

THE ULTIMATELY COOLEST WAY TO RAISE YOUR KIDS IN THE NEW ERA

GEEK PARENTING

Issue #61 January 2018



STOP CYBERBULLYING

**LANGUAGE
DEVELOPMENT**

IMPRTANCE OF EARLY
COMMUNICATION

**AUTISM &
TECH**

FRIENDLY APPS THAT
REALLY HELP

**NEW YEARS
RESOLUTION**

A TECH INSPIRED
GUIDE FOR PARENTS

**BITCOIN
INVESTING**

GIVING KIDS A
BETTER FUTURE

CONTENTS

FEATURES

RISE OF CGI CHARACTERS

WILL MORE & MORE MOVIES FOLLOW SUIT?



AUTISM FRIENDLY APPS

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN HELP



EMOJIS

TAKING OVER THE CONVERSATION



LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

THE COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING



OLD SCHOOL TIPS

A LOOK AT TIMELESS PARENTING ADVICE



OUTDOOR WINTER FUN

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



TACKLING CYBER BULLYING...

HOW WE CAN
HELP



| Parent View



PARENTS GUIDE

TO NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS &
HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

| Level Up



THE NEW YEAR CAROL
KICKING OFF WITH A TIME
CAPSULE

| Gamer Dad



GAME GENRES
WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

| Books & Entertainment

GEEK PARENTING RECOMMENDS

Kid's App | Spotlight

LUMIKIDS SNOW, EARLY LEARNING PLAY FOR KIDS

DIGITAL WINTER
WONDERLAND!

EDITOR'S NOTE

The rise of social media has had an unfortunate side effect in the amount of vitriol that people (albeit a small number) have a tendency to throw at one another. The safety of being behind a screen has removed the real world filter that usually lets people think twice before speaking out immediate thoughts. It's created a seemingly consequence free playground for would be abusers, and an almost inescapable torment for potential victims with the ubiquitous nature of today's digital connectivity.

Cyberbullying is a very real problem today, and it's a horrible thought for any parent to think that their very own could be suffering from this, or even dishing it out. Comments seem to be even more hurtful when posted online, no matter how off handed. Perhaps because we can see them with our own eyes.

We need to make sure that our kids know they don't have to silently suffer online abuse. Likewise, they need to know that just because they are hiding behind a screen, doesn't mean they can say whatever they want without consequence.

Finally, on a more lighter note I have the third and last of my cryptocurrency series. Setting our kids up for financial independence in the future is something I think all of us parents would like to strive for. We want them to be able to pursue whatever they want in life without the constant looming threats of monetary barriers holding them back. Despite what you may or may not have heard in the news, I still believe cryptocurrency is a fantastic opportunity and that is only from my own personal experience. I hope you find it useful in some way.

As always we love to continue hearing feedback from our readers. Get in touch at:

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THE GEEKY MONTHLY

Bringing you cool news and media from around the globe



3DOODLER CREATE

You don't have to be an expert to create amazing 3D art with this gadget. The 3Doodler is a 3D printing pen that squeezes out a thin, flexible, strong (and child-friendly!) heated plastic which quickly hardens. You can either trace over doodles on a paper or draw directly in the air itself! Whatever you imagine you can create right in front of your eyes. The plastics come in a range of different colours. You can find it [here](#).

BYTE SIZED NEWS

Loveable AI Robot

A UK inventor send out his pint sized creation to the public to see how they would react to it. Most avoided it, met it with some trepidation but some where warmed with its questions such as 'What is love?'. Watch the video [here](#).

Second Law of Thermodynamics

A team of scientists have carried out a quantum experiment that appears to have created a heat flow from a cold system to a hot one. On a macroscopic scale (what we can see with our eyes) heat always goes from hot to cold, like heating up food on the stove, giving it an increase in entropy. However, there is no special relationship between them in order for this to happen. On a quantum scale, you can have two quantum states with a special, correlated relationship that make a reversal of that flow possible. Imagine two rooms next to each other with an open door, one hot, one cold. Eventually the temperature will even out and both will be lukewarm. Now imagine a tiny quantum 'demon' in the door between them that only lets hot things go one way and cold things another. Eventually, one room will be hot, and the other cold again- an omelette turned back into an egg- a reversal in entropy. Essentially, they have proven that this 'demon' can exist. And since entropy is heavily linked to time...

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DID YOU KNOW?

DOLPHINS SELF-MEDICATE

Dolphins are known to be highly intelligent mammals. They've been found to rub themselves against Gorgian sea fans which are covered in mucus. This mucus turns out to have anti-microbial properties that help to fight against infection! The revelation has led to new medical research in reefs.

WILL OUR KIDS AND GRANDKIDS GROW UP IN A WORLD OF AUGMENTED HUMANS?

RISE OF THE NON-HUMANS CGI CHARACTERS RULE!



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

W

e have a lot to thank actors like Andy Serkis for. Be it Gollum in Lord of the Rings, Caesar in the Planet of the Apes movies or General Snoke in Star Wars, when he portrays a non-human, he does so with a panache and vibrancy that gives that grabs and convinces the viewer. Films are much richer for the

addition of human elements and mannerisms in decidedly un-human characters, but with technology advancing swiftly, where does this particular rabbit hole end up??

Fundamentally different from animated films, those with CGI characters try to convince us that the person ►

onscreen is actually real rather than some anthropomorphised animal/car/tree/cup & saucer, and they are becoming increasingly useful to Hollywood. One of the most applauded acting roles from 2016's *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* was played out by an actor who died in 1994!! The recreation of legendary actor Peter Cushing to reprise his role as Governor Moff Tarkin lent the film a certain elegance and negated the obvious replacement with someone living and all the trauma that

brings us. Like Mark Ruffalo replacing Edward Norton in the Hulk movies - Ruffalo is better IMO – the obviousness of a switch detracts from the original, making it all the less believable, though when you're talking about an average man transforming into an increasingly big and powerful and indestructible savage, you're on shaky ground anyway. Back to *Star Wars* and the lovingly recreation of Cushing was a huge bonus in a better-than-average movie, and demonstrated the power of CGI. *Rogue One* was also

“...THERE IS AN INCREASING INCIDENCE OF YOUNGER UP-AND-COMING ACTORS AND ACTRESSES HAVING FULL BODY SCANS...”



