

Transcript of Patient's Daughter-in-law, Ella Walker Monologue:

Hello, I'm Ella Walker, Bobby and Brianne's daughter-in-law. Their son Noah was my husband. He died last year in a military training accident and I've been a single mother raising our little boy, Ty, ever since. Ty was only two years old when his daddy died. Ty didn't really understand when it first happened. He came to me more than once after the funeral and asked, "Where did daddy go?" It broke my heart. Still does.

Pop and Mom, as I call Bobby and Brianne, tried to help me out early on after Noah's death but they live a couple hours away in Decatur and Pop can't take too much time away from work. Then Mom got the vocal fold nodules and has been out on medical leave from her job teaching chorus, and that made things even worse. Not being able to sing is so hard on mom, not just because of the job. She's always loved singing in the church choir, and caroling at Christmas. And so far, she hasn't seen much improvement in her voice and I know it upsets her. In the past, she'd sit Ty on her lap and sing songs to him. And Ty doesn't understand. A few months ago they visited us and Ty was sitting on mom's lap. He said to her "Why's your voice broken, mom-mom? I wish dad was here. He'd fix it." And mom just burst into tears and hugged him so tight.

I'm a nurse, not a psychologist, but Mom seems to be suffering from depression. She's been putting on weight, she's not interested in anything, and the unpaid medical leave hasn't helped. Now Pop's income is all they have to live on.

Now's pop's got COPD on top of the asthma, and he's struggling trying to get into shape. I know he's doing it for Noah as much as himself. But I'm worried for him. I feel guilty that I can't help them more. But between all the hours in my nursing job, and shuttling Ty back and forth to pre-school and spending as much time with him as I can, I'm exhausted. On top of that, now that I'm the only breadwinner in this household, I'm going back to school to become a Family Nurse Practitioner so I can earn better pay. I don't get much sleep because after all those things are taken care of there's still all the household chores that need to be done. I know I should go to visit Pop and Mom more. And I know I need to take better care of myself. But how do you do that when you have no spare time? I mean literally, No. Spare. Time.