

# Interpreter of Cries

Category: Crying

written by Melanie Tioleco-Cheng | May 17, 2017

It happens daily. I enter a room and come face to face with someone who's afraid of me. But we make friends, we may even laugh and share a high five or two. Then I leave. And from the room next door, I can hear the horrendous cry. The aftermath.

I'm a pediatrician, and the aftermath is when my capable medical assistant or nurse goes in after me to give a vaccine or check a hemoglobin level or administer a shot of antibiotics because the oral antibiotic isn't working.

Last week, such a scenario struck me as being like a zombie apocalypse. Don't ask me why—that's just how my brain works when it's low on sugar, when I'm working hard to not make my patients wait so long, when I'm also taking my time to be the best physician I can be.

I've learned to block out some of the "I'm terrified of you" cries because I have to. It doesn't mean they don't bother me. But I'm there to do a job: I *must* make sure you don't have an ear infection or pneumonia or something else that requires me to bring out the "big guns." That's right—I have a prescription pad and I'm not afraid to use it, if necessary.

I'm also a mom, so I hear crying at home, too. As a parent, you learn what various types of cries mean: *I'm hungry. I'm wet. I'm really tired but I can't get to sleep. I'm hurt. Or I'm just pissed off because my granola bar broke in half.*

As a pediatrician, you learn to read cries as well. The "terrified of you" cry, I've learned to ignore—or at least not keep me from doing a proper exam. More worrisome is the lack of cry in a really sick kid, as I'm deciding if I can treat them as an outpatient or if they need to go to the ER or even be admitted to the hospital. Their breathing may be too fast or shallow. Or they may be whimpering. Or looking me straight in the eye, trying to tell me without words that they don't feel right.

More often than not, though, the terrified or "zombie apocalypse" cries die down, and I get a small smile or a wave as my little patients make their way out the door, back to the safety of the waiting room.

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