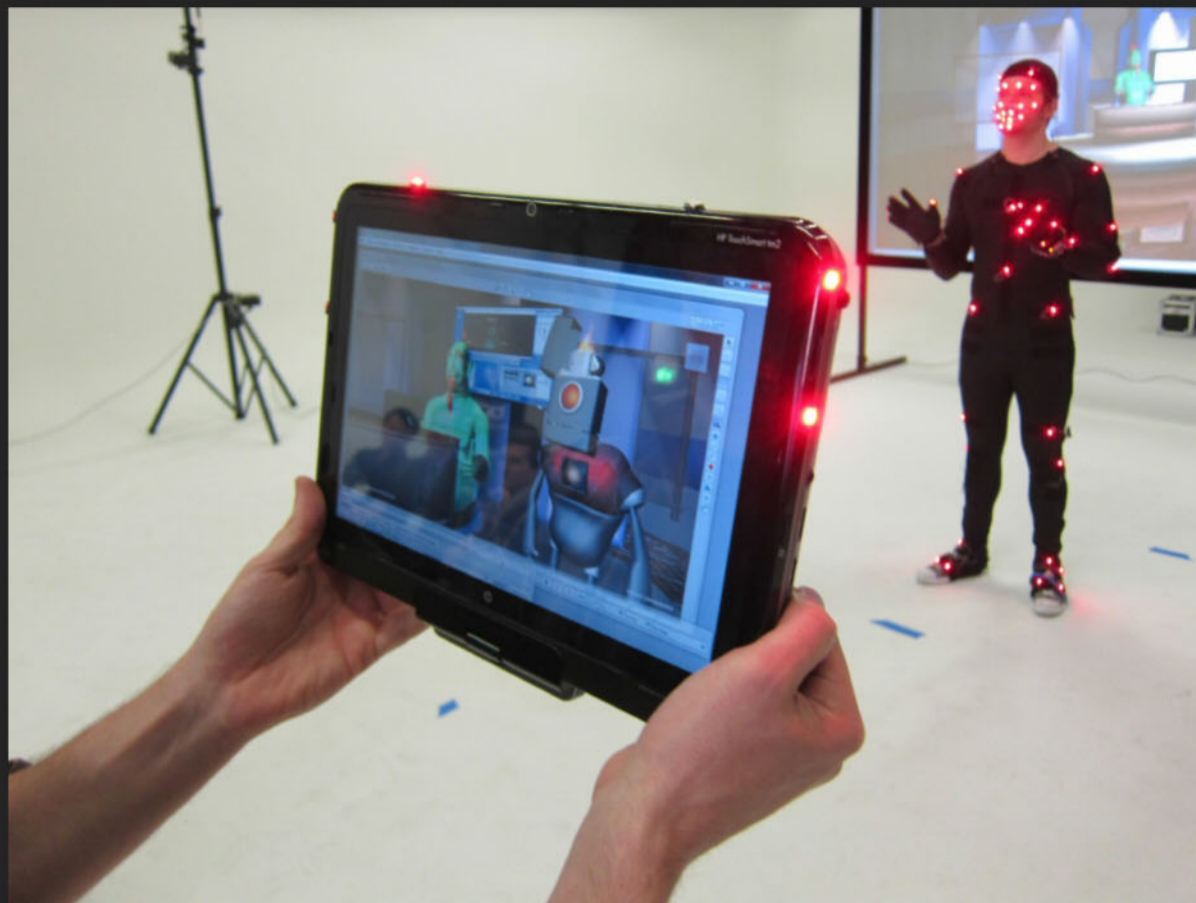
(ABOVE) Guy Henry played Grand Moff Tarkin in 2016's *'Rogue One: A Star Wars Story'*. Although it did not quite fully cross the uncanny valley, it was nevertheless an extraordinary technological feat.

responsible for a young, CGI, princess Leia, which fitted the story and made it all the more enjoyable.

But where does this end? If we can routinely put dead or unavailable actors in movies, who needs the original anyway?

Entertainment graphic scientist – it is a real thing apparently - Professor Nadia Magnenat Thalmann has been working on virtual humans in film and TV for over thirty years and points out the enormous cost of hiring real people. Thalmann says “We’re able to make virtual actors look great – and as soon as we can automate the process, there will be a cost-benefit analysis.” Actor costs are a significant part of movie making, and availability is also an issue. If a full body scan and subsequent CGI sculpting can take place, then an actor can be available at any time and for a fraction of the normal cost.

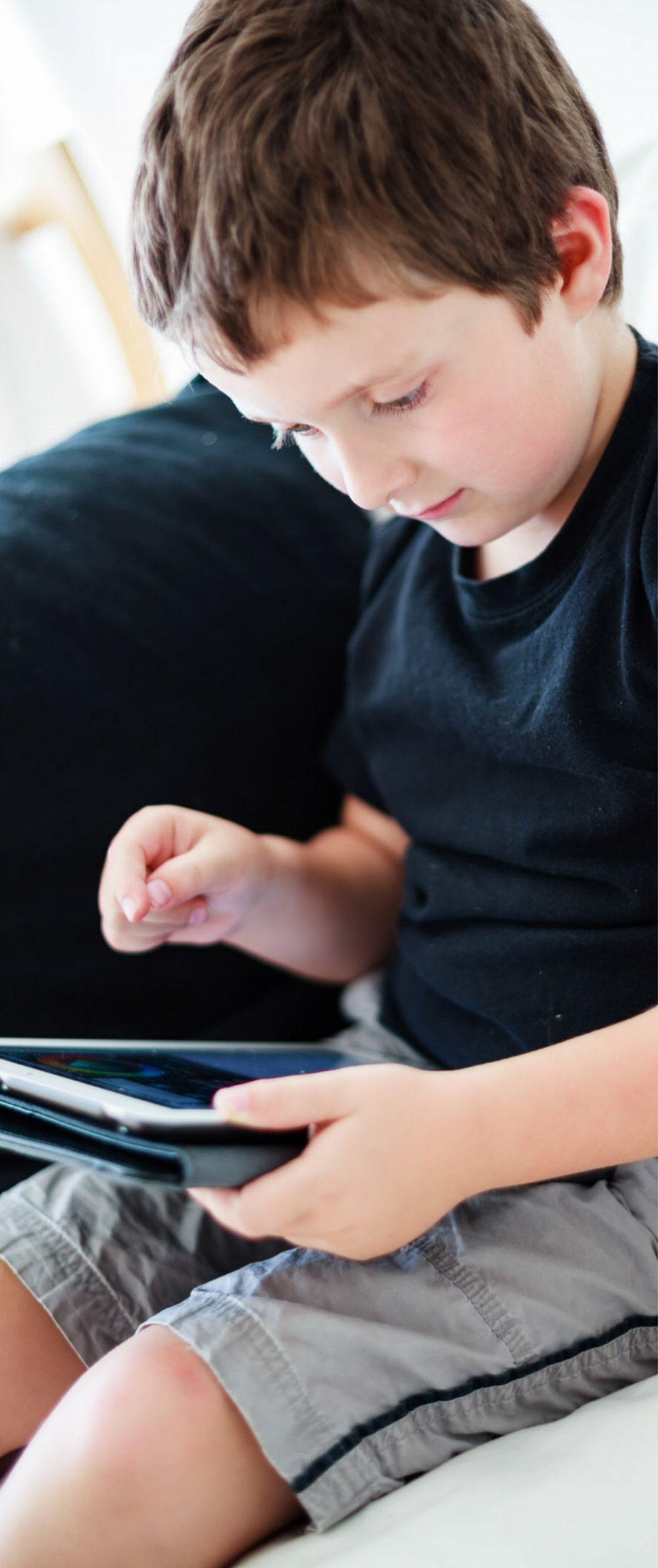
Back in 2014, indie effort The Congress dealt with the issue of an aging actress who agrees to have her entire body scanned for future films. The film becomes an allegory for dehumanisation and, obviously, ends quite



(ABOVE) Mocap suits such as those provided by PhaseSpace capture the movement and facial expressions of actors which are then rendered in a computer.

badly for all concerned. Right now, there is an increasing incidence of younger up-and-coming actors and actresses having full body scans in exchange for an up-front payment and the promise of trickle payments per movie in future should their image be used. With character aging easy to do in graphics packages, there is no need to take a second or third scan as the original actor grows older, and with the initial scan done, they can go off to a slow and public theatrical death on second-

rate tv, or peddle ill-thought-out condiments or diet plans. If there is one thing that we can be sure of, then it is that CGI characters will continue to figure in movies and TV programs, and start to become the major figures in them. The combination of being perfect for every take, not needing pay, and being immune to any kind of bad behaviour or addictions is irresistible to directors and film studios alike. It all adds to good news for film goers and bad news for anyone following a drama career. ●



AUTISM FRIENDLY APPS

Climb inside the mind of an autistic child and you'll find certain nuances and qualities that set them aside from other children. One of the more notable differences is the way in which they interact with technology, be it physical gadgets or computer apps. Many autistic children find that these technical asides are not only entertaining, but also relax the stresses that they can feel in everyday life; to an autistic child, something which might be simply interesting to others might be a vital lifeline.

Tablet computers have become the Swiss Army Knives of the electronics world, giving droves of children and young adults access to all manner of games, entertainment, news, and reading material. They have also been linked to positive behaviour in autistic children.

Autism is a spectrum disorder with, typically two types of symptoms, being either problems in social communication and social interaction and/or restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities. From both of those points of view, tablet computers can offer both therapy and entertainment.



FLUMMOX & FRIENDS



PUPPET PALS



HAPPI & THE PIRATES



HAPPI 123



HAPPI SPELLS



COGNOA

While autistic children have used mainstream apps for these outlets, there are a growing number of specialist products aimed specifically at them.

