

Mommy Meltdowns

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Although moms possess impressive abilities to manage simultaneous herculean tasks, we sometimes surpass our limits and abilities. We are at fault, despite our best efforts. When that happens, our blood pressure rises, our tempers flair and we have tantrums much like those of our toddlers. That's what I refer to as a 'mommy meltdown'.

Such was the case for me earlier this week.

I have long since accepted many tasks that come with the role of 'mother'. It's not a glorious job, by any means, and yet billions of us willingly and lovingly take on the weighty everyday responsibilities.

Along with our own lives, our jobs, extended family and miscellaneous grey areas, we are in charge of our families' schedules, education, health and well being, the condition of our homes, the shopping and, very often, the bills. It is manageable, when it is not overwhelming.

This is a similar feeling to having the straw break the proverbial camel's back. You pick up the same mess over and over again, someone makes a negative comment about their food you prepared, you discover a crayon in the laundry after its too late, the pet has an accident just as you are trying to get out of the house on time, checkout at the store takes longer than your actual shopping time, your toddler (not yet potty trained) wriggles and giggles as you struggle to change him, juice leaks out of a spill proof cup leaving another permanent stain in the middle of the carpet, your kids want to 'help' you with the chores and argue over who gets to do what and much, much more. Then, somehow you manage to put everything into place, despite the many obstacles, so you take a well deserved break only to have everything undone within hours. (On really bad days, that is also when you have unexpected company and you die with embarrassment over the condition of things) Your system goes into overload and you have a breakdown.

I usually wind up with a sore throat from the hideous scream of frustration I let out. I can almost feel my head spinning. I have been compared to 'The Hulk' as I wind up my frustrations and release them on anyone within earshot. In order to save my children from the damaging psychologic impact this may have on them, I give myself a long time out (one minute for every year of age, right?). They understand what 'time outs' are. I need to take time to calm down. A long soak in the tub usually helps.

Once I have calmed down, I get the attention of my family and establish new rules. Since they have mistaken me for their personal valet, chef, secretary, maid and more, I realize it is ultimately my responsibility to correct them. They are to have more personal responsibility and I am to enforce that.

Everyone is to put their things away. New projects are not to begin until the last project is put away. I don't run a restaurant, so food may not be returned to the kitchen and reordered. Good personal hygiene is everyone's responsibility. Homework projects (and work projects) are a priority - lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part. If I say 'no', 'now', 'later', or even 'maybe' that is my final answer. The rules of the house are mine to create, enforce and change at any time. If Mama isn't happy, no one is happy. It is in everyone's best interest to uphold the rules.

So perhaps with each mommy meltdown, new rules are enforced and everyone learns their limits. There are consequences for exceeding your limits, whether you are the mom or living by the rules of the mom.