

Power Struggles

Written by Laura Packard
Wednesday, 06 April 2016 04:51



I'm perplexed.

I plug a phone charger into the electrical outlet, attached to my phone, leave the room for a sec... and poof!

It's gone.

Just like that.

Not my phone . . . well, sometimes . . . actually, a lot of times, but it's always the charger. Always. Though sometimes the cord is gone but the box with the plug on it is still lodged in the wall like my husband's feet planted solo in the middle of a grocery store, willing a box of Bubba Burgers and a block of Velveeta to find him.

Erma Bombeck famously wrote about the vanishing phenomenon of everyday household items during the end of the last century.

The universal missing sock conundrum was a fan favorite. Who hasn't experienced the crazy reality that if you put 4 pairs of matching socks in the dryer directly from the wash, odds are only one will come out? Where do the other socks go? A PBS sock puppet convention? A

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meeting of a secret society made of cotton loyalists? The NYC subway system?

Conspiracy theories abound, including the following from Erma's column, *Crockpot Sock*, written March 20, 1990: "Some thought socks were victims of a great cosmic force that demanded one be sacrificed like a virgin maiden. Others thought lost socks were reincarnated and appeared in your dryer as bras and panties you had never seen before. The defection theory was suggested for 'socks who wanted to get out of the pressure of living in Boston'."

The difference between socks and phone chargers though, is the culprits are usually easy to identify, though difficult to catch in action.

When one of my chargers goes missing, I follow the scent of Vera Wang Princess perfume and Tate's Gluten-free cookies. Sure enough, there it is, a binding source of conductivity powering one of my children to the brain-sucking world of Instagram, Polyvore, Snap Chat and Trivia Crack.

Inevitably, when confronted, they will claim the percentage advantage.

"Your phone was on 72%," one of them says through a cloudy haze of a giant bubble of Hubba Bubba. "Mine was on 11 and I can't find my charger."

This is where I claim numbers of days walked upon the earth.

Winning. Every time. But not without a struggle.

"But MOOOOOOOOOOMMMMM," the bubble will whine back.

"Exactly. That's what the charger you're grasping like the last Kit Kat has written all over

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it in black permanent marker."

Speaking of struggles, it's not just their personal phone chargers they can't keep up with.

It's everything they own.

It's quite frightening when you think about it, really, seeing as these are the future leaders, great thinkers, movers and shakers, healers and arbitrators of the next generation.

"Mom, where are my shoes?" (In the closet.)

"Mom, I can't find a pencil." (In the desk drawer.)

"Mooooommm, I'm hungry. I can't find anything to eat?" (Food. Five feet to the left in the pantry.)

"I can't find the milk." (That's because it's not in pantry. Fridge. Two feet back. One foot right.)

"MOM! I'm late! Where's my favorite Southern Tide sweatshirt? The one with the giant bow on the back?" (On the floor. You just stepped over it.)

These endless questions and the constant urgency of trying to locate something that's slap-dab in front of them drives me, as Erma would say, to take a few nips from the bottle of Vanilla extract. It makes me bat-crazy insane. So does their apparent lack of problem solving skills.

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"The printer is broken again." (It's out of paper.)

"My flat iron stopped working. I keep telling you I need a new one." (It's plugged in. Not turned on. Again.)

"Help!!! How do I turn off the hose?" (Twist the handle in the opposite direction you turned it on.)

My husband says it's not that they don't know the answers to these questions or how to function properly in the real world. They do and they can. It's just they're lazy and used to me jumping up and doing everything for them.

He's right. No more.

Next time they ask me where their phone charger is (because mine is now glued down to the kitchen counter tighter than my husband's wallet to his back pocket on a trip to Saks 5th Avenue), I'll tell them what Erma used to tell her kids when they complained about a missing sock.

"Honey, it went on to live with Jesus."

Happy hunting or non-hunting. And whoever says technology makes life easier obviously doesn't live with teenagers. Catch you on the flip side. Hopefully, it's all wireless.