Many autistic children struggle to navigate their social world, and the **FlummoX and Friends App** for the iPad is aimed at helping with those emotional issues. Presented as short video episodes interspersed with quirky cartoons to gently reinforce social skills and help with social conundrums that the child may be feeling. The App also has a 'discuss mode' where the child is asked questions about what they have seen and can undertake simple quizzes. FlummoX and Friends is an ideal arena in which all children can learn valuable social lessons, but is especially need to learn in certain ways.

While Autism has a multitude of attributes, one of the hardest to address is that of speech in a child and speech therapy. Some children are reticent to express themselves in a group environment but this can usually be addressed with simple therapy. However, the **Puppet Pals App** is aimed at encouraging children to speak and create conversations by making short films and adding the voices to it. Puppet Pals lets you create a series of scenes and meld them together into a short movie. The App also lets you add and manipulate photos and create characters out of them, as well as incorporate photos and pictures as backdrops, and

manipulate them by finger strokes and swipes. There are also plenty of downloadable materials to help with their storytelling.

Education is also central to the **Happi Papi range of Apps**, which include reading, spelling, maths, and then some fun asides like driving. Research has shown that children with autism are far more responsive to reading material when it is displayed on a tablet rather than in books. The interactivity element is proven to engage autistic children and the Happi Papi App has been endorsed by the Autism Speaks organisation.

All children need boundaries and these are often difficult for the autistic child, but tools like **Cognoa** help parents set boundaries and track them. It allows you to set milestones and help your child achieve them too. Cognoa was developed by the former vice president of Cultural Programs at the Autism Speaks organisation, and has been made with autistic children firmly in mind.

But what about good old fun?? There is plenty of evidence showing that certain games engage and calm autistic children, and one of the top ones is **Minecraft**. The act of building captures the attention of children with autism, and helps them to develop focus on tasks, as well as social skills and even dealing with others if in multi-player mode. If you want to wear them out, try **Fruit Ninja** and let them loosen off some steam. ●

EMOJIS



Like



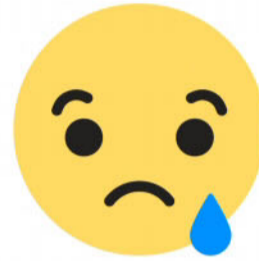
Love



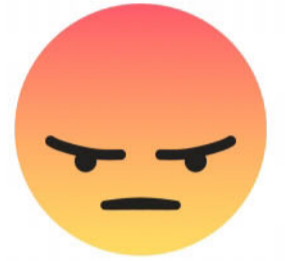
Haha



Wow



Sad



Angry

PICTORIALLY TAKING OVER THE ART OF CONVERSATION

We can probably thank Scott Fahlman, a computer scientist at Carnegie Mellon University for giving us emojis – the tiresome little pictures that increasingly invade out text messages. Scott proposed using certain keyboard characters to create stylised faces in text and emails to convey emotions. Plainly, typing a colon followed a right curved bracket saves around 0.63 of a second when you want to state that you are happy and, presumably, if you add all those little bits together, you end up with another few seconds in which to send pointless tweets.

Using keyboard characters was all well and good, and gave the user the potential to create three

happy faces, three unhappy ones, and a couple of playful faces. There are more, but you need to get creative. That just wasn't enough for Japanese Engineer Shigetaka Kurita, and he set about developing a series of pictograms based on weather symbols, Manga characters, and standard imagery such as lightbulbs to denote a bright idea. The term emoji is constructed from the Japanese loanword *e*, meaning 'picture' and the *moji* 'letter meaning 'character'. Stick them together and you have picture-character, and what better way to describe an emoji?

While these were initially a bit of a stunt, emojis went mainstream when they became a part of Unicode in 2010, with each image drawn on a 12-pixel by 12-pixel grid and a standardised two-byte

“EMOJI’S HAVE NOW MOVED FROM A RANGE OF EMOTIONS TO JUST ABOUT ANY SEASONAL CHARACTER YOU CAN IMAGINE.”

sequencing system. Emojis, suddenly, had become mainstream. Because they now had a well-defined form as a foundation, and one that could be used to reliably build more, they attracted the attention of both Apple and Google, whose emergent software systems were ideal platforms for the fun-filled formations.

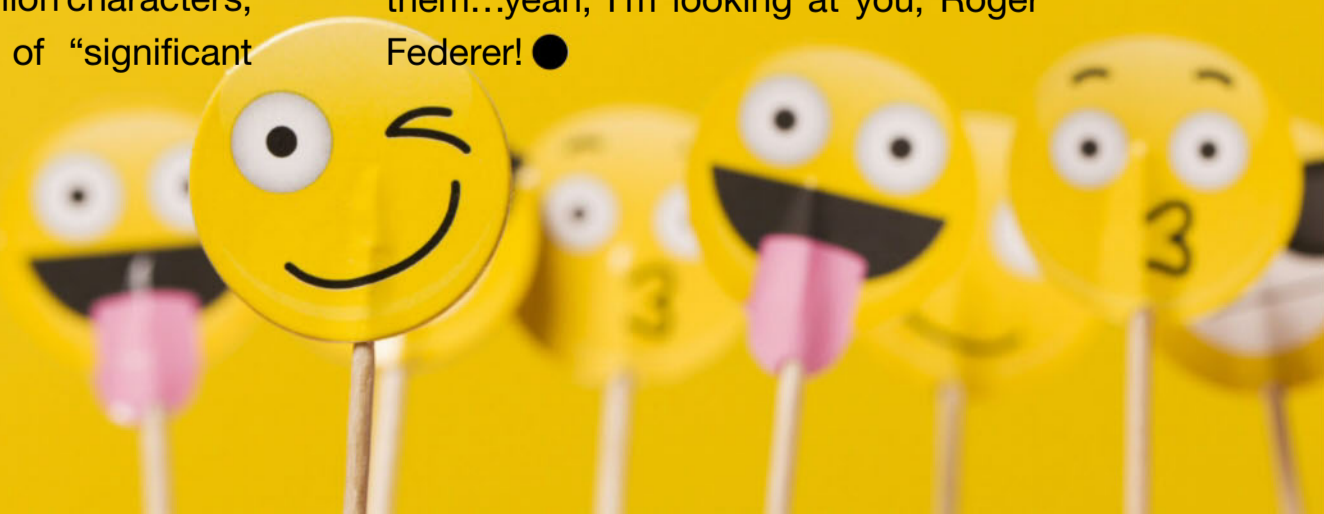
While keyboard-characters were of only limited use in mainstream computing, the rise of mobile phones became a natural playground for the next generation of emoji's. Text messaging was an obvious place for these cheeky little messengers, and the coding to drives them was weaved into both Android and iOS and emojis became a part of the operating systems through their iterations. With scores of mobile phone users trading emojis in chuckling, image-filled conversations, emojis started to take the place of properly-constructed English.

The crowning glory came in 2015 when the 'Face with Tears of Joy' emoji was chosen by the Oxford English Dictionary as its word – well, picture in this case – of the year. The OED explained "Oxford University Press partnered with leading mobile technology business SwiftKey to explore frequency and usage statistics for some of the most popular emoji's across the world, and Face with Tears of Joy was chosen because it was the most used emoji globally in 2015". Statistically, usage of Face with Tears of Joy had more than doubled on its previous year at 8,000 instances per billion characters, making it a character of "significant

use". And it's not just fevered teens who use it to litter their messages; Hillary Clinton is a fan, along with Roger Federer – who posted one tweet of forty-eight mixed emojis and the words 'day off' – Selena Gomez, and a whole clan of Kardashians, so if you like a to insert something a little cheeky, you are in good company.

