

a mother's view

Good night, Jude. Good night, Riley. Good night, Maggie.

And I don't want to say it again!



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of Cape Coral is
the mother of
three children.

Maybe I shouldn't put myself out there or embarrass my kids, but I'm quite certain I am not the only parent who struggles each evening. When it's time for the kids to go to bed, my nightmare begins.

I realize there are countless books (I've read several) and classes you can take to help resolve this bedtime standoff, but theory and reality are often on two different parallels. For example, one theory suggests you very quietly redirect the child to bed

each time they get up, not offering any affection or comfort.

The reality is, after I've redirected them five, six, seven times, they are getting some attention. Unfortunately, it's not going to be that positive reinforcement theorists say is the best tool for behavior management.

Like most parents I would like to think I am cool, calm and collected in most situations. I adore my children and truly enjoy spending time with them **DURING THE DAY**.

I realize a 7:30 p.m. bedtime is a little early for an 8- and 9-year-old, but I don't expect them to go right to sleep.

I am fortunate that both of my older children love to read. My son, Jude, will read until he is tired, turn off his light and go to sleep. I am so

proud of his passion for reading. It's the 10 trips to the bathroom, and the extra glass of ice water that he randomly needs, or the cut on his finger that he just discovered or the vocabulary question he gets stumped on.

Our bedtime ritual starts by asking the kids to brush their teeth and get their water. I give them five minutes. After that, they start losing minutes for the next night's bedtime ritual. This usually goes fairly smoothly. And then, just when I've rocked and read to Maggie, our 4-year-old, and put her in bed, the games begin.

"Mom you forgot our medicine," calls Riley. How could I forget — they take it every night? In with the round of medicines for allergies and asthma. I return to the kitchen just in time ➤

for Maggie to yell, "Mom I just pooped — I need you." Back to the bathroom and off to bed, again.

I sit down for a moment before Jude is at the arm of my chair, "Mom, what does auspicious mean?" I head for the dictionary. Problem No. 3 resolved.

"Mom," Riley calls out from bed, "Maggie is up again."

"Maggie, you need to stay in bed," I say the first time. The second time, I simply put her back in bed. The third time, I contemplate locking her in there, but fearing that would truly traumatize her I simply put her back in bed. Trip No. 4 about sends me over the edge and I close the door and tell her not to get up again.

With a 16-hour day under my belt, I

am about to lose my cool when Riley peaks her head out the door and says, "Mom, I'm scared."

Breathe, I tell myself, take deep breaths and focus — don't lose it — don't yell and scream and act like the crazy lady you feel you are about to become.

I am able to mutter out semi-kindly, "Riley, what are you scared of?"

"I don't know," she answers.

This means a conversation to discuss her very real, but most inconvenient fears.

It is now 9:30 p.m. Jude just turned out his light. Riley's fears have been dismissed for the moment. Maggie has retired for the night after SIX trips out of bed for what she felt were "very necessary" reasons.

I have gotten next to nothing done and am completely exhausted! At 9:45, my Aunt Donna calls, and I apologize for not being able to talk earlier as I was reading about a Curious George adventure with Riley. She admires my patience and commitment to read with the kids and goes on to say how much I should "enjoy" the kids.

"They grow up so fast and then you don't get to rock them or snuggle with them and worst of all they don't NEED you at night anymore," she says.

I think to myself she's right; this bedtime circus shall pass all too quickly. So for now I will count my blessings and my sheep because it is 12:15 a.m. and I have to wake in five hours. **PC**

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