A Son Calls His Mother

By DANN BARRY

DOYLESTOWN, Pa. — A mother sat at the edge of her bed. Angry figurines rankled down from a shelf, and wooden rays on the wall offered sparse concealment. She was calm, but the edge, collapsing promised to her son’s eyes. The reclusive nature appeared to her son’s eyes.

This fragile conversation with her son had started as a quarrel over a scatterbrained way. A Dartmouth grad, a decade out of college, should be able to balance his checkbook. But Patrick, whose trouble in managing everyday life frustrated everyone, especially his mother.

His mountainous father, an educator, his boundaries were just about a measly $400 bank overdraft. It was about football. The cost of all those games and practices, the arc of a smart, well-mannered teenager with Ivy League dreams. But now her Patrick was on the line for consequences. Really, Patrick stands out. In a single week in October, her Doylestown bedroom, where she sat on the edge. He was talking flat about standing on a ladder with the leash for Diesel, his black Lab, around his neck. He was diminishing his place to see all the good in his life and she was trying to discern between bluffs and truths.

Mr. and Mrs. Risha at this stage, reflected each other bristling anger or unnerving apathy. C.T.E., the degenerative disease caused by repeated blows to the head that has been found in the brains of former football players. C.T.E. has been linked to depression, impaired actions and short-term memory loss.

Examinations of the brains of Patrick Risha, 32, at the University of Pittsburgh and Boston University revealed chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or C.T.E., the degenerative disease caused by repeated blows to the head that has been found in the brains of former football players. C.T.E. has been linked to depression, impaired actions and short-term memory loss.

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