions in the yard. We had to make him stop because he would reek for days, it would get in his blood.

I would say, "You cannot eat onions out of the yard anymore." But, he's always craved those raw whole foods. It's very interesting with him.

**Shannon:** That's good that he knows that makes him feel better, whether he knows it intuitively or not. I was jotting a note, you said the MSG makes your kids sluggish. I'm having a problem solving world right now this summer in that my 11 year old has been really sluggish. Just feeling tired and sluggish, and part of it is the heat and not wanting to go outside, and he's such an outdoor and it's just too hot to be outside.

We have a really large house, so to keep the costs under control we keep our air conditioning only on one side of the house and at 82 degrees, so it's still warm in the house. He's just been really sluggish, but he's also been eating some more packaged foods than normal, so I need to go check and see what those ingredient lists are. Maybe there's something there that's causing a problem for him.

**Kayla:** It could be. The other day my husband had dental surgery and he wanted me to buy him Ramen noodles, so I acquiesced and did, and my kids think those things are like candy, if they can get Ramen noodles they are so happy. All Ramen noodles are is salt, MSG and flour and you put water in it, so you're eating a chemical food here.

My youngest son was like, "We got Ramen noodles." And he ate two big packages of them, which is a bunch, and then later in the day he says, "I feel so tired and sluggish and I can't concentrate." He said, "Do you think it might be the MSG?" I said, "Yeah, I think it might be." He hasn't had it in so long he really realized what a huge difference it made in the way he felt.

**Shannon:** Wow. That's just incredible. I'm sure that plays that way for most of us, but it just seems to be more pronounced I think in some of this.

### **How Outdoor Time Can Make a Difference**

My boys are incredibly active and both of them love to be outside. One of the things that I had never seen before and for some reason I missed it the first couple times through your book, but this last time last week I was reading [Focus Pocus](#) again and

you had a thing in there that related to a study that says that kids prefer schoolwork wise and focus better if they have time outside.

**Kayla:** In a later study, a very late study has come up and says especially if it's in a green area as opposed to a concrete sidewalk outside, like in an urban setting. They did this in an urban setting and they said that the children that were taken to the park where it was green were able to function and focus better when they got back to the classrooms than those who were just sent out to the concrete playground.

I thought that was very interesting, but absolutely that fresh air, that outside play. We had a teacher, a couple of my boys had her, and she taught fifth grade and our school policy was they went in the gym for three days a week and then they played outside for two days a week and that was the policy and that was the way it was going to be.

This teacher was like, "No. In my class we'll go to the gym three days week, but we play outside five days a week, whether it's raining or not. When it's raining we'll go under the portico, but we will be outside for 20 minutes every day." She told the parents at the beginning of the school year, "When my classroom scores stop being the highest in the school then I'll follow the rules."

She got away with it and they didn't touch it because she really did have really good scores. I really think it's because she let those kids play outside every single day rain or shine, hot or cold, it did not matter, they got that fresh air. They need it.

### **Memorization & Movement**

**Shannon:** They need it, yes. I know with inattentive they don't necessarily have the hyperactivity, and I don't know that my boys are hyperactive so much as they just need to move, they just need to be active. I've had situations, even my daughter learned to skip count by bouncing on a trampoline or dancing around my office.

My youngest son, the one who has a really hard time with memorization, one of the things that we did and I have found works well for him is if I can make it physical in some way, preferably outdoors, then he remembers it better. So, learning to count was a huge deal for him. He understood the concept of numbers, but he couldn't remember the order they went in and the names of them.

So, we would get out on the trampoline outside and he'd bounce to that, and that helped him stick things in his head a little bit better, but it also helped him focus more on what I was having him do. Did you have any ways of adapting to handling the high energy levels?

**Kayla:** Well, the first thing if I saw them getting antsy I'd say, "Stop and go run around the house." They'd go outside and run around the house once and they usually felt a little bit better. They just needed to get those wiggles out.

