Oops I Made A Mistake

Raise your hand if as a parent (or aunt, uncle, grandparent) you think “man I could have handled that situation better!” Around you are a sea of hands rising. Maybe not literally but as a parent I have “oops” moments. You know that moment when you lose your cool, everyone breaks down into tears, when you are just trying to get out the door in the morning, praying that you haven’t forgotten something at home or left the coffee pot on, you know those moments. The ones that keep you up at night thinking you have just ruined your child and that for sure he/she will grow up to be an axe murderer...just me? Well I’m here to tell you that you are NOT alone!

As caregivers of children we are human and thus imperfect. I don’t know about you, but I know that my child didn’t come home from the hospital with a three ring binder 6 inches thick just to get me through his first month of life. What we do have is unconditional love from children and an opportunity to model an “oops” moment. To show the little humans in our lives that we are human and we all make mistakes. This my fellow caregivers is the saving grace. We need to allow ourselves to show our human side to our children (and other adults). It is ok to make mistakes and guess, what mommy loses her cool too.

I have had to stop beating myself up for these moments. As a friend and colleague put it “We need to learn that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Rather than having to become the perfect parent, we learn that mistakes happen and we can learn from them. We can model to our kids how to handle mistakes and even apologize if necessary.”

This my friends is the rainbow at the end of a storm to the “oops” moments in life. We get to turn them into great opportunities to show ourselves grace and to model to our children how to handle our mistakes in life. With this approach we are able to take moments for ourselves and raise happy well-adjusted humans who can take ownership and not turn into axe murders...still just me with that one?

My most recent ‘oops’ was when I committed the cardinal sin and took a bite of my child’s dessert without asking. This had the potential to turn into a full blown melt down as it had already been a high emotion evening. As tensions were rising, I chose to not engage in an argument and said, “oops son I made a mistake, I should have asked before taking a bite, that would be polite. I made a mistake.”

His reply was “mom that’s ok, you can try again next time.” To some of you, this might seem like a peaceful happy fairytale that I’m telling. We have come a long way to make this the norm in our home. The fact is that I make mistakes, my husband makes mistakes, and our children make mistakes. The mistakes are not the important part. The part that matters is the fact that we can own our mistakes and move on from them in a healthy and positive manner.

As parents you need to cut yourself some slack. You are not going to be prefect, and I can guarantee that the parent you compare yourself to isn’t either. The most successful thing you can do, as a parent, is to take care of yourself and know you will be successful. Think of the goodness and the love you have created for your child to not focus on all the times you have slipped up.

Next time you lose your cool, remember to smile, take a breath, and say, “Oops I made a mistake and I can try again.” Going forward, know you will not be the perfect parent but you will be modeling success and emotional wellbeing to your child. You are sharing with them how to take ownership of mistakes.
without feeling guilt. This will give you freedom to enjoy the little things and know that you will always be able to try again.

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