

Life... My 4 year old at bedtime

Situation:

Last night my son did it again. I put him to bed, read him a story, closed the door and 10 minutes later I could hear him jumping up and down on the bed. When I ignored him, he started throwing toys against the door. It really got to the point that I couldn't overlook it anymore. With all the racket I was sure his little sister in the next room wouldn't be able to fall asleep.

Symptoms:

I was tense and angry. This behavior has got to stop! Sammy never acts out like this at his Dad's house. None of my other friends seem to have out-of-control children! At one point I thought: "I just can't handle this anymore. He's driving me crazy." I felt incompetent as a mother. I thought about going in and spanking Sammy, which is the only thing that's worked in the past. But I know that even though he settles down, I go through this guilt thing about using physical punishment.

Solution:

I took a deep breath. That helped. And I made up my mind that I was going to take a minute to stop and think! I needed to calm down before I could attempt to calm Sammy down. Even though my son's behavior is important, it's just as important for me to work on my mental health, and another minute of noise from his bedroom probably wasn't going to make any difference to his sister Shannon falling asleep.

Sammy is my outer environment and I can't control him, I can influence him but I can't "make" him do what I want - he's proved that enough times in the past. He's not wrong for acting up at bedtime. He's average. Lots of kids don't go straight to sleep. And I'm not wrong I'm average for not liking his noisy rituals. Another deep breath and I thought, "instead of the usual spanking, I'm going to lay down with him until he falls asleep." And if he asks what I'm doing I'll say, "I'm here because I love you." I didn't know how it would work, but I was willing to give it a try.

While I was laying there I started thinking again about "why" Sammy doesn't go straight to sleep. And I answered that question with, "I just don't know. He's 4 years old. A four year old can't always verbalize what he's thinking or feeling. Maybe he can't control his behavior, But I can and will control mine!

In the past:

Sammy has been, let's say, more active than the common child for more than two years now. In the past I used to blame myself for his behavior, his lack of control, his tantrums. I blamed myself so much for so long that I spiraled into depression. I was convinced that I was no good. Although I'm not back to 100%, I

know that, I am not a bad mother. I am not evil, wicked or weak. It took a lot of self-talk to change my mind. And I still have to remind myself from time to time.

Also in the past I'd be so worked up about Sammy's conduct, I really thought I had no options. Because my mind was so busy being angry at him and fearful that I wasn't a good mother, it was impossible for me to think of any options on how I could handle things.

I'm not as calm as I'd like to be, but with practice I know I can get there.