But, I have a god-daughter and she had a really hard time learning to spell and she found that swinging and she'd spell and swing back and forth and the combining of the physical and the cognitive just gave it a double whammy and it would really help it sink into her brain. Well, you know some of the rhymes that you learned when you were little when you were jumping rope and so forth. There's a reason for that, our bodies instinctively go to learn things.

Sometimes you realize that you haven't memorized a phone number, you've memorized where the keys are, same thing on the typewriter. It's just easier to memorize that and then if you associate a letter with it for some kids, not for all kids, that's the problem with learning, nothing works all the time for all kids, but it really does help to put some physical activity with it.

### **Handling the Wiggles**

Let them stand up when they're learning. I was talking to a teacher the other day and she said that she had one child who is just over the top, ADHD, wasn't on medications, the parents didn't want to put him on medication and she says, "I'll work with him, not a big deal." She took up some masking tape in the classroom and she masked off a place and put a table in the middle of it and that was his area.

She said, "You are free to do whatever. You have to be quiet, but you can do any movement you need to inside this square." And he did and he learned and was much less of a disruption as a result and he learned and the other kids could learn too and she didn't have to keep calling on him and make him sit down. "Sit down and shut up," well you don't say that, but that's what you mean.

**Shannon:** Right.

**Kayla:** Now they have the little balance cushions that you put in a chair for kids or for adults too, it's a little tiny cushion, I talk about it in [Focus Pocus](#), and they look like half of a rubber ball and they go on a chair. The child sits on them, they don't make any noise, but they can wiggle back and forth and that wiggling is physical activity and it helps them to be able to pay attention.

**Shannon:** Interesting. I know we use an exercise ball, my third child, my younger son, he just bounces and bounces on the exercise ball. I think he's going to pop it one of these days. But, that seems to help him stay in a space. He's moving his body vertically, but he's not flailing and he's able to focus more that way. I'll have to go look at those, because the exercise ball is mine so it's fairly large, so something that would fit in a chair might work better for him.

### Setting Boundaries

**Kayla:** One of the things that we have to be careful about is you've got a disability, you've got ADHD or whatever, so we have to accommodate it, but in your life you're going to have boundaries. So, we'll accommodate it, but only this far. You can jump up and down and wiggle, but only in this box.

You can stand up and not use your chair, but the moment I see you kicking the desk behind you, and yes I've been there done that, then you lose your privilege. So, you can do what you want in my boundaries, because life has boundaries and if they don't learn that control when they're young in the context of ADHD or their sensory disabilities or their "I'm just bored with math" we're doing them a disservice as they get older.

**Shannon:** Right. That makes sense to me, as part of raising them to be successful adults and to handle life successfully and within themselves, but also within the society that they're living in. That makes sense. Not everybody in the world is going to accommodate your needs, so learning how to live within the rest of the world makes sense.

## Getting Homework Home and Done without Tears

Now that we're on school a little bit here, you've actually got two other products related to sharing your advice and what you've learned along the way dealing with homework and getting home and done appropriately. One is an eBook called **Waking Up From the Homework Nightmare**, and for our listeners who want to look at that the URL for that is [HomeworkNightmare.com](http://HomeworkNightmare.com).



The other one is **PAC-Kit**, which is a planner, agenda, calendar, which is a planner system for kids that is color coded. You developed this for your boys, if I understand it correctly. For the listeners who want to look at that at [PlannerForKids.com](http://PlannerForKids.com).

Monday, January 2, 2006

Subject: <u>Assignment</u>	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: _____	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: <u>Assignment</u>	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: _____	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: <u>Assignment</u>	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: _____	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: <u>Assignment</u>	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____
Subject: _____	Due Date: _____	Supplies: _____

Upcoming Tests/Projects: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Initials: \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you tell us a little bit more about how those came to be and some of the lessons that you've learned helping your boys be successful in school? Obviously, they've even gone on to college and been successful with that. It can be a big struggle.

I know my brother had a big struggle, forgetting his homework, forgetting to put his name on his homework, forgetting to bring books home, whatever it was. When he was about third or fourth grade it all came to a head then and I've seen that with my own kids when they're doing outside activities or we talked about sports. How have you adapted?

