

Parenting Solo: Welcome to the Land of Leave It Alone

Written by Michelle Greenlee Harris, Columnist
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In the midst of one recent mother/daughter battle, I felt the room start to spin like the farm house in the Wizard of Oz. By the time my child and I brought our discussion in for a landing, I was sure I wasn't in Kansas anymore. I had arrived in a strange new land called "Leave it alone".

My baby and I were wrapping up her inaugural trip to the gym and we were both frowning - for different reasons. Me because the treadmill had gotten its revenge. Her because her coach potato ways didn't mesh well the elliptical machine she had tried for a grand total of seven minutes.

As I drove out of the parking lot I could sense the sour look she was sporting without even turning my head. Normally I would have cleared my throat and dove into a monologue about cherishing our good health and all that no pain no gain jazz. But today, for some strange reason, I crossed over into uncharted territory and kept my mouth shut.

Oh the mom in me wanted to say quite a few things as my child sat shotgun, pounding out complaints on the screen of her smart phone. She was casting a social media net to gain sympathy from her video game playing, tweet sending friends. That will normally set me off, but today I finally heard the kung fu master voice in me say "Patience grasshopper". Somehow I knew that she would eventually learn the lesson I was trying to teach her.

I could actually feel myself growing as a parent. Could it be that I was finally developing the kind of patience and wisdom that my grandmother had? Or maybe I was becoming apathetic and dismissive like my teenager. Suddenly I felt my feet throbbing in my Nike's and I figured I was

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closer to my granny in more ways than one.

Sure my child was cutting her eyes at me like I was the Wicked Witch of the West, but I knew eventually she would see me Glinda, the Good Witch for dragging her to gym that day.

My long flowing dress and sparkling wand came quicker than I thought. Later that week my child announces that she is going to “work out” with some of her friends. Blank stare. Was this the same child that was cursing my name on Facebook for dragging her to that torture chamber full of free weights and recumbent bikes? Now she’s meeting friends to “work out”.

I just smiled as she casually left the house to get on the same elliptical machine she had had a tantrum on a few days before. Leaving it alone had actually worked! I was downright giddy. This must be the euphoria that the parents of adults feel. You teach them, fuss at them, pray for them, love them and let them go. Forget Dorothy! She can click her heels all she wants, I’m staying in this brand new world.