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The Magical Parenting Power of Storytelling!

When it comes to storytelling, I'm a professional

I made a living [writing movies](#). I've [sold stories](#) to magazines. [I perform monologues](#) based (loosely) on my life experiences for paying audiences.

[Pass Around Storytelling](#)

Meet the game that stimulates creativity, entertains kids alone or in groups, and can help children express themselves!



That's how the story starts. Your kids decide how it finishes!

Now meet one of [the creators of these storystarters](#). She's a Dr. of Psychology with some words of wisdom on the importance of stories.

And now meet her partner, an educator

But it wasn't until a child came into my life that I realized the full power and importance for children of **hearing** stories.

Our children NEED stories... and not only from books!

Lots of parents think of storytelling as an unintended byproduct of something they do anyway.

In other words, these parents read to their young children in order to impart the message that books are an essential part of a happy and productive life.

By reading to their children - unless they're reading from the cereal box - they just happen to be telling stories.

But storytelling can - and should be - much more than

Books!



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who combines [story and dance](#).

that

It's not just the **act** of reading that's important, it's also the content.

Same thing for storytelling, whether it's from a book or not. Your child **needs** stories. Here are just a few of the many reasons why:

1. Stories help children understand their place in the world
2. A story can help your child cope with a difficult situation or experience
3. Learning to tell stories helps your child become socially proficient
4. Storytelling can be the perfect way to impart a life lesson
5. It has been shown that telling stories about your own childhood is one of the most powerful ways to strengthen the child-parent bond

Think of your child as **NEEDING** a minimum daily dose of storytelling!

Consider how drawn children are to the TV. Clearly, most of what they get from television is storytelling! What is a cartoon if not 21 minutes of story interspersed with 9 minutes of commercials?

And some of those commercials are delivered in the form of stories!

So with our children craving their minimum daily dose of storytelling, you know they're gonna get it somewhere!

How much of it do you want to come from sources you can't control, and how much of it do you want to come from you?

Do you want your child getting Barbie© stories and Hot Wheels© stories, or do you want your child to learn classic lesson-imparting stories from you?

Begin thinking of yourself as a storyteller

For instance, when you're driving your child somewhere, I want you to think of telling a story as one of your entertainment or communication options.

Of course, if you're like most parents, that's a daunting expectation. You have enough trouble remembering a joke, no less a whole collection of stories!

But this isn't as hard as you think. The fact is, you have a lot of old stories



in your head, you just need some [reminding](#).

Stories you know...because you lived them!

Here's another option.

One of the most respected thinkers and writers today on the subject of parenting is doctor and brain researcher [Daniel Siegel](#).

One of Dr. Siegel's big focuses is the subject of attachment disorders.

Of course, in studying attachment disorders, Siegel learns a lot about healthy parent-child attachment as well. Are you ready for his most astonishing discovery? Here it is...

The **most** powerful predictor of a strong bond between child and parent is the parent's ability to speak coherently to the child about the parent's own childhood.

Are you as amazed by that as I am?

When I first read that, it threw me. Why on earth would talking to my child about **my** childhood be the **most powerful** thing I could do to foster healthy attachment between us?

Then I thought back to my own youth. I remembered how hard it was to imagine my parents as children themselves. I remembered how sure I was that they wouldn't be able to understand the things I was going through...

And then it made sense to me! I didn't think they could help me because I couldn't imagine them as children. And I couldn't imagine them as children because **they hadn't helped me to do so**.

They didn't know any better. But I do. And now **you** will too...

Here's how to become this type of parental storyteller

It requires no work or research on your part and serves two important purposes:

1. Strengthens the bond between you and your child
2. Helps your child get the minimum dose of daily stories!

Here's how I do it: when my child is experiencing a sadness or frustration, I think back to similar feelings or similar experiences in my own childhood.

Then I tell the story of that moment in my life!

Of course, tell the story in an age-appropriate fashion. And make sure it has a happy ending. (Not "and that's how **my** parents messed **me** up.")

It's a lesson in empathy - for both of you - and so much more.

Okay, moving on...