**Kayla:** Well, the first thing was when we really worked closely with the schools about making sure that the homework was copied correctly. That is one of the hardest things for parents to do. Now, a new development is the cell phone and we didn't have that option back then, but a lot of children have cell phones now. All they have

to do at the end of the day, they have to get permission from the principal and the teacher most likely, but just take a picture of the assignment board.

**Shannon:** Oh, that's brilliant.

**Kayla:** Then they have it on their phone every day, which is just great. But, then the other step is you've got math and you've got to do certain pages, and you've got spelling, then you've got social studies, and you've got science, and you have to take home your periodic table to do your science homework because it's based on that, so you've got to get all those things home.

We discovered that the planners that the school provided had these teeny tiny little blocks for children with perfect handwriting and then they had all this stuff about today is Halloween, yeah you think my kid is going to be copying his math when you've got this big picture of candy at the bottom of the page? But, they just didn't work for our kids, so we started out using a marble composition book and at the top of the page I would write the date every single day and they had to copy their homework on that, we would divide it into sections.

We discovered that having a different color section for each subject was very helpful and we would just use a different color ink. Eventually I thought, "I'm just going to do this on the computer." That's where the PAC-kit came in. The PAC-kit they write down their homework, they copy from the board, but then beside it they also have to write down what they have to take home to get that done.

This was particularly helpful in middle school, so if they science with that special periodic table they had to write down, "Science, page 49, numbers 7 through 12," then next to it they would have to put exactly what they needed, the science book, science notebook, special periodic table to take home. Then they would have to check it off.

Then for my second son, and that seems to be a recurring theme my second son, he actually at the end of the school day the assistant principal allowed him to go into her office where it was quiet where he could think that through systematically. Sometimes he did and sometimes didn't, this was not a magic pill, but he did more and more and was able to bring the correct things home for his homework.

So, that's where the PAC-kit came from. We just would print the sheets off and three hole punch them and stick them into a little file folder and they would have a month at a time and it would have all their information on it when they would come home at the end of the day and they would have the right stuff with them.

**Shannon:** That sounds really good.

**Kayla:** It really did improve them being able to get the stuff home correctly.

**Shannon:** That makes sense. I know that even now my daughter just finished an intensive high school biology class and it was one year's worth of biology lab in nine days. They would be at class for five hours a day and then they've have homework to bring home and then they had to look up and use their book to answer the questions and so forth, so she's bringing things back and forth.

She's had outside classes now for four or five years, she's gone through three years of Latin, and that was always like, "Okay, do you have all that materials you need for it?" A process for her to learn to write down the assignment and what she was going to need for that and she was only doing it for one subject, because we home school the rest of the subjects, so the whole concept I don't know how it would be for us, for my boys especially, to have to do it for multiple subjects.

In the homeschooling world for children who have a hard time with finding their materials and working through to order materials the Work Box System is very popular, because there's those multiple drawer plastic bin things. They put one subject worth of materials in each drawer and then they have a little tab.

You work through this one first and all the materials are there for you. Then you work through this one and all the materials are there for you. So, that can be helpful for an in home situation. All I've done is each of my children have a box that has their school work in it, but even then my older son has a tendency just to leave things where he is at and getting it back into where it needs to be.

It's a very traumatic thing for him. It's like not finding something he needs is hugely traumatic for him.

**Kayla:** One of my sons said, "ADHD means you can lose something and not move." And it's true, they lose stuff and they haven't even moved. It's just odd, it just

disappears. Having them put it back, oh my goodness. It's a routine that they have to learn, but it's so against their nature.

**Shannon:** At least you know it's possible. I could continue to pick your brain a great deal more on this and thankfully you have your eBooks where you have graciously shared your lessons on this. I only recently have been exposed to the [Waking Up From the Homework Nightmare](#), because I didn't think as a homeschooler I really needed it, but when I was going through the information that was in the book I was like, "Oh, you know what?" You were talking about tips for spelling memorizations and that something that Josh is really struggling with right now, he's my 11 year old.

