



## Just call us Halloweenies

Is there a child who doesn't live for October 31? Yes, there are two. Their mom, Ellen Seidman, learned that if you can't face-paint 'em, join 'em.

**M**y son's first Halloween was scary, for both of us. At 10 months old, Max functioned at a four-month level. A stroke at birth had caused brain damage and serious delays; doctors weren't sure how disabled he would be. Still, I wanted him to have the fun-tastic rite of passage everyone enjoys as a kid—the thrill of dressing up, the glee of dumping out the night's haul. That October, I got Max a ridiculously cute velour pumpkin costume and took him to our town's parade. Hundreds of kids milled around, store owners doled out candy corn, a loudspeaker blasted “Monster Mash.”

Max freaked out. His sensory issues were just beginning to surface, and the crowd and noise terrified him. I felt awful for him, and mournful. We left every other family in town at the party and went home.

I tried again next year (Max as a puppy) and the year after (Max as Thomas the Tank Engine). He wailed; I cried. By the time Max's fourth Halloween rolled around

and he'd been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, I'd given up on the parade. My husband took our 2-year-old, Sabrina, while Max and I carved out our own celebration. He put on a fireman's hat, I swung him on our backyard swing, and then we downed double-fudge ice cream. It was his idea of a good time and, unexpectedly, mine too; Sabrina could represent our family amid the sugar-fueled swarms.

But, no. Last year, both kids refused to dress up, Sabrina joining Max in a show of sibling solidarity. At first I begged her to wear the Ariel getup (\$39!!!) I'd bought. And then, I let go. We would do Halloween our way, in T-shirts and sweatpants. *That* would be our tradition, as quirky as our family itself.

And so off we went, trick-or-treating. “Who are you?” neighbors asked, perplexed by my costume-less children. “I'm Sabrina!” said Sabrina. “Ax!” said Max. Best costumes ever. ●

*Ellen Seidman blogs daily at [lovethatmax.blogspot.com](http://lovethatmax.blogspot.com).*