



Parenting during pandemic

Day 28: Rainbows, unicorns, dinosaurs and magic! Keeping the magic of childhood even in lockdown

Just before Easter, Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand announced that the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy are essential workers. For our children, this is a powerful message about the magic of childhood and the need to keep hold of this even during difficult times. As parents, we know that there is a bit going on behind the scenes of the magic so today's blog is about keeping the magic in childhood and what we can do behind the scenes to ensure this for our children even during a pandemic and lockdown.

Among the masters of magic in childhood are Disney. If you are ever lucky enough to consider a visit to one of the Disney parks, you will know that there is some planning that goes into this. Disney knows this too and they provide lots of tools and helpful hints about how to plan and get the most out of your trip. Disney's taglines include Disneyland as the "happiest place on earth" and their Magical Kingdom as the "most magical place on earth". Disney strives for these things and uses them as the vision for the whole operation. So what would your tagline be for your child's childhood? What is your vision for them?

In psychological terms, having a vision is about thinking about what you want in the future. This may allow us to think positively and therefore feel better in the short term. Thinking about things is not the same as doing something about them though. According to the Stages of Change Model by Prochaska and Di Clemente, we can be in several stages of change before actually taking any action and the length of time in each stage is undefined. So we can be in the pre-contemplation stage where we are not really thinking about change. We can be in the contemplation stage, where we are thinking about doing something. We can be in the planning stage where we are thinking about the steps we could take to make a change. All of these are before any action is taken.

Disney doesn't stop at vision and thinking positively about the future, they back this up with lots of planning and lots of action. So, how can we plan and take action to keep the magic in the childhoods of our children even under the restriction of lockdown and our worries around the pandemic?

In previous blogs we talked about planning and setting routines. At that stage it was about practicalities around daily tasks but as parents we can also plan a little magic. The Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy may be magical aspects of childhood currently happening but at other times of the year we also plan for magic. Christmas, birthdays, other holidays and special occasions have a magic for children and we tend to plan for these. So what will you plan for your child during coronavirus and lockdown to keep the magic in their childhood?

Even when there is a plan, there is still another stage around putting this into action. In the midst of everything else going on for us at the moment, it may be difficult to action the magic – we were literally talking about exhaustion in the blog yesterday! It may be helpful to think about our motivation to bring the magic and this is where going back to the vision can be helpful. If we know what we want to achieve, have made a plan about how to get there and can build up our motivation by focusing on really wanting to make the change and why it would be important to us, then the action may be easier.

So, what will the action be? Magic doesn't have to be about children getting things from different places – presents, eggs, pennies for teeth etc. The magic of Disney is about stories. As parents we can make up stories for our children or get dressed up and role play a story or play with toys together or pretend to sprinkle fairy dust and fly around the living room! Magic can be free of charge but hugely valuable in the lives of our children – and in parents lives too!

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: Pivoting or chasing your tail. Added social pressures during the pandemic

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.