

#104 Arizona, March 2014

Dear Arizona,

I said I'd help with this clean up the neighborhood day, but I just got invited to do something way more fun. What should I do?

Deciding in Denver

Dear Deciding,

I completely know what you're talking about. That same thing happens to me all the time! I'll agree to do one thing and then I hear about something else even more fun going on at the same time. Sometimes I can transform myself into the master planner of the universe - coming up with brilliant scheduling plans and cleverly rearranging stuff so I can fit everything in. But once in a while, when two things are happening at the exact same time and there's nothing in the world I can do to make them both work, I feel frustrated and disappointed. Those are definitely not my favorite situations.

A little over a month ago, one of those very situations came up, and I have to admit - I ended up being really surprised! It started when I was helping my little brother pick out a book at the library.

I don't remember her exact words, but the librarian said something like, "Oh, I just love that book!" And I said something like, "Me too. I used to make my parents read it over and over and over!" And she said something like, "You know, I'm looking for volunteers to help out at our special Book Day Extravaganza. We'll have all kinds of fun activities for little kids next Saturday from noon till three, and I could really use somebody like you who loves books and is great with young children."

I went to go find my mom in the mystery section, and after she said yes to my helping out, I went back to get all the information.

"Wonderful, Arizona!" The librarian said, handing me the Book Day Extravaganza flyer. "My name is Emily, and I'm just thrilled that you're willing to volunteer! I'll see you on Saturday the second at twelve o'clock."

Okay, now for the complicated part. I do like books, and I do like little kids, and I do like helping and making a difference. However, I don't really like missing out on the most incredibly fun stuff ever. This is why getting my friend Mareya's phone call on Friday afternoon was not exactly the highlight of my life.

“Great news!” she said. “I get to invite three friends for lunch and roller skating at that new place tomorrow at twelve.”

“That sounds so fun!” I said, all excitedly.

“Great!” She said. “My mom says we can pick you up on the way. Emma and Natalie are going to meet us there.”

“Awesome!” I said. “I’ll ask my mom and call you back.”

I hung up the phone and ran to tell my parents the good news. Which, as I’m sure you’ve already figured out, was not truly very good news at all. My mom didn’t even have to open her mouth. She walked over to the refrigerator, pointed to the library flyer and gave me ‘the look’, which involves raised eyebrows, frowny mouth corners, hands on hips and an over-all silent but extremely loud and clear message.

How could I have forgotten? Roller-skating sounded so incredibly fun, it made me blank on the Book Day Extravaganza. I called Mareya to see if there was any way we could roller-skate after the library event.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Arizona! This is the only time that works for my mom.”

“OK,” I said. “Count me out this time.” I knew Emily was counting me, and I’d feel lame letting her down.

So yeah, that was that. The next day, I headed off to the library feeling bluer than a bluebird who’d fallen into a can of blue paint. I trudged up the steps and dragged my feet all the way to the children’s room.

And – surprise! The moment I got there was the moment I stopped feeling sorry for myself! There were all kinds of crazy decorations, and cookies that were frosted to look like books, and craft tables where you could make your own book, and a Winnie the Pooh puppet show, and a bunch of cute little kids.

“Hooray! Arizona! I’m so glad you’re here!” Emily said. “I could really use a hand at the book making table.”

I was so busy working and helping and laughing all day, I didn’t give one single thought to roller-skating. And I ended up making friends with a couple other people who were volunteering. In fact, this interesting, funny girl named Fawn and I had our second play-date just last week.

So, Dear Deciding, next time something fun pops up at the same time as something you've already promised to do, you should absolutely transform yourself into the master planner of the universe and see if you can fit everything in. But if you can't, I highly recommend following through on your commitment. You might be surprised by how much fun you end up having, and no matter what, you'll definitely feel good about following through.

Ciao for now,

Arizona

