



But I Did Not Yell

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Some days I wake up feeling ambitious and set big goals. Lots of them! Tackle the kids' closets. Organize the garage. Clear out the laundry room clutter.

Some days I'm less ambitious and make some small goals. Wash the dishes. Sweep the kitchen floor.

Some days I have many goals, some days I have few goals. Some days I get them all done, some days I get a few done.

And some days I get none of them done.

And some days are adjust-my-goals days. Like yesterday.

By 8:30 in the morning I realized I would have to adjust. I scrapped all my plans and stuck to one simple goal:

Do Not Yell.

It was quite apparent that for the kids, it was a Let's Make Mommy Yell Day, and I resolved I would not give in. I would not raise my voice.

All the kids had gone to sleep too late the night before and they had woken up too early in the morning. Everyone was sleep-deprived. And they kvetched. And they cried. And they fought. And they spilled. And a lot of other stuff.

Trying to get a moment of peace, I opted to serve hot cocoa. My three-year-old insisted on the pink cup. The pink cup was already in use. And I stuck to my rule of Cups Don't Have Taste So We Don't Choose Colors. And he cried. And

he bawled. And everyone else finished their hot cocoa. And he still wanted the pink cup. And then kind little six-year-old brought him his finished pink cup. And he poured the cocoa in, spilling half on the table. New reason to cry. And on it went.

And I stuck to my goal; I did not yell.

I served some pasta. Four-year-old wanted ketchup. But not where I put it. There was nothing to negotiate. He wanted it THERE, not THERE! My head was spinning, and all the THERES looked the same to me.

I took a deep breath. And I stuck to my goal; I did not yell.

And on the day went. Lots of deep breaths. When my husband came home, I disappeared for a little while to refuel.

And more spills, and more fights.

But I did not yell.

When they were all tucked in and finally asleep, I felt like I had achieved a tremendous accomplishment. Sure, my head was spinning and I was absolutely exhausted. But I had not raised my voice even once.

I had nothing to show for it; no items crossed off my list. Not by the looks of the floors or the kitchen sink. Or the garage or the laundry room.

I realized that not all accomplishments can be hung out on a banner. Not all accomplishments can be bragged about on Facebook. Or posted on Pinterest. Some are just that satisfied feeling that only a mom knows at the end of a long day.

I collapsed on the couch and allowed my brain a few seconds to mentally rethink my day.

As calm as I like to be, I don't think I would have made it through the day without losing it had it not been my top priority, had I not been fully conscious of this goal.

All that I want for my children, and the house they're growing up in, won't happen by itself. Sometimes it'll be at the cost of the laundry, clean house, a good night's sleep and a lot of other stuff. But that's the only way to reach my goal, especially when it comes to raising my kids. ■