Princess Melise

Toddlers form obsessions quite easily. I didn't realize how easily until I bought some diapers with a picture on the front of Dora the Explorer and Boots, her monkey friend. Melise, my 2-year-old daughter, had never watched that cartoon before, but she was very curious about the monkey on her diapers. I started calling them the "Dora" diapers.

After a week of this, Melise had figured out that Dora was the name of the little girl on her diapers next to the monkey. Suddenly, Melise saw Dora everywhere. We went to a clothing store and she found Dora shirts. We went to the grocery store and she found Dora snack items. For heaven's sake, we went to the doctor and they had a Dora sticker to give her!

You know, I always figured that the cartoon characters on diapers were to help sell the diapers, but now I see the truth. Diapers, being considered a necessity by most parents, actually sell the cartoons. And they truly did sell Dora in our household. Melise gained a Dora shirt, Dora nightgown, and Dora jacket before I even realized we were being invaded.

I thought the Dora obsession was going to last for years. But then Melise saw the purple dress hiding in her closet. A friend of mine had talked me into buying the frilly little thing so Melise could play dress-up. I liked the idea, but Melise had never shown interest in dress-up, so I just thought I'd tuck it away until she was older.

But then she saw the dress and asked for it. Just a minute later, Melise was all dressed up, jumping up and down in ecstasy. She squealed over and over, "Princess!"

I suddenly realized that my little gender-neutral toddler who plays with cars and footballs was actually a girl! She was so delighted to be dressed in the glittery, fluffy frock that I had to run get the camcorder. She admired herself in a mirror. She turned in circles to feel the skirt swoosh around her. She danced and frolicked all over the house.

I taught her to pirouette and curtsy. (The second almost had her falling over as she tried to twist one foot around the other.)

Getting her to bed that night was quite the challenge. I had to promise over and over that she could wear the dress as soon as she woke up the next day. And she held me to that promise! As soon as she climbed out of bed that next morning she took me by the hand and led me to the dress.

She was Princess Melise all day long. She was a princess while she played, ate and napped. I somehow managed to convince her that she didn't need to be a princess at the grocery store, but when we got back home she put the dress right back on.

That night as we got ready for bed, I offered her the Dora nightgown with the hopes it would get the princess dress off her. But alas! Not even Dora could turn the head of Princess Melise!

I have now learned the true nature of the toddler obsession: very strong but short-lived. I know now that the princess phase will likely pass as quickly as the Dora one did. But will someone please tell me what she'll obsess about next so I can be prepared?

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