



BARBARA BURROWS
PARENTING

M A G A Z I N E

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Me, Myself and I (How Children Build their Sense of Self)
The Disastrous Christmas Shopping Trip • Role Reversal • Solving Children's Squabbles
Helping Your Teen Succeed In High School • Mad, Sad, Feeling Bad

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Mum's the word

Years ago when my oldest dyed her hair a wonderful shade of burnt purple (she told me it was dark red and it's only because I am colour blind - that I didn't like it), I nearly hit the roof. Take one head of the most beautiful, shiny, healthy, brown hair and within minutes it looked the same dull waxy finish as when she use to mix every colour of Crayola crayon together.

Thankfully she (and her hair) grew out of it. This past weekend, her younger sister returned home from a wake-over (what use to be known as a sleepover but who are we kidding - they never sleep!) and was in her room when I arrived home later that morning. Apparently her father hadn't seen her - he was busy painting.

I started to help paint when the phone rang. It was her older sister who is away at University. "Seen her yet?" she asks.

"Why?" I respond.

Her: "No reason, just asking"

Me: "What do you know?"

Her: "Nothing. Just wondered if you knew"

Me: "I know but why don't you tell me what you know?" I lied, my curiosity peaked.

Her: "No, it's ok. She says she likes it and I was just wondering if you did"

Me: "No comment"

Something is up. I've picked up the clues with my mother-knows-all radar. I assume it's her hair - either

that or a belly-button ring. Please Lord, let it be the hair. I call to the little beauty queen to come downstairs. She arrives with her head hidden by her sweat-shirt hoodie. Dad's still painting, still clueless.

Me: "So let's see your hair"

Her: "How did you know?"

Me: "Mothers know everything"

Her: "No seriously, how did you know?"

Me: "We mothers have a website - mothernetwork.com - and we report on what our kids are doing. One mother said you dyed your hair."

Her: "NO WAY! Which mother told you?"

I'm not sure if she checked online for the website but I do know for sure that she has no idea how I found out. I'll never reveal my source. In fact, my "source" doesn't even know she tipped me off. Mothers just know when and how to read between the lines, website or no website!

I may sound a little smug, but I'll have to admit, its way more fun being "in the know" than worrying about not knowing - which of course I've also done frequently! I forgot to mention the hair colour - a red/black combo - she loves it, guess I am still colour blind.

What's Up?



ANGELA GREENWAY
Managing Editor

Angela

DECEMBER 2003

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DEAR BARBARA

Ungrateful 9-year-old hates new life

Dear Barbara:

Six years ago, I suddenly found myself on my own with a 2 year old. I had no marketable skills, an incomplete education and no one to support my daughter and myself. My parents were wonderful, and helped with the care of my daughter so I could start to make a life for both of us.

My daughter gradually became more and more a part of my parents' lives and their neighbourhood as she would stay overnight when I was out late etc. She started school with the kids in my parents' area. She was happier with Grandma and Grandpa than she was coming back to my apartment that offered nothing for small children, so I went back "home" to my parents to visit her there.

Now I have completed my education, have a good job and am going to be married. My fiancée is eager to be a father to my daughter, who is now 9 years old.

We have purchased a home in a good neighbourhood, and thought we had everything worked out. We have one terrible problem. Since we have brought my daughter home to live with us, she is dreadfully unhappy. She cries frequently, and wants to go back to grandma and grandpas. She says she hates school here.

My soon-to-be husband is hurt and baffled. He thinks her grandparents must have spoiled her. I am angry that she doesn't appreciate how hard I have worked to be able to bring her to such a nice house and neighbourhood. We are both getting tired of her moodiness and sullen behaviour. She is unpleasant to have around.

How can we make her understand how lucky she is?

Dear Parent:

Anyone who loses something needs to mourn. Your daughter has lost her home, her substitute mother and father, her peer group, and her school. You and your fiancée are gaining new and wonderful things — a new home, each other and a new life together. Your daughter's losses may seem even greater to her in light of your gains.

She is likely worried about her new family relationships, new neighbourhood and school. Your fiancée is relatively new in her life. It will take a long, long time to develop a close feeling — for him and for her. A child who is not certain that she belongs in the family will be doubtful about whether she will be liked at school.

Rather than trying to convince your daughter how lucky she is, encourage her to air her frustrations and worries. Keep telling her how

much you both want her with you, in spite of the inevitable problems in adjusting.

Try not to shift your daughter between the two homes (for example, using grandparents for weekend babysitters). Arrange for her to visit whenever she asks. Responding to her need to see grandparents supports her transition and is different from sending her back to them for your convenience. During this difficult period of transition, don't leave her with babysitters if possible. Stay with her, or take her with you until she feels safe in her new home and her new family.

Your parents have also experienced a loss. Invite them often to your home, so they can ease from parent figures to grandparents again. This also supports your daughter's transition.



BARBARA BURROWS
Director,
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Photo by Murray Pellowe

Tip for Kids – Put me down, I'll get my book!

When Laura, age 4, would start to get out of control, her father would gather her in his arms (with Laura pushing, and fighting) and her father would say, "What do you need to do to get your good feelings back?"

When her father first used this technique, Laura would fuss and squirm and push and pull, yelling "put me down!" but her Dad just kept patiently asking her the same question. As her Dad would use this approach often, Laura got much better at noticing when she was getting upset and knowing what she could do to calm herself. Eventually she would say, "OK, OK, I'll get my book" as her father came towards her to pick her up, even before her father reached her.

By setting limits in this way, Laura's father helped her think more deeply about her feelings, which in turn, helped Laura find ways to get her upset feelings under control. Her father effectively stopped Laura's poor behaviour without punishing or rejecting her in any way.

As her Dad would use this approach often, Laura got much better at noticing when she was getting upset and knowing what she could do to calm herself.



