

The Snow Factor



This morning my daughter, Emily, woke me up early to tell me her ear was hurting. "This one, Mom," she whispered as she tugged on her left ear. "Maybe if you eat some breakfast, you'll feel better," I said. I don't know why I said it, maybe because this was the kind of thing my Mom used to say to me, or maybe it was the sleepiness talking, or maybe I really truly believe Honey Nut Cheerios have a magical healing power, and milk can be some kind of ear pain elixir, but that was all I could come up with as I looked up at her sweet face from my pillow.

With advise like this, you can guess, "Dr. Mom" is never uttered in the Broughton house. Why am I expected to know when to "ice," when to "apply pressure," and when to "just go lie down for a few minutes?" My medical advice seems like a dangerous mixture of WebMD, hasty logic and things my mom said to me... and then there is always The Snow Factor to consider.

I clearly remember when I was Emily's age trying to fake a stomachache to my Mom to get out of going to school. Oh, the moaning...the face-crushed grimace...the dramatic pushing away of my breakfast... I am sure it was a stellar performance. But, my Mom was unmoved, she looked me straight in the eye and said, "You're not trying to snow me, are you?" It was one of those moments as a kid when you genuinely believe your mom can see right inside you—into your deceptive, lying soul. Frightened by her clairvoyance, I backed off my claims and, with hunched shoulders, went to get ready for school.

The Snow Factor: it has so been done before.

Skeptical...yes, I was. Emily's dubious earache could just be a ploy to stay in her pj's on a rainy day and watch Boomerang. I called in the reinforcements: Larry, my husband, agreed— she

could at least try to go to school, we don't want her forming any bad habits. Apathetically, I got her dressed, out the door, and plopped her in the car, but by the time the marquee of her school was in sight, it was clear she was really, honestly sick.

At the doctor's office later that morning, she was clinging to her ear, sniffing softly into a tissue. "Am I the most evil mom in the world?" I was thinking, "How could I not believe her?"...The Snow Factor made me do it.

It wasn't the first time I have doubted her cries of being sick. Once, during soccer practice, she made with the "I have a stomachache" routine. It had become a regular occurrence with with her, so I batted her back on the field more than a few times before she insisted she wasn't feeling up to playing. It was just seconds after she got in the car that the "realness" of her sickness came out—everywhere, all over everything. It took a pep talk from my friend, "You just never know," and a \$100 car detail to get me over that misjudgment.

So, there I was again, feeling bad about my broken "mother's instinct," when the doctor came in and examined Emily's ears, "Yep, she's got a bad ear infection." Then, for no other reason than to deepen my shame, she asked me if I wanted to see the suffering ear through her otoscope (totally had to look that word up). I will never get that picture out of my mind in this lifetime—a sick ear should not be looked upon lightly—it was like the end of a Stephen King novel in there.

I felt like a heel all day and fetched her every juice, Littlest Pet Shop dog and Go-gurt she requested. Putting her to bed, I told her I was so sorry for not believing her, that I loved her and proposed a deal: She doesn't try to snow me and I will always believe her when she says she is sick.

We have a deal. It's solid. We shook on it and everything.

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