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Insanity: a symptom of a new parent

By Marsha Maung

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This was about 3 year ago but at that point in time, I probably didn't notice the people who were sniggering uncontrollably behind me when I bent to pick up the pacifier that Joshua spat out onto the shopping mall floor. On top of putting on a fierce display of hygienic practices, I refused to let him have the same one back until it is completely sterilized. They could have been rolling around on the floor with laughter so bad that it made them rush to the ladies to place all those loose brain cells they shook loose when they were laughing so hard. Paranoia is an inevitable symptom of first time parents.

If you try really hard, you can probably remember that ONE TIME, you almost threw a fit when your husband or wife changed the diaper 2 seconds later than immediately. Personally, the second time round, I kept the ones that are not COMPLETELY soaked till it's leaking through the corners and make Jared wear them over again until it....well, got so soaked that it sunk to his toes, I guess.

I engaged in heated and intense debates with my husband regarding the bedsheets we used because it might cause an `allergic' reaction in my baby. I locked horns with my mother-in-law because she used the `sarong' (cloth cradle) to lull my cranky child to sleep. I threw ballistic fits when I found out that the pacifiers weren't washed with specified nipple brushes and instead was washed using fingers and normal dishwashing liquid. Boy oh boy, did I really go over the top almost all the time!

With Josh, I only gave him `parent approved' baby biscuits and cereals. Those that are not advertised or are produced by non-reputable companies WILL NOT be fed to my precious offspring lest the heaven part and threw pebbles onto the offender. With Jed, I can say that we feed him anything. I guess I figured out one thing along the way. Heck, if we can eat it, he can too! Why the heck not? He didn't really have to drink sterilized water till he's 18, did he? So, what's so bad about a `potato chip' here and there, now and again? Josh never experienced that kind of luxury until he was 2 and half, really.

The other differences that I noticed with my first and second child, with regards to my own personal attitude to parenting, is this: every month, there are at least 6 new toys for my baby to play with. I spent a vast percentage of my salary (I was working for someone else then) on toys for the kid that I adored.

Fisher-Price and Kids II loved me....if not, they should.

I believed that only toys specially designed to educate my children would assist in their development. I bought this really funky (and EXPENSIVE) play table for Joshua one day and lugged it home in a taxi after work. I presented the toy to Josh and he was playing with it. My husband asked me, "Why did you have to go buy ANOTHER toy for Josh? This is the third new toy we had this month and if this goes on, we'd have to purchase a land just to house all those toys". I proceeded to educate him about the kinds of things that our precious son will learn when playing with the toy...like how to use his hands and fingers to turn the toys around, to feel the texture of the material, to put one block on top of another. I felt that Joshua wouldn't be good enough if he didn't have this toy, really. Joshua would end up a loser if he didn't have this toy. My child, Joshua, would wallow in despair if he didn't have this toy.

Very nicely, my husband pointed this out: have you ever seen a normal human being who does NOT know how to perform the above tasks by the time they were 3 years old? Good point, hurray! But the toy stays.

Then, there's Jed, the poor deprived soul. He learnt to do everything his brother did, with only forks, spoons, empty bowls, discarded boxes, chopsticks, and any other thing we can find off the floor to play with. Imagine that. He also gets lots of presents too...like 2 presents A YEAR: Christmas and his birthday.

I even bought Joshua a toy that would help him walk...you know like a fancy looking, sound-making, music-playing machine that would crinkle, shake, roll, sing, and make us all mad when it is pushed. Accordingly, this will help encourage the child to take one step and then another and then another. Jed never had this toy...yeah, he used the same one I bought for Joshua...AFTER he learnt how to walk. Because you see, Joshua walked at around 12 months of age and Jared started walking on his own when he hit the 10th month mark. Now, you go figure whether that push-toy thingy actually worked its magic or not.