Now a solid part of messaging services, including Skype, Facebook, and Twitter and their contemporary partners, emojis have become entrenched as shorthand notation for feelings, conveying a multitude of emotions, that we cannot possibly express with words, in little pictures. If you are unsure as to what emojis you should be using, or just want to check usage statistics, there is a yearly 'emoji report' available, and from that, we know that the 38% of heavy emoji-using millennials send an emoji in 56% of their messages. Little do they know that they are playing into the hands of celebrated 20th century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who considered the limits of language. He argued that "picture theory' of language: reality (he said) is a vast collection of facts that we can picture in language, assuming that our language has an adequate logical form". Emojis' it is then.

Emoji's have now moved from a range of emotions to just about any seasonal character you can imagine. They are a success story that that started to litter our written content and are a fun addition, provided we don't over-use them...yeah, I'm looking at you, Roger Federer! ●





TACKLING CYBER BULLYING...TOGETHER



It's one of those now awful phrases that as much as we want to protect our children, sometimes, just sometimes, things can be beyond our control.

The internet and the number of social media apps now available bring a number of different opportunities for young people. They can be used as great platforms to demonstrate skills, launch new ideas, voice opinions and communicate with people from all over the world. They can be used to break down barriers to social inclusion and offer more alternatives in the way in which we communicate with each other, for people to find their "online voice".

However, it is sometimes finding and using this voice that seems to be the problem.

Online, everyone and everything can appear different. From the pictures we post, giving the illusion that everything is perfect. To the way we talk online and the

language that is used.

ONLINE "BANTER"

It's almost become acceptable practice to be able to say things online that you would never say to someone on the street or directly to someone's face. To "troll" someone online because of something they're wearing, that you might not like, or post a picture or comment that you don't agree with. Something which most people wouldn't dream of saying to someone if they saw them walking down the street wearing the same outfit.

Social media apps in this sense have almost given people too much confidence. They have allowed people to become too opinionated. And for a long time now we have allowed people to get away with this type of "bullying".

What might be seen as "banter" by the person behind the comments, can be taken a whole different way to the person who is receiving the comments, and this is part of the problem.

Because these interactions take place through the digital space, you can't read people's emotions, their body language, how they react to your comments. Are they laughing with you or genuinely hurt and upset by what you have posted?

Yes, some people are purposefully going out of their way to gage a reaction and a negative one at that.

But for most young people, being aware of how others might interpret their responses is down to making sure we educate them on the difference in online language and much more.

In the UK a recent nationwide survey revealed that 55% of young people have received hurtful comments online, with 18% experiencing cyberbullying. The scary part is not the enormity of these current figures, but how organisations such as the NSPCC and the new Taskforce set up by the Royal Foundation in the UK, have reported that these figures are continuing to grow at quite a rapid pace.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO HELP?

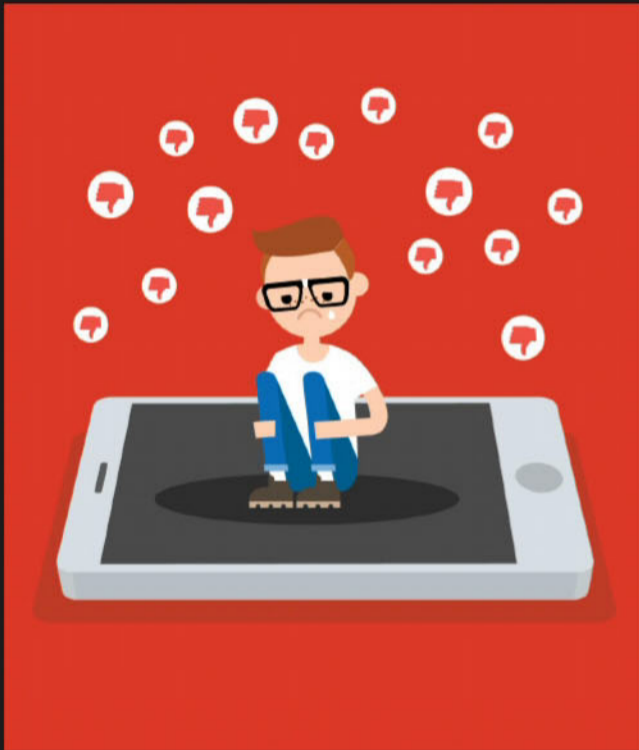
In the UK the Duke of Cambridge through his work with a number of organisations, has most recently spoken out about cyber bullying and in response to help tackle the problem, has set up what has been termed a “Taskforce team” (which includes: The Anti-Bullying Alliance, Apple, BBC, BT, The Diana Award, EE, Facebook, Google, Instagram, Internet Matters, NSPCC, O2, Sky,

Snapchat, Supercell, TalkTalk, Twitter, Vodaphone, Virgin Media and YouTube). The Taskforce has primarily been set up to help identify a set of actions for young people to help them to ultimately behave better online, and for these actions to be placed on the social media sites which are being used.

It is then planned for these actions to be used as a part of a wider campaign, to reinforce the message that the internet and these social media platforms should be used as a positive platform for young people.

For the Duke of Cambridge the taskforce was set up to help relieve some of the pressures that young people face from their peers and to develop a positive strategy to combat online bullying. Used and available to support teachers and

“THINGS CAN BE HIDDEN AND DELETED BUT THE IMPACT THAT IT CAN HAVE ON A YOUNG PERSON’S LIFE STILL REMAINS.”



In Australia, 1 in 8 students experience cyberbullying, with it being cited as one of the second most common forms of bullying. Again as like the UK and the US, Australia is taking a tough stance on anyone to be found to be harassing, or causing offence to someone online. Police involvement is now encouraged and information is regularly posted to parents as well as educational

parents alike.

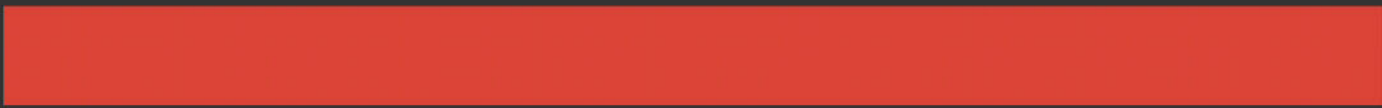
In the US and reported by the Megan Meier Foundation, 1 in 4 students experience bullying at some point during their school life. With reports also highlighting that in the US approximately 52% of students have reported to being cyber bullied. This is a growing statistic with severe consequences in some instances. Companies as well as government and parent groups are now coming together to educate young people. Going into schools to tell their stories, to offer advice, to offer avenues for people to speak up if they are a victim of cyber bullying.

Taskforces are being set up to run workshops with young people to help them identify action points to stop cyberbullying. Focusing on inclusion rather than dictating what can and can't happen online.

“THE GOOD NEWS IS COUNTRIES ARE COMING TOGETHER TO REALISE THE IMPORTANCE OF FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THESE TERRIBLE ONLINE ACTS.”

talks given in schools to warn of the dangers of being online.

These statistics from different countries are to show that cyberbullying isn't something ➤





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matters.org

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NSPCC

 **A M E R I C A N
SPCC**
American Society for the Positive Care of Children

connected to just one place. Just like social media apps are worldwide, unfortunately so is cyberbullying.

The good news is countries are coming together to realise the importance of fighting back against these terrible online acts.

THE EFFECTS OF CYBERBULLYING AND WHERE TO FIND HELP

We've all heard and read about the terrible effects cyberbullying can have on young people. What's worse is that sometimes their families are the last to know. Due to the nature of everything being online, things can be hidden and deleted but the impact that it can have on a young person's life still remains.

It's scary for any parent to think about their child being bullied and only by raising awareness can we start to educate young people about the effects their words have on others.

To show them that online trolling and posting vicious comments online does have serious consequences. No longer can they hide behind their devices and be allowed to almost get away with their actions.

We also need to talk about the use of online language, how people might perceive things differently online to what is actually meant, to raise awareness of this perception and to show that even online there is a right and wrong.

There's also some great websites which can provide a whole host of information such as Internet Matters, Teen Safe, the NSPCC in the UK and the American SPCC.

Social media apps and the internet must be used responsibly. We need to educate young people on the positive opportunities the internet can offer and how we should be using this as a positive tool.

