



Redefining Strong

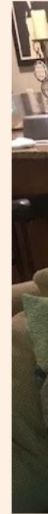
Masculinity, Resiliency, and Fatherhood in the Disability World

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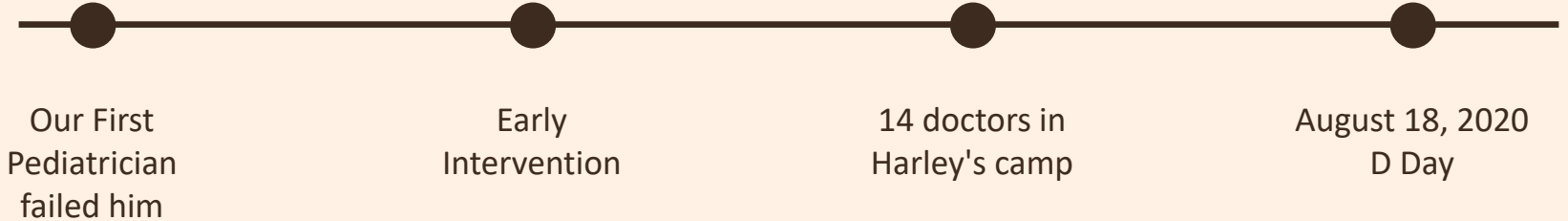
The Arc of Illinois 76th Annual Convention | April 29, 2026

www.got4titude.com

Harley joins us in October 2018!



Harley's Journey



Exhaust all options



"I cherish and celebrate every laugh and inchstone like it is my last day."

My Journey

Grief.

Invisible Weight.

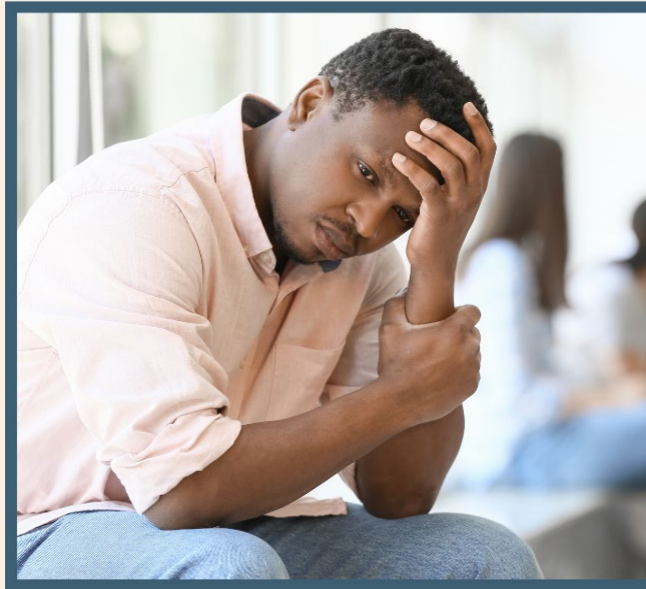
A Shattered Blueprint.

The Quiet Battle.

The version of masculinity I inherited wasn't built for this moment.

What No One Ever Tells You

About Being a Dad to a Neurodivergent Child



- It's not just appointments and therapies. It's an emotional crash.
- Grief for the life you imagined, not the child you love.
- Shock: the world looks the same, but nothing feels the same.
- Isolation: few truly understand the storm inside.
- The myth that strength equals silence.
- True strength isn't silence or fixing. It's presence. It's showing up again and again.

The blueprint we inherited wasn't built for this.

Redefining Masculinity & Building Resilience



Old Blueprint

- Don't cry, don't ask for help
- Be the rock, be unshakable
- Carry it all alone
- Walls that block connection

New Blueprint

- Emotion, honesty, vulnerability
- Presence over perfection
- Asking for help is strength
- Bending without breaking

We are the generation that rewrites the story. What your children see you do today becomes their blueprint tomorrow.

*"The men in this room are the generation
that rewrites the story."*

Presence Over Perfection

Gaining Clarity in the Chaos

"Clarity creates peace. Peace creates presence."