GOOD BOOKS - MORE THAN A REVIEW

Me, Myself and I

How Children Build Their Sense of Self

Me, Myself and I
(How Children Build their Sense of Self)
Kyle D. Pruett M.D.
Goddard Parenting Guides
ISBN 0-9666397-4-X
Cost: US \$19.95

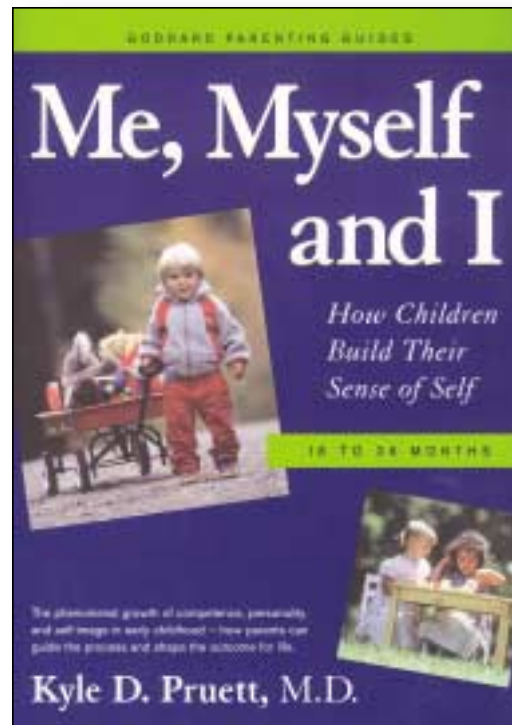
Me, Myself and I is a definitive guide to toddlerhood - the extraordinary period when parents have the greatest influence in setting their child on a healthy and happy course for life. Internationally known author Kyle P. Pruett M.D. draws on the latest research and his decades of experience as a developmentalist and child and family psychiatrist. The result is clear, practical help for parents to enhance their child's growth on all fronts, from language, and social skills to cognitive and emotional development.

There are many books available for parents of toddlers, but few written by a man with as much knowledge as Dr. Pruett on healthy psychological, cognitive, social and emotional development in youngsters.

He deals with differing temperaments, talking about children's innate capacities and the intricate interaction between the personalities of the parents and the way the child is. In the sometimes humorous and always warm style that permeates the book, Pruett asks "Can a librarian raise a sky diver and vice versa?" He says a child's behaviour is his temperament filtered through the way he is nurtured. Understanding the complex temperament differences between parents and child can help with the attachment process, and Pruett explains how.

The book goes on to explore the roots of autonomy, self-reliance, self-regard and the "oh-so-trying" but "not-so-terrible twos" - the passion, thrill, and chills of exploration and the beginnings of body mastery. In this chapter, and others too, there are many examples that show how learning words and concepts can help children greatly with mastering their difficulties.

Pruett describes Tamara, the under 2 year-old daughter of 23 year old parents, who split their work day into two separate shifts to make ends meet. Tamara is struggling with



Pruett's exceptionally clear way of illustrating the developmental concepts he discusses makes this book an easy read, and remarkably useful.



comings and goings, and the feelings associated with one or the other of her parents leaving and coming back frequently. Her usual calm and predictable temperament can change to "meltdown" if not well prepared for her parents' schedules each day.

When aunts or uncles and cousins are getting ready to leave after a visit, she will anticipate their departure with a soft, but insistent "bye bye?" with an inquiring tone at the end of the phrase. It is as though she is asking, "Do you have to go?"

Dr. Pruett explains that Tamara's uncanny accuracy in figuring out what people are doing and watching carefully to figure out these comings and goings may help her feel that she can have some control over the worry it causes her. Once she understands when these events will occur, she may feel she is the boss over her "coming and going" feelings and then these events will not hurt or confuse her so much. Her words, "bye bye" have great power to comfort her. (P 59)

Use of words by parents can help greatly as well. "Talking and Feeling" is a subtitle in the chapter on communication. Pruett explains how a parent's ability to put the child's hurt, fear, frustration or hurt into words is "magic in its ability to solve problems".

He gives the example of Matthew, who at 19 months was fascinated by the kitten sitting in his cousin's lap. His eyes were wide open and he was so still you couldn't see him breathing. He wouldn't reach out or touch or say anything, despite his mother's attempt to help him engage. After 20 minutes it was time to go, his cousin got out of the chair, and Matthew dissolved in tears. What the heck was the matter?

Finally his dad guessed it - Matthew did want to touch the cat after all. When Dad asked, Matthew said "dutch" (touch?). He did, and smiled warmly. A helpful word had turned chaotic uncertainty for the adults into orderly behaviour for Matthew. (P102)

Not only is this book filled with sound, helpful information (not advice!) it is attractively laid out. The type is not crowded, wide margins, and coloured headings make reading very easy. Pruett's exceptionally clear way of illustrating the developmental concepts he discusses makes this book an easy read, and remarkably useful.

F E A T U R E

Dear Santa:

By Lenka Hlavenka

Dear Santa:

Soon you'll be back in town once again and, just like every year, you will encounter countless young children eager to tell you about their wishes. I hope to catch you before that happens, because, although I'm not a child any more but a mother of one, I'd like to make a wish as well. But, first I want to tell you a story (a true story, in fact) because without that my wish might seem outlandish and ludicrous to you. And so, here it is:

Once upon a time, in a small (but growing) town there was a Kindergarten class that was getting ready to pay a visit to Santa Claus in his temporary residence - the town's newly renovated Train Station.

All the children were very much excited and couldn't wait to meet their favorite Christmas character. One little boy found it particularly hard to hold back and so, as soon as Santa appeared at the door, he jumped on his feet and started running. It seemed as if he landed on Santa's lap before the jolly old fellow even had a chance to sit down himself.

All of the adults present found this quite amusing and Santa struck a pleasant conversation with the boy while the other children watched and waited their turn. After a while Santa remembered that he was there on some very important business and sent the boy back to his seat.

Child after child took their place on Santa's knee and none was given as much attention as the one who couldn't wait. Of course, we all know that life isn't always fair - but try telling this to your kids at Christmas time!

And there is more to this story: After each child received a small present and Santa Claus was getting ready to leave, another little boy (my son) approached him. I couldn't hear what he was asking Santa - later he told me that he wanted to know if that was all they were getting? You see, because the boy who couldn't wait got two turns on Santa's knee my son (quite logically) assumed that he also got two presents and that just wasn't fair! What happened next was, to say the least, unexpected: Santa Claus turned his back to the child and completely ignored him.

Now, in all fairness, this could have happened unintentionally - maybe Santa didn't hear the boy (I would certainly hope that this was the case). But my son didn't think so. He cried bitterly all the way back to school. And the fact that the "boy who couldn't wait" was my son's tormentor didn't help much either.

After this, with "Christmas Spirit" in serious jeopardy, I remembered that old saying

"The Truth shall set you free". That day after school I sat down with my son. I said, "Do you remember last Christmas, when you were really worried that Santa won't be able to come because we don't have a chimney anymore?" (We have moved that year into a house without a fireplace.) "And do you remember," I continued, "what I told you last year?" Yes, you guessed it: I told him The Truth. Santa is make believe; he is only pretend. And, although he did not believe me when he was 4, he did believe me when he was 5.

