

HELP! I Don't Know What To Do!

Have you ever said those words? I believe we all have at some point in our lives. Not long ago I was talking on the phone with my daughter who lives in Alabama. Suddenly, she shouted in the middle of a sentence, "Charlie! Get down from that tree right this minute!" Then she said, "Mom, she's climbing the neighbors tree in her Easter dress!" I smiled to myself and thought, "What a rascal," recalling the numerous times I went through similar things while raising my own 5 kids. I wasn't sure whether the problem was the dress or the tree or both; so I waited. In this case she was wearing the wrong clothes. Sometimes we get upset because our kids do what they want to do no matter what we say or how often we tell them, "Don't wear your good clothes to play in, you'll ruin them." Other times there are genuine safety concerns, "Don't climb that tree, it's rotted and the limb might break and you could fall and get hurt." Often our kids seem to need to discover for themselves what we try to tell them. (Not a good choice.) So what can we do?

My first suggestion is always **PRAY!** The Bible says do it with out stopping, and raising kids gives us an understanding why we should. God knows better than we do what will touch the heart of our child. When I'm angry or frustrated, scared or worried, I like to stop and ask, "Lord, what should I say or do right now?" That pause gives my brain a chance to move from reactive mode to thinking mode and helps me avoid saying, or doing something I'll later regret. AND it also allows the Creator of the Universe to weigh in on my decisions and actions. (Always a good choice.)

STAY CALM!

My daughter asked me to tell her more about how to do that. I admit it is not easy but with practice you can train yourself to not show a lot of emotion when your child is in danger, or driving you crazy. (The prayerful pause is a big part of the secret.) Staying in control of our emotions is important. As I think about that I remember an episode of the reality show, "Shark Tank," that I saw recently. Entrepreneurs get the opportunity to appeal to investors for funding for their ideas. I watched as the entrepreneur made his pitch and then waited. Would he take the not so sweet deal he was offered? Crickets..., the proverbial "pin drop," the poor guy squirmed, very uncomfortably. I told my husband, "The guy who speaks first always loses." It's like a battle stance. The one who remains calm, retains power. Oh, by the way; he lost the deal.

Create a Plan

Have you ever thought about having a parenting plan? We plan for many things; retirement, a vacation, even a trip to the grocery store. Day to day life, however, can run away from us like a semi with no brakes, hurtling down a mountain. Scary thought! Try this:

Make a 4 quadrant grid on a piece of paper. Steven Covey writes about this in his book, "First Things First." Label the boxes: 1. Urgent and Important, 2. Important not Urgent, 3. Urgent, not Important, 4. Not Urgent, not Important. Make a list of long range, short term, and daily goals.

Put the most important things in Quadrant 1 and do them first. At the end of the day, if you feel like you didn't get much done, you can have peace of mind because you know what you did was the most important.

Also, combine your work, personal and kids calendars all in one. Anything you need to be responsible for goes on this one calendar. You'll avoid double booking appointments, overlaps in personal and work schedules, and you'll see clearly whether you can accomplish all of the details.

Realize you're not Super Woman and you can't do everything. You have one life and one calendar. Get a calendar that has plenty of space for details like goals, thoughts, monthly, daily and hourly spaces. I bought the Freedom Calendar and I love it! If you're more techy get the Google calendar, Wunderlist or one of several other options for your PC, phone, or iPad. When you have a conflict, choose one obligation and then do not re-negotiate with yourself; no second guessing. It may feel extravagant at first to spend 30 minutes of planning time out of your day, but it will save you hours of frustration and it will be SO worth it once it becomes a habit. I like to look ahead to my week on the weekend and block out my plans. Then I spend a few minutes each morning reviewing my day. I get a lot of satisfaction out of checking things off a list.

So much to say, such a short article! If you are interested in learning more tips, parenting ideas, finding your Sweet Spot, and that of your children; I'd love to help. **Contact me at libbyhodge@gmail.com.**

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