

Everyone Geneva in 2007

By Esther Baird

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OK, time for New Year's resolutions. Hmm, let me think while I eat these double-stuffed Oreos. Oh . . . sorry, I didn't mean I was thinking about resolutions for myself. I plan on eating whatever I want and wearing my most comfy clothes, but then I guess it's time to let you all know that I'm pregnant again. Don't get me wrong, I understand that my health and fitness levels are just as, if not more, important in my child-carrying state. But my 2-year-old keeps me moving plenty. As for nutrition, back away from the Oreos. They are mine.

I do have one New Year's resolution that doesn't involve food or exercise. This year I want to learn how to program my sports watch. You know the sort: They're cheap plastic; come in an assortment of colors; and have big faces with easy-to-read, digital displays. I never pay more than \$15 for one and I always require that they are totally waterproof — for 'tubby-time' soakings with our toddler, have back-lighting — for sneaking into said toddler's room to check on her at night and at least two time zone options — because we travel a lot.

In addition, these watches often include about nine trillion other things like stopwatches, calendars, pedometers and intergalactic spacecraft positioning. But they only perform these various and potentially powerful functions if you know the secret code of holding, pressing, and releasing one of the four buttons that operate the entire watch. Cracking that code — technically called the instructions — is always my undoing. Instead, when simply trying to program the time, I consistently manage to set the alarm for the hours between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

My first sports watch, a conservative black one, had an alarm that, in successively louder beeps, propelled me out of bed at 1:15 a.m. After a week of jangled nerves and half-awake hunts for the watch, I finally remembered each evening to bury it in the medicine cabinet — and to close the bathroom door — and to close our door.

Eventually I threw the black one away and bought a new, pink one. This time I was ready. I folded up the instructions and tucked them into my daytimer ensuring I'd never be without them to guide me through the complexity of the four buttons. That is until, on a long, boring flight, in a fog of parental malaise, I handed the pink watch to my toddler. She managed to set it to military time in such a way that no amount of instruction consultation would return it to the 12-hour clock. Here is a basic fact about me: I can't process military time. Please don't send me tips on 'easy techniques' to remedy this. My brain is not wired that way. The pink watch was done.

Finally, I bought my latest and most exasperating sports watch to date. It's purple and has upped the anti by dedicating a full, single button to just the backlight, leaving only three buttons to operate the watch. I could probably run every appliance in my house if only I could push and release the right buttons on this new watch but instead all I've done so far is to, yet again, set the alarm for 3:02 a.m. For a month the purple watch lived in the medicine cabinet until I finally sat down to crack the code. But it was not to be.

Here are the actual directions for setting the alarm: "In normal time, push S3 twice to get into alarm mode, digits will flash. Geneva [sic] through depression of S2 button. . . hour digits will flash and Geneva as above . . . month digits flash and Geneva as above etc."

The instructions continued like that for the entire watch function repertoire. And, no, you didn't read incorrectly, the main action verb given was to "Geneva". As in the Swiss city? As in the prisoners-of-war accord? As in what!? My husband, normally suspicious of my ability to follow instructions, even sided with me. He was sure it was a typo, a weird one, but a typo nonetheless. I'm not convinced. I think it may be the next evolution of sports watch powers. What secret technological action might these watches complete if only we, mere humans, could Geneva?

And so that's my New Year's resolution. To program my sports watch. To sleep soundly — and alarm-free — through the night until March when the new baby comes. To eat lots of Oreos. And to Geneva. Here's to 2007!

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