What a relief! This was a good time to remind him that nobody is perfect - not even the guy who dresses as a Santa Claus. And, of course, we were also talking about other things that make Christmas special - about how much fun it is to "believe" in Santa - to pretend that is. Yes, this story does have a happy ending: The truth did not ruin my son's Christmas - it saved it for him!

And so, herein comes my wish: I wish that all the parents out there who are steadfastly holding on to the myth that Santa is real for fear of spoiling their children's Christmas could pause and think for a moment - about this seemingly harmless tall tale. If the kids really believe that some big-bellied guy with a huge sack can squeeze through the chimney, then doesn't it make sense for them to believe that there is a monster underneath the bed? And how about the children whose parents cannot afford a truckload of toys for Christmas? How do you explain to them why their cousins and friends received all those presents - were they more "good"? Or did Santa make a mistake?

I believe that children deserve to have their questions answered - not sidestepped. After all, we want them to be truthful with us, don't we? Do we think about how difficult the truth must be for the ones who have been kept in the state of blissful ignorance the longest? (Or, could it be possible that the kids already know and pretend to believe, because they don't want to spoil the fun for the adults?)

There is no doubt in my mind, however, that Santa would continue to be a big part of Christmas, even if children knew that he exists only in a fantasy. I really don't believe that the world would become a dark and dreary place devoid of love, poetry, and beauty the moment we stop pretending he is real. After all, Santa represents a wish and a dream of every human being on this planet regard-

less of their beliefs; a wish for a kinder, gentler world, full of selfless generosity.

And, as for all those "Santa's Helpers" out there: I wish that every single one of them could realize how much responsibility comes with their position of authority.

In fact, may I suggest a "Wanted" ad for that position?

SANTA WANTED

We are a leading manufacturer of Make Believe currently expanding our Christmas department.

You are an exceptional individual with warm and Approachable personality and A deep sense of fairness.

You are equipped with superb hearing Since you will be required to hear even the tiniest voice of the shyest child.

And you have to be fair: You possess excellent organizational and time management skills Since you will be forbidden to run out of time

(You will be required to ensure that children who waited the longest will get rewarded)

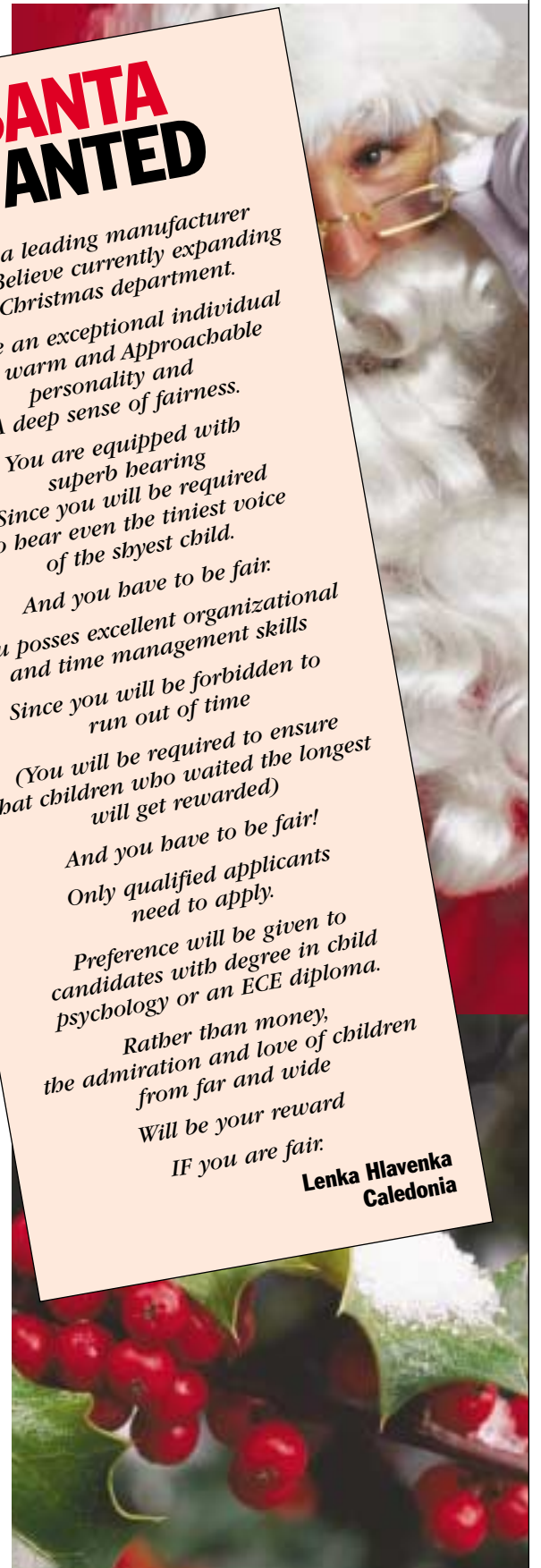
And you have to be fair! Only qualified applicants need to apply.

Preference will be given to candidates with degree in child psychology or an ECE diploma.

Rather than money, the admiration and love of children from far and wide Will be your reward

IF you are fair.

Lenka Hlavenka
Caledonia



F E A T U R E

Helping your teen succeed in HIGH SCHOOL

By Dorte Deans

Dorte Deans is a retired vice principal of a Hamilton high school.

Our children's teenage years are in many ways the most trying and challenging years of all. We have survived toddlerhood with only a few scratches, we have coped with the unending sports tournaments, and dance recitals. We have taught our kids to ride a bike, say "please" and "thank you", and tie their shoes. Now we are ready to hand over some responsibility to our children, and relax a bit. Suddenly we are confronted by Attitude, Moods, and Anger. It's the Terrible Twos all over again, but this time they are too big to pick up and send to their room.

What happened? Well, puberty for one thing. Biologically, teens are programmed to begin pulling away from their parents at this age, so they can get ready to stand on their own two feet and become adults. To the adults, this seems scary because our teens are standing on the edge of the nest like a baby bird ready to spread its wings and fly. But fly where we wonder? Who will help them?

Our teens are confused too, of course, although few would admit it to us. Hormonal changes, new responsibilities, peer pressure, harder classes at school, changing expectations, the need to be Cool and Beautiful at all times – how do they deal with it all?

