

Happily Ever After

Oscar Wills explores the magical world of fairy tales and how they are of benefit for developing children.

Telling fairy tales to children could be linked to self development and growth, according to an article published in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health.

The article, written by Dr Anthony Zehetner from the University of Sydney, suggested that fairy tales allow children to face their fears and “make sense of life’s bewilderment in remote and symbolic terms.”

Dr Zehetner, who is also a paediatrician at Westmead Children’s Hospital, says fairytales promote a number of key developmental areas. “Children realise that being small physically and in society doesn’t necessarily mean you are powerless. Kids need to realise that what might be a weakness on one hand could turn out to be a strength. Fairy tales help do that.”

Dr Irina Verenikina, an expert in educational and developmental psychology from the University of Wollongong, also sees the importance of fairy tales. “Children learn some basic things from those stories and they reflect basic morals in society in a very simple way.”

Some traditional stories, however, may be perceived as being “too scary” to be told in full to young children.

Early Childhood educator Lyn Ward says fairy tales play an important part in her teaching, but she has had experience with modifying stories.

“We have had to modify stories, such as Little Red Riding Hood and the great big teeth that the wolf has. We modify that part so the father comes in and rescues her earlier. We did it in recognising that it’s a bit of a violent sort of thing, and we don’t promote violence at preschool.”

“It’s important to expose these stories to kids, [however], because they do have the morals to the story and they are imaginative. It’s definitely important to let the kids not only hear the story but also hear those morals.”

Mother and grandmother Kate Donahue is adaptive in her approach to fairy tales. “I always leave the scary bits in, but then we talk about how important it is to have fears and how to tackle them.”

“If they react very strongly to the scary bits, the next time around I might ameliorate the scary bits so that they’re not quite as frightened,” she said.

Dr Zehetner said: “Sometimes it can be good to modify fairy tales, as they tend to evolve. It’s the meaning of the story, not the actual details of the story that are important.”

“Even if we were to modify fairy tales, there still needs to be an aspect of adversity in there so kids can recognise that life is sometimes hard. The idea of fairy tales is that they should be tailored to the audience so that the meaning of the story can be best realised.”

HORNETS HIT HARD BY COACHING SHORTAGE

Juanita Truong investigated the case of the missing coaches at Chester Hill Hornets JRLFC earlier this year and the effects it had on the club’s players.

A shortage of coaches this year has seen children turned away from Chester Hill Hornets Junior Rugby League Football Club.

An increase in registrations from last year had seen the club relying on parents volunteering for coach positions.

Chester Hill Hornets Secretary, Adam Williams said: “The problem is that no one wants to put their hand up.”

The lack of coaches has meant that children have been forced to join a team from another district or compete in a different sport.

“If we can not get enough kids or officials, then we ring around other clubs to see if they got space to help out the kids because it is upsetting when they don’t make the side,” said Rhonda Moybayed, Treasurer and mother of two sons who play for the Hornets.

Former player of the Chester Hill Hornets, Mick Aycheh, 18, said: “I played since I was five . . . until I was fifteen. Then my dad moved me to [play for] Bankstown.”

With the competition starting this week, the Hornets had to reject players from the under 9’s, under 10’s and under 15’s age divisions.

According to the coach coordinator Richard Hamawi, all new coaches are required to undergo a coach course at Canterbury and several clinics for three weeks before he decides whether or not they pass the basic requirements.

Parents who devote approximately 15 to 20 hours per week to ensure the club runs efficiently run the not-for-profit organisation. Volunteer roles at the club include coaches, trainers and canteen and barbeque staff.

The majority of the parents have full-time jobs outside volunteering for the Chester Hill Hornets.

As a Secretary and father of two sons playing at the club, Mr Williams said: “I am involved with the club seven days a week. I usually work full-time, 35 hours a week.”

Mr Hamawi said: “Good coaches attract good kids. It is a community club. We are here for the kids and the families are here for their kids as well.”

Chester Hill Hornets is the oldest junior league club established in 1948 with 80 premierships to date. Last year, the Hornets were named Canterbury Bankstown District Rugby Club of the Year.

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