

"Just let her cry"  
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Woman Uncensored Blog



There was a time, not so long ago in my life, when I was nearly as helpless as a baby. It was a dark time in my life, when it should have been a radiant one. I was pregnant, and joyously happy about it, but my body was not. I was sick, and not in a "oh I don't feel so hot" kind of way. It was a "if I didn't have big things to live for, I'd want to die" kind of sick. Some of you may have experienced this too. I could literally not even hold down a sip of water or a nibble of food. Eating made me throw up. Not eating made me throw up. I would throw up stomach bile. Anyway, the point is that I was VERY weak. At 4 months pregnant, I weighed less than I did when I was 16 (and everyone called me stick girl back then). My clothes were falling off of me, instead of becoming tight. Every few days, I would be able to hold down maybe one meal's worth of food. In case you are wondering, it is called Hyperemesis Gravidarum, and it typically does not respond to medical or natural

treatments. We tried anything that wouldn't be harmful to the baby, and nothing worked. Despite the physical misery, the emotional scars I suffered at the hands of a loved one were far more profound.

I grew so weak that I could rarely leave the bed. I needed support just walking the 10 feet to the bathroom. I needed a shower stool and help getting clean. Just raising my arms to wash my hair was an immense strain. I relied heavily on my husband.

My husband was loving during the day, but things would change at night. He would leave me in the bed, tell me it was time to sleep, shut off the lights, and walk out. I would say "But honey, I'm not ready to sleep yet" but he would ignore me. It was confusing. Sometimes, I'd be having a day where I felt I may be able to eat or drink something, and I would call out to him, asking for something. Again, he would ignore me. Sometimes he would poke his head in, but it was only to tell me that I needed to go to sleep and I was "fine". I had times where I grew very depressed. On top of being sick and miserable, I missed my husband's loving arms. Sometimes I just needed to be held and comforted. Still, he would ignore me. I began to wonder why my needs were valid during the day, but not at night. At times, he would leave the room far too cold or warm. Sometimes I desperately needed to use the bathroom. Sometimes the pain all over my body became unbearable. Sometimes I was just very scared and lonely. Alas, no matter what I felt or needed, my husband ignored me.

I longed desperately for my independence, and loathed needing another person for even the smallest things, but for the time being, there was nothing I could do but ask for enough help to at least keep myself and our baby alive. I was so hurt and confused. I would weep bitterly, alone in the dark. One night, I overheard my mother in law talking with my husband. She said "Just let her cry. She has to learn. Don't let her manipulate you, she doesn't really need anything. Keep it up and you'll win eventually." Win? What exactly was he going to win, and at what cost?

Eventually, I lost all trust in my husband. I would lie there in bed, hungry, hot, cold, hurting, and/or just plain sad and lonely. I stopped asking for help. I later heard my husband boast that he had finally "trained" me. So now I was an animal. Why did he get to decide what needs and feelings of mine were valid, and which were not? Why was it okay for him to be my husband during the day, to love me, talk with me, and help me, but at night time all my needs were expected to suddenly cease? I would never be able to fully trust or open my heart to him again.

In the darkest time of my life, my most beloved person failed to be there for me. My needs were small, things that would take very little time or effort, but were of great importance to my physical and emotional health. I was neglected. You may even call it abuse. Fortunately, it was a brief time in my life. Unfortunately, there are countless more victims of this kind of neglect, and even worse. They are even more helpless than I was. They are babies. Sweet, innocent babies. They have parents that love them fiercely and truly, but fall victim to beliefs and advice that (usually) inadvertently put babies on a level even lower than animals. Books and well-meaning friends or family tell tired new parents to "just let her cry". This is often referred to as CIO (cry-it-out) or "controlled crying", although the already twisted concept of controlled crying is often further misunderstood and warped and becomes "I let my baby scream for 2 hours and eventually she threw up and wasn't the same for weeks after".

Helpless babies are expected to cease all "neediness" once a certain time on the clock comes around. Their God/nature-given instincts to cry and express real physical AND emotional needs are ignored or written off as manipulation or just plain not "real" needs. Why? If a sick adult or an elderly person were treated in such a way, they would suffer in deep ways and the person responsible for their care could even end up in prison.