Address a problem behavior with storytelling

Some of our proudest moments as parents come when we truly help our children.

But helping our children in their struggles isn't always easy.

Awhile ago, my child was struggling with a problem behavior. It was causing problems with peers. I worried about the lasting effects on my child's happiness if this behavior were to continue.

I tried talking to her about it. I tried to help her catch herself doing it. I tried to make her see the effect it was having on others. Nothing worked.

After all, they're called **problem behaviors** for a reason.

Then one day...

I was driving my daughter home from a frustrating play date I had witnessed. I was about to say the usual things--but it hadn't worked before and wasn't likely to work this time.

Suddenly, I got the bright idea of telling her a story.

She LOVES stories. I'm a storyteller. I made up a story on the spot about a little girl with a funny name who was experiencing a problem behavior like my daughter's.

I didn't tell my daughter she was supposed to take a lesson from the story. I didn't reference my daughter's own behavior. I just started spinning a tale.

My daughter was enthralled. She asked me to tell the story two more times that very day.

([The story of Balooga](#) appears elsewhere on this site.)

My daughter's behavior started improving IMMEDIATELY

You see, I had tapped into the power of storytelling for children. My daughter was able to engage in the tale of a child who was experiencing the same difficulties my daughter was experiencing.

But because the story child was a fictional child and not my daughter herself, my daughter's defenses didn't go up. She was able to hear the story and learn from it.

You see, in the story, Balooga experiences worse consequences than my daughter had yet experienced. And in the story, Balooga fixes the behavior on her own.

Balooga's strength helped my daughter find her own strength. **That's** the power of storytelling for children.

How to try storytelling to help YOUR child with a problem behavior

There's a great page on this site:

[Storytelling - How To Write A Children's Behavior Book](#)

On it I walk parents through the process of writing a pictureless picture book - for their child to illustrate - using a problem behavior as subject matter.

You too can use the How To Write web page as a guide for **oral storytelling** on the subject of one of your child's problem behaviors.

I'll warn you: it's a long page, but it takes you step-by-step through the process. Give it a look when you have some time.

Also, the page has great information about [how a compelling story is structured](#), so it's a worthwhile read whether or not you plan to create an oral story on the subject of a problem behavior.

Oh, and one other thing: if you don't have time to write a story for your child...

I've done it for you

In the [Children's Behavior Book](#) section of this site, you'll find my entire library of stories addressing problem behaviors. These books address the subject matter playfully, so your child won't even know it's a learning experience.

And, as I mentioned above, the stories are pictureless so your child can illustrate them. Two benefits here...

- choosing how to illustrate activates your child's imagination
 - the act of illustrating requires rethinking the story's content.
- Repetition is the best way to learn!

Adding storytelling to your parenting menu

To review, we've discussed three ways in which you can add storytelling to your family life:

1. Tell your children fanciful fiction, like fairy tales and folktales
2. Share stories from your own childhood, particularly at times when your child could benefit from your own life lessons
3. Address a problem behavior with a made-up story on the subject

#2 is easy. You could start right now.

#1 is pretty easy. You just need to refresh yourself on some stories.

#3 requires some real effort on your part. But I have faith it's within any parent's power.

Storytelling, for children, is a powerful thing

When you tell a story, without a book in front of you, you give your child one more reason to be in awe of you. You appear to have pulled this magical, useful, compelling thing from thin air to share exclusively with your child.

Your relationship can't help but be the better for it.

Finally...

We talked earlier about a "minimum daily dose of storytelling."

There are times when you **can't** read your child a book, or when your child can't read to him/herself. There are also times when you may not feel up to storytelling, or even available for it.

Audio books for children have become a big thing. I approve of them...and I don't.









1. I **don't** approve of audio books as a substitute for your child reading or for you reading to your child
2. I **do** approve of audio books **in addition** to an appropriate amount of reading, in order to help meet the minimum daily dose of storytelling.

Audio books are storytelling. I do not believe listening to audio books is reading, or necessarily that it even promotes reading. **Do not let audio books crowd out reading for your child.**

If you are interested in using audio books to **supplement** your child's storytelling needs, then check out my [audio books](#) page.

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