



Parenting during pandemic

Day 12: Narrative therapy.

Let's tell your story of parenting during the pandemic.

Stories are very powerful and important, that's why so many are passed down through generations and through history. We are currently living through a significant moment in history. We may find in years to come that future generations study the time of the pandemic. Stories also have a way of allowing us to sort out information into a logical order that makes sense to us and holds together as a whole rather than being bits of information without clear ties. We've put together these tips from some aspects of narrative therapy and we hope you will find them helpful.

What's your story of the pandemic? Well, it's your story. Essentially that means it's up to you. What do you want your story of the pandemic to be? What do you want your children's story to be and your family story to be?

We have lived through some of the story so far so you could consider that but this is not a diary, you get to re-author the story. It may be helpful to think about how you feel based on the story you tell and how your children feel. For example, you could say: *In the beginning we all felt fear, we were stuck at home, the boredom was terrible, we all hated it.* If that's the case, how will you feel? Or, you could say: *In the beginning we all felt fear, we thought we would be stuck at home but we read inspirational quotes about being safe at home rather than stuck at home. Sometimes we felt bored but we found ways to entertain ourselves and each other and began to realise we were spending quality time bonding as a family. At times we hated it and it was hard but we learned that we can get through hard things together and we noticed how hopeful we could be and how much we could look forward to things to come.* If that's the case, how will you feel?

If future generations study the pandemic, what do you think you will want to tell them? Consider the stories you heard from older generations of different times. A lot of the stories are not diary entries but more focused on skills people showed, what people learned, lessons for the future and so on.

Narrative therapy focuses on people's experiences being somewhat separate to them and their skills and attributes being important. What skills have you shown during the pandemic? What skills have your children shown? If you discuss this as a family and highlight the positive skills you have noticed in both the children and adults at home, you will be building self-esteem. If you discuss the story of the pandemic and how things were difficult but you all showed positive skills and got through things together, you will be building resilience.

To some extent, children look to adults to make sense of what is going on around them so the story you tell your children about the pandemic is important. One important note, however, is that you don't have to be doing lots of positive things at this time to make the story positive. The story is allowed to note that you went through some difficulties and at times it was a struggle.

You may have seen lots of things advertising that this is the time to learn a new skill, improve something, build on something etc. This may be your story and if it is then great, you will have plenty of positives to add to your story and plenty of skills to note in yourself and others at home.

Equally, however, the story can be about struggling each and every day just to survive. There are harsh realities here of financial struggle, job losses, conflict over which house children should be staying in, increased challenging behaviour at home, emergence and re-emergence of mental health difficulties and so on. If your story is one of surviving and not necessarily thriving right now, that is ok. It is enough just to survive this and unfortunately many people will not survive. Surviving the many difficulties just now shows skills and strengths in us and if you are following the public health advice then you are helping everyone right now. Getting yourself and your child or children through the day is enough and if you can still identify some strengths and skills and speak to your children about being survivors during difficult times then you are setting them up well for the future.

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

Tomorrow's topic: Children's stories of the pandemic and how to build self esteem and resilience with stories.

Please [contact us with questions, comments or topics](#) you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.