

SAMVEDANA

EK THA RAJA, EK THI RANI-THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Parents these days find it easier to put their children to bed after watching a favorite cartoon, than curling up in bed and reading out loud. What seems like a simple pleasure of childhood has many benefits attached to it, and it is important that you take out some time each night to read to your children.

- **What Is Story telling?**

Storytelling is as simple as reading a story from a book. If you don't have that much time, you can always share a story from memory, talk about your own childhood, or even read out loud from your phone. There are innumerable advantages of story telling for kids, especially for preschoolers, kindergarten and young children.

Reading aloud and sharing stories with your child is a great way to spend time together. Reading and storytelling also helps promote language, literacy and brain development.

- **Why is reading important for babies and young children?**

Sharing stories, talking and singing every day helps your child's development.

You're helping your child become familiar with sounds, words, language and the value of books. This all builds your child's early literacy skills, helping her go on to read successfully later in life.

Reading stories sparks your child's imagination, stimulates curiosity and helps with brain development. Interesting illustrations and word patterns – such as rhymes – can get your child talking about what he's seeing and thinking, and help him understand the patterns of language.

Exploring stories also helps your child learn the difference between 'real' and 'make-believe' and might help develop her own ideas.

Reading or telling stories can also be safe ways to explore strong emotions, which can help your child understand change, as well as

new or frightening events. Books about going to the dentist or hospital, starting at child care or making new friends will help your child learn about the world around him.

Sharing stories with your child doesn't mean you have to read always.

Just by looking at books with your child, you can be a great storyteller and a good model for using language and books. Your child will learn by watching you hold a book the right way and seeing how you move through the book by gently turning the pages.

Reading stories with children has benefits for grown-ups too. This special time together promotes bonding and helps to build your relationship, laying the groundwork for your child's later social, communication and interpersonal skills.

From babyhood to the early teens, children love to hear a good story. Without the use of books, telling stories takes on a different dimension. It offers a new way of looking at stories and is reminiscent of the old radio days when families gathered around and listened together. So whether you read a story from a book or tell a story from memory, storytelling time truly beneficial for your kids.

- **How, exactly how does storytelling benefit children?**

- 1. Language Skills**

As young children listen to a storyteller, they're hearing inflections in speech and words presented in a compelling and fascinating way. Older children can expand their vocabulary and learn skills that may serve them well if they decide to act in plays later.

Storytelling also presents certain literary devices in a demonstrative and memorable way. Children will see and hear the building of plot, characterization, climax, conflict, conclusion, etc. Perhaps rhyme or poetic prose will be used to tell the story, allowing children to hear the way the language sounds and how that can add to the story.

- 2. Memory**

Without books or illustrations, children have to remember key points of the plot and character names. This is an excellent exercise

in memorization skills and it also may help guide children when they wish to write a story of their own.

3. New Worlds

Storytelling opens children's minds to other cultures and life philosophies; it develops the inner world of imagination and creative thinking. Children tap into their imaginative minds and provide their own imagery. Storytelling is also a way to bring history alive and inspire further exploration of historical events.

4. Instils Virtues In Your Child:

Children all over the world love listening to stories. They want to know more about their favorite characters and often try to emulate them. By telling your child stories that come with a meaningful message, you can definitely inculcate qualities like wisdom, courage, honesty, etc. from an early age into your little one.

5. Makes Them Aware Of Their Own Culture And Roots:

Telling your children stories from your childhood and about various activities and celebrations from your past will make them more familiar about the different customs and traditions prevalent in your family. Sharing stories about various family members will help them learn about their lineage better.

6. Improves Listening Skills:

Most children usually have a lesser attention span and find it difficult to concentrate on something thing for long. Also, they end up talking more, rather than listening. Storytelling for kids ensures that they are not only more attentive, but are also keen to listen and understand.

7. Encourages Creativity And Imagination Power:

Listening to a story helps a child imagine the characters, places, plot etc. instead of seeing it on a visual medium. This also enhances creativity, making them more imaginative and open to ideas and free thinking.

8. A Great Tool For Sharpening Memory:

By using certain smart ideas, you can use storytelling to help increase your child's memory. Once you have read out the story, you can ask him to repeat the same after a few days. Alternatively, you can ask him to describe the story up till the present. This is a fun way to increase his memory and encourage concentration.

9. Broadens Horizon:

Young children may not always be exposed to the different cultures and countries of the world. Through the medium of storytelling, you can make him familiar about the various places and cultures across the world. Try and include stories from different countries and cultures to give your child a broader understanding of the world.

10. Makes Academic Learning Easier:

Storytelling for children is a stepping stone for academic learning. Many children have the habit of learning by rote, without understanding the subject. Storytelling, as a regular activity, can help children to enjoy and better understand what they are reading. This helps them in learning their subjects better. Sometimes, teaching school subjects as an interesting story (example, a boring history lesson can be turned into an interesting historical story) can help them understand better and fuel curiosity.

11. Better Communication:

Sometimes, children are hesitant to ask a question, even though their mind is filled with curiosity. Storytelling helps children in learning the art of asking the right question. It also tells them how to strike a perfect conversation and makes them more confident. Regular reading and listening can make them better orators too.

12. Helps To Face Difficult Situations With Ease:

Difficult situations can often end up leaving children feeling confused. Stories about various characters facing difficult situations can help them understand this concept better. Try and tell stories that teach children that pain and suffering are a part of life as much as happiness and fun times are. The right stories can help your child become well-equipped to face life and various situations.

• So What Should You Tell Stories About?

