

**Toothpaste
Moments**

10/15/20



When the alarm went off this past Monday, I got up and began my usual morning routine. Within a few minutes, I was about to brush my teeth when I realized the toothpaste tube was empty. I didn't miss a beat, I reached into the cabinet, took the scissors, and I cut the top off of the tube of toothpaste. I didn't think about it much. We had used most of the toothpaste and had already rolled up the tube to get as much out as we could. For most of the week, there has still been enough left in the two ends of the tube to brush every morning, and I am just about ready to discard it and open a new tube. Let's say I might be a bit frugal.

I didn't just happen to decide to cut the top off the toothpaste. For most of my childhood, it was a part of the regular rhythm. We would open a new tube, and use what we could, then roll it up for a few days. After that, mom would cut the top off, and we would continue to use it until the inside of the tube was clean of any remnants of paste. For the record, we would also pour water in the shampoo bottle to get out what was left. These lessons somehow stuck with me. If you are blessed to live long enough, we all will begin to act like our parents. For me, this was one of those moments.

It's funny what lessons you take from your childhood. Something about the toothpaste moment left a lasting impression. As we go about our day to day working with students, I often wonder what lessons they will take with them. How will they remember their elementary experience? For me, much of that memory includes nature walks, field days, and talent shows. I remember our first-grade "show and tell" days, but I don't remember a lot about the classroom instruction. I know I was in the hall more than I should have been, and the teacher liked to use her paddle on little boys that were a bit distracted. I remember the book my teacher chose to read to our fourth-grade class. I remember very few lessons. I remember very few assignments. But, I do remember the powerful moments.

As we go about helping young children develop, teachers and parents must become cultivators of moments that matter. I encourage you to look for opportunities to chase these memories with your children. These are the moments that will cement themselves in the minds of the next generation. Some of these moments we can't control, tragedies and celebrations will both be remembered, as well as vacations and significant events. Children also observe us and develop their sense of work ethic from what they see, their response to difficulties from how we respond. We never know from day to day what they will remember.

There will be both celebrations and tragedies, but there will also be a bunch of stuff in between. We will make many lasting impressions. Some will be enjoyable; others will be painful. We can only hope that sandwiched in between are a few toothpaste moments where our actions teach a valuable lesson that isn't soon forgotten.

Thanks, Mom! The toothpaste lesson stuck with me.