

Parenting Strategies on a No Good, Very Bad Day

Parenting Strategies on a No Good, Very Bad Day



When my children were small, I used to read them Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day. I especially read the book to my daughters when they had a particularly difficult day. We would

laugh at the various challenges Alexander would encounter throughout his very difficult day until bedtime when all was well when he drifted into dream land.

When caring for my twin nine month old granddaughters and four-year-old grandson, I experience many mini adventures throughout a particularly terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. The twins can instantly create an ear shattering chorus of crying and screaming when they are suffering from colds, exhaustion, teething, and hurting themselves. During those bouts of overwhelming panic, I focus on the following ten coping strategies to maintain my sanity:

This too shall pass. All children experience many

challenging moments in their daily lives. If I can keep my focus on humor, creative visualization of happy times with my grandchildren, and the Knowledge that I will have help or relief in a finite number of hours, I can survive these difficult moments calmly. Stay calm. Even when the children are screaming, demanding immediate attention, and despondent, I try to respond quietly and calmly during the crisis. This response greatly reduces the drama.

Redirect all to happy times. When the babies start screaming, I start singing their favorite song, Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. Once I start singing, the twins immediately are redirected and start bouncing to the music instead of crying.

Be compassionate. When children are distressed, I give them loving hugs and encouragement. This response helps them relax, feel heard, and aids in their self-regulation of calming themselves.

Use humor only when appropriate. I like to use humor to diffuse a difficult situation. Sometimes, this makes the situation worse if the children feel that I am not responding to their needs.

Smile when I talk to the children. When I smile, I reinforce my commitment to stay calm in challenging situations and I reduce my stress level.

Focus on the big picture of life. When my family and I decided to have me serve as a primary caregiver for the twins and part-time support for the preschooler for the next couple of years, I realized that my days would be filled with endless hours of watching infants play with toys, sing songs, read books, take stroller walks, change diapers, support meal times, and provide lots of loving cuddles. This choice is

incredibly rewarding and loving when contributing to the growth of these wonderful grandchildren.

Build in break time and relief support. When taking care of my grandkids, I know my limits for exhaustion and enlist the support of family and friends for breaks and relief support. I must ensure that I have sufficient energy and patience to support my grandchildren and their family throughout the week.

Sometimes, I spend the night for a sleep break.

Sometimes I take an extended weekend break.

Regularly, I meet a girlfriend for lunch and we each manage a baby on the swing and at the park. Other times, I bring the babies to the nursery school of their older brother where the teachers and children entertain the babies. We all need free time to take a shower, get dressed, pick-up the house, relax, or read a book.

Get help. I have identified chores in my life that are overwhelming and trade services. I would rather spend extra time watching other children and have my entire house cleaned by a professional cleaning service a couple of times a month. It is liberating! Talk, sing, and read to my grandchildren. When I talk, sing, and read, the children are happy and they feel validated with my extra loving attention. The added benefit is that I am contributing to their overall social-emotional health and academic preparation for school success.

The preceding suggestions will greatly reduce the impact of your no good, very bad days. Please share your strategies for keeping your sanity during these difficult times.

Loving regards,

Mary Ann

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