

Mornings are tricky for me as a mom. While we have a solid morning routine, the smallest thing can derail our entire family. Today's catastrophe was a hair cowlick compounded by a missing hair tie. While *I* was impressed that we located the brush, Ella dissolved into a puddle of tears in the back seat of our wagon.

I had just put the car in reverse and was turning to check behind me when I saw her entire body convulsing with tears streaming down her face. If I pulled out right then, we would be on time. Today, I put the car back in park and told her to crawl up front and sit with me. In a flash she navigated a seat belt and plopped in the small space between the steering wheel and me.

I fought the inclination to tell her to get over it. I fought the desire to simply brush her hair myself and make it all better. While I figured out what to do, I just held her. Without thinking, I whispered, "It's ok." To which she bellowed, "It's not OK and might not be OK ever again." We were both wrong. It wasn't ok. If it were, she would not be so sad. She was wrong too. As hard as it was for her to believe in that moment, it would be OK again...I am certain.

I reverted back to what was working. I just held her. To keep myself from saying anything else, I took a few deep breaths. They were audible. Her head rose and fell on my chest with each breath. I think her breathing got in sync with mine, but I cannot be sure. The crying stopped. We sat a moment longer.

She started to move and I responded, "I am sorry our day started this way." As she crawled back into her seat, I thought to myself, "That's a lie." I am not sorry our day started this way. I wish every day started with my eight-year-old curled up in my lap just being mindful that we are in this together. Of course, it wouldn't work everyday. If every morning she came downstairs to find me sitting on the couch, arms outstretched, suggesting she sit in my lap, she would give me that "what is up with you look," cocking one eyebrow into her forehead while expanding only one nostril.

Today it worked. For both of us.

By the time we pulled into the parking space at Wheeling Country Day, the storm had passed. We were late, but we weren't rushing. Calmly, we made the long hike up to the gym hand in hand. When I opened the door, a beaming kindergarten student came running into my arms as soon as he saw me. I squatted down to catch his hug, and Ella's fingers slipped effortlessly out of my hand as she rushed off to borrow a hair elastic. The time had come for her to share me with the other children, and so too it was the time for me to share her with her friends.

Our moment together quietly staring down the morning's curveball had ended. I was catching up with Luke, who had a wonderful story to tell me, and she was engrossed with Claire.

There were plenty of problems as the day went on, but each time I just reverted to that deep breath. Breathe first.

Parents ask for advice quite a lot. This morning makes me aware that I should always offer this, "When in doubt, breathe."

Keep breathing until you figure out your next move

...or until your child (or husband, or co-worker, or stranger for that matter) looks at you and wonders why you aren't reacting and walks away confused...that happens too.

I hope yours was a good morning. Mine was.