



Modern Parent

(Let's Do the) Time Warp

by Liz Rothaus Bertrand, Mama on the Go

January 2012



Do you hear that sound? That constant and reassuring tick-tock, tick-tock? Well, that my friends is the sound of progress. Picture it – a young(ish) couple and their two year old fighting no more over bedtime, nap time or bath time – all thanks to a new, little wonder gadget: a blue and white plastic kitchen timer.

That's right, folks. A mere \$1.99 spent at IKEA can change your life. (Well, that and a plate full of Swedish meatballs.)

Just listen to what happened to the Bertrand family. Their toddler was showing tell-tale signs of civil disobedience: refusing to come to the dinner table, objecting loudly when told he had to leave the store or turn off the TV, making his body go limp to foil any attempts to carry him to his bedroom for a nap. Desperate to restore peace in their household, they stumbled upon the greatest innovation in childcare since the disposable diaper.

But first, some background.

If time is relative, it would be fair to say that it is in no way related to Mrs. Bertrand. She distinguished herself in her youth by a particular disregard for time – showing up late for invitations, turning in school assignments at the last minute, regularly missing planes, trains and buses. Things had improved in recent years but she was a long way from being an early bird (and, quite frankly, still wondered what interest there really was in catching a worm...)

This lack of timeliness or time-boundedness makes it all the stranger that it was she who devised the idea of using a timer to motivate her son to move on to another activity. After all, she had scoffed at her husband and the teaching institute where he worked when they required that timers be used as a classroom management tool.

But having exhausted all other strategies that fateful afternoon, she went for the Hail Mary pass and was amazed to see what happened: a magnificent parenting touchdown. Her 2-year old caught the idea and ran with it. He loved the timer – an authoritative voice that laid down the law.

Now the timer is used for everything. The little boy requests that it arbitrates all activities and then goes willingly at the sound of the bell – no matter if it's been thirty minutes or three.

He is content that his parents no longer set the terms for his every action. Today, when they tell him it's time to finish playing puzzles and go to bed, he sets the terms of the agreement: "We use the timer. When it goes off, it's time for do-do" and then he gestures toward the timer in a way that seems to complete his thought: "There, there, dear Mother and Father. Let us not discuss such matters. We will leave it to the one, true, unalterable authority to make the final decision."

You too can restore peace in your home with just one easy payment of \$1.99...