

The rocky road of discipline



Melise as a 2-year-old proved several times that she wasn't ready for the responsibility of markers.

A few times, she got hold of a permanent marker that Mommy accidentally left within her reach. The scribbles somehow always ended up on our sofa. How do you get permanent marker out of microfiber? Luckily, a few minutes of scrubbing with rubbing alcohol does the trick. I made Melise watch as I cleaned up the mess so she would understand the consequences.

One day, I had a set of Crayola markers out for her to use in a coloring book. I missed one when I put them away and, of course, Melise found it. In a hurry, there were green scribbles on the sofa. When I came upon her art work, I asked in a huff, "Melise, why did you do that?!"

Melise smiled as if she was glad I asked and said, "Cause I want to clean it!"

My eyes rolled back in my head at that point. Apparently she liked watching me scrub the sofa and even wanted to do it herself! Where did I go wrong? I almost granted her wish, but then I realized she had used a washable marker this time!

"Ha, ha, ha!" I laughed like an evil villain, "The washing machine gets to clean the cushion cover!" Melise was so disappointed.

Teaching a child discipline is a mine field. They have such unique ideas in their heads. They don't think in terms of right and wrong like adults do, but instead they think like little explorers or scientists discovering the secrets of new frontiers. I must remind myself that often.

The Laughing Mom: humorous tales of motherhood

Written by Susan Pfaltzgraff

One day, I was returning to the kitchen after changing Alina's diaper—that's my baby. Melise was standing by the cat's water dish with a bottle of cooking oil. I could see the little gears turning in her head as she unscrewed the lid and held it above the dish.

My feet seemed glued to the floor as I tried to dive forward to intercept her. "Stop, Melise! Stop! STOP!" I screamed.

The bottle was in my hand within a moment, but it was already upside-down over a dish full of oil and a puddle around it. Needless to say, I was not happy.

My growly demeanor made Melise sob. I sat her on a chair and made her watch as I cleaned it up (because that has worked so well in the past, right?). I lectured her on the importance of listening to Mommy when she says "stop." Alina, who I had to set down in a bouncy seat, started to fuss. Melise went to comfort her, sniffing the whole time.

When I finished cleaning, I asked Melise, "What are you supposed to do when Mommy says 'stop'?"

With all seriousness, tears running down her cheeks, she said, "Make a big mess!"

I shook my head and asked her again.

Melise looked confused as she guessed, "Rock Alina?"

I chuckled, "No, honey. When Mommy says 'stop,' you stop what you are doing."

"Okay," she sobbed as I gave her a hug and kiss.

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A few days later, we had a play date at the park. Melise was doing something potentially dangerous, so I yelled, "Stop, Melise, stop!"

The other mother asked, "Does that ever work?"

"Not yet," I said, "but I keep hoping!" She smiled and nodded sympathetically.

I sometimes wonder if I will still have my sanity by the time my daughter outgrows this stage. Thankfully, there are other parents going through the same thing, which makes me feel a little less lonely in my discipline confusion.

Holyoke Enterprise November 24, 2011