



# TOTAL BLISS (FOR A WHILE)

GOLDIE GROSSBAUM

**T**HE HOUSE IS SPOTLESS and I try to hold on to this weekly moment in time—the minute after my housecleaner leaves and the seconds before the kids sail through the door; the moment when every toy is put away, the counters are bare and sparkling and the floors are swept and mopped—and the smell of Shabbos is in the air.

Cooking is done. Challas are ready. And there's actually some time to just enjoy the Friday afternoon.

I happily realize that I will be getting more than a mere 20 seconds of quiet and a clean house; since the sun is shining and the rain has finally stopped, the kids decide it's a perfect day to play outside.

I couldn't agree more!

And so my seconds of quiet expand to minutes, and I revel in the knowledge that my to-do list is complete for the day and the kitchen sinks are empty.

Everyone has showered or taken a bath.

Total bliss.

And then, just like that, the back door opens and the game is over.

In less than three seconds, I watch in horror as black footprints with mud and sand fill the kitchen, the living room, the dining room and the beautifully vacuumed rug.

"What were you guys doing out there?" I manage to ask, trying to hide my horror and my tears.

"Digging! You won't believe how deep we dug this time!!"

They're all talking at once, so excited to tell me that the pit must be at least two feet deep.

I'm really not feeling the joy.

All I see is white Shabbos shirts spotted with dirt and Shabbos pants with dusty knees. Black toes (yes, they're barefoot!) and filthy fingernails. And my messed up floors. They're tracking the dirt everywhere!

And all I can think is—what is with BOYS?? Why can't they just go outside and sit around the picnic table and chat? Play jumprope? Why



does outdoors have to mean dirt and mud??

Or just go on the trampoline! I mean, not all of you at once. But take turns on the trampoline! Like make a line and wait your turn!

Or the slides out there, or the bikes, or the scooters...

I glance at the window at my yard filled with every type of attraction and wonder, why did they have to choose digging? And go out of their way to make sure that the dirt is mud, not just plain old dry dirt??

And at the same moment I know the truth... that boys will be boys...totally oblivious to the mess they're making, the fact that they had all showered or that they were in Shabbos clothes. Life is just too exciting for such trivial details.

And as much as I hate to admit it, I know the reality. A mother's job is not to change them from being boys. My job is to change myself to love them for their boyness.

Of course I take a moment to show them that they are tracking the house with mud and make them all go out and stamp their feet on the outdoor rug that's there for a reason. I do have the responsibility to teach them common courtesy. I point out that they aren't wearing appropriate digging clothes ... but to tell them to stop digging....? Where to even begin!

And so I tell myself—again and again—boys will dig. And it will drive me crazy. And that's how it will be. And I can either let it drive me crazy or learn to love them for it.

Because not only will boys be boys, but boys should be boys—it's healthy.

And mothers will be mothers—wanting our sons to keep busy but without doing anything that'll be noisy, messy, disruptive or dangerous; basically wishing for the impossible.

My job is to figure out how to bring out the best in my houseful of boys, but not to change them. I find that being a mother, the real work is changing myself. ❧

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Goldie Grossbaum and her husband Rabbi Yossi Grossbaum are the directors of Chabad of Folsom in Northern California and the proud parents of nine children *ka"h* – their brigade of junior *shluchim*. To read more of Goldie's writings, visit [littleyellownotepad.com](http://littleyellownotepad.com) or make sure your subscription to the *N'shei Chabad Newsletter* is up to date.

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