As a vice-Principal in a High School for 10 years, I have often seen parents who were very dedicated to their children, but did not know how to help them at school. The school was new, and perhaps large enough to be intimidating, the friends were new and perhaps a bit intimidating too. On top of that, their teens were changing from cute, friendly little tykes who liked to cuddle with a story, to big people who put holes in their bodies in impossible places, wear clothes that are too tight, too baggy, too short, or dragging on the ground. Their hair is a mess, their music is dreadful. How do parents cope?

The ideas I am going to suggest are from study, research, and mostly, close observation. I am not a child psychologist, but have seen students turn their lives around after one or more adults have taken an interest, and taken the time to guide and help them. Here are some general guidelines for parents who are trying to help their teens navigate the crazy waters of high school success:

- Listen to their needs and stories. When they start to tell you something that is important to them, truly stop to listen and remember



The best advice of all is: **DON'T EVER GIVE UP."**

the details of what they say. This will help open lines of communication and let them know you are on their side.

- Negotiate and compromise but keep the strong foundation of your values and beliefs. When you say no, explain your decision but refuse to get sucked into an argument. If it is important to you, stick to your guns, but be kind and understanding. If there is any chance of a compromise, take it. For example, if your daughter wants to date but you think she is too young, find out if other girls that age are dating, and if you still feel strongly, suggest that he can meet her at the park where your family is watching your son play soccer. They can spend time together, and then she can come home with you. Suggest they go to a movie at the same theatre you are going to with a friend. They can see a different movie, and then come home with you.
- Communicate openly. This refers also to point one, but is very important. If you have a history of communicating with your teen

by getting into a yelling match, learn to stop that. Keep your temper, listen to their ideas and concerns, and speak quietly, kindly, but firmly. If you get angry, ask for a time-out, go for a walk and then return to carry on as a firm but kind parent. When you both yell, your teen is just doing what you have taught them – yell. You need to teach them that open, honest communication is the way to resolve issues, because it leaves each person feel better about the result and more likely to follow the decision.

- Validate your feeling and theirs. Say, "I know you feel you should be able to ride in a car with Jerry, who just got his license. But he is older than you and I really worry about you doing that. Let's give him a little longer to get experience driving, and let me think about it some more. Maybe if I met him that would make me feel better about it. Why don't you invite him over to watch TV with you one afternoon?"
- Expect the best from them. Scientific studies show that children learn what others expect of them, and tend to live up to that expectation. If you expect them to hang out with troubled teens, you will let them know by saying things like "Oh, yeah, Susan – I hear she's really trouble – trust you to pick her as your best friend. You never hang out with the good kids!" If you expect the best from them, you will let them know by saying things like "Oh, Susan. I hear she is a nice girl. I think she sometimes skips school, though. Maybe you can be a good influence on her and get her to stay in school. But please, be really careful that she does not get you to skip with her. You need to say no if she asks you."

The key, of course is balance. It would be easy to overdo these suggestions, and be a parent who either validates their teen so much they have no rules at all, or stands on their principles so much that their teens have no leeway to make their own decisions.

As difficult as the teenage years can be, they can also be hugely rewarding. The day your son comes home with a test that is much better than his others, the day your daughter makes the soccer team, the evening your family goes to see your son in his first band recital, the night of your daughter's first prom. That is when your heart will overflow with pride and you will see it was all worth it. Besides, they become adults eventually and then start to look at life like you do. Then you have an ally. The best advice of all is: **DON'T EVER GIVE UP."**

Tip for Babies – Being close; being separate

One of the tasks of mothers and infants is to form strong, loving attachments to one another and then each develops the capacity to feel like a separate person within that relationship over the next many months and even years. Many sleeping and eating difficulties with infants can be solved by understanding more about these complex psychological tasks.

A case example in "Through the Night" by Dilys Daws shows how 6-month old Luke's settled well when both mother and son became more separate from the other. Luke's mother was reluctantly returning to work in 2 months, and was in a panic, as Luke was feeding constantly, day and night. She was very worried about weaning him and sought a consultation with Daws. Because of her anxiety about the coming separation, she was unable to discriminate when Luke needed her and her breast and when he needed to be apart from her.

As she talked with Daws in the consultation, she revealed that she had many worries that her milk was not "good" for Luke, as he fed often and was frequently sick. This worry in her was interfering in her ability to see what Luke did and did not need.

In the consulting room, Luke played by bringing toys to his mouth, blowing bubbles and making little "talking" sounds. Daws pointed out the developing pleasure Luke was getting from using his mouth in different ways and that he was using his mouth to communicate from a distance from her, which was different from the way he communicated at the breast. This new form of communication could not occur as frequently or as well when his attentions were directed towards the breast where he was frequently clamped on.

At the next appointment, a week later, the mother reported Luke had slept through the night for the first time. When asked if she had done anything differently, as first she didn't think so. Then she recalled she had not breast fed him during the day. She had kept him out in the buggy most of the day, breast-feeding him only in the morning and at night. Daws explained that sensual pleasure increases excitement, and that the pleasurable stimulation of the mouth in nursing arouses feelings in a baby in a particular way. Daws speculated that reducing the number of nursings allowed Luke to settle down from his previous state of excited arousal, and perhaps this allowed him to sleep well through the night.

Another factor contributing to Luke's more settled behaviour could be related to his mother's worries being articulated. This mother was able to speak to an empathetic person about having to return to work and that her milk may not be nourishing for her infant. Talking this through may have given her the mental space she needed to think about her own distresses more clearly. When her worries are separated in her mind from her baby and his needs, this strengthens her position as a person separate from the baby. This separateness may have given the baby more space to be the baby and therefore he is no longer an extension of his mother's worries. The mother's increasing ability to contain her own anguish could also have helped things settle down.

This vignette shows how psychological separateness in both mother and baby very likely helped Luke settle down much better at night. He also showed positive movement forward in his development as he began to "talk" with his mother about things he found interesting in the outside world.

For a more thorough discussion of this case, see "Through the Night" by Dilys Daws P 156. Daws book may not be readily available, but information on how to get it is included in the review at www.barbaraburrows.com magazine Oct 2003.



