

Life... My obstinate 3-year old

Situation:

Joshua and I were at McDonald's the other day for about an hour. We both had lunch, then Josh spent quite a bit of time climbing and bouncing around the outdoor play area.

At 2 o'clock it was time to go. We had to get to a routine pediatrician appointment. I was ready and Josh wasn't. The more I coaxed and explained, the more stubborn and loud Joshua got, and the more upset I got.

Symptoms:

I felt flushed, my heart was racing and I was tense all over. I kept thinking, "Why isn't he cooperating? What's wrong with him? If he keeps this up any longer we're going to be late for our appointment. With all his ranting and raving, I'm sure all the other parents here think I can't control my son." All of a sudden I could feel the hamburger that I ate wasn't sitting too well in my stomach.

Solution:

I really don't like it when I get that upset, so I gave myself two minutes worth of self-talk. I took it thought by thought by thought, by thought: These stress symptoms I'm having are distressing and upsetting, but they're not dangerous. They're temporary. I will calm down and everything will be OK again.

I was flexible. I wanted to leave 30 minutes before we had to get to the clinic. So what if we don't leave until 27 minutes before!

The part about me being worried about what "other" parents wondering what kind of mother I was – well I'm sure they've had their share of stubborn child moments. And I know that I really can't control Josh. I can influence and teach him, but I can't control him completely.

Then reality really hit: Josh doesn't have an adult concept of time. He's three years old. He's too young to understand. All he knows at this point is that he's having fun. That's the thought that really helped me see the whole situation as trivial.

I made a firm decision to go over and take his hand and lead him to the car. He balked a little, but I was firm. Best of all I was a whole lot more calm than I was a few minutes earlier.

In the past:

I would have kept trying to coax and bribe him. The more he resisted, the more upset I'd be. I'm sure I would have made it a point to tell his father what he did. Michael would come home and ask how our day was and I'd fill in all the details, like a play-by-play of the last nine hours.

Anything that didn't go as I had planned would, I would have made it a big deal and kept it a big deal. I'm learning to be more flexible.

Another thing I used to do was to mentally add up all Josh's "bad" times and my conclusion was that I was a bad mother. Now I know it's really not worth me getting upset over all the small things.

The more calm I can stay, the better example I am for Josh.

