

Is Santa Claus Real?

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There is a certain magic surrounding the belief in Santa Claus for young children. And we can feel a twinge of sadness when they get old enough to question if he is real or declare that they no longer believe in Santa. I would like to share a couple of ways that other parents have come up with helping their children to retain the heart of giving as they mature.

Son: Dad, I think I'm old enough to know now—is there a Santa Claus?

Dad: (Stalling to figure out an answer) Ok, I agree that you're old enough. But before I tell you, I have a question for you. The truth is a dangerous gift. Once you know something, you can't unknow it. Are you sure that you want

to know?

Son: (After a brief pause) Yes, I want to know.

Dad: Ok, I'll tell you. Yes, there IS a Santa Claus."

Son: Really?

Dad: Yes, really but he's not an old man with a beard in a red suit. That's just what we tell kids. You see, kids are too young to understand the truth about Santa Claus until they are as old as you are. The truth is that Santa Claus isn't a person, it is an idea. Think of all of the presents Santa gave you over the years. I actually bought those myself. I watched you open them. And did it bother me that you didn't thank me? Of course not. In fact it gave me the greatest joy.

You see, Santa Claus is **the idea of giving for the sake of giving, without thinking of thanks or acknowledgement.** When I saw that woman collapse in the grocery store last week and call for help, I knew that she'd never know that it was me who called the ambulance. I was being Santa Claus when I did that.

Son: Oh!

Dad: So now that you know, you are part of it. You have to be Santa Claus also. It means that you can never tell a young child the secret and you can help us select Santa presents for your younger siblings. Most importantly, you have to look for opportunities to help people all year, not just at Christmas. Got it?

Son: Yeah, I think so. Thanks, Dad.

Anonymous-adapted from an internet posting

In our family, we have a special way of transitioning the kids from receiving from Santa, to becoming a Santa. This way, the Santa construct is not a lie that gets discovered, but an unfolding series of good deeds and Christmas spirit. When they are 6 or 7, whenever you see that dawning suspicion that Santa may not be a material being, that means the child is ready.

I take them out "for coffee" at the local wherever. We get a booth, order our drinks, and the following pronouncement is made: You sure have grown an

awful lot this year. Not only are you taller, but I can see that your heart has grown, too. (Point out 2-3 examples of empathetic behavior, consideration of people's feelings, good deeds etc, the kid has done in the past year.) In fact, your heart has grown so much that I think you are ready to become a Santa Claus.

You probably have noticed that most of the Santas you see are people dressed up like him. Some of your friends might have even told you that there is no Santa. A lot of children think that, because they aren't ready to BE a Santa yet, but YOU ARE. Tell me the best things about Santa. What does Santa get for all of his trouble? (*Lead the kid from "cookies" to the good feeling of having done something for someone else.*) Well, now YOU are ready to do your first job as a Santa!"

Make sure you maintain the proper conspiratorial tone. We then have the child choose someone they know--usually a neighbor. The child's mission is to secretly, deviously, find out something that the person needs, and then provide it, wrap it, deliver it--and never reveal to the target where it came from. Being a Santa isn't about getting credit, you see. It's unselfish giving!

My oldest chose the "witch lady" on the corner. She really was horrible--had a fence around the house and would never let the kids go in and get a stray ball or Frisbee. She'd yell at them to play quieter, etc--a real pill. He noticed when we drove to school that she came out every morning to get her paper in bare feet, so he decided she needed slippers. So then he had to go spy and decide how big her feet were. He hid in the bushes one Saturday, and decided she was a medium. We went to Target and bought warm slippers. He wrapped them up, and tagged it "Merry Christmas from Santa."

After dinner one evening, he slipped down to her house, and slid the package under her driveway gate. The next morning, we watched her waddle out to get the paper, pick up the present, and go inside. My son was all excited, and couldn't wait to see what would happen next. The next

morning, as we drove off, there she was, out getting her paper--wearing the slippers. He was ecstatic. I had to remind him that NO ONE could ever know what he did, or he wouldn't be a Santa.

Over the years, he chose a good number of targets, always coming up with a unique present just for them. One year, he polished up his bike, put a new seat on it, and gave it to one of our friend's daughters. These people were quite poor. We did ask the dad if it was ok. The look on her face, when she saw the bike on the patio with a big bow on it, was almost as good as the look on my son's face.

When it came time for Son #2 to join the ranks, my oldest came along, and helped with the induction speech. They are both excellent gifters, by the way, and never felt that they had been lied to--because they were let in on the **Secret of Being a Santa**.

Shared by Lesley Rush in an internet posting

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Amazon: www.amazon.com/gp/product/B09L7KS5VH

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.

