

psst... from one parent to another

# After the no, *and the meltdown*

THREE NOTES FROM THE GROWN-UPS' PAGE OF  
"THE SECOND COOKIE" · AGES 5–8



## 1 Screaming on the floor. Do I cave?

If the no was there for a reason, it can stay a no, and you don't need to win an argument to keep it. The cookie is just where the no landed, on top of a long day. Staying close and saying very little tends to help most: "Still no cookie. I'm right here." No new explanations, no bargaining. And if some days you do cave, that's human, not ruinous. Tomorrow's no can still be a calm one.

## 2 It's over. Should we talk about it now?

He's wrung out, and so are you, so tonight probably isn't the time. A hug, a drink of water, "That was a big one," and on with bedtime is plenty. If something does need saying, it lands better later, once you're both calm, even if that's tomorrow at breakfast. Just not a minute after the last sob. Quite often, by morning, there's nothing left to say at all.

## 3 Can I say no without a meltdown?

Not every time, but a couple of small turns can take the edge off. You can lead with yes: "Yes, tomorrow after lunch." Same answer, really, but he heard yes first. Some parents also like to wish out loud with him once he's calmer: "Imagine a cookie tree in the backyard. What kind would grow on it?" You're still not handing one over, just letting him know you get how much he wanted it.

Read Theo's story together — your child decides what he does. →

[ifarium.com/stories/the-second-cookie](https://ifarium.com/stories/the-second-cookie) · free, no sign-up

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org 2021; Child Mind Institute 2025; Vanderbilt University Center for Child Development.



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THE STORY

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# The Yes-Later Card



A no can stay a no. You can still lead with yes: “Yes, tomorrow after lunch.” Write the when on a card, let him keep it, and the waiting has somewhere to go.

## YES, LATER

*Yes, and here's when:*

what: \_\_\_\_\_

when: \_\_\_\_\_

Same answer, really. He just hears yes first.



## YES, LATER

*Yes, and here's when:*

what: \_\_\_\_\_

when: \_\_\_\_\_

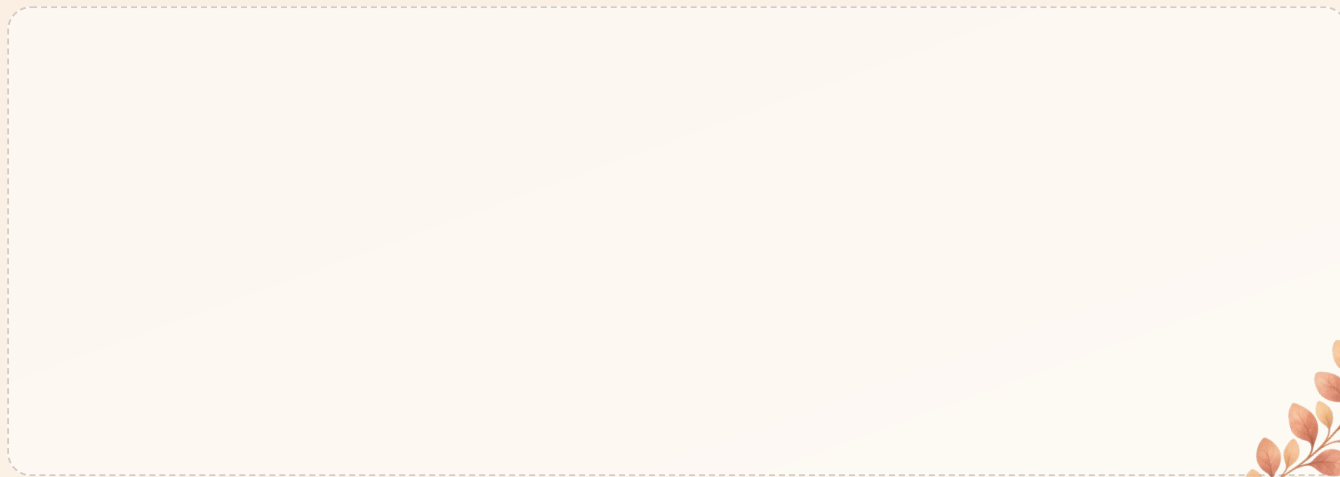
Same answer, really. He just hears yes first.



## OUR WISH TREE

*“Imagine a cookie tree in the backyard. What kind would grow on it?”*

Draw it together once he's calmer. You're still not handing one over, just letting him know you get how much he wanted it.



From “The Second Cookie” — read it together at [ifarium.com](http://ifarium.com), free, no sign-up. Ideas from the grown-ups' page; they won't stop every meltdown, and that's okay.



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