

Simply having fun



WE are all facing very different challenges as parents and teachers at the moment. We cannot necessarily celebrate special events in the same way as we have become so used to doing. Birthday parties, visits to grandparents and holidays are all restricted. Festive celebrations both in school and at home are all taking on different forms this year.

But we have to continue to look for silver linings – how many of us are really missing the birthday party for 20 plus children in a village hall or missing finding ourselves stuck in a departure hall at an airport with young children wondering who in the family was actually going to be able to relax for the duration of the holiday you had saved for months to pay for? There are some things I think that in all honesty we are not missing at all and we are secretly hoping might not return any time soon.

What we must do with young children in particular is avoid focusing on what we can't do and what we are missing – very few of our youngest children will have any real memories before the 'new normal' took hold. Instead it is a time to be creative and actually exercise choice over what is important and how we want to celebrate milestone moments and festivities in meaningful ways. Stripping things back to much more simple events is actually often far more child friendly and fun for all concerned. The important thing is to cherish those opportunities and find every chance to catch the magic as it happens.

So, ten ideas for child friendly ways to have fun or mark a celebration in the time of COVID:

Get outdoors:

Camp in the back garden

Star gaze together on a clear evening

Have a DIY festival in the back garden, a Glastongarden with a playlist of choice

Buy and install a bird box with a camera and watch and make your own nature programmes

Get into the garden and make a bug hotel



If stuck inside:

Have a family's got talent competition in your living room

Get crafty and messy – make pom poms or other decorations for celebrations at home

Create a time capsule

Have a family bake off

Turn family photos or your child's art work into jigsaws to re-create special moments



Stepping away from the Zoom calls, social media and technology and creating and treasuring childhood moments benefits everyone in your family. Everyone will feel better for some good old-fashioned fun. Why not take the chance to return to some of the timeless games that have been entertaining children for decades- pass the parcel, making paper chains, pin the tail on the donkey, treasure hunts, Kim's game, musical statues and if it really has been one of those days sleeping lions never fails!



Fun is in fact a serious business and play is an essential ingredient in every child's development and emotional well-being. Allow time for play and engage in it with your children rather than just observe or provide for them and you will also reap the benefits that can come from spending time at simply having fun.

Naomi Bartholomew

Headmistress

St Catherine's Prep School, Bramley, Surrey
www.stcatherines.info