



Parenting during pandemic

Day 13: Children's stories of the pandemic and how to build self esteem and resilience with stories.

Yesterday's blog utilised some aspects of narrative therapy to provide tips on thinking about your story of the pandemic and your family's story. This blog focuses on how to help children to tell their stories of the pandemic.

Asking your child to write a story is a bit like hiding veg in their dinner. In a slightly sneaky, good parent – type of way, you are getting them to practice all kinds of skills. For example, you could ask them to plan the story. This means thinking about the characters, plot, timeline, beginning/middle/end etc. You can ask them to organise the materials they will need to tell their story. This might be a pen or pencil and paper to write; or colouring pens to draw a cartoon or comic book; or a laptop to type; or a phone to record a video etc. All of these things work on executive function skills in the brain which are skills that are still developing in the brain up into our 20's. If you ask them to write the story, they are practicing writing and spelling. Cartoons and comic books practice art skills. Typing on a laptop encourages IT skills.

Psychologically, however, stories can also allow children to think about the skills and attributes needed to do different things in the story. If children focus on the positive skills and attribute they possess, they will be building self esteem, allowing themselves a positive self concept and image of themselves. Stories also allow consideration of difficulties and how to manage them. This means children focus on resilience and how to cope when things are hard.

What will your child's story of the pandemic be? Imagine they have just gone back to school and the teachers need to assess their skills so they ask the children to write their news about what they did during the pandemic. What will your child write?

You can guide and support this activity at home by asking your child some specific questions like: what was good about the pandemic? What did you enjoy most about being at home with your family? What skills do you have that you think helped you during the pandemic? If you

were bored, how did you manage that? If things were difficult, what did your family do to help you? What did you do to help people at home during the pandemic?

You can try all sorts of activities around this like: ask them to draw themselves as a superhero showing all the skills they had during the pandemic. Ask them to make paper bracelets for everyone at home with something written on them to help them during the pandemic. Ask them to imagine their friends or teachers are a bit bored during the pandemic and ask them to write letters to cheer them up. Ask them to make a scrap book showing things they did during the pandemic or a time capsule. Ask them to draw pictures for the doctors and nurses working hard to help everyone.

If you ask your child to try some of these things and you find that they are creating stories that are quite negative, that's your opportunity to find out how they are feeling during the pandemic. They may be missing friends, teachers, wider family, clubs/groups etc. They may be worried about COVID-19 or something else. They may be feeling a bit down due to the boredom and repetitiveness of the lockdown. Also remember that if you do have conversations like this, you don't have to have all the answers. Nobody has all of the answers about the pandemic just now so it's ok to say you don't know and to acknowledge with your child when things are difficult. This is your opportunity to let them know that you are a team and you are in this together and will get through it together. You could then suggest re-writing the story with you as superheroes who save the day!

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: Bored, bored, bored! How to beat the boredom of lockdown.

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.