

Mom, you can let go now

This was a big summer for Emily, my nine-year old daughter. There were a lot of firsts, but the biggest first by far is letting her go with her brother outside to play by themselves.

This is the kind of thing that if you were to go back in a time machine to the '70s and tell my mom "Hey, I let my 9-year old play outside by herself! Big day!" She's be like, "Um, I've been letting my kids do that since they were 6." No big deal and then she'd go back to watching Lawance Welk or making our Sloppy Joes. But in the 2000's it's a right of passage. It's a calculated parenting decision. It's a big flippin' deal.

When Emily struck out with her brother to explore the wilds of the park across the street in our gated community the first thing I noticed was the sound of the cars. Every car I heard from my office window sounded like it was going 100 MPH. Cars were now my enemies—out to get my kids. I was hyper-tuned in to the approaching rush of the car and after each passed I felt relieved...until the next one came down our street.

Emily passed the first "test" just fine, meeting all of our requirements; coming back when she said she would, *with her brother*, neither bleeding or crying. So they were allowed to go out on their Razor scooters the next time, then down to the park that's further down the path. With each trip out by themselves they proved they were ready for the challenge and I felt a little more relaxed.

The next leap was learning to ride her bike; Emily never learned to do it without her training wheels. She was more focused on her roller skates and scooter. But, now two girls her age moved in next door (yay!) and since they are constantly on their bikes, there was a sudden urgency to get

on her bike.

I took her out to practice on her new bike she got back at Christmas, which is now almost too small for her. I held on to the back and she would give it a go—standard learning to ride your bike stuff. But, darn it if I had trouble letting go of that seat. I just kept running next to her thinking if I let go she was going to burn in on the grass.

Finally it got almost comical and as I was sprinting next, working up a pretty good sweat and trying not to get my toes run over she turned her helmeted head toward me and said calmly, almost sympathetically, “Mom, you can let go now. I got it.”

But it's so hard!