



A Parent Talks

A Kinder and Gentler Snooze Alarm

By Amy Willis

"Reeeeeead?" I hear through a thick layer of pillows and comforter, the *Wheels on the Bus* board book falling onto my stapled-shut eyes.

"Huh, wah?" I respond in a sleepy stupor.

"I have to leave in four minutes, Ame," warns my husband. I open one eye to see Ken looking handsome and assured in his business-casual attire.

"Reeeeeead?" our 19-month-old daughter Juliana repeats, this time handing me her *Clifford the Big Red Dog* board book.

"What time is it?" I ask dreamily.

"Twenty of seven," says the only other person in the room capable of telling time. I groan as I realize Ken is taking the dreaded "early train" again.

"Can't you take the middle train today?" I plead desperately, hoping for ten more minutes of sleep.

"Sorry, but I have a closing this morning," the real estate lawyer explains. "Gotta run. Talk to you later. Bye." A kiss on the forehead, and he's off.

"Reeeeeead?" Juliana persists.

"OK, honey," I manage. "Mommy will read to you...in just a minute..."

Practically everything in my life changed when I became a mom. I went from working full time to being at home with Juliana full time. My days and evenings used to be my own; now my schedule revolves around hers. But one thing that hasn't changed is the fact that I have never been, and will never be, a "morning person." That's not to say that

I'm a "night person" either—not the type who can stay up until 2 or 3 a.m. and then function happily on four or five hours of sleep. No, I fall into the category of unlucky people who complain during the day and evening of being tired, but become suddenly possessed by an unwanted burst of energy at 10 p.m. as our spouses are wandering off to bed. Last night, like many other nights, a terrible force came over me, an uncontrollable urge to "get things done." There I was, tidying the house, surfing the web and sending e-mails, and making my "to do" list for the next few days, frantically running back to it every few minutes as I thought of more and more errands and projects. At midnight I fell into bed, my thoughts still racing.

"Uppppppp!" I hear from across the room. Juliana is now standing behind our bedroom door, tugging at my bathrobe, which hangs from a hook.

"Uppppppp!" she commands.

"OK, Bunny, Mommy is getting up...in just a minute..."

Before we had Juliana, Ken, who is keenly aware of my late night antics, would wake me for work each morning in a peaceful manner. He would sit on the bed while I struggled to open my eyes, periodically updating me on the time and granting most of my requests for additional minutes of sleep. He was like my own personal snooze alarm, but kinder and gentler.

Juliana shows less mercy.

"Eeeeeeeeat?" she inquires, now out in the hallway, banging on the metal gate that separates our bedrooms from the stairway.

"Eeeeeeeeat!" she urges.

"You're hungry already, Juli? OK, Mommy will make you breakfast...in just one more minute," I reply, as I haul my exhausted body out of bed.

It's now 7 a.m. With my bathrobe and slippers on, I pad down the stairs, the twenty-four-pound Juliana in my arms.

"Huwoh," she greets the now awake me.

"Hi, Sweetie," I respond with a kiss on the cheek, the joy of mothering a young talker suddenly overtaking my entire being. Some things are worth getting up for.

Amy Willis is a member of the Parent Talk Writers Group and does freelance business writing and editing. She lives in Needham with her husband, Ken, and daughter, Juliana.

October Lecture Fostering Emotional Intelligence

Wed., Oct. 17, 7:30 to 9 p.m.,
Congregational Church, Needham.

On October 17, our guest speaker Susan Brown will present her lecture, "Fostering Emotional Intelligence." Brown will discuss such topics as how children develop the skills to make friendships, how a child's ego evolves, and how emotional intelligence helps a child better perceive the world around him. She'll address how nurturing emotional intelligence helps complete a child's social development to create a successful, well-adjusted adult.

Brown is a clinical child specialist and founder of "Parent to Parent," a group that helps parents identify their child's needs and assists them in resolving conflict. She has worked in many clinical settings, including Tufts Medical Center, Children's Hospital, and the Perkins School for the Blind. She currently operates her private practice at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. She is also the mother of six children.