Tip for Tots – Standing by to admire

Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine in Oct 2003 discussed "doing with" as a way to help toddlers and mothers move from the stage where mothers do most self care tasks for children to helping toddlers develop and interest in looking after some of these tasks themselves. An example of "Standing by to Admire" at the 4 year old stage is discussed in "Tip for Kids" June 2002. (See www.barbaraburrows.com magazine link)

The "doing with" stage, once embarked on, is often a very satisfying stage for both toddler and mother, but it can reach a plateau. Some children have great difficulty giving up having their mothers wipe their bums, for example. Mothers are willing to continue this practice to help children "get really clean" and children continue to experience the passive stimulation which is pleasurable. There can be reluctance on the part of mother and toddler to move to the next stage – "standing by to admire". For the mother, this means truly surrendering her direct involvement with the child's body, without withdrawing from him. It is an exceptionally difficult stage for mothers, who often feel unneeded. When the child can "do for himself" it is easy for mothers to turn to their own work, and turn attention away from the child.

Yet the child still needs his mother so much to stand by and admire his achievement – his hard work. Without the interest of the mother, the child's new skill cannot be internalized in a lasting, satisfying way.

Ellen and her mother had come easily to the "doing with" stage. But Ellen's mother had trouble not taking over Ellen's accomplishments and appearance. Ellen's mother did things "with" Ellen to improve her daughter's achievement and appearance. She adjusted her clothes, added hair barrettes, and also added things to Ellen's activities, by putting a piece in the puzzle or adding things to her pictures. Ellen was ready to move beyond the "doing with" stage but her mother didn't understand. Mother continued to do things with Ellen. Mother's pride in the final result was matched by Ellen's dissatisfaction and often led to Ellen actually destroying her work, because it had become her mother's rather than her own.

Ellen's skills had become joyless and unstable when they lacked her mother's loving investment. Ellen no longer needed her mother to "do with" but now needed her mother to "stand by and admire". She needed her mother's loving interest and investment while she did these things herself.

This example is outlined in *Toddlers and their Mothers* by Erna Furman P.122. Next issue, watch for "Doing for oneself".



THE GRANDMOTHERS

Introducing children to *cultural events*



"The Grandmothers" are Early Childhood Consultants, and an energetic, experienced group of professionals linked with The Hanna Perkins Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Collectively, they have decades of experience and have helped several thousand children lead happier lives. "The Grandmothers" are Maria Kaiser M. Ed.; Lyn Kirst B.S.; Georgianna Roberts M. Ed.; Nancy Sabath, M. Ed., Kathleen Smith, M. Ed., Virginia Steininger M. Ed. "The Grandmothers" are coordinated by Barbara Streeter M.S. (Bank Street) L.P.C.C. Child Psychoanalyst, Associate Director; Hanna Perkins Center; Extension Division

By Gann Roberts

One of the pleasures of being a grandparent is sharing our love for plays, concerts, museums with the children. When we took our granddaughters to a performance, eight-year-old Lily saw a delightful puppet show of *Peter and the Wolf*. Three year old Faith saw *Peter and the...* Fortunately, we had told her the story beforehand, so she made it very clear that she did not want to see any wolf - no matter that it was a four-inch-high puppet. So we sat on the aisle and as soon as we heard that wolf music, out we went to the bright lights of the lobby. Then, back again, once the wolf was safely dispatched by the hunters. Nobody called Faith a baby; no one urged her to stay and watch, saying "it's only a puppet, don't be afraid." There was simply a matter of fact acceptance of her wishes. How reassuring for a child to know that the adults will respect her feelings and accommodate them.

We want our children to enjoy cultural events and are often a little too eager to expose them before they are ready and without giving the whole experience some thought. Like the notion that whenever

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and without giving the whole
experience some thought.**

there is more than one child, there need to be two adults: one to exit with the child who is scared (or has to go to the bathroom) and one to stay with the enthusiastic audience member.

Choose your events carefully. If it's a show in a huge theater, based on a TV program, it's a pretty good guess there will be loud noises, flashing glaring lights, and confusing special effects, all of which can be very upsetting to children, even those in early elementary grades. Plan your escape route if you're in one of these situations. Better yet, avoid them altogether.

We all know how important it is to prepare children for new experiences and certainly you will tell the children what the show is about. But think, also, of all the things that are new and overwhelming: the huge space, the numbers of people, the pitch dark before the show starts. And what about those enticing souvenirs for sale? Be very clear, right from the beginning, whether you will buy anything - and then don't waiver. You can acknowledge that a tee shirt or a sword that lights up is wonderful and would be fun to have, but we're

just looking. Going to the event is treat enough—case closed.

The most wonderful theater experience our grandchildren have had was a performance, in a tiny theater by the *Signstage* troupe of deaf and hearing actors, of *Winnie the Pooh* narrated from backstage while the actors signed the dialogue. It was fun and gentle with no overwhelming effects. The children understood it all. And, to top it off, the actors stood in the lobby to shake hands with everyone after the show. Oh, the thrill of seeing Tigger up close!

Don't forget that you have many years to take the children to cultural events. Don't rush it. You may think this is the only chance for your five year old to see *The Nutcracker* - not so. It's too long, it's confusing; save it for the second grade child because age eight is when children begin to really differentiate between fantasy and reality. Likewise any orchestra concerts. Yes, hearing Mozart does contribute to brain development (and does wonders for Mom's nerves) but not for young children in the concert hall. Put on a tape when you're driving to the store, play the classical music station at home. And if your local orchestra has special half-hour programs for children, as the Cleveland Orchestra does, be guided by their age recommendations and let your children be exposed, gradually, to the concert-going experience.

Finally, take a minute to think back to what you remember from these kinds of experiences in your childhood. I'll bet the best memories are of the shared pleasure of the family time together. So be sure to stop for an ice cream treat or have a picnic in the park after the show or visit to the museum. Your main objective in all of these activities is to help your children become as enthusiastic about these cultural events as you are. Make sure to leave a pleasant memory in their minds so that they are eager to return again and again.

F E A T U R E

Solving children's *squabbles*

By Barbara Burrows

Todd and Ted's family got a new computer last Christmas. Todd and Tim are 12 and 10. The computer has been the source of many squabbles!

"It's MY turn on the computer. You've had it over an hour! I should have my turn at 7:30 PM!" announces Todd.

No response from Ted.

"Come on! Are you going to let me have my turn?"

"No – I got here first and I'm doing something important."

"You are not – you're only talking to your friends. I need to talk to Jake about homework – I told him I'd be on ICQ by 7:30. So I'm having my turn then."

No response from Ted. "If you don't let me, I'm telling Mom."

No response.

The older brother Todd runs upstairs yelling...

"Mom, Ted won't give me a turn on the computer."

Todd returns shortly to the computer room saying,

"Mom says I get my turn at 7:30!"

