



Mommy takes a bath

Toddlers are finicky creatures. I found this out a while back when I went to visit relatives.

A few days into the visit, it was time to give my daughter Melise a bath. My hostess explained to me that the only tub available was the walk-in tub they had installed for my grandmother to use. It's the kind of tub that has a seat and a little door so that you don't have to climb in. I didn't think it was a problem. A tub's a tub, right?

Well, apparently Melise is very sensitive to the type of tub she bathes in because her screams of protest could be heard on the moon!

We survived that bath, but the real problem started after the trip. During our week-long stay at the relatives' house, Melise only had one real bath and several sponge baths. So almost as soon as we were back at home I announced "Time for a bath!"

Melise ran to the opposite end of the house crying, "No, no, no, no!"

I had such a horrible sinking feeling in that moment. Melise has always loved baths—always. How could one funny tub turn all that around? I buried my head in my hands and groaned. Then I gave myself a little pep-talk and went after my daughter.

I carried her, kicking and screaming, into the bathroom. I hate forcing her to do anything she's scared of, but I had to get her in the vicinity of the tub at least. I shut the door of the room so she couldn't run away. I started filling the tub. She just stood there, pressed against the door with tears streaming down her face saying "no" over and over. It was time for Mommy to put on a good show.

The Laughing Mom: humorous tales of motherhood

Written by Susan Pfaltzgraff

“Mommy’s going to take a bath!” I said. Melise kept sobbing and shaking her head. “Mommy’s getting ready for her bath . . .” I stripped down and stepped into the tub. Melise’s sobs stopped in disbelief. It was working!

I sat down and splashed a little. Melise just watched suspiciously.

“I forgot the toys! What will I play with?” I reached out of the tub and grabbed some toy boats that were nearby. I perched them on the edge of the tub in a line.

“Melise, would you help me with the toys?” She walked very slowly to the tub and stopped when she could just reach out and touch the tips of her fingers to the boats. She pushed them in one at a time. I chugged the boats around, which brought a little smile to her tear-streaked face.

“Can I have more toys?” Immediately, Melise grabbed up the other bath toys and threw them in the tub one at a time. As each toy splashed in, her smile got bigger. Eventually, she was laughing as her mom made a fool of herself playing with her boats and duckies.

Suddenly, Melise realized that there were no more toys to add to the tub. I worried that she would run away, but instead she pulled her shirt and diaper off and held out her hands to be lifted into the tub. We had a pleasant bath after that.

I have to say, seeing Melise light up with happiness toward the bath just because I was there was one of the brightest moments of my motherhood to date. I’ve had to repeat the performance a few times, but it’s well worth it to have a clean and happy toddler!