

Parenting roadblocks

Children have an uncanny knack for revealing great depths of love and joy while simultaneously commandeering parents' last nerves and hijacking inner peace. Simply put, we love our kids like crazy even as they drive us a little, well, crazy.

How can we navigate roadblocks when we would much rather activate the emergency escape pod? Taking pit stops for prayer and perspective can help us recognize the hidden blessings in our children's less-than-ideal behavior.

ROADBLOCK

Whining/complaining

"I wa-a-a-a-ana cross the stre-e-e-e-et by myse-e-e-elf!" your preschooler cries as you prevent her from running headlong into traffic. Face it: If you've got kids, you've got whining, complaining and crying. It's enough to make a parent weep in her mocha.

Reroute with a pit stop: Breathe out agitation; breathe in understanding.

Children usually whine and complain to those with whom they feel the safest and most loved. Praise God – that's you! Many kids complain when they feel out of control and need help making sense of their circumstances. Quite often they whine when they are tired, hungry or ill. Allow God to help you understand and meet your child's needs.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit – fill me with your peace.

ROADBLOCK

Noise

Maybe your kids, like mine, love talking over one another and rarely use “inside” voices. It can be difficult to feel at peace when you can barely hear yourself think.

Reroute with a pit stop: Breathe out irritation; breathe in gratitude.

Rather than being irritated by outrageous sounds, we can thank God for active children who make “joyful” noises to communicate and express feelings. Besides, inexplicable silence usually means the toilet paper is completely unrolled into the toilet or the garbage is strewn across the floor. Silence doesn’t always equal peace.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit – fill me with your peace.

ROADBLOCK

Selfishness

Why does after-school snack time devolve into a death match over who gets the last banana? Who cares if his car is red and yours is blue? Why can’t kids just accept what they are given?

Reroute with a pit stop: Breathe out frustration; breathe in opportunity.

Here’s the thing: Parenthood is rife with teachable moments. When envy threatens your youngsters, it’s time for a chat about generosity and gratitude. Better yet: Model the appropriate response. Have your little ones repeat after you. Repeat as necessary. And it will be necessary.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit – fill me with your peace.

ROADBLOCK

Frustration

“Where’s my lunch?” “She hit me!” “The baby ate dirt!” How many times have you started an important task only to be derailed by your children’s needs? A priest once told me that his priestly vocation and mine as a parent are similar. Both of us have to-do lists that are frequently overridden by people’s needs.

Reroute with a pit stop: Breathe out expectations; breathe in acceptance.

“Both priests and parents are Chief Ministers of Interruptions,” Father said with a smile. Of course, he was right. Don’t get me wrong – work is important and has its place. Who wants to live in utter chaos? However, when we ask God how he wants us to spend the precious time he’s given, I bet he would favor people over hyper-productivity and children over extra chores.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit – fill me with your peace.

ROADBLOCK

Fatigue

I often joke that the key to successful parenting is to outlast the children. Each day can feel like a marathon of sprints ’til they (and then we) collapse. Sometimes we get regular breaks to shower or eat or pray, sometimes not. Regardless, parents are usually “on,” and it’s exhausting.

Reroute with a pit stop: Breathe out resentment; breathe in perseverance.

Sleep deprivation is no joke. It certainly doesn’t feel like a blessing. Yet being so incredibly tired means that you are

needed and wanted by your spouse and your children. And being needed is a tremendous blessing; ask any elderly person. But if someone kind and competent offers to give you a break, TAKE THEM UP ON IT.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit – fill me with your peace.

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