Let's work together to bring down those statistics and keep our young people safe online. ●

THE COMPLEXITIES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT



When our little ones are just that, little, we record every milestone. The first time they crawl, take their first steps and say their first words.

Throughout all of these milestones, children are monitored by Health Visitors and professionals to make sure that children are reaching the critical areas which have been identified for certain ages.

This is especially true for language development.

When we think of the first babbling noises from babies, to

then certain words starting to form and from there more words being used to form sentences, and then by the time they are 3 forming longer sentences using four or more words and using them in the correct format.

All of this progress is monitored not only by parents but also by health professionals. It's used as a guide to support children in their development and to be able to identify any intervention methods that might be needed preferably before children start primary/infant school.

Language within itself is a •►

complex area. However, mapping out language milestones and what children should be achieving and when they should be achieving these by is an even more complex area.

We're all different

Every child develops at their own pace. From the age that they learn to walk, to the age that they say their first word. Everybody is different.

However, with new research in language development now coming to light, the emphasis is placed on just how language milestones in particular, are crucial in helping parents monitor children to make sure that everyone has the same opportunities and are able to achieve the same goals without anything standing in their way to hold them back – language development being one of these potential barriers.

The research

Newcastle University in the UK, has recently released their

research into toddlers' language development, which focuses on how to support children with delays in their early language development. Ways to help boost toddlers' language skills as well as some of the interventions that we currently use to identify toddlers development as well as proposed new methods parents and professionals should be considering.

When we think about language development from the viewpoint of starting school, learning to read and write and even as adults in the workforce. How difficulties from a young age which if not addressed can hold people back. Then yes, language development does play a crucial role in an individual's personal and educational development.

Key findings from the research

From their report (commissioned by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) in Partnership with Public Health England), Professor James Law and his team looked at findings such as:

-
- children's gestures, such as pointing, are key to their early language development;
 - toddlers need to be using between 50 and 100 words before they start putting words together, a skill that can be a better predictor of later abilities than the number of words used;
 - at some point between the ages of two and three, children typically start to produce longer, more complex sentences.

The report also highlighted the most shocking statistic that, it is believed between 7-14% of children struggle with language before they even enter a school setting.

Learning language from the beginning

What this new research has done is bring to the forefront the area of toddler language development and how this area is key for setting our children up for future success. The milestones within this area are nothing new, yes some boundaries might have changed or maybe have

**“BETWEEN 7-14%
OF CHILDREN
STRUGGLE WITH
LANGUAGE BEFORE
THEY EVEN ENTER A
SCHOOL SETTING.”**

been expanded upon over the years, but the focus is primarily on the fact that children really must be achieving these milestones before they start in primary/infant school.

This is if everyone is to have the same opportunities and start in life. It's about identifying what interventions can be put in place to help support parents and teachers and other professionals in order to support children with language difficulties.

How can we support?

We know as parents the important role we play in our children's upbringing and development.



Sometimes it really is like the pressure is on. Studies and articles into language development highlight that it's about focusing on positive interactions between parents and children and the emphasis to promote this further, especially through their early years before they get to nursery age.

Things such as playing story time, or when they point to something and say just one word, for example, "blue", for you to fill in the gaps and reply back to them "yes that cup is blue". It's about reinforcing what they are saying and adding to it. Helping them to learn the words that go together, as well as to start and use their imagination in order to develop and grow.

Once at primary/infant school, the emphasis is still on parents to help them with their language skills and in most instances this is from learning sounds through phonics.

This is also the method that most teachers and teaching professionals will use. Teaching reading and writing through the ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes. Not only helping them to read and write but helping children to hear

the sounds used within words. Helping them to blend sounds together to be able to form words and hence develop their language skills.

Training for teaching staff has also been highlighted as essential in early year's settings in order to deliver cost effective and evidence based interventions to those children who have fallen behind. However, as class sizes continue to grow and the number of teaching staff feeling the strain due to the decline in the number of support staff; identifying those children who have fallen behind as well as being able to offer them the additional support they need is hard.

Their future is in our hands

It's a strong statement but it's true. A child's development is in the hands of parents, healthcare professionals and educational professionals. It's down to us to help children with their language development. We talk a lot in Geek Parenting about the importance of communication and communicating with our children.

When it comes to looking at children's milestones and with new research into the area of language development, communication has never been so important.

Language development in this instance and making sure they hit the right milestones does have an effect on a child's personal and educational development.

Of course with guidance on teaching continually changing new research into this area will only add to the ever changing milestone and teaching cycle.

As parents our aim is to guide, support and lead our children to help shape them into the adults that they all too soon become. Any information on how we can help support their development and implement interventions early on to help them by the time they reach school age, can only be a good thing. ●



Old school PARENTING TIPS



T

hese days, there seems to be more advice than ever before about how to go about parenting, and everyone seems to have their

own opinion about how to raise kids. With so many modern methods to choose from, how do you know which one works best for your family? Even though the old-school ways may seem to be horribly out of date in the modern world, in fact there is still a lot to be said for some of the parenting tips that were popular with our grandparents. Here are some tried and tested parenting ideas that will never go out of style.

CHORES ARE IMPORTANT

Fewer and fewer kids these days have to do chores, but having the responsibility of your own task which needs to be done on a regular basis is part of learning about the way we all have obligations in the adult world. Chores can start off by being pretty simple when the kids are small – picking up toys after play, taking clothes to the dryer or feeding the cat, but as they get older they can tackle proper household jobs like vacuuming, mopping or mowing the lawn. If they don't do their chores, they don't earn their privileges, so if they want to watch TV, have their cell phone or play on their games console they'd better get those tasks done in time. It's all part of the principle of learning that nothing comes in life unless you earn it.

MAKING MISTAKES IS OK

These days, many parents try to shield their kids from making any mistakes, but in the long run, that does no good. All decisions come with consequences attached, and if kids don't learn that they can make the wrong choice every now and then, and learn how to deal with the consequences of those choices, how will they ever manage in the adult world?



QUITTING ISN'T AN OPTION

If your child starts something but then wants to quit straight away, that's simply not allowed. Lots of parents give in to their kids the moment that they decide they want something and then are equally happy to just let them drop it instantly. Not in the old-school way of parenting. If your kid chooses something they see it through, whether that be a semester of gymnastics training or a banana.

BEING INDEPENDENT

Lots of modern parents have fallen into the trap of doing everything for their kids. It's understandable. We love our children and want things to be easy for them, but actually forcing them to be more independent is just being cruel to be kind. You won't always be around to help out when they need their jacket fastened or their teeth brushed, and when they're older, they'll need to learn to deal with much bigger problems on their own – after all, you won't be around to call their boss when they're having a problem at work will you?

FOLLOWING THROUGH

This is one of the hardest old-school parenting tips to follow, but in many ways it's the most important. If you threaten something, you need to follow up on it, no matter how much hassle that'll be. If your kids are fighting and you say you'll send them to bed if they don't quit, and they choose to carry on hitting each other anyway, they need to be aware that they will definitely end up in bed – no arguments, no way outs. It may seem harsh, but remember that one day if they don't do what their boss tells them, they'll be out of a job.



Being a parent is one of the hardest jobs there is, but sometimes the old ways are the best. These few old-school tips will help to make sure that your kids grow up to be independent, hard-working and responsible, and you can't ask for more than that. ●

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR WINTER



I

It's often hard enough to put down their electronic gadgets and out into the fresh air at the best of times, but when winter comes around and the temperatures drop, getting them off the sofa can be even more challenging. However, there are plenty of fun outdoor activities that you can do as a family now that the cold season is here, so here are some of the top ideas to get your and your kids out in the great outdoors this winter.

GO ON A TREASURE HUNT

Your kids are sure to love going on a treasure hunt, even if it's just to their local town. Some places have online treasure trails which you can download to your smartphone or print out, but you can make your own just as easily. Simply take photos of buildings and landmarks near where you live and head out with the kids to find the locations. You can make it easy for the little ones or harder for older kids. It's a great way to foster co-operation between siblings and you can earn yourselves a reward of your choice at the end of the day.