I was like, "I need to get a hold of this one too," because even though I'm a homeschooler there's going to be information that's going to help me with my kids in it. I'm just so thankful that you've been able to share this with us.

### **More on Memorization**

The other thing that I wanted to ask you specifically was there's so much memorization that our kids have, facts and figures, not just in school and with schoolwork, but within maybe church or faith systems where you're memorizing verses and so forth. I'm about to send my eight year old son into an Awanas program and it's making me very worried about it.

I want him to do it, I think it's going to be really good for him, but at the same time he's just now at the point where he thinks he can control himself within situations where he doesn't know everybody and doesn't know the routine, which is a big thing for him, but the memorization for him is so very hard. Can you share a tip with me on how you did memorization with your boys?

**Kayla:** Poems, you talk about bible verses, we made it a cheer when I was in fifth grade, I still remember it and it just popped out of my brain. Putting them to music, putting anything to music, putting them to a poem, or the swinging back and forth. Putting them on a finger.

I teach preschool right now at our church and we will take verses and put them to activities. I'm strong, be strong, and you put your arms like you're making a muscle, in the Lord, and you put your hand up. Stuff like that, but to vary it, to not have the

same system with every verse. So, if he comes home with 10 verses try to come up with 10 different routines. Maybe two songs and two cheers and two poems and two physical things.

Then also there's just absolutely making pictures to go with it, so they can see that picture in their brain. That will help them memorize, especially for stuff like biology. Your daughter took biology and this has sort of ribald, but again ribaldry works the older they get. There was a particular, I think it's a mushroom it's called ascombacone.

Well, you can imagine the picture that we drew to go with ascombacone and my son remembered it when it was time to go on his test, because he saw that picture of that awful comb in his brain. Just little things like that will really help to solidify it and to put it in there so that they will not forget it.

### Teaching Your Children to be Self-Aware

**Shannon:** That's good. I've got notes here that I'm writing, I've got a page of notes here. That's awesome. Now, we're running low on time here and there's a couple things I wanted to ask you about.

You make a comment in [Focus Pocus](#) about teaching our kids to be self aware. How and why has this been really important for you and for your boys?

**Kayla:** Is it Robert Burns that wrote the poem, "Oh would some power the gift to give us to see ourselves as other see us?"

So many of us and many of our children, especially kids that have Aspergers or ADHD, that cannot see themselves as others do. When they do things that are socially unacceptable or it ostracizes them, and I'm not saying to not let our kids be themselves, I'm not saying that, but when you have a kid that's in, and I'm thinking of one in particular in middle school, who wears a suit with cowboy boots to school. Hello? That's not a good plan. You know what I'm saying?

His mother needs to say, "Look. I want you to think about this. I want you to think about how this looks to other people. What is this telling other people?" Basically, for this kid it's saying, "I don't really want to be your friend. It's too hard for me to be friends."

So, teach them that, teach them when they're in class and when they're starting to lose focus teach them. Watch them when they're watching a movie, you can tell when your kid is getting ready to lose their focus and say, "Do you feel yourself losing focus here?" When you're sitting in church, when you're on a trip.

When you're going on a trip, for example, and you can see them getting agitated because the schedule is not the same, say, "Realize what you're feeling right now. Recognize that you're feeling agitated simply because we said we were going to stop at 1:00 and we are not because we've got another place that we're going to go at 2:00."

When you recognize something that they're feeling point it out to them gently, but so that they will understand themselves a little bit better.

### **Picking Your Battles & What Fights are Worth It**

**Shannon:** Okay. That makes sense. You also make a comment in [Focus Pocus](#) about the fight isn't always worth it. In that place I think you were talking about finding methods of making beds. But, I have learned along the way that not everything is worth it and to pick my battles.

I have a kind of thing, "Is this going to matter in two to five years? Is this going to matter in the course of a lifetime?" Then I make my decision as to whether I'm going to make a deal out of it. That's sometimes about swallowing reactions on my part.

Over time, and you've raised your boys now to adulthood, your youngest is 17 and almost there, looking back what fights were not worth it for you and what fights were?

