

Parenting is Hard

Parenting is hard. That is a giant understatement. Parenting is big, important, magical, crushing, uplifting, ridiculous, fun, blissful, overwhelming and so many more adjectives. It's a roller coaster of every possible emotion you can imagine, and a few you can't imagine. Here is just one of my stories that illustrate a little bit of parenting madness with a sweet resolve.

Usually, Aaron and I naturally take turns switching between being the calm, centered parent and being the angry parent. It isn't something we plan. Our triggers are usually very different and when he is angry I can usually see reason as well as when I am angry he can see reason. The goal is to stick up for the kids and be their voice when they are scared without undermining the feelings and needs of the parent who is angry. This usually helps ground the angry parent and leads to quicker conflict resolution. It doesn't always work out so picture perfect, in fact, I am about to share a story with you where both Aaron and I lost our cool.

It was Easter, we had spent the morning enjoying playing with all the goodies from our kids Easter baskets, then spent a few hours playing at the Spanish Fork Hare Krishna Temple's Festival of Colors getting filthy, came home to shower all the colors off of us, and then raced off to eat an Easter dinner at my mother's house.

It was one of those days when you are so glad to just be home and you want nothing else but to kick back, relax and maybe watch a few episodes of *How I Met Your Mother*.

We also recently bought a new van and since we pretty much spent a good portion of our day in it, we wanted to clean it up a bit before we went in to relax. So Aaron and I stayed out in the car to clean while my daughter went inside. Our two boys stayed to hang out with us while we cleaned for about 20 minutes. When we finally came inside to relax we found my daughter had a bit of fun with some colored powder from the festival.

To say we were a bit frustrated may be a bit of an understatement. We were exhausted and very angry! There wasn't much time for rational thought, so I left my brain behind while I went all yell happy. Apparently, Aaron's rational brain wasn't up for the task that night either because he chimed right on in with me.

For about 20 minutes we went on about how angry we were, guilted her, and in between, we found new surprise messes that fueled our anger even more. For the first 10 minutes she just ignored us or shouted back, but the last 10 minutes she got real quiet. That is what got my rational brain to come back.

I mentioned to Aaron that I think we were too hard on her, and without saying anything I

knew he agreed. He was busy cleaning up what is now our permanently purple sink, so I went back to talk to her myself.

I found her drawing a picture and she had teardrop marks down her cheeks. I let her know that I felt really sad for how I treated her and that I know she was just exploring and experimenting with the colors. I let her know that I was tired and grumpy from such a long day and that I really needed to relax and was sad that her play got a little too messy. I hugged her and told her how much I loved her.

Turns out the picture she was drawing was an apology. Art is her way of expressing herself since she has a hard time saying what she feels. I asked her to tell me about it and she explained to me that she is sorry, she loves us, and the words say "I promise I won't ever do it again." On the back, she drew her name and herself crossed out. She didn't tell me what it meant, but she cried when she showed it to me. It isn't too difficult to understand what she meant by it.

Aaron came with his own picture to tell her he was sorry complete with hearts and words of his own.

I hate having these fights with my children. I hate conflict in general, but mostly with my kids, it is hard because they are too weak to stand up for themselves. It is very easy to let my emotions get out of hand when it comes to them.

I feel even worse when Aaron and I gang up on them because it only compounds the problem!

I can only take comfort in the fact that I am getting much better at this than I used to be and am making changes for the better all the time, and that after our conflict we spent the rest of the night bonding and snuggling.

Now, every morning I wake up and see our permanently purple bathroom and remember that **no mess, broken item, or any conflict is worth ruining a relationship over.**

I hope that in the future I can resolve these conflicts without shaming, guilt, or without raising my voice.

I hope my children can see that it is okay to make mistakes as long as you take responsibility for them afterward.

I hope that I can show my children that if you love someone you make every effort to understand and accept them.

Mostly, I hope that I can show my children how to peacefully resolve conflict and that underneath behaviors there are needs asking to be met.