



The loving couple of 10 years say Seven has strengthened their bond

The popular radio hosts introduce their lucky little Seven

JAY-JAY & DOM:

NOW WE ARE

Jay-Jay Feeney laughs at the way her life has changed since a small child came into her world. Her once-pristine Auckland villa is now littered with Lego, she has swapped celebrity magazines for childcare manuals and she's just as likely to be found leading the school walking bus as treading the red carpet.

The popular radio host and her husband Dom Harvey became instant parents in January 2008, when they took in their then-four-year-old nephew Seven.

"His dad, my brother Micheal, has been in and out of prison since his teens," explains Jay-Jay (35). "Seven's mum is around but, unfortunately, she isn't in a position to care for him.

"When Micheal was facing another jail term, I suddenly thought, 'What is going to happen to that poor child? Is he going to be put into care?' And Dom said, 'If you want us to look after him, that's fine.' There was really no decision to make."

Jay-Jay told her brother she would help and, two months later, he rang to take her up on the offer. "It was overwhelming," Jay-Jay admits. "What we were taking on really hit me all of a sudden. My main worry was that this poor kid would cry for his dad each night."

But, in the end, the change was not as traumatic as they feared. "Seven is the best kid," Jay-Jay says proudly. "He was so cool about everything. He settled in and now he owns the place!"

The fun-loving couple, whose antics as



Jay-Jay Seven and Dom are happily embracing their new life together

part of radio station The Edge's Morning Madhouse entertain over 227,000 listeners every week, have made no secret of their longing to have children.

They endured three attempts at IVF after Dom was made infertile following complications from surgery for a benign stomach tumour three years ago. The last round was soon after Seven came to live with them. "It was such an emotional time," recalls Jay-Jay. "One minute I was pregnant, the next I wasn't – IVF is so hard. We're taking a break so we can focus on Seven."

As Seven's legal guardians, Jay-Jay and Dom have happily changed their lifestyle to incorporate the cheeky youngster. They've curtailed their once-raging social life to be home as much as possible and redecorated one room in their comfy villa with bunk beds and the latest toys.

Seven turned five just a month after he arrived, so school was an early hurdle. "He was so scared," says Jay-Jay. "The first few weeks, I had to sit in the classroom with him and he clung to me."

"Now he has plenty of friends," smiles Dom (36). "It's rewarding seeing how far he has come."

Jay-Jay says she's particularly thrilled to have been welcomed into an after school "boys' club", where she's picking up heaps of parenting tips. "It's a group of about eight mums of boys," laughs Jay-Jay. "We take turns to host it and the boys play. Then we get the dads to pick up the boys while the mums stay and drink wine and talk!"

Seven has also embraced his new life and when asked about his unusual living situation, he simply explains, "My dad's in jail. I live with my auntie and uncle."

Dom laughs when he recounts a classroom visit by a police officer. "He was talking about road safety and said, 'Remember to wear your bike helmet or you'll go to jail.' Seven's hand shot up and he said, 'My dad's in jail. Did he not wear his bike helmet?' I don't think the poor guy knew where to look!"

Jay-Jay and Dom are clear that they want Seven to continue his relationship with his parents. A few months ago, they made the difficult decision to take him to visit Micheal in prison.

"I don't approve of some of the things my brother has done," says Jay-Jay candidly. "But I'm always here for him and it's important to me that he connects

with his son. We just want to be the best auntie and uncle we possibly can."

But after being thrown into childcare so suddenly, the busy couple admit to experiencing a few problems as they've come to grips with issues like tantrums, tears and "time out".

"I read Diane Levy's book *Time Out For Tots, Teens & Everyone In Between*, which helped a lot," says Jay-Jay. "And I have a neighbour who is great. The problem is, I feel like the meanest auntie in the world if I put him in time out!"

So Dom has become the disciplinarian in the family – he claims Seven has Jay-Jay wrapped around his little finger. Luckily, the pair rarely disagree on parenting and Seven's presence has strengthened their 10-year relationship.

"Though I have found a few grey hairs," laughs Dom. "And let's just say Jay-Jay and I drink a lot more wine now! Bedtime is 7pm and some days we really look forward to that time when Seven is safely asleep so we can relax with a big glass of wine and talk."

Raising a child is an often thankless task and some friends have noted that Seven is a lucky boy to have such a caring extended family. But suggest this to Jay-Jay and Dom and they both shake their heads emphatically.

"We always wondered what we'd be like as parents," explains Dom, with a smile. "Now, thanks to Seven, we're finding out. And I think we're both doing very well. He's a great little fella and we love having him. If anything, we're the lucky ones." ■

Bronwyn Marquardt



Seven brings out his auntie and uncle's playful side!



THREE