One of the great things I have loved about being a mom is being close to my kids. I know them very well, and they know me very well also. As great as that can be, it can also present some difficulties! We know how to get under each other’s skin, and I often struggle with not “taking the bait” as my husband calls it.

When my son Brian came home from college the first time, he brought a monumental amount of laundry. It didn’t look like he had washed anything in months! He piled it all in the laundry room.

“Brian, I am not doing your laundry,” I said.

“Of course not, Mom! I’ll do it!” He replied.

My laundry room was next to our back door. I also had laundry I washed every day. So, after two days, I reminded Brian that he needed to do something about his laundry – it was in my way.

“Chill, Mom! I’ll do it tomorrow. I just got home and am exhausted!” he replied.

Ok, I chilled. The next day dawned, and then it got later and later. Finally at 1:00, he appeared downstairs, ready to walk out the door to go see some friends.

At first I was calm.

“Where are you going, Brian?” I asked. “Did you forget your promise to do your laundry?”

“No mom, I said chill! I will do it tonight!” he replied (in an impatient tone.)

That just sent me over the edge.

“No, you are not, Brian! You are going to do this laundry RIGHT NOW! You are not going anywhere until this is done!” I shouted.

Of course, it just escalated from there. Within a couple of minutes both of us were angry with each other and feeling very disrespected. Finally, he walked out of the house and down the street.

My husband came home soon after. When I told him what happened, he just sighed.

“You let him push your buttons again,” he said.

I was furious. Couldn’t he see this was all Brian’s fault? I had been so patient, just reminding him nicely – and he took advantage of me!

“That is the problem,” he said. “You keep reminding him, and it needs to be his worry, not yours!”

He was right. Brian was counting on the fact that I would get sick of this. He knew it would annoy me, and I would eventually do the laundry just to get it out of there.

What I could see later that night was that I had taken on the responsibility for getting this task finished. I wasn’t going to do it, but I was going to make sure Brian did. Brian was tired of me telling him what to do. After all, at school he did his own laundry without my prodding.

I moved the dirty clothes out of the laundry room and put them in Brian’s room. Later that evening, I apologized for losing my temper and for taking on his responsibility for his laundry.

I learned a great lesson that day. My son needed to own his responsibilities, and I needed to get out of his way. My kids are not going to do things the way I would – but that’s okay. I need to let them figure it out!

- Mary Moore has three sons who have graduated from Hyde and a daughter who is a senior.

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