

“I’m jealous of my nanny!”

One Illinois mom asks, “Why does my nanny get to have all the fun?” —AMY LEVIN-EPSTEIN

Like many toddlers, Kate Davis attends a mommy-and-me story time and play group in her hometown of Elgin, Illinois. Although it sounds lovely, it’s a source of anguish for her mother because Kate attends with her nanny, Sarah. “I’m happy Kate goes, but I feel guilty that I’m not the one taking her,” says Jenny Davis, who hired Sarah a year ago to take care of Kate while she and her husband work. “I’m jealous that they do fun things together while I make sure Kate eats the vegetables she hates. I make dinner, give her a bath, brush her teeth, and then she’s off to bed. There’s no time to goof off.”

While this isn’t uncommon, there are easy solutions, says parenting expert Michelle LaRowe, author of *Nanny to the Rescue!* and *A Mom’s Ultimate Book of Lists*. For example, there’s no reason why mom shouldn’t get in on the fun. “When mom comes home, I recommend she change into play clothes, put down her phone and transition into family time. As soon as she walks in the door, she should get down on the child’s level to help her warm up,” says LaRowe.

But what happens when it seems like the nanny is better at being a mom than you are? “Kate has tantrums if you give her water instead of orange juice,” Davis says. “Yet Sarah will ask her to get her cup and drink the water, and she’ll accept it.” The nanny also seems better able to control stressful situations, like when Kate throws food from her high chair to alert everyone she’s done. “Maybe it’s because Sarah is right on top of her, and I’m trying to load the dishwasher and get household chores done at the same time,” Davis says.

LaRowe says nannies may actually have an easier time disciplining because they’re *not* the mom. “While nannies genuinely love the children in their care, they aren’t ruled by emotions when setting boundaries. It may be more convenient to give in, but due to experience, they’re aware of the consequences,” says LaRowe, adding that busy moms



might try to reduce multitasking. “The simplest of child-care tasks, like bathing, diaper changing or feeding, can provide wonderful bonding opportunities.”

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And what if your kid just seems to love the nanny more than she loves you? Unlikely, says LaRowe. Kids may cry when the nanny leaves or even call her mama, but mothers shouldn’t see this behavior as a potential *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle* moment where a sitter is trying to steal your family. “Developmentally, once a baby says dada and mama, they say it about everything and everyone. They’re just babbling,” explains LaRowe.

Think of it this way: For many multitasking moms like Davis, a nanny can be a life saver. The key is to trust your caregiver—and give yourself a break. In many ways, you’re bettering the life of your child by giving her a greater circle of loving caregivers. Says LaRowe, “Early interactions with a nurturing and consistent caregiver can teach a child about forming non-familial relationships that foster healthy self-esteem. And since many nannies take on other household tasks, you may be able to check the children’s laundry, meal preparation and grocery shopping off your list.” That might give you more time to make up for any daytime cuddles you’re missing. Says LaRowe, “Don’t worry, a child always knows who her mom is.”