Ted now speaks for the first time, "Oh sure, you never even went upstairs,"

"I did too, and Mom says if she has to come down, neither of us gets the computer." (feelings are escalating in both boys now).

"I'm counting down – it is 1 minute til 7:30. 59, 58, 57 ..."

"Get the hell out of here!"

"Mom, Ted swore."

"If you don't get the hell out of here, you're going to be sorry."

"15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10"

"I mean it – get lost!"

"3, 2, 1 – my turn" Todd grabs Ted's arm and starts pulling him away from the computer and they start hitting each other and yelling.

By the time their mother rushes in, things are escalating out of control. She stops the fight, but both boys are furious and so is she. What is the answer to this and all other sharing issues brothers and sisters must face day in and day out? Whose turn is it? Who should decide? What is fair?

Sometimes, parents will take charge and set up schedules, but that doesn't take into consideration the specific individual needs –



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in this case, an appointment Todd had to talk (via computer) with a school friend about homework. In the long run, we want to instill in our children a flexible willingness to consider the needs of others as well as their own. One thing that can help is for parents to support children in working issues through by not making the final decision about what is fair. For example, the mother might have come to the computer and said, "We have a problem – you both want to use the computer at the same time. What should we do?" Of course, each boy says he should have it. The mother points out this isn't possible, unless they both want to chat to the same people. They don't want to.

"So", she says, "we still have a problem. If I give it to Ted, Todd will be angry and feel I favoured Ted. If I give it to Todd, Ted is upset. How can I know what will feel most fair to each of you? You really need to decide and you need to decide in a way that *both* of you feel OK about it."

Almost always, when a parent shows empathy for the problem and doesn't choose one child over the other, children begin to calm down. Often, deep down, the fight has to do with more than just wanting the computer. It expresses an unconscious (or sometimes conscious) wish to establish oneself as superior or best loved in the family. The one who gets the most privileges appears to be most loved. The boys are fighting for dominance and parental love, as well as the computer. When parents choose one child's posi-

tion over the other, even if their choice is clearly the most logical, one child can feel slighted – and usually does. When their mother refuses to give one boy a privilege over the other, she diffuses the underlying struggle of each trying to get the extra support of having the parent "on his side".

The boys will likely have trouble working it out and each will demand he take the next turn. If their mother can patiently turn the problem back to them, and remind them that one or the other is still going to be upset if she decides, the boys are left with the task of focusing on their problem and the working through process will continue.

This mother doesn't really know what she is diffusing. It is difficult to know what the undercurrents are in sibling relationships. Sometimes siblings get along very well – other times there are tensions that lead to squabbles. The tensions remain unconscious – children cannot explain them. The whole family can feel it when fights are close to erupting, though.

It is amazing how helpful the parent's presence can be, and how the children's tensions can ease if s/he refuses to take sides and insists the children keep thinking until they find a solution that leaves them feeling OK.

To my surprise, parents have told me of successfully working through conflicts with children as young as 18 months. In one case, an 18-month-old and 2-year-old playmate were fighting over a toy. The mother just kept repeating that she didn't want to make either of them unhappy by giving the toy to the other, and together, they needed to figure it out.

The mother said she was feeling very uncertain, she wondered whether the little ones even understood. Just when she thought her approach was useless, the 2-year-old said, "Your turn" and gave the toy up. The children ran off to the playroom quite happy to continue their play.

Helping children problem solve in this way can start at a very young age, and continue into adulthood. The more parents use this method of offering support by standing by to support – but turning the decision making over to the children, the better children get at working things through in a way that builds strong relationships. Although time consuming for parents in the short run, in the long run, the squabbles diminish and children learn to work most issues through without fighting.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CLASS?

Accounts here are written by parents who have attended Barbara Burrows Parenting programs. The stories are submitted anonymously to protect the confidentiality of the children. Thank you to the parents who have taken the time to share their experiences.

The Disastrous Christmas Shopping Trip

Single Father of Three
Brampton ON

I came to Barbara Burrows out of a desperate need to find a better way to become more successful at parenting. Being a single father with the fulltime responsibility of raising three children, a daughter of 14, two son's ages 9 and 4 1/2 years, and a very demanding fulltime sales career to manage, parenting becomes a "real" challenge. However my biggest challenge was raising my youngest child who is bright, independent and very strong willed.

Simple things...like a trip to the mall at Christmastime with my 4 1/2 year old, was an absolute disaster practically every time. My original plans would be totally derailed, with his own plans to visit all the toy stores in the mall.

When he found that he could not have his own way, he would have an uncontrollable temper tantrum. Eventually we would all end up leaving the mall totally embarrassed and frustrated with nothing accomplished.

At times I felt manipulated, guilty, totally frustrated and overwhelmed as a parent. I tried different approaches to discipline and found nothing was really working.

After talking with the Family Paediatrician and hearing Barbara Burrows on a local talk show, I decided to call her. Barbara gave me a very insightful example of how I could take a different approach to the mall trip problem, by letting my son know beforehand the purpose of the trip, and that there was going to be something in it for him as well...a treat! Something small, but something he could look forward to.

It worked!, This made all the difference in the world, and it ended up being a more pleasurable experience for everyone.

Further Discussion by Barbara Burrows

Have you ever offered your child "a treat" and not been lucky enough to experience such dramatic results? In this case, it may not have been "the treat" as it seemed to this father, but rather the insight he gained as he considered his son's position and his son's frustration from this draining ongoing experience of "going shopping with Dad".

Once this dad found a way to recognize what his child was experiencing, it became easier for him to address his child's needs, as well as his own. The child's behaviour likely improved because his father had a deeper understanding of his child and was trying to take his needs into consideration. This is likely what encouraged more responsible behaviour on

his child's part. Another factor for the child's demanding behaviour not discussed was that he could be missing his mother. When his father took special time to think about what the boy may like, the child may have felt more nurtured, and thus managed better with frustrations.

The child's behaviour likely improved because his father had a deeper understanding of his child and was trying to take his needs into consideration.

Role Reversal

Mother 13 year old son and
17 year old daughter
Burlington ON

As the mother of a teenage daughter I often felt like pulling my hair out, wondering what had happened to my sweet little girl. All of a sudden, it seemed, I was challenged at every turn. The slightest thing, like curfews homework, sleepovers without parents, parties, appropriate clothing, messy room, driving, you name it - it instigated a battle. More than once I wondered if my parenting skills were adequate. Would I ever have my sweet little girl back?

