

The Great Battle...

Anyone with young kids will tell you that the time of day between dinner and bedtime exists solely to stress out Mom and Dad. No matter how long the bath or the stories, the books or the brushing of the teeth last, there always seems to be time leftover. On a normal weeknight, this void can be shared by Mom and Dad; with each getting a few quiet moments to do dishes, take out trash, or fold clothes. Normal chores can be a relief versus refereeing a wrestling match or chasing down uncapped permanent markers. Solid parent to kid defense is the key.

On some nights, either Mom or Dad may step out for a social evening. This much needed and well deserved break for parent A means extra work and no play for parent B. In these cases, parent B must resort to a zone defense that may include staying up late, sugared snacks, extra TV time, cell phone games, and sometimes bribery. You do what you have to do.

My night with the kids was going well. They were clean and ready for bed. The only problem was that we had read three books and told two stories and still had twenty minutes to bedtime. Dad was all alone with no help coming before lights out. What to do?

"Let's set up some armies," the four year old boy suggested.

On a normal night, this would be a bad idea to the sheer volume of toys that would litter the living room and, thus, have to be picked up by morning. Tonight, though, all bets were off.

The one problem with setting up armies is that the toddler draft board favors the child with the most army toys. Seeing that my two year old girl has yet to enter a *Private Benjamin* phase, we were forced to improvise. It would be an epic battle with the brown army men, select *Transformers*, and a few random other toys facing off against the *Disney Fairies*, the green army men, and the plastic molded cast of the *Beauty and the Beast*. Chaos ensued.

The princess army started strong, managing to take out *Optimus Prime* and *R2-D2* in a deft opening attack. The green army men were quickly destroyed because all of their cool tanks and airships were fighting for the other side. Fortunately, *Tinkerbell* saved the day and flew them all to a makeshift infirmary so that *Ariel* could heal them with her magical voice. Repeated missions by a broken *Star Wars* fighter were turned back by the infamous claws of *Sebastian*, the crab from *Little Mermaid*. Finally, *Cinderella* met an armless, blue robot in the middle of the battlefield and they danced to a truce among toys. And then, I think they got married or at least they appeared to kiss. Maybe that's how toy armies make peace.

After all was said and done, the living room floor looked like a Wal-Mart toy aisle on December 24th. The kids happily went off to bed, with only a handful of army men each. All was quiet when Mom got home. The living room was pitch black.

"Wow, the kids sure are quiet. How did you do that?" she asked.

She'll know in the morning. Glad I'm going in to fix teeth.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at www.ParrishDental.com.