The Lo Mein Hit the Floor

A lesson in not letting everyday stress get the best of you.

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I don’t say this often, but I am glad yesterday is over. It started early as normal, and the morning was fine. I didn’t even mind that I had to run out in the rain with my kids in my pajamas in order to get them to the bus on time. Work was great, with a live training of our 10,000-plus Facebook Fans workshop and a productive staff meeting. But then everything got harder, because my kids re-entered the picture.

First, why is running a multi-million-dollar company so much easier than raising two kids? Second, here’s what happened: As I greeted my kids and started to put out crafts for a pre-planned play date we were hosting for both of them, one of my children got mad and threw a sweatshirt at another. Innocent enough. Except it hit a burning candle and proceeded to pour wax all over the kitchen counter, wall, floor and everything that was in a one-mile proximity. There goes the setup time I had planned, because I now have to spend the next hour scraping up wax and spend the night smelling like a Christmas forest. Thankfully, there are worse smells.

Playdate goes well-ish, and then my girls and I are off to run a couple of “quick” errands. (You see where this is going.) First, we’ve got to buy a recorder for my oldest, who has her chorus concert tonight and is playing the recorder in it. She broke her first one yesterday and we are in a time crunch, so no time for Amazon Prime-ing this situation. I think Waze was enjoying some holiday cocktails, because I entered Guitar

Center into Waze and ended up at a Walmart on the opposite side of town. Forty minutes later, we ended up at the right location, and when I discovered where this is, I realized if I went my normal way without Waze, it would have been about 10 minutes. (*Waze, I hope the spiked eggnog was worth it, because we are on a break right now. You will miss my reliance on you and joy upon greeting, I promise.… Who am I kidding? I can't stay mad at you. I can't find my way out of a one-exit room without you. You are forgiven.*)

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After the one-hour, six-dollar recorder-shopping trip, we headed to Kohl's to do the annual Mom Olympic event of getting Christmas outfits. I normally wouldn't do this on a school night, but we are in a time crunch for photos and, well, this momma's got Kohl's cash burning a hole in her pocket. (Yes, that is how Kohl's gets us. And also, how you should always look to successful retailers for tips on how to get customers to come back. They test this stuff for you so you can just follow their blueprint.)

Anyway, the shopping trip didn't go well. There were tears shed, gnashing of teeth and threats of running away, and that was just by the clerk helping us. I am pretty sure it took the Wise Men less time to get to the new baby than it did for my girls to agree on what to wear. Finally, we left the store exhausted, hungry and dreaming of a teleport to get us home ASAP. I was supposed to be making tacos when we got home. After all, this was Taco Tuesday. (I mean, duh.) But when the kids started crying about it, I didn't have it in me to fight this fight. The dresses had taken my last left hook.

So, when my youngest asked if she could instead have leftover lo mein from the evening before and my oldest asked for a burger, I gave in. This would save time, and time is what I needed, because it was going on 8 p.m. and they still hadn't

done homework or showered. I strategized on the plan in the car: “Burger kid, get in the shower while your food is being delivered. Lo mein kid, sit at the table and start doing your homework while I heat it up.” And then, taking it out of the fridge, it hit the floor. And while I never knew Tupperware could do this, the container broke into tiny shards of plastic and the lo mein spilled everywhere. Yup. It did.

At this moment, I guess I yelled, “How can this be happening?” and, “Jesus take the wheel” and some other signals of a motherly breakdown, because my daughter came to me in the pantry as I was piecemealing her a dinner out of snacks, and said, “Mom, are you OK?” And that’s all I needed to snap me out of it. It just hit me: You have two girls who are with you and healthy, and while they drive you nuts sometimes, cherish this moment. A dinner out of snacks and one more late night isn’t going to ruin anything, but you allowing the stress of it all to rain down on the family will.

So with that, I looked at my child and said, “Would you like to have pretzels, yogurt, applesauce and a cheese stick for dinner?” And she said, “Dream come true.” Yes, they went to bed too late. Yes, their dinner was made of poor choices and bad planning. But none of it was the end of the world, and today is a new day.

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The same is true for you. You have a choice every day to allow what happens at work and life to be debilitatingly stressful, or you can accept that nothing is happening *to you*. Things just happen, and you can only deal with them one thing at a time. I challenge you to think and laugh at the lo mein image the next time something goes wrong today. Know that you aren’t alone in the chaos of the holiday season. And there’s always tomorrow.

I am cheering for you.

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