After a summer of her working away from home most of the week as a camp counselor she came home to prepare for her first year of university. Although she did have many opportunities to clean out her room, clean out her desk, sort through clothes and organize herself for university, nothing had been done. Naturally as her mother, I wondered if she was mature enough to leave.

Everyday we argued about her procrastinating, disorganization and her priorities. What was more important after all, packing or partying? With only two days to go I was in her room, uptight, frustrated and losing patience. My voice was rising with each sentence. She stood there, gently held me by the shoulders and said "Mom, I know you're stressed about me leaving and really worried about me. I'm worried too! I'm going to miss you and the family as much as you will miss me, maybe more. I don't want to fight. I'm afraid to leave. I wonder if I will succeed. I really want to try though. I still need your love and support to help me through. I think I will be fine, I hope you think so too. At that point I broke down and cried. My tears were partly of sadness, but mostly they were tears of joy. My little girl was mature enough to recognize my anxiety about her moving not only away, but moving forward with her life. She was trying to console and comfort me. She reassured me that I would always have a job as her mother.

In that moment I knew she was ready to go. I may have lost my sweet little girl but I found a wonderful, thoughtful, maturing daughter. The struggles were well worth the reward.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CLASS?

The Oedipal Struggle

By Mother of 2 sons
Hamilton ON

A concept that sometimes comes up in our class with Barbara is "Oedipal complex". For the past year or so, my older son has been in the thralls of a classic "Oedipal complex". I was familiar with this concept from my university days, but had never heard any friends talk about it, and frankly, until we experienced it in our family, I wasn't certain it was something that really happened. There is no mistaking it now, and I would like to share one way I think we were able to help our son with this "no win" oedipal situation.

Here is how he expressed his oedipal wishes. We would be in the kitchen, cooking and chatting and out of the blue James would ask if we could get married some day. Initially I thought he was kidding with me, but as time went on and he continued to ask I realized there was more to it. There were other comments as well that confirmed he was serious. When he would get angry with his father, he would refer to him as my "ex-husband". I realized that James was thinking that if he was to marry me then his dad couldn't be my husband. James wasn't just playing. He was earnest in his fantasizing about the future.

This was a "no win" situation. I knew my husband felt hurt to be rejected so openly by our son. Clearly it wouldn't help to encourage my son's fantasy that I could be his wife. Concerned for both my son and husband's hurt feelings I approached Joe with the idea that we somehow gently help James to see that this wish can't be fulfilled.

My husband was the creative one! The next time the subject came up, Joe responded by painting a little scene for James. He said "Can you imagine if your favourite teacher came to your wedding and looked around for your mom to sit with and then saw her up at the altar?

It seemed this humorous scenario, that James clearly enjoyed, helped him see how it couldn't be.

What would she think?" James started to laugh and we all had a giggle over it.

It seemed this humorous scenario, that James clearly enjoyed, helped him see how it couldn't be. And because Joe was able to present it in a light-hearted spirit, it eased the

disappointment. I'm not sure if this is the end of this phase, but I haven't had a marriage proposal in weeks.



Imagine my relief when the full fury of "fall apart" failed to materialize

Talking Saves the Day

By Mother of 9 year old son
and 7 year old daughter
Hamilton ON

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly a tense situation can be diffused when we try to acknowledge how the other person might be feeling under the circumstances. I have found this empathetic approach particularly helpful when ambivalence is causing the child to feel over-whelmed with confusion.

An example of what I mean occurred during a recent camping trip. We arose early on a lovely fall morning at our lake-side campsite, quickly made breakfast and headed out onto a hiking trail. At the half way point on the loop, (i.e. the furthest point from our campsite) we realized that we had taken longer than expected and had no snack! The wonders of nature lost their attraction for our daughter as she became tired and hungry. One of her "hungry fall apart" seemed about to happen. I wasn't sure how to get her back to the campsite, without her upsetting, angry bad mood ruining her own and everyone else's pleasant time. I decided to address the ambivalence I thought that she was feeling. She knew that she was too big to be carried back, at 7 years. As a smaller girl, she would have managed well if her dad were to carry

her. Being hungry and tired, she didn't want to walk back either. "You want to be back at the campsite where our food is, but you don't know how you'll find that little pocket of energy you need to get back there." Imagine my relief when the full fury of "fall apart" failed to materialize, once we talked about how difficult it is when you are tired and hungry. After a

half hour more of quick marching, a cheerful girl arrived back to the campsite and very happily welcomed the prospect of lunch!

F E A T U R E

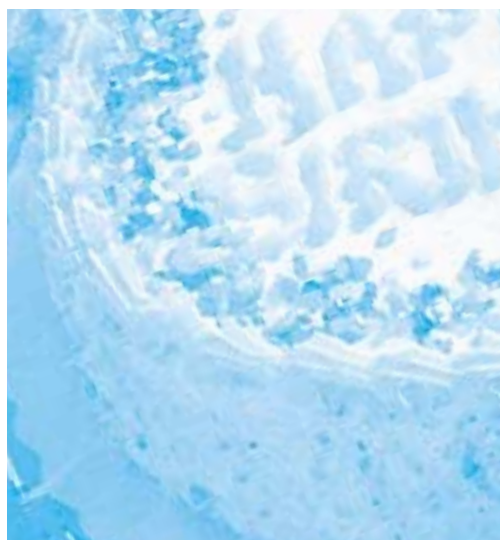
Mad, Sad,

By Judith Deustch

Judith Deutsch received her M.S.W. from the University of California at Berkeley and received child and adult clinical training at Mount Zion Hospital Psychiatric Clinic California. She is currently a psychotherapist in private practice in Toronto. She can be reached at (416) 929-8180

Fine children's literature can show us special things about children - and about ourselves too. In *A Birthday for Frances*, author Russell Hoban and illustrator Lillian Hoban, are able to convey the complexity of the inner life of a child, in a way that rings true. They draw us into the world of childhood, allowing us to remember and even to delight in feelings that can so often bring forth shame.

