

ONLY
72p

SAUSAGE ROLLS RULE MY LIFE!

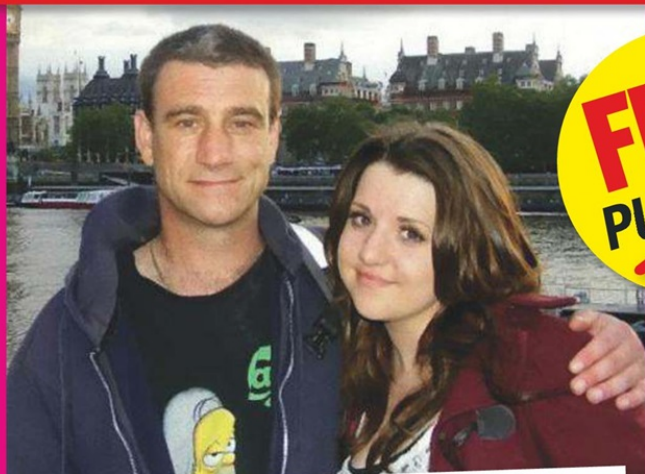
15 August 2019 72p

Issue 33

Pick Me Up!



**FUN
PUZZLES!**



**Whatever it takes
I'll free my dad and
bring him home**



**My rare
son was
BORN
ANXIOUS**



**TORMENTED BY MY
NIGHTMARE
NEIGHBOUR
UNTIL I LOST
MY BABY**

SHE CHOPPED UP



**MEN WHO
DIDN'T
GET HER
PREGNANT**



**How I'm still in
THE SAME
BIKINI
AFTER**

40 YEARS!



BORN ANX

Kelly Barker, 41, from Herne Bay, is creating a world to make her boy happier...

Sat in his highchair, my little boy kicked his legs happily, waiting for his lunch.

'Mama!' he gurgled.

What did he just say?

'Mama!' I said, encouraging him to repeat his words.

Emotion flooded through me as I kissed him proudly.

At 11 months old, Oscar had begun saying the words 'Mama' and 'Dada'.

And I was so proud every time he did.

It was the sweetest sound.

But, sadly, the talking didn't last long.

And if I'd known that Oscar wouldn't be saying 'Mama' again for the next few years, I'd have savoured those precious moments even more...

Oscar was born on 4 October 2013, and me and my husband Brendan, 41, were overjoyed.

Our two older children, Orla, now 17, and Lorcan, 12, were so excited to have a baby brother.

'I just can't wait to cuddle him,' Lorcan said.

When Oscar was born, he was an easy-going baby and slept a lot.

At 11 months, he was running around and babbling

away to himself.

He was full of life and energy.

But he wouldn't wave or point.

Oscar had so much love to give, but he struggled communicating it.

Orla and Lorcan had passed all of their health check-ups as babies.

But unlike his siblings, Oscar failed his one-year check-up.

Soon after, the babbling stopped, and he wasn't sleeping at night.

He stopped saying 'Mama' and 'Dada' and would get frustrated and cry often.

At 15 months, he was banging his head on the wall.

We flagged the problems, and when Oscar failed his 18-month check-up, we were referred to have an MRI to check for autism.

We prepared ourselves for the diagnosis, researching lots and discussing the possibility of Oscar having a developmental disorder.

'Labelling a name won't make what we deal with now any harder,' I discussed with



He just needs more compassion

Oscar sees things differently to us

Brendan one day.

'A diagnosis won't change our love for him,' he agreed.

We were called to the doctors to discuss the results of the MRI.

'Oscar has autism,' the doctor confirmed.

Relief flooded through me.

Oscar was only two - he had been diagnosed so quick.

I'd heard terrible stories about children being on the spectrum for years, and parents not knowing how to support their child.

Straight away, we viewed Oscar having extra bits, not as having less.

From that moment on, discovering Oscar's diagnosis was like peeling an onion.

At aged four, he was diagnosed with epilepsy and regular absence seizures.

Then at aged five, Oscar was diagnosed with extreme anxiety.

Now, he is almost six and he's being assessed for ADHD.

Every diagnosis gives us a better understanding of what goes on inside Oscar's little world.

Oscar has lots of symptoms as a result

of his epilepsy.

His little ears go red often and his feet get really hot, so he takes his socks off wherever he is playing.

He has unpredictable behaviour and is prone to pushing kids away or attacking people when he can't control his emotions.

He has multiple absence seizures a day, where he will zone out for up to 20 seconds.

When he comes back around, he's very emotional, confused and tired.

Sometimes he's even sick or throwing up blood.

On two occasions he's had cluster seizures and we've had to call an emergency ambulance to the house.

It breaks my heart when he has health problems.

There's nothing I can do to help him.

I deal well with Oscar's anxiety and autism, I enjoy teaching him about the world, but his epilepsy scares me.

Since Oscar has been medicated for epilepsy, he's had less seizures and feels much calmer.

Oscar goes to a special school and attends private therapy to learn how to turn-take and how to share attention.