If you want to engage in storytelling for children, come up with your own story or re-tell an old one that you heard growing up. Your own child might love to hear about their babyhood or even about what it was like to be pregnant with them. Research your family background and find an interesting ancestor who lived an interesting life or experienced an unusual event. They will discover much about themselves this way, too.

If you're telling stories to a group of kids who aren't all your own, stories about life in the past, in other cultures, or animals make

good stories. Telling things from a unique point of view will get children to think about what life is like for others, which is a good precursor for developing empathy.

Storytelling connects. It connects children with history, families, and each other

- **How to Get Started**

Storytelling is an ancient form of communication. For millennia, people have passed on traditions, legends, and historic events through the telling of stories. True storytelling does not make use of books; like the ancients, it is intended to convey an idea simply through the spoken word.

Many are interested in exploring the art of storytelling but aren't sure where to begin. If this interests you, here are some ideas on getting started.

1. Research the stories you love or have heard, such as folktales. Many of these stories were told and re-told many times before being written down and people still enjoy them today. Why? Look into what ties these stories together across generations. What makes them compelling? Why do children still enjoy these ancient stories? As you seek answers for these things, you can weave these universal elements into your storytelling.

2. Consider family stories. Talk to your relatives and, if you have the means, do some genealogical research. Nearly everyone has at least one interesting character or story in their past. As you find these fascinating personalities, you can create stories about them or tell their true stories.

You might have family stories that have been passed down, too, that you might not have considered for storytelling fodder. Did your grandmother used to make remarks about certain incidents? Maybe your dad likes to joke with your uncle about something funny that happened to them when they were kids? Keep your ears open!

3. Look to your own past. You can invent a character for your storytelling and use incidents and insights from your own past to create adventures for your characters. Or you can tell the story in

the first person point of view (using “I”). Think about the lessons you’ve learned or funny, interesting things that have happened to you over the years. Turn these events into compelling stories.

4. **Attend storytelling programs.** This may be the most important thing you do as you embark on your own storytelling ventures. Local fairs and festivals may feature storytellers, or programs might be held at your local theater, library, or bookstore. Find out when storytelling is occurring in your community and make a point to attend. If possible, get to know storytellers and make connections; then you can get some tips to become a better storyteller yourself.

You may find yourself amazed at the different styles of storytelling. Some people use props, others move around, and still others stay still. You will see that there is no “right” way to story-tell; the common thread is the ability to interest others and draw them into your world. How you do that will reflect your personality and unique experiences.

- **Right Approach For Story Telling:**

As much as storytelling is important, it is also important to make sure that it is being told in the right way. The 7 points mentioned below will help you understand these techniques and become a better storyteller:

1. **Length of The Story:**

A story should neither be too short nor too long. A short story might not be able to deliver the right message, while a long one might become boring and uninteresting. So, decide the length by keeping your audience in mind.

2. **Comfortable Setting:**

Choose a comfortable space to read out the story. The place should create the perfect mood and ambiance for storytelling.

3. **A Proper Introduction:**

If you are telling it from memory, let your child know where you heard the story or who you heard it from. Tell them how it helped you and how you think it will benefit your audience. Try to create an interest right from the start.

4. Proper Expressions:

While narrating a story, make sure to use proper hand gestures and facial expressions. You can also make different sounds or ask your child to do so to make storytelling as interesting as possible.

5. Loud But Slow:

Make sure you speak loudly but at a slow pace. Your voice should be able to depict the right kind of emotions as mentioned in the story. Vary your voice, tone, pitch as per the requirement of the story and use pauses at appropriate places.

6. Involve Your Children:

Try to involve your children by using various phrases or by asking them questions like 'Do you know?' You can also ask them to find out the message conveyed through the story, thereby making them more involved.

- **Storytelling Activities For Kids:**

Storytelling activities help your kids connect with their creativity. The activities are all about taking an idea, developing it and creating something that is sharable. Let us check out some exciting activities for your kids.

1. Storytelling With Family Photos:

- Encouraging your child to tell stories is as simple as asking a natural storyteller to narrate a story. Read out the ways on how you can use family pictures to encourage storytelling.
- Glance through some pictures along with your kid and take turns narrating stories about what you find. For instance, it can be a picture of her birth or a picture that recounts a story about the night when there was a heavy snowfall.
- You can even print some pictures of any fun occasion like a birthday celebration, family vacation or any holiday trip and ask your child to arrange the events in order.
- Show a picture of any event and ask your little one to make a story using the clues.
- Let your kid pick 10 or fewer pictures and place them in chronological order to create a story. It is interesting to watch what pictures they pick to narrate a story.

2. Storytelling With Stamps:

- This activity would seriously add unlimited fun to the story writing. Stamps are a great way to get your kids' creativity flow, pencils move and smiles grow.
- Firstly, you need to gather different sets of stamps – like the animal stamp set, vehicles stamp set, flower stamp set, baby zoo animals stamp set and more. Also, gather a Jumbo multi-color stamp pad and storytelling paper that is perfect for illustrating stories.
- You can stamp out some pictures on the paper and ask your kid to write a story depicting them. They can fill the stamps with extra colors and can add details by drawing something handy in between the stampings.
- When they go wrong, you can correct their spellings and grammar so that their skills improve. It would be a super fun and sneaky learning along the way.

Be Natural:

It is important to evolve your own style of storytelling. This will ensure that it does not become monotonous for your child or for you. Enjoy what you are reading.

Storytelling is very crucial for your child's development. Don't let your child miss this simple yet extremely important part of childhood. Happy storytelling!

Don't forget to share your interesting story telling techniques with us.

Happy parenting!

Anupama Chand