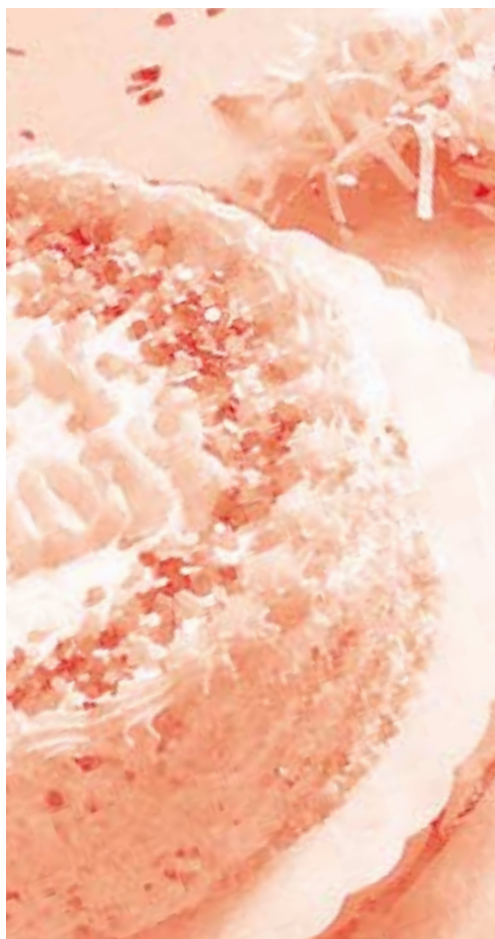
The story is about Frances, a badger. It is her younger sister Gloria's birthday and Frances struggles with her own envious feelings. At first she refuses to participate in the party preparations, draws nasty place cards, and talks resentfully about the time when Gloria took away some of her special toys. However, she comes to feel that she would like to give her sister a gift and decides to buy Gloria gum balls and a chocolate "chompo" bar. She is very tempted to eat the candy herself, and in fact does eat some of it, but at the end of the story she is able to finally give most of the present to her sister.



Conflicting wishes

Frances gives us a glimpse of how children, just as adults, can feel torn inside by their emotional dilemmas. One part of her wants to give to herself, so that when she buys candy for Gloria, Frances herself eats some of it. But there is another part of Frances - who truly feels disappointed in herself when at first she notices that she does not have a gift for Gloria. She has her own wishes to give and her own loving feelings for her sister too. Even young children have two-way feelings and feel distress about opposing kinds of wishes...they can feel partly rivalrous and partly loving.

What makes a child's rivalrous feelings so strong at times? These feelings are complex, and are partly related to a child's perception of time and their understanding of the difference between fantasy and reality.



Children's Sense of Time

We as adults have both a logical and illogical sense of time. On the one hand, we have a logical sense of minutes, hours, years, but emotional experiences can make "time stand still" or seem "endless" and so on. It takes experience to have a logical sense of time - for example, the younger the child, the more "not now" seems to mean "forever." As children become older and more self-observant, we can often hear them talk about how special good days like birthdays seem to pass by so quickly, or that minutes in boring classes are so long. For young children especially, good and bad feelings easily take away their sense of real time.

For Frances, who is trying to manage her difficult feelings, it is as if birthdays are "all-or-nothing" - if it is her sister's birthday, her perception is it will never again be hers. At the beginning of the story, "Frances was in the broom closet, singing:

*"Happy Thursday to you,
Happy Thursday to you,
Happy Thursday, dear Alice,
Happy Thursday to you."*

'Who is Alice?' asked Mother.

'Alice is somebody that nobody can see,' said Frances. 'And that is why she does not have a birthday...'

Frances' mother is able to help Frances understand her mistaken sense of time by saying that "even if nobody can see her, Alice has one birthday every year, and so do you."

Since Frances is not a real child, we can not really explore with her why she felt that "not now" means "never." There are so many possible reasons for a child to feel that good things will just never happen. Helping children with a more realistic sense of time, and wondering with them why they feel so "now or never" when they have these kinds of beliefs and worries, can be reassuring and helpful and even open the door to more communication - as it does in the Frances story.

Feeling Bad

Fantasy versus reality

It is Francis' parents who gently help her keep track of reality — who help her sort out the difference between her imagined fears and a more realistic sense of the way things really are. When her mother hears Frances talking about how her invisible friend does not have a birthday, her mother reassures her that everyone has one birthday a year — perhaps not as many as Frances would wish for — but at least one. In effect, her mother clarifies that this is an imagined fear — not a reality. As she feels less afraid of being left out forever, Frances no longer needs to see herself as being so big and powerful and comes in touch with some of her kinder feelings.



Parental support

In the next part of the story, we see Frances struggling with her opposite wishes of wanting to be kind to Gloria, and her wish to keep the present for herself, and we see her father gently supporting a more realistic picture and helping her bear the frustration of not eating the delicious Chompo Bar. Frances' wish to keep the candy for herself is a conflicted wish — in fact, she puts two of the bubble gum ball gifts in her own mouth “without noticing it” — she does not want to be fully conscious of taking the candy because a strong part of her wants to really give the gift to Gloria and not keep it for herself.

As she walks home from the candy store with her father, she wishfully says that she thinks eating so much candy would make Gloria feel sick, and her father reminds Frances of the reality— “I do not think it would be good for Gloria to eat Chompo Bars everyday. But tomorrow is her birthday, and I think it will be all right for her to eat one.” Frances then wishfully says that she thinks little Gloria could really only eat half a Chompo Bar, and again her father reminds her of the reality, and supports her kind wish by saying “Gloria loves sweets and I am sure that she can eat the whole Chompo Bar. That is why it is such a good present for her, and you were very nice to think of it.”

At the end of the story, Frances' mother talks about birthday wishes that can actually come true, like the sisters' wishes to be kinder to each other. She talks of the “special kind of good wish that can make itself come true.” Learning to give up imaginary wishes for a more realistic view of what is actually possible and desirable is one of the big tasks of growing up.



The value of kindness

From early on, children can have a wish to be good and kind, both to themselves and to others. In the story of Frances, we can come to appreciate some of the touching inner struggles that come with learning to be kind. Frances lets us know how very hard it is for her to give up her wish to eat the Chompo Bar: while the other children sang “Happy Birthday to you,” Frances, “very softly, so that nobody could hear her, sang:

*“Happy Chompo to me
Is how it ought to be—
Happy Chompo to Frances,
Happy Chompo to me.”*

When Gloria shows Frances special kindness by apologizing for an earlier disagreement and wishing that Frances would no longer be mad at her, Frances is emotionally ready to give the candy to Gloria. She sings the real “happy birthday” song, and after each line she rests and lovingly squeezes the Chompo bar... then finally she squeezed the Chompo Bar one last time and gave it to Gloria. “You can eat it all, because you are the birthday girl,” said Frances.

With much support from her parents, and with the help of her lively and rich imagination, Frances was able to feel good about herself for being kind in giving the present to Gloria.



Barbara Burrows Parenting Magazine welcomes

...your questions, comments
or parenting stories
that you wish to share with others.

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