

A Kid's Life

Editor's Pick. Written by Darci Walker.

Nine-year-old David comes home, throws his backpack on the floor and stomps off to his room. Several minutes later he is lurking around the kitchen while his mom cooks dinner, poking at his brother, whining to his mother. She tells him to go outside and play until dinner is ready. He goes to put on his shoes but can only find the red tennis shoes with the extra-long laces that are hard to tie, and the world comes crashing in. He screams that he hates these shoes, throws them down and then yells at his brother to "get out of his way."

So, what do we know about David? That he doesn't follow the rule to put his backpack on the hook? That he is bored and has difficulty finding ways to engage himself in activities after school? That he is "needy" for his mom's attention? That he hates red shoes and has trouble tolerating frustration? That he lacks empathy for his brother?

If we look at each of these behaviors as singular moments of time, completely unrelated to what may have happened in the previous moments, then these simplistic assessments make sense. But this may be one of the biggest parenting errors we make. We assume that we have all the information. We assume that our children's reactions and behaviors are based solely on what we can see and hear and feel AT THAT MOMENT. We have a tendency to assume that our children's worlds are only as big as the information we have.

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