“ONE WAY TO ENCOURAGE YOUR KIDS TO JOIN YOU ON A WALK IS TO TAKE A STROLL AROUND YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO SPOT HOLIDAY LIGHTS.”

HAVE A SNOW DAY

Who doesn't love getting out in the snow and playing with the white stuff? Whether you're a kid or a kid at heart, there's nothing more fun than making snow angels, having a snowball fight or building an igloo together. If you're lucky enough to have snow in the winter where you live, you could try ice skating or sledding on the hills, and who doesn't enjoy making a snowman? Even better, why not try painting the snow in your back yard? Simply add food coloring and water to a spray bottle and then head outdoors to paint your own colorful snow pictures!

TAKE AN EVENING WALK

One way to encourage your kids to join you on a walk is to take a stroll around your neighborhood to spot holiday lights. Make it your mission to find the best dressed house, or count how many houses you can see with snowmen in the garden – it's easy to think up educational activities to turn your walk into a fun way of learning.

HAVE A WINTER PICNIC

Most people think that picnics are purely a summertime activity, but actually it can be good fun to eat outdoors in the winter too. Dress appropriately for the weather and pack some tasty warming treats such as soup and hot chocolate with marshmallows. Even better, you won't have to battle with other families for the best picnic spots!

TRY BIRDWATCHING

Birdwatching can be just as much fun in the winter as it is in the summer, and you can attract them to your garden by making some homemade bird feeders from peanut butter, pine cones and bird seed. Hang them around your outdoor space and then keep an eye out for the different varieties of birds which come to enjoy the tasty treats. Why not try photographing them or drawing pictures to display later?

Make Winter an even more fun time for the whole family by trying some of these exciting ideas, and make the most of this time of year. ●




PART III

BY DZULKIFLEE TAIB

GIVING MY KIDS THE KNOWLEDGE TO
BUILD THEIR OWN FUNDS IN THE FUTURE

Disclaimer: *Before I start, I would like to put on a disclaimer that I am no way a financial advisor and information covered in this article is purely based on my own research from publicly available sources and experience which may be biased due to my own individual opinions. Please seek your own professional advice before doing any kind of investment and be aware that materials covered is of an extremely high risk nature and to be used at your own discretion.*



Imagine if you have a time machine and can travel back in time, what would you tell your younger 10-year-old self?

That's the kind of thinking that has been playing in my head over and over again, not for me, but for my kids. Of course, a time machine might never be a possibility for them in the future, hence I would need to pretend to be their older selves and tell them on their behalf. Other than always be nice to your parents, insert smiley here, with the current bullish nature of cryptocurrency, I would think the best thing that they could be told is to learn as much about cryptocurrency as possible - to the extent that they can become financially independent in the future. The keyword here is financially independent (as opposed to being wealthy). I think there is difference between the two. Being financially independent is all about having the freedom to do what you want to do in life without money being a restriction. If you want to change the world by

giving financial aids to needy people where it matters most, you can. If you want to travel around the world and learn how human beings around the world are all connected, you can.

I believe, cryptocurrency can play a big part of being financially independent. I am not just saying this because I am bias but I've observed this through the numerous encounters with people whose lives have been changed for the better by cryptocurrency. It is hence my duty, I believe to help my kids build their own funds, no matter how small to begin with, so they can be better off and financially independent in the future.

There is a challenge though. How do you explain to your kids the concepts of cryptocurrency when they hardly even know the economics of the monetary system? Also, at the time of writing this article, my kids are 11, 9 and 4, so there are all relatively young, especially the 4-year-old!

After some planning, I've decided to impart the knowledge of being financially independent using Cryptocurrency in 6 steps.

1. EXPLAIN WHAT BITCOIN IS

I guess, like anything you want to teach you kids, the first step is to maybe just focus on the most simplest thing first. In the world of cryptocurrency, this is obviously Bitcoin. My approach is that I will explain to them that Bitcoin is just another form of money You can use it to buy things with and also when you sell your things, you can get paid using Bitcoins for them.

2. EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF CAPITAL GROWTH.

I guess, like anything you want to teach you kids, the first step is to maybe just focus on the most simplest thing first. In the world of cryptocurrency, this is obviously Bitcoin. My approach is that I will explain to them that Bitcoin is just another form of money You can use it to buy things with and also when you sell your things, you can get paid using Bitcoins for them.

3. EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF INVESTING TO GET A RETURN

I believe the approach for this is to build on the above STEP 2, and to tell them that if you “invest” 1 Bitcoin this year, next year you might have 2 Bitcoins! And expanding on 2 above, you can tell them instead of 2 Toys you can buy 4 toys because you might have twice the number of Bitcoins! So, bottom line, both capital growth and investment are important.

4. OPEN UP A WALLET FOR EACH ONE OF THE KIDS (PARENTS NEED TO HELP HERE)

Thank god for the fact that anyone can open a Bitcoin wallet without filling up forms like in the banks. And that is also provided that the bank you are going to allow minors to have their own bank accounts! For each of my kids, I intend to have an offline Trezor wallet and a corresponding online hot wallet. I would keep the Trezor safely and me and my wife can help operate it for them. All they need to know is that there is a wallet for “long-term” investment, like the bank savings account and there is a wallet for short term investment, like the one that people carry with them daily. I would go further and teach them about how to use their hot wallet. I guess with the 4 year old, I would have to help him use the wallet as he will be too young to use any computer application! My 11 and 9 year old girls are quite web and mobile savy so I wouldn't think it will be hard to teach them how to use an online hot wallet like the blockchain.info wallet.

5. FUND YOUR KIDS WALLET WITH A LITTLE BIT OF BITCOINS TO START OFF WITH

I would then go ahead and fund their wallet on their behalf. I will tell them that I am lending those Bitcoins to them and when they have enough Bitcoins that they make via investment, they can return those Bitcoins to me. I guess the minimum funding that would be needed is USD \$100 each as that is what is the lowest amount of investment that you can do on Bitconnect, which I will use as a starting point to show the practical part of STEP 3. You can also show them the practical part of STEP 2 by simply showing them once you have funded their wallet that the dollar value of exactly the same number of bitcoins have appreciated over time.

6. SHOW THEM HOW TO USE BITCOINS THEY “EARN” TO BUY REAL WORLD ITEMS

This is the important part as you can incentivise them by showing them that the extra Bitcoins they earn can be converted into real money that they can use to buy things they want. I would probably be their “localbitcoins.com” and exchange real world fiat money with their bitcoins.

I believe by doing the above 6 steps, it would be enough to start my kids off with their fund. I would also of course tell them from time to time to send some bitcoins into their Trezor wallet address and tell them probably that whatever on the Trezor cannot be used till they turn 18. I guess once we do a few cycles of STEP 6, it will encourage them to

explore further about cryptocurrency and we can possibly teach them new concepts like mining and other alt coins. Whichever the case, I think I can safely know that my kids will have “some” amount of Bitcoins when they turn 18 and who knows what the price of BTC will be then! Wish us luck! And good luck to you as well! ●





Sam Tydeman

Sam Tydeman is a 30 something mother of two girls and an avid book reader. She has read to both girls every single night since they were babies and this has meant that they are absolute book worms. Her favourite book as a child had to be Pongwiffy, A witch of dirty habits!



Sunday Simmons

Sunday Simmons is a freelance writer, indie author and mother of three. She specializes in entertainment writing and music journalism, and has a passion for geeky things – from comics, to movies to anime!

