

COMMENT

Finding a way to keep kids kids

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The View From Here

In a world that makes our children grow up all too fast, how do we, as parents, protect their innocence?

This question has been on my mind lately as I watch others like friends and classmates begin to have a greater influence on my kids.

A few days ago I overheard my son, who's six, telling my four-year-old daughter that he learned the 'F' word from a friend at school. I resisted the urge to stop the conversation because I thought surely my sweet boy who's only in grade one couldn't really be hearing that language from his peers already. He'll say "fudge" or "fluffernutter" or something equally cute.

But then he came out with the word I was dreading, and my heart sank. As I listened to my daughter begin repeating it over and over, I stayed as calm as I could, took my son aside and told him that's not the kind of language we like to use.

I know it's one little word, and there are far worse things that he could be saying or seeing. I couldn't help but feel sad though as I realized this is just the beginning. That word is but one drop in a huge bucket that will be filled with a lifetime of things I wish I could shield my children from.

Maybe this is my naiveté, but I certainly didn't

know any profanity at the tender age of six. One may say I led a sheltered life, but I'm happy my parents worked so hard to make sure my childhood was an innocent one.

Sure, I didn't like being the only kid in my Grade 5 class who wasn't allowed to watch Beverly Hills 90210, but I understand now why my parents censored what was coming into our household through the television.

So what's a well-meaning parent to do in today's society, where one wrong click of the mouse can expose our children to far too much? I don't want to be "that mom" who's so overprotective that I embarrass my kids. But I also don't want to give up and just accept "that's the way it is" today, where innocence is gone in the blink of an eye.

I'm praying that I can find a middle ground, where I can shield them from things that are just too much for their little minds, but also be there to talk when they inevitably are exposed to mature or inappropriate things.

Our children have a lifetime ahead of them to learn about and deal with the tough stuff. Let's preserve childhood and make it what it should be—innocent.

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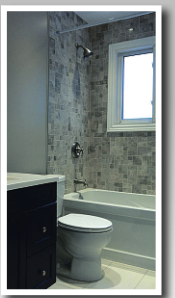
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