**Kayla:** Making beds was not worth it. You are so right. The fights that are going to contribute to their character are worth it. Being able to have people depend on you, not losing your temper, those are the fights that are worth it. The things that are going to affect their core beliefs, their core values, their core being as an adult.

I talked to a mother, actually this was just yesterday, and she said, "My little girl, I didn't bring her to church this morning because she got so angry in the morning because she couldn't decide what she wanted to wear, and I couldn't get her to

brush her teeth, and I couldn't get her to eat her breakfast." And she says, "She's getting ready to start kindergarten. What am I going to do?"

I said, "Well, this is what you do. First of all, ditch the brushing the teeth. Her teeth are not going to fall out. Pick your battle here. Your battle is getting her to school with something in her belly. So, the night before get her clothes out and make it very clear. This is what you've chosen, in the morning there is no discussion, there is no debate, I will dress you. You know how to dress yourself, it's a not a self help skill that you haven't learned. If you are going to fight me I will just dress you, I will shove a piece of peanut butter toast in your hand, strap you in your car seat and we are leaving."

That's the battle, that's it, getting her dressed with a little bit of nutrition in her to go to school. The rest of it is just not worth it. One battle per morning. That was the way it was with a lot of things with our boys, just one battle at a time.

But, if it came down to that character issue we held our ground. "We're not going to let you do this. We are not going to let you lie. We're not going to let you be disrespectful or disobedient." We draw the line there, those are always the battles that you have to fight.

**Shannon:** That makes sense. Right now I'm working with my teenager on picking her battles and learning to pick her battles, because right now she's nitpicking at her younger brother (my oldest son) and it got to a point last week where she didn't even say something that affected him, but the tone of voice that she was using just set him off because he felt like nothing he said and nothing he did around her was right.

So, we had to have a discussion with her on, "This is what you're doing, this is how it's being perceived." And having to teach her about when to pick her battles. What you just said helped crystallize a couple more things I think I want to talk to her about, because she's learning how to deal with things. She likes things to be done her way and that's not always possible.

**Kayla:** We all have a tendency to think that if things aren't done my way they're not right and that's not the reality. It's not true, number one, and things are not always going to be done your way. Just learn to accept they're going to do this differently,

it's going to be all right, it's not my way, and it might not even be the best way, none the less it gets done and I have to suck it up and go on. Suck it up is a favorite phrase of mine, if you noticed.

**Shannon:** Well, I use that phrase too. I think that might have to do with just having been in the trenches for awhile.

**Kayla:** Right. No drama. That's why I don't have girls. Can you imagine me with girls? Just suck it up, honey. I know you don't like it. I would destroy her psyche forever I'm sure, so God knew what he was doing.

**Shannon:** I think on one of your pages relating to homework you have mentioned that homework has driven you to tears on more than one occasion and I know that I spend and have now since the kids were very young a lot of time and energy thinking about how to address whatever issue we're working with that has to do with, like I said, I'm trying to figure out about memorization for Z before going into Awanas, or various things like trying to figure out what's the right nutritional blend to use for this child.

I know as I've read through your stuff you've gone through this process of diagnosis, there was somewhere about a sleep study, you've done a whole bunch of things with your kids to help your kids succeed in the world and to understand how to meet their needs and help them become successful. I know for me that takes a lot of time and energy and the tears sometimes are there and there's an emotional toll on that.

### **Kayla's Words of Encouragement for Other Parents of Special Needs Kids**

Having been through this process now, what are your words of advice or encouragement, or not, for those of us who are going through that process, either just learned that their child has ADHD inattentive, or Asperger's, or just can't process the world in the same way you'd like them to, what would you tell us?

**Kayla:** Each child is unique, each child is a gift, and they are more important than a job, they are more important than a hobby, they're certainly more important than television and Facebook. I'm married, so God, then my husband, then my children, that's my priority. I think if you get that in perspective.

Sometimes you have to let health go, sometimes you have to let so many things go, I think it happens. I'm not saying that they're your total world, because they're not, but those are your priorities and it will happen if you give your children everything you have and recognize them as the wonderful gifts that they are they will grow up and they will be okay.