GEEK PARENTING RECOMMENDS

BOOKS FOR JANUARY

BY SAM TYDEMAN

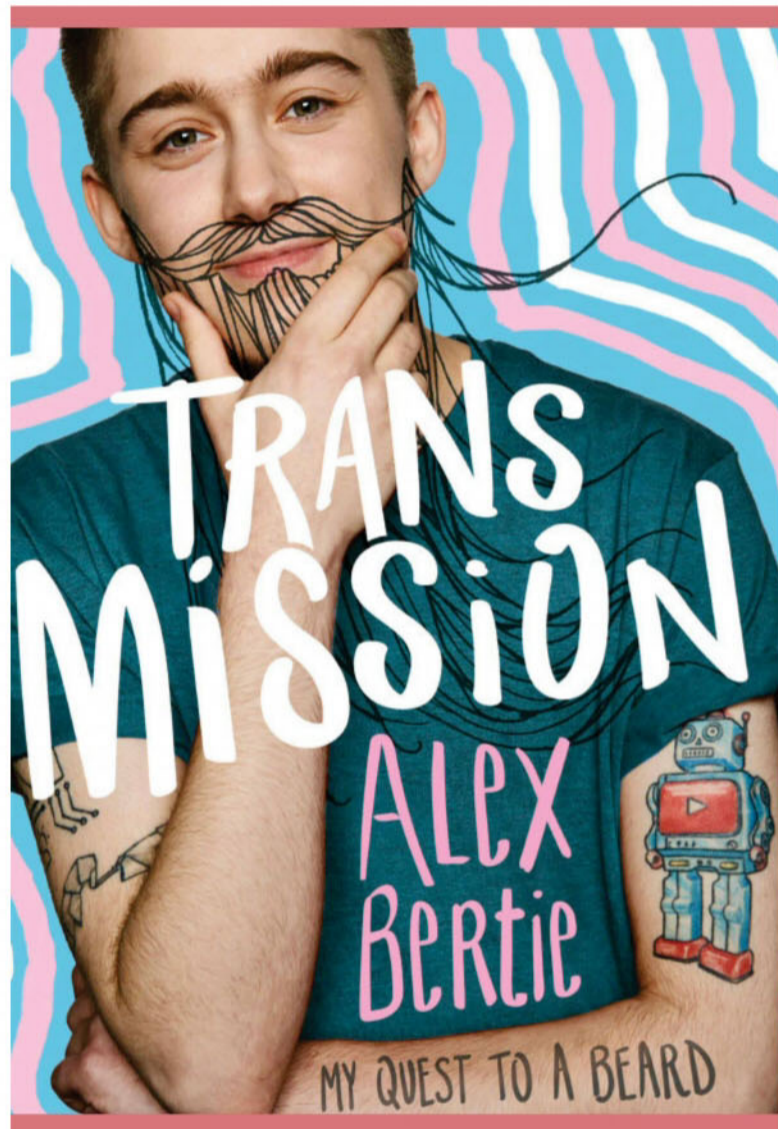
With a new year comes the opportunity for a bit of a new start. Why not make it the year for trying out some different books and encouraging your child to do the same? Kids can become a little stuck in a rut when it comes to reading, and they often reach for the same stories rather than try something new. You can change this up for January with some of our awesome book recommendation list.



The Polar Bear Explorer's Club

By Alex Brown
(Ages 9+)

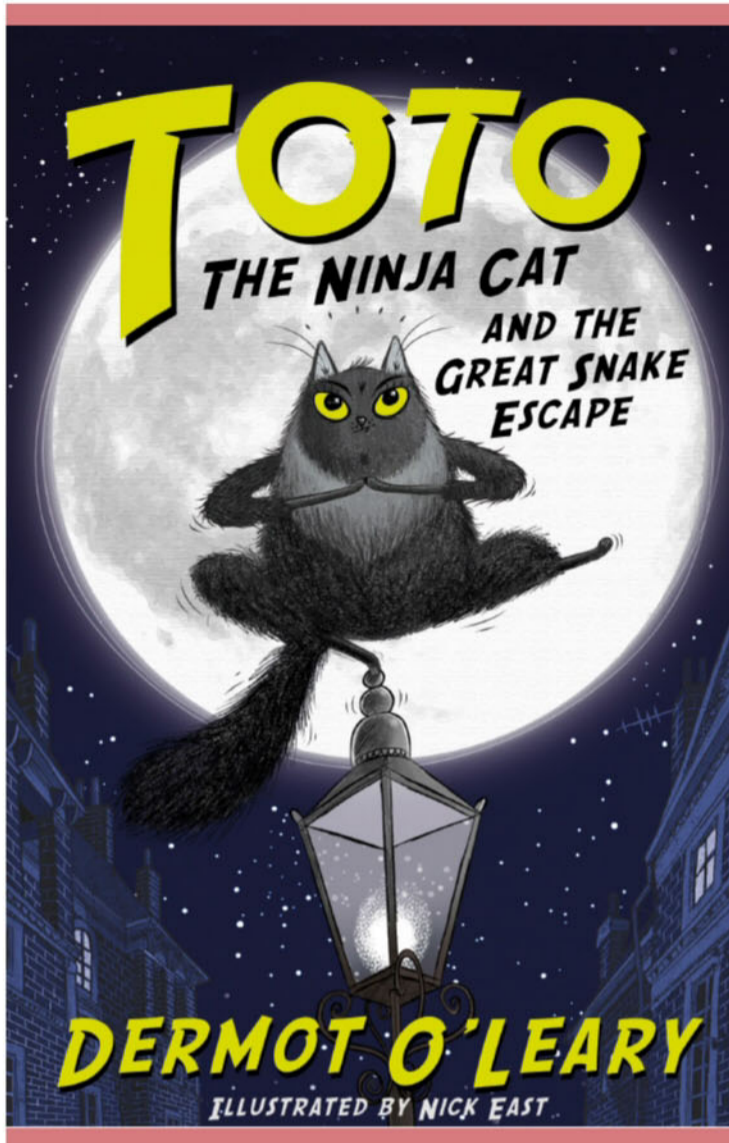
There are plenty of children out there that love nothing more than the idea of becoming a world famous explorer. Which means that this exciting story is going to be ideal. It covers the story of Stella Starflake Pearl and her three fellow explorers as they head off to trek across the Iceland and discover more about this frosty land. There is much more there than they ever anticipated seeing and the story quickly turns with the three explorers becoming separated and trying to cross the isolated wilderness alone!



Transmission

By Alex Bertie
(Teens)

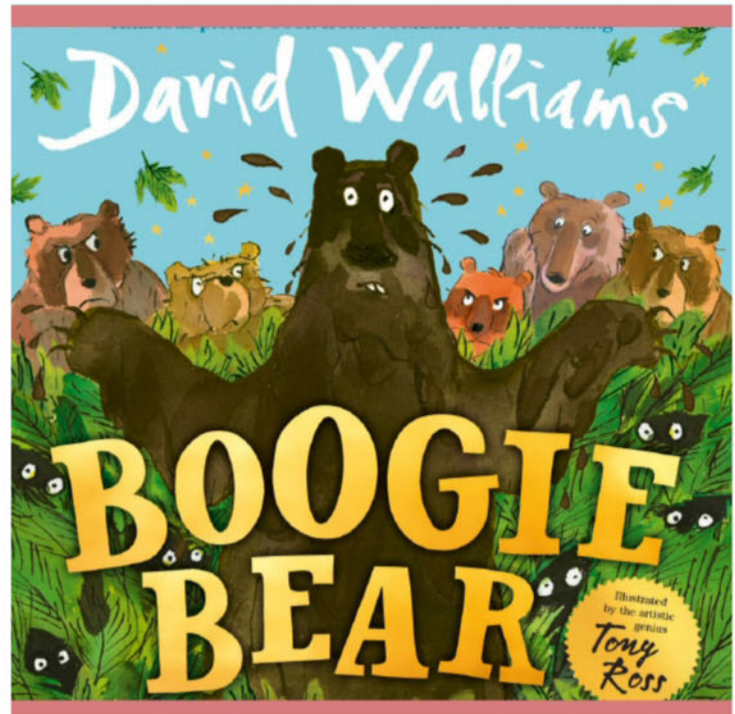
Growing up in this modern world is very different to how it may have been just a generation ago, and this means that kids need to have a much broader tolerance for those around them. This is something that is down to us parents to teach them and it is a vital skill for all people to learn. This is why we think that this particular book may be a great idea. Written by Alex, a female to male transgender man, it tells the story of how Alex has had to deal not only with his own feelings but also the world around him too!



