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• RAISING KIDS

The Inevitable Echo of “Enough”

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POSTED ON
June 30, 2017



When my firstborn was six months old and still waking in the night to nurse, I remember feeling as though the last shreds of sanity were slipping from my grasp. I'd never functioned well with a sleep deficit, and now the cumulative exhaustion of motherhood was hitting me hard. Late one night, as my daughter began to stir and fuss for another feeding, I knew I'd finally reached my limit. So I rolled over in bed and mumbled, "No more. Enough."

With a little persistence and my husband's baby whisperer skills, my daughter weaned from night nursing fairly quickly. Several months later, after enduring a wicked bout of mastitis, I decided it was time to conclude our breastfeeding relationship. It had been long enough.

When my daughter's third birthday passed and she hadn't yet mastered potty training, again the word surfaced. "Enough," I declared. "We are done with diapers. You're wearing undies or going commando!" There were tears and meltdowns from both of us, and ample amounts of chocolate to help us cope. Many pairs of underwear sadly met their end in the trash bin.

Fast forward several years: my daughter just turned eight, and that word still makes a regular appearance in my parenting vocabulary.

"That's enough for today, honey," I say when my budding artist accidentally spills an industrial-sized container of glitter or adorns the floor with permanent marker again.

"Enough, take it down a notch," I plead when I'm trying to prep dinner and she insists on singing at the top of her voice.

“Enough, I’m done hearing about this!” I pronounce in frustration when she moans for the fifth time about how so-and-so didn’t play with her at recess, everyone is a meanie, and her life is ruined forever.

In our relationship, I have always been the limit-setter, the one who decides when something or other needs to stop.

Until one morning when I was about to brush her hair, as I always did before school. My daughter’s hair is wavy, thick and coarse. Like mine, but lighter.

“No, Mama,” she said firmly, pushing my hand away and knocking the brush from my grip. “That’s enough. I can do it myself.”

The words didn’t quite sink in at first.

“Wait, honey, if you just let me—”

“No! I don’t want you to!”

A small thing, perhaps. But it felt like a spear in my heart. In that instance – one of many to come, I realized – she’d taken my own words and turned them back on me.

Enough, Mama.

Something had shifted in our relationship. Some balance was changing. Each time I told my daughter “enough,” I was closing a door. Whether she wanted to or not, I was ready, often impatient, to move on to the next moment, the next phase or milestone, whatever it might look like. I

alone controlled the timeline, making the decision for both of us. I never considered how it would feel when my daughter started doing the same.

Someday, she'll take her first steps into a world that's more hers than mine, building a life untethered from me. No matter how far into the future this day may be, I know I won't ever be truly ready for it.

I can see now that I'll always want more. More snuggles, more late night bedtime stories, more silly songs, and more messy crafts on the floor.

Last night, I perched on the edge of my daughter's bed as she read a book. It had rained all day, and the sky was finally clear. Just a little interlude, a brief pause for a bit of stargazing before the next storm rolled through. "Should I braid your hair?" I asked, and held my breath.

She nodded. I brushed out her long hair, unwinding each snarl, and twisted sections into tiny braids.

We sat in the peaceful stillness together.



Gina Rich

Gina Rich is a writer and mother of two daughters. She shares caffeinated ramblings on her [website](#).