You have to do that balance, you can't just think that they're these perfect creatures and they're always going to do the right thing, but just recognize their strengths, recognize their weaknesses too, and deal with weaknesses and go for it and then they'll grow up and go away. It's happened to me.

**Shannon:** They grow up and go away, but they still need you on occasion, don't they?

**Kayla:** Actually they do and it's really cool to watch. Our first one Skyped us at 1:00 in the morning the other night about car insurance, which I've mentioned, so he and my husband stayed on Skype for about an hour about car insurance. Just asking for advice, he never used to ask for advice, he used to think we were so stupid and we didn't know anything.

It's so neat to see them turn the corner and become adults that can be your friends, because your kids aren't really your friends when they're young. They are, but they're really not. As they get older they really are and they just start to shine. They still have their quirks and they still have their moments, but then the last time I checked so did I and I'm almost 50. I'd bet you have some quirks too.

**Shannon:** Oh, definitely.

**Kayla:** So, it really is cool how they grow and develop.

**Shannon:** That's neat to hear. I know that sometimes it feels like my entire life for the last 13 years the primary outside God and my husband has been on the kids. Right now I'm looking at my 6 year old who is holding a microphone waiting for me to be done with this call so she can sing again, and I've got another 12 years until she's 18.

Visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com)

It's amazing to think about what life might be like when they're adults. Looking at them now at 13, 11, 8 and 6 and wondering, seeing glimpses of who they're going to be, how they're going to be. It's kind of interesting, for me anyway.

So, Kayla, I want to just say thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and sharing your wisdom and lessons learned along the way. I really appreciate it.

For our listeners, to get to know Kayla some more her website again is [GoAskMom.com](http://GoAskMom.com) and the products we've talked about where Kayla has written down her advice are at [HelpYourChildFocus.com](http://HelpYourChildFocus.com), which is her Focus Pocus book; Waking Up from the Homework Nightmare can be found at [HomeworkNightmare.com](http://HomeworkNightmare.com); and that planner for kids that she's created, the PAC-kit is at [PlannerforKids.com](http://PlannerforKids.com).

Also, if you're doing science projects she's amazing with her [tips on science projects](#) and I have some links to that on the website. She's given us a [free eBook](#) on making your way through science projects for those that have never done science projects before.

Kayla, thank you again for sharing your generosity and your experience.

**Kayla:** Thank you for having me. It's been a lot of fun. I've never done an hour interview before and you made it easy. It was fun talking to you. Thank you very much.

**Shannon:** It was. Maybe some time we can have you back to hear about how your business got started, but that's another conversation.

**Kayla:** Which dovetails right into the ADHD thing, believe it or not.

**Shannon:** Does it really?

**Kayla:** Oh, yeah.

**Shannon:** We'll have to book you again.

**Kayla:** Sounds great.

Visit [Living-Life-at-Home.com](http://Living-Life-at-Home.com)

**Shannon:** This is Shannon with Living Life at Home wishing you a blessed and wonderful week.

## More Resources from Kayla Fay

[GoAskMom.com](http://GoAskMom.com) - Who Put the Ketchup in the Medicine Cabinet

[Focus Pocus: 100 Ways to Help Your Child Pay Attention](#)

[Waking Up from the Homework Nightmare](#)

[PAC-Kit: A Planner for Students](#)

[Raising Small Souls Parenting Retreat](#) (Kayla was one of the speakers)



### **Kayla's Science Project Resources:**

[7 Steps to a Successful Science Fair Project](#) a guest post by Kayla Fay

[A Non-Scientific Parent's Guide to a Science Project](#) a free guide from Kayla Fay

[24 Hour Science Projects](#) - Step-by-Step How-to instructions for 5 science projects that can be done within 24 hours

[Weekend Science Projects](#) - Five experimental projects that can be completed in a weekend.

[Watch This! Science Projects](#) - Five demonstration projects, for students who must present a scientific concept to their class.

[Middle School Science Projects](#) - Five experimental projects designed for the Middle School student. Each project also has a 24 hour option.