

# I can't argue with that!

by Kim Zachman

According to parents that I've talked to, the teenage years are especially difficult. Besides body piercing, dating, and driving, there's the adolescent attitude that parents are idiots. I'm very worried about that stage because my four-year-old daughter already wins most of our arguments, unless you count the times that I use "because I said so" as a closing remark.

Any statement, any rule, any command is grist for her confrontational mill. It's not Abby's style to break rules; that's much too obvious. Abby likes to find the loophole and then dive through headfirst.

One night, she was working on her master plan to get me committed to the local asylum by driving me insane with sleep deprivation. She'd been in bed for hours, calling on me in ten-minute intervals. She asked for a drink of water, to go potty, for a book, and for her favorite pony that just happened to be under the coffee table and required careful jabs with a walking stick to dislodge. Then she asked me to trim her fingernails. Horns grew out of my skull, steam hissed out of my ears

and I growled at her, "Do ... Not... Call... Me... Again. Or else...."

"Or else what?" she brazenly asked.

I contemplated tar and feathering, but I didn't have a chicken to pluck, so I snarled back at her, "No TV for three days!"

I snuggled under my covers letting the anger seep away and was almost asleep when I hear mournful

I smelled a victory. "Abby, there were only two buses, not four." I smugly corrected her. "No, Mama. There were four." She insisted.

I was incredulous because Abby can count to one hundred. She knows the difference between two buses and four buses. "How do you figure that, Abby?"

"Well, Josie saw two and I saw two and two plus two equals four." She explained.

What could I say to that? Except AARRRGGGGH!!

Abby does love to argue. She argues the way a bird would sing or a dog would chase a ball. I told her once that she would argue with a fence post and she replied, "No, I wouldn't because they can't talk."

One day last week, we were having an unusually cantankerous day. Everything I said that day was wrong from the sky is blue ("no, it's green") to let's go outside and play, ("no, let's stay in and color"). By evening, I had used up my monthly allotment of patience and had dipped into next month's reserves and a bottle of chardonnay. Finally, it was time for bed.

"Abby, it's bedtime." I said.

"No, it's bath time." She answered.

"Abby, you've already had your bath. It's bedtime." I stated plainly.

"No, it's time to brush my teeth." She answered. "Abby, you've already brushed your teeth. It's bedtime." My anger rose. "No, it's time for breakfast." She ventured.

My few remaining strands of patience broke like flimsy spider's web and I screamed, "QUIT ARGUING WITH ME!"

With amazing calm she said, "I'm not. You're arguing with me."

What could I say to THAT?

Except maybe, "Touché."

## IF ABBY THINKS SHE'S SMARTER THAN I AM NOW, HOW AM I GOING TO CONVINCING HER TO HEED MY SAGE ADVICE WHEN SHE'S FIFTEEN?

sobs interspersed with faint "Mama's". I leapt out of bed, "Abby!" I said through gritted teeth. "I told you not to call me again!"

Without hesitation, she answered, "I wasn't calling for you, I was crying."

What could I say to that? Except AARRRGGGGH!!

Besides her Johnny Cochran-like ability to find loopholes, Abby has a very unique perspective on the world. While her logic is somewhat fallible, it's also eerily irrefutable.

For example, one day we were in the van, when Josie, my two-year-old, saw a couple of school buses. "Oook, Mama. Skoo bus, Skoo bus. I saw tree skoo bus." (Translation: Look Mama. School bus, school bus. I saw three school buses.) Abby never lets an occasion pass where she might show her intellectual superiority over her little sister. Abby said, "No, Josie. There were four school buses."

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