The Internal Shift

- Let go of fixing everything
- Focus on becoming, not just surviving
- Define your rhythm, your values, your fatherhood
- Presence is more powerful than solutions
- Not perfection, but intention

The Generational Impact

- When a father shifts inside, the home shifts with him
- When your nervous system is calm, your child feels it
- What your children absorb becomes their baseline for manhood
- You are building the emotional infrastructure for the next generation

"Show up, reset, try again. That's the compass."

The IEP Story

When doing everything right still isn't enough

1

We moved our family from Chicago to the northern suburbs specifically to access strong special needs curriculum and support for Harley.

2

I showed up to Harley's first pre-K IEP meeting ready to be part of the conversation.

3

The IEP team met with Chelsey for over an hour. Harley and I were in another room with a school team member.

4

At the end, I was brought in and asked if I had any questions. No context for what had just been discussed.

"I had no idea where to start."

This Is a Systemic Problem

The Reality

- What happened to our family happens to fathers across the country every day
- IEP processes structurally default to the primary correspondent parent
- Fathers are not excluded through malice. They are excluded through design.
- 40% of parents caring for children with disabilities have contemplated suicide. Dads are so underrepresented they are invisible in the data

What Got4titude Is Calling For

- Mandatory dual notification to both parents or caregivers from the first contact
- Meeting structures that do not default to one parent as the primary decision maker
- Language in IEP documents that addresses both parents
- Training for school teams on father inclusive practices

Strategic Partners: The Arc of Illinois | National Parents Union

"This conversation starts here. Today."

Walk Away Tools: Mental Reboot for Dads

From the Got4titude Father's Survival Toolkit

The 3x3 Practice

1 thing that made me smile today

1 hard thing I got through

1 thing I'm hopeful or grateful for

*Rewires your brain toward gratitude
and resilience.*

60 Second Reset

Close your eyes.

Inhale through your nose for 4,
hold for 4, exhale for 6.

Do that three times.

Enough to reset your nervous
system in the middle of chaos.

Tools you can use tomorrow morning. Tools you can teach your kids.

Walk Away Tools: Mental Reboot for Dads

From the Got4titude Father's Survival Toolkit

Mirror Check In

When you're brushing your teeth in the morning, ask yourself:

"Who do I want to be for my family today?"

Not what do I need to do.
But who do I want to be.

Mental Reboot Sequence

- 1 Pause and name what you're feeling
- 2 Ask: "Is this energy helping me or hurting me?"
- 3 Reset with breath or movement
- 4 Re-enter with intention

This 2 to 3 minute practice can shift the energy of your day and your household.

These become part of your family's emotional infrastructure.



A nonprofit built for fathers and father figures raising children with complex needs.

Community

The Inner Circle: a private brotherhood of fathers navigating this life together. Weekly tools, live calls with Kirby, and men who get it.

Education

ICU Dads course (in development) for the crisis moment. Practical content built by a dad who has been there.

Resources

Father's Survival Toolkit, IEP Guide and Dad's Downloads: no cost tools built from the front lines of this journey.

The difference between a dad who burns out and a dad who builds through it is often one conversation with someone who gets it.

Join the Movement

For Dads

You don't have to carry this alone. Join the Inner Circle: a brotherhood of fathers building a new blueprint.

For Organizations

Partner with Got4titude to reach the fathers in your community. We fill a gap no one else is addressing.

For Funders & Donors

This is a gap in the ecosystem. Help us fill it. Got4titude is building the infrastructure fathers need.



Scan to join the Inner Circle

www.got4titude.com/inner-circle

Got4titude is calling for father inclusive IEP processes from the first contact. This conversation starts here.

hello@got4titude.com | www.got4titude.com

Q&A

Group Reflection

*What's landing right now?
What tool or thought hit home for you?*

*"Your kids don't need a superhero.
They need you."*

Raw, imperfect, and willing to keep showing up.

Got4titude

www.got4titude.com | hello@got4titude.com

Spirituality: Seeing Beyond What's in Front of Us



- Diagnosis shrank my world, left me feeling powerless
- Learned fatherhood isn't control.
- It's something deeper.
- This journey pulled me into an unexpected spiritual path
- Healing is more than physical.
- It's emotional, spiritual, energetic.
- Grounding in faith and purpose shifts the atmosphere at home
- Storms still come, but I now have a compass and connection
- Our fathers never had a room like this.