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Accepting Gratitude

~Amy Cushing

I had to drag my son to his second timeout the other day.

He refused to go to his room, shrieking protests at the injustice instead. As I reached for his arms to lead him upstairs, he went limp on the floor---absolutely boneless. I muddled my way through his suddenly liquid-like body and managed to gather an arm and one side of his waist. I lifted his 40 pounds of disobedience and made my way up the stairs as he bellowed octaves only dogs can hear into my left ear.

He provided no help and, instead, made every effort to turn into a bag of bricks. By the time I made it to his room, my back was screaming as loud as he was.

After eeking out my demands for the time out, I closed the door and headed downstairs to check on his sister. I made it halfway before I sat on the stairs and began to cry.

It was one of those days---one of those dogged-tired days that seems an endless stream of discipline, corrections and one too many “no’s.” It was one of those days that, as a parent, leaves you emotionally exhausted before lunchtime.

I gathered myself, found a morsel of strength and went downstairs to see my daughter. I had set her up in her booster at the kitchen table so she could play with her box of crayons and coloring books. She had long ditched the booklets for the table. I sighed as I noted the colorful crayon streaks layering the tabletop.

I opened her Minnie Mouse book and placed it in front of her. She spotted the page with Minnie and Daisy Duck and continued her art spree on Daisy's shoes.

"Ewwws!" she exclaimed as she pointed to Daisy's high heels.

"Yes, shoes. Good!" I replied, trying my best to appear excited.

"Bwake, cwying," she said.

"Yes, Blake is crying," I replied.

Yes, he was crying. I was crying. My back hurt. My heart pained. And there were crayon marks covering my kitchen table.

On these mind-numbing days, it can be hard to see the gratitude in each moment. Some days feel like you're trudging through molasses, struggling to make the right decisions, and using what reserve power you have left to keep your calm.

But, other days are better. They hum and flow and sail from morning until night with just a few blips. There are smiles and laughter and cuddles---and happiness. While such days arrive less than I'd like, I have many happy memories to know they endure.

When I have my head buried in my hands trying desperately to fend off my frustrations, I remind myself that I have it good. My life is not perfect. I am not perfect. My kids, well, they're close to perfect (when they're not going boneless at the bottom of the stairs).

When I look beyond the disharmony, I realize I'm fortunate.

I have all my needs met. I have family and friends who are actively involved in my life. I have access to opportunities and education to improve my life and my kids' lives. I have a voice. I have hope. I'm surrounded by love.

It doesn't get much better than that and I shouldn't expect it to. Instead, I should receive the goodness.

The beauty of children is once the discord is done, they move on with their day. They don't brood or let bad feelings linger. They get over it. And they seem to have an endless supply of

giggles. If we adults take a moment to notice their resilience, we could create more of those good days we strive for.

I read an insightful quote recently, attributed to author Melody Beattie, that said:

“Gratitude turns what we have into enough.”

It’s true. We don’t need to change everything to achieve that semblance of happiness. It is right here in front of us. We just have to take the time to notice and appreciate it.

For me, that day, happiness was upstairs hollering disapproval and also sitting at my kitchen table coloring a duck’s shoes yellow. It was also discovering that a sudsy wet cloth and a little elbow grease can clean crayon streaks from a wood table.

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