He's good with adults but

WORDS BY NIA DALTON AND HATTIE BISHOP PHOTOS: SWNS



It didn't change how we felt about him



There are wonderful moments

IOUS



not with other children yet.

He has a good understanding of the world and personal space, too.

But at six years old, he's still got lots more to learn. He's okay at socialising if it's on his terms.

At home, I set up activities with visual cues to explain to him what we're doing that day.

'Now we are going to play with playdough,' I'll say. Then I point to a happy face.

The picture cards reassure Oscar that playdough is fun, and he can relax.

But he has a delay in accepting the activity.

10 minutes might go by, and even when he's playing, it's hard to keep his attention.

Everything is so hard and scary for him.

Orla and Lorcan used to stand up if Oscar came in the room, worried that he'd run and attack them.

Oscar might confuse slapping for affection.

We've introduced 'kind hands' so that he knows when to be gentle.

His big brother and sister just want to cuddle him, and it's difficult for them.

But they are both really positive and caring.

Sadly, not everyone is as understanding as our family.

When Oscar was kicking off in public, one stranger said to me: 'If he were my child, I'd smack him.'

Luckily, he isn't your child!

Strangers have often told him to 'shut up' or called him 'naughty', which makes Oscar feel even worse.

People don't know how to react to autism, because there isn't enough awareness.

They don't like situations that aren't normal.

To prevent the abuse, one

summer I bought Oscar some autism awareness tops to wear on our holiday.

It was time that people understood his actions.

Oscar began itching the labels and taking the top off - he wasn't comfortable.

No-one had designed them with an autistic child in mind.

I wasn't happy.

So, I decided to create my own clothes for Oscar to wear.

I bought some organic t-shirts online and printed the

slogans 'Be kind I have autism' and 'Unpredictable and amazing'.

Quickly, people began to understand Oscar's actions.

Strangers were touching him less in public and giving him space.

'You'll have to make my son one!' a friend from Oscar's special school said.

With encouragement, I started an Etsy shop.

I wasn't selling loads, but parents were loving them.

Still, wearing the t-shirts didn't calm Oscar down.

Compared to other autistic children, he was angrier and would lash out.

I'd love to be inside Oscar's head, I thought.

To document my mum experiences, I decided to start an online blog.

Not long after, a friend suggested I link my blog with my Etsy.

What a good idea!

I created 20 more designs and began blogging and selling my clothes on the same website.

'I need a good name for it,' I said to Brendan. 'I just can't think of one.'

Before I even realised, I was selling lots of clothes online.

It was a gradual, organic process that just happened.

But I still didn't know what to call the brand...

Then last year, Oscar was diagnosed with having extreme anxiety.

'Your son has a fear of hands,' the doctor explained.

'He will need to be referred

to a clinical psychologist.'

He'd always been nervous.

'He really was born anxious,' I replied.

And in that moment, it clicked - eureka!

That's what I'll call my brand... Born Anxious!

And since, the popularity has really grown.

Oscar isn't aware that his mum has a clothing brand, or that he wears the clothes.

But I know he really loves it.

I've watched him turning the top around before and stroking the bumble bee.

Eventually, I'd love him to be involved in the brand.

He can only speak 10 words now, but when he starts chatting, I'd love to have tees with his own little phrases on.

It might be a while before that happens though, he doesn't talk often.

Whenever he wears one of the t-shirts out, I get positive comments and thumbs up from other mums.

'You're doing amazing!' they'll say, when I'm trying to control him lashing out in the park.

We tend to socialise in public at off-peak times and we avoid busy holidays because he suffers from sensory overload.

And, we can't be spontaneous - I have to carry a safety reign everywhere, with drinks, wasp spray and food.

He refuses to eat anything but toast - so I really am the

mum that carries cold toast in foil in my handbag.

Call me crazy, but the boy needs to eat!

If we are having a bad day, we visit nature - it's guaranteed to calm him down.

He's willing to give anything a go as long as he's calm.

He loves soft play, swimming, taking part in the school choir and horse-riding.

Oscar experiences everything that any other six-year-old does, but he does it slightly differently.

He watches the fireworks with soundproof earphones, we have half days out instead of full days, and I always take a carer with me swimming.

We plan our day around his medication; if he takes it at 7am, he will need to take it again at 7pm.

It's difficult, but I wouldn't change him for the world.

Oscar has us all in the palm of his hand, and we are all cheering him on.

Last week, Orla cried when he ate a little bit of potato.

'I'm so proud of him!' she sobbed at the dinner table.

Oscar lives in a bubble, and every time he tries or learns something new, his world gets that little bit bigger.

He's only hugged his older brother once, and I managed to catch it on camera.

We celebrate all the small things like that, that most people take for granted.

You've got to remember the precious moments.

So many children have invisible differences like Oscar.

And, Born Anxious is about celebrating those differences, raising awareness and showing off all those little extra bits that every child has.

I really am building an army of autism awareness.

● www.bornanxious.co.uk

I'll do whatever it takes to help him feel better



Oscar has inspired me to help others

