



Goosehill Primary School

Weekly Notes- October 7, 2016



Dear Parents,

As Halloween approaches, I thought I'd share some ideas from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and CommonSenseMedia.org. about the potential effects of frightening images on children.



What is too scary for young children? Each child is different, so it's difficult to give hard and fast rules about what may be frightening for all children at different ages. However, it is important to know that there are developmental stages to consider. Children under the age of seven are the most vulnerable to scary images because they believe what they see. They are just developing the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality. Children at this age respond well to magical remedies and nightly rituals, such as cleaning the monsters out of the closet. Older children may be able to handle being scared –in fact, many love it! The most important thing parents can do is to know their own child and watch for reactions to potentially scary images and situations.

What else can parents do? One important job for parents is to monitor their children's exposure to media that includes frightening images. Newspaper, television, and video games that involve scary characters or violent events can cause distress in children. If children are exposed to such images, it is important for parents to talk about the experience. Try to avoid telling your child, "*There is nothing to be afraid of.*" Rather, explain that all people experience fear and have ways to cope. Some use self-talk; others replace a scary image with something pleasant. Share your strategies for coping with fear with your child. You could also invite your child to draw or use toys to act out a story in which a character is afraid of something and then figures out how to deal with it. Pretend play is children's way of making sense of their world. Through play, children can master fears and difficult experiences by reinventing them in a way that gives them a sense of control.

What about Halloween? While Halloween for some involves dressing up as frightening characters, parents should always try to avoid violent, gory costumes. Such costumes have the power to cause anxiety or fears about possible encounters for children. At school, we try to read lighthearted stories and poems with playful creatures and not-so-scary "frights." ("*Boo!*") Our school sing-along will include fun songs, such as "*Dem Bones,*" and "*Jack-o-Lantern is a Funny Fellow.*" When thinking about what your child will wear to school on Halloween, please avoid costumes that represent things that are frightening or gory. Remember, children at this age love to be superheroes, animals, and princesses!



Within warm, supportive relationships, children develop the ability to manage their emotional reactions to all kinds of images and situations that may have frightening elements. The most important thing we can do for children is to let them know that the adults in their lives will keep them safe.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Enjoy the long weekend!

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein