

LAURA ON LIFE

Burglar in the House

There must come a time, eventually, when a mother feels comfortable leaving her children at home to watch themselves. We know that it is important for their own self-esteem to realize that they can take care of themselves for a short while. Most people would say we should wait until they are old enough. So age has some bearing on this decision. It would also depend on how young the youngest child is as well. You wouldn't leave a 10-year old with a 1-year old. That's just asking for trouble.

Maturity is also a factor. My 12-year old daughter is infinitely more mature than my 13-year old son, but he was mature enough to handle himself for a short while, I thought.

It began when my 8-year old lost his shoe. Don't ask me how things like that disappear. It's not like he hasn't worn them in a long time. He wears them every day. He needed shoes for school the next day, though, so this was a critical situation.

Where I live it takes 15 minutes to get to a shoe store. My son and daughter were busily engaged in some activity that did not include a TV screen and that is something I like to encourage. If they had been watching TV, I would have, no doubt, made them come with me. Rather than ask them to stop what they were doing, I calculated how long it would take me to get shoes for the youngest: Fifteen minutes there, fifteen minutes back and fifteen minutes to locate an appropriate pair of shoes.



Laura Snyder

Hmm. What could happen in 45 minutes, I thought, as if time had anything to do with it. I guess we think that if one crisis happened on any given day, then the longer you are away, the higher the likelihood that the crisis will happen when you are gone. There are 24 hours in a day. I would be gone 45 minutes. No court in the land could convict me of neglect... unless, of course, the crisis actually happened in those 45 minutes.

I believed they were safe, however, because the crisis-of-the-day had already occurred with the missing shoes. I left them with my cell phone number, a list of six hundred back-ups and a warning to behave themselves. My 8-year old and I left together to get his shoes.

I received a frantic call while on my way back home. My son whispered into the phone, "Mom, I think there is a burglar trying to get into the house!"

My first thought was panic, of course, "Where are you?"

"In the basement. I locked all the doors."

"Okay, you guys stay in the basement. I'm coming!"

I floored it and prayed that there would be no radar traps between me

and my house. I didn't call 911 because a more rational part of my brain was thinking that my children could be over-reacting to something and, at the speed I was now going, it would only take me about 60 seconds to reach my house anyway.

Those were the longest 60 seconds of my life. My imagination was in overdrive. I thought of all the things I could use to defend myself and my kids if there was a stranger in my house. The arsenal of weapons in the car with me included my ice scraper, an umbrella, a pair of headphones, and a fingernail clipper. I imagined the disbelief on his face after I burst in brandishing my ice scraper. On second thought, I don't think he'd be suitably cowed.

I vowed to use the car as a weapon if I had to. Okay, not rational. The car doesn't fit through my front door and if the guy was outside running away, there would be no need to run him over.

Much to my surprise, when I pulled in the driveway, my daughter was sitting on the front porch petting our cat. The situation didn't look too terribly dire, I thought. I asked her where her brother was.

"I don't know. He locked me out of the house and I've been trying to get back in the whole time you were gone!"

Laura Snyder is a nationally syndicated columnist, author & speaker. You can reach Laura at lsnyder@lauraonlife.com Or visit her website www.lauraonlife.com for more info.

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