

Isn't that Ironic?

By Dorothy Rosby

I told my son to leave me ALONE because I was TRYING to read a magazine article! The article was about good parenting. I'm not sure, but I think that was the day he asked me what "ironic" means.

An ironic situation is, of course, a situation that is strange or funny because things happen in a way that seems to be the opposite of what we expect. Or something like that. Irony is one of those words that's easier to give examples of than to define. And when I started looking for examples I saw them everywhere.

I almost rear-ended the car in front of me because I was trying to read its bumper sticker. Turns out it said, "If you can read this you're too close." That's ironic. Also dumb--on both of our parts.

And I think the "No fat chicks allowed" bumper sticker on the back of a clunker driven by a rather rotund gentleman was ironic. The use of the term gentleman might be a little ironic too.

Announcers on prescription drug commercials read dire warnings like, "Side effects may include hives, nausea, or breathing difficulties. In rare cases, usage may result in serious injury, coma, or DEATH." All the while, healthy-looking actors are dancing and jogging. Maybe they can't hear the announcer.

Before we buy a \$20 sweater, we try it on. Before we buy a car, we test drive it. But before we buy a house--the largest purchase of our whole life--we don't even sleep in it for a night.

It's ironic that shopping is good for THE economy, but not for MY economy. And that I'm willing to spend twice as much for an item that's advertised as, "Buy one, get one free." Or maybe that's not ironic. Maybe it's something else. Stupid maybe.

It's ironic that women's magazines put dessert recipes next to articles about how to have a flat stomach. And it's ironic that certain women I know gripe about getting their holiday baking done and then complain about holiday weight gain. Oh well. I can put up with the grumbling. I'm just happy they get their baking done.

It's ironic when I park as close as possible to the gym. And that I circle the block twenty times to find a parking place next to a store downtown, then walk the equivalent of twelve blocks inside a mall.

It's ironic that women pile on warm winter coats over dresses, leaving their poor, bare legs exposed to the elements. It's really ironic when men do it.

I know people who own television screens that cover an entire wall. Then they watch movies on their itty bitty cell phone screens.

TV news channels tell us to stay tuned because the president is going to make a big announcement. Then they tell us what the announcement is going to be.

It's ironic that we complain about the deer then put up plastic ones in our yard. And that more people complain about government than vote. And that a watched pot never boils but a pot boils dry if it's not watched. At least it does at my house. And fairly often too.

But for me, parenting remains the most worrisome source of irony because so much of what we parents think of as irony, our kids think of as hypocrisy--even before they're old enough to know what hypocrisy means. We teach them about good sportsmanship then take them to professional sporting events where the adults boo the officials. We tell them to get some exercise--from our place on the couch. And I personally have been known to tell my son to use his inside voice--by yelling at him. Ironic or hypocritical? I prefer ironic.

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