Why are babies treated as less than human? Why would we WANT to teach our children that we won't be there for them? Why should we get to pick and choose which needs are "real" and which ones are not. Why should our job as parents simply end at night? Just because they've been fed and changed doesn't mean they are "fine". All they have is their instincts. For all they know, a predator could be lurking and waiting to eat them! They are programmed by God/nature to want to be near us for their own safety and for their proper development. We know that human contact is essential to the developing brain of a baby, but we deny their natural pleas for such contact. We lock them in the dark and even though we may sing, pat them, and say "you're okay, sweetie", when we walk out of the room and leave them in the dark alone they may still be cold, hot, uncomfortable, in pain, or just plain scared or lonely! Why is that so wrong? "Cry it out" or "controlled crying" is just neglect with a different name.

Scientists everywhere know the short and long term consequences of these so-called "methods", and they are vast. Most parents also instinctually know these things. Some parents listen to those instincts, and others listen to people like my mother in law who say "Just let her cry. She has to learn. Don't let her manipulate you, she doesn't really need anything. Keep it up and you'll win eventually." These people usually mean well. They aren't setting out to harm a child, but that doesn't change the fact that they are. Argue with me all you want. Say "I let my baby cry it out, and he/she is fine". I don't believe you. I believe you broke your child like an animal. I believe they gave up. They didn't magically learn to "self-soothe", they just figured out that you suck at being a parent at night time. YOU will be old some day, or you may find yourself in a helpless situation even earlier than that. See how you feel if another person tells you what to feel, when to feel it, and how to express it. See how you feel if they ignore your feelings and only meet the needs that THEY deem valid. See how you feel if you are treated like less than an animal, someone that must be trained. Someone that must lose, so they can win. A baby has far less capacity to understand these things, so the next time your little helpless one cries out, remember that they cry for a reason. Even just wanting to be held is a real NEED. If you've ever seen what happens to those babies in foreign orphanages that never get held or talked to, you'll realize the incredible importance of human contact. It's so simple.

I could go on for days with even a million more reasons, but I will leave you with a few resources, and a simple piece of advice. Next time you hear "Just let him/her cry", think twice. You'll never regret being there for your child.

Edit: It was mentioned that I condemned CIO/sleep training without offering alternatives. I guess my links below were missed? Anyway, I'll add some more ;-)

- Pinky McKay does an excellent job of summing up the very real damage that "controlled crying" can do. This is a must-read on the subject! Enjoy. [http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/pinky\\_mckay.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/pinky_mckay.html)
- Dr. Sears is another great resource. If you have a baby with sleep problems or just want to learn more about babies and sleep in general, give it a look! <http://www.askdrsears.com/html/7/T070100.asp>
- The No-Cry Sleep Solution: <http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/books/0071381392.php>
- TONS of great articles about sleep: <http://www.naturalchild.org/articles/sleeping.html>

Anyone please feel free to share more! I'm pretty tired at the moment, but its hard to find time when I am both well-rested AND have the time to write :-P

\*\*\*ALSO! This is very important. I want to make it very clear that the above story is only half-true and was given a different spin for the purpose of making people think. I was unfortunately very sick and helpless, but my husband would NEVER neglect or abuse me in such a way. I did want to make people think though. If any other helpless person (sick, injured, elderly) were treated in the ways described, people would be disgusted. The fact that babies are often "trained" in such a manner proves that babies are still viewed by many people as lesser beings with invalid needs and feelings, even though the care-taker probably doesn't realize that is what they are doing.

I would also like to add that when a parent is near their breaking point and has to put their child down in a safe space and leave the room briefly for the sake of gathering their sanity, that is VERY different. This is essential to preventing a mental break in the parent and possible harm to the child. Do not feel guilty if you've found yourselves in moments like these. It is an entirely different situation than it is to leave a child crying, screaming, even vomiting alone in the dark on a regular basis for "training" purposes.