Sadly, one of the things that I missed out on is the fact that I recorded down every single little milestone Joshua passed. Like the time, he uttered his first ga-ga, the 1st time he crawled on his own, 1st tooth, 1st smile, 1st independent step, 1st wave, 1st everything! I didn't have the time or patience to start ANOTHER list with Jed. With him, I didn't even notice the 1st time he smiled at me that wasn't a result of wind in the tummy.

Sadly, I had only Joshua to care for when I had him...naturally, he was the only person I had around when daddy was working. He was my BESTFRIEND, still is. With Jed, kakak has always been around and I am not as powerful an influence on him unless it comes to the breast department. By the way, he doesn't call me mommy. He calls me either `kakak', `cher-cher', `tar-tar', or `nen-nen' (milk). Funny being called MILK.

Here's the difference, with Joshua, he was the ONE person who filled an emotional void in my empty soul. I didn't really have a lot of friends then cause all my friends were either looking, hunting, seeking for potential life partners or they didn't have children. For those who were men hunting, my little boy wasn't really husband material yet so, my penchant to rattle on and on about my kid was disconcerting

to them.

Jed, instead, turns out to have the kind of relationship I should have with my child...total adoration and love beyond words. There are no words on this planet that can adequately describe my feelings for this tot. Everything that he does tickles me to no end and he is absolutely the kind of baby any mother wants. He is pleasant, outgoing, cheerful, rarely kicks up a fuss, breastfeed ferociously and love the shape of my body.

Joshua's relationship with me was not a mother-son relationship. He was the King of my life. Everything his heart desires, I got it for him. If he starts pouting, I would feel rotten all day. He was everything...still is, to me. I wrote him letters to tell him my heartfelt love towards him and spends almost close to RM1,000 printing conventional photographs. With Jared, I got smarter. I invested in a digital camera and started taking pictures of him like there's no tomorrow and turns out, I don't have to spend a single cent on printing photos of my kid....and I still get to keep memories of his childhood!!!

When I said paranoia is a symptom of a new parent, I mean it with all my heart. You don't have to

answer me but answer this yourself. Did you check for your baby's pulse every half and hour when he was sleeping? If he was sick, did you keep yourself awake and towel him every 2 hours or so? If yes, then you have just confirmed my theory. Insanity is something every new parent will go through.

But it's only temporary, don't worry. I would like to think I am sane now. If you're a new parent yourself, I look forward to speaking to you in person when you're saner.

Marsha is a work@home graphic designer, writer, and mom to 2. She loves nothing more than blowing bubbles in the park and getting her hair yanked by her children in the middle of a tickle session.

Could This Be Arthritis In My Hands

By Rusty Ford

Ask Rusty

Arthritis Questions answered by Rusty Ford Editor of

Could this be arthritis in my hands

Hi Rusty. A few days ago, I slightly injured a finger on my hand. Now my hand is swelling with severe joint pain in the fingers. At first I thought this was a possible sprain in that region, but now my other hand is showing the same swelling of the fingers and pain of the joints. Should I go check this out right away? It doesn't seem to be getting worse today, but the pain and swelling are persistent. Could this be a sudden arthritis attack? I'm 38 years old and in good health (I just had a check-up at the doctor last week and the blood work came back okay).

Your advice is greatly appreciated.

Answer

Ouch, a little sprain is not supposed to do that. Unfortunately some times it does. I am sorry to hear about this. It is not unusual for arthritis to begin in an effected joint. It is not the norm for it to set in so quickly. There are different kinds of arthritis that can effect the hands and feet that can cause swelling. It is possible that arthritis was already beginning but not showing symptoms yet but this triggered a symptomatic response.

I am concerned that the pain is bilateral, effecting both sides. I doubt it is anything extremely serious but it would be good to see your doctor. The sooner the better. If nothing else, your doctor will be able to treat the pain and swelling. But if it is arthritis or one of the other conditions that can cause this type of swelling in the fingers the earlier the diagnosis the better.

I wish you good health.

Rusty

Rusty Ford is the editor of

one of the internets largest arthritis web sites.

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