Toto the Ninja Cat and the Great Snake Escape

By Dermot O'Leary
(Ages 5-8)

Who doesn't love the idea of a Ninja cat? This is definitely something that seemed to appeal to Dermot O'Leary so much that he decided to write a story all about it. Toto, lives with her brother Silver in a posh townhouse in London. To most Toto is a cat that, being almost blind, lives her life out at home. However, the real truth is that she has learnt a whole host of Ninja skills during her early life. By day they may relax, but by night, Toto and her brother head out on a number of amazing adventures. One that even has them dealing with an escaped King Cobra straight out of London Zoo.



Boogie Bear

By David Walliams
(Preschool)

David Walliams has made somewhat of a name for himself of late with his literary offerings. One of his newest, and most animal themed has to be Boogie Bear. A picture book style tale of a Polar Bear who finds herself in a rather strange land after she falls asleep and travels to a distant place where things are not quite as she is used to. This particular book is ideal if you want to ensure that your child celebrates difference and understand that we all can't be the same!

So, whether you want to enjoy the tale of an almost Daredevil like kitty, a person on a very special journey or perhaps a bear that finds themselves in an odd world, these are definitely the books to try out!

| Entertainment

ENTERTAINMENT FOR JANUARY

BY SUNDAY SIMMONS

Action animation first made an impact on me during the seventies with the likes of *Battle of the Planets* making the mini-me wish I was part of that fantastic dynamic. Throughout the eighties and nineties this style of cartoon burgeoned in popularity with *Thundercats* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* leading the way. Today, we're ringing in the New Year with some totally awesome action cartoons from the early noughties, perfect for action heroes old and young!

Join us every month for great recommendations both new and old perfect for the geeky family!



Totally Spies (2001-2014)

Teen girls fighting crime isn't new, but *Totally Spies* is definitely an outstanding offering from the turn of the new millennium. Following the adventures of Sam, Clover and Alex, three seemingly regular high school girls who double as super spies, *Totally Spies* is fast paced, action packed, and bags of fun. The animation has an anime style feel to it, and that's certainly added to the appeal of this long running series.

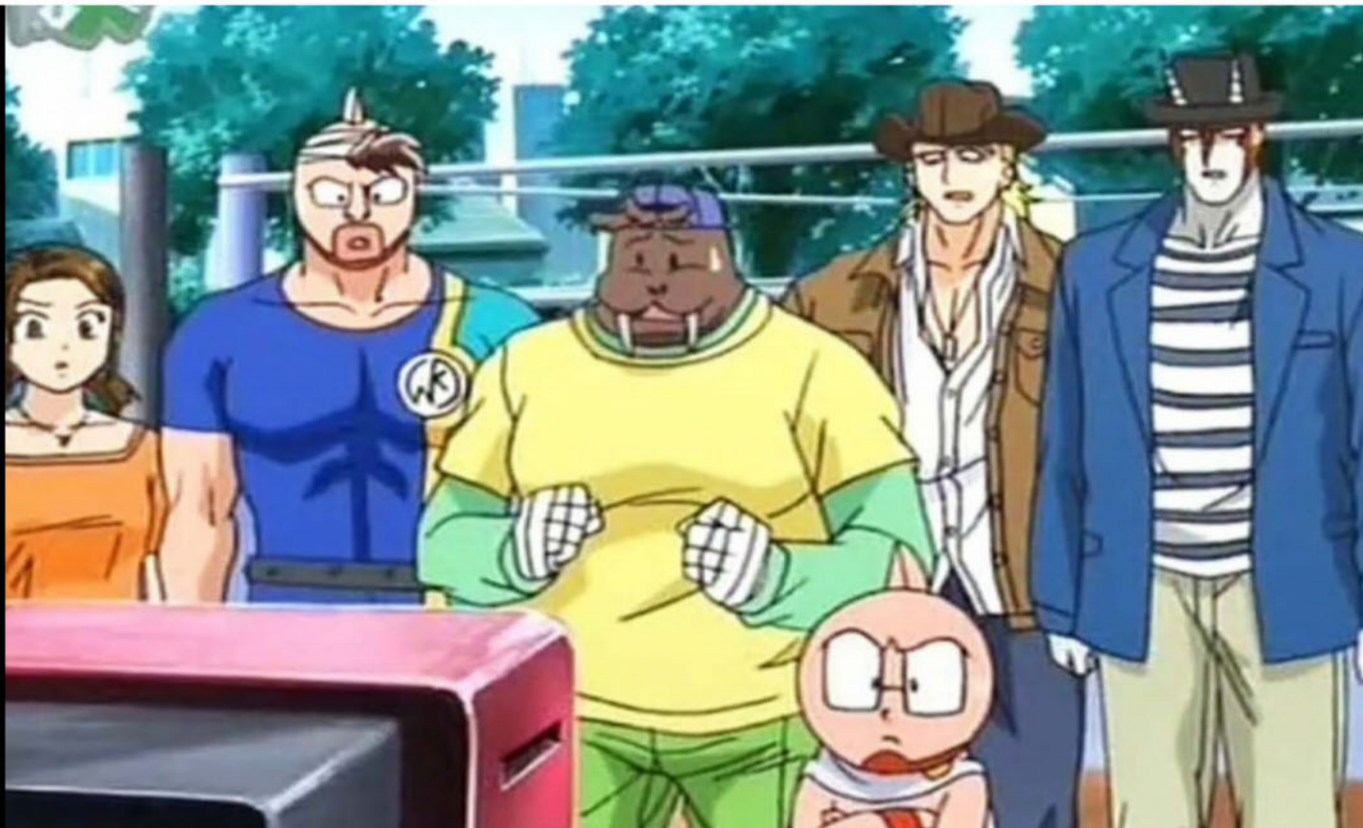
Combining the stresses of everyday school and homework with secret espionage assignments isn't easy, but there's plenty of humour injected into this storyline, making it appealing even for older kids. If you've seen and enjoyed *Sailor Moon*, then it's likely you'll love *Totally Spies*, as it has the same enjoyable formula just brought into an American high school setting. Introduce your spies in the making to *Totally Spies* on Amazon Video today!



American Dragon: Jake Long (2005-2007)

Disney's American Dragon is a sneakily good cartoon, and let me tell you why. Take an Asian/American boy living in modern day New York City, throw in some ancient Chinese mythical creatures, add a dash of good humour and some fantastic animation, and what you end up with is probably one of the most interesting high action cartoons of the early millennium.

The American Dragon in question is Jake, a teenage boy suddenly bestowed with mystical powers, making him the protector of magical creatures lurking amidst the everyday world. There's a lot to enjoy in this series, a good strong storyline and even a wise cracking side kick in the form of Fu dog. If you enjoyed Ben 10, then American Dragon will be right up your street, and you can stream it today on Amazon Video.



Ultimate Muscle – The Kinnikuman Legacy (2000-2002)

Son of the legendary wrestler King Muscle, Kid Muscle is the new superhero wrestler in town, and with his bulging biceps and the rest of the Muscle League, the Ultimate Evils don't stand a chance! Intrigued? You should be! This Japanese made cartoon translates well, and it's an absolute riot of a cartoon from start to finish.

Kid Muscle has inherited a gift from his father– the power of The Ultimate Muscle. Unfortunately, he's also a bit of a lazy teen! With sudden glory and responsibility thrust upon his shoulders, the action comes thick and fast in this cartoon, and so does the hilarity. It's a bit of a guilty pleasure, I must admit, but Ultimate Muscle has always been a hit with this animation fan and her family, so I highly recommend you try it on for size. You can grab this muscular offering on DVD today!

A parent's New Year's resolution guide

BY
AMANDA
WRIGHT

10 TOP TIPS

I

t's the start of the New Year, the new you. Things are going to be different in your household, oh yeah. Clothes will no longer gather on the floors of your children's bedrooms, you won't be late on the school run or be the parent who forgets it's the bake sale. You also won't be the one who turns up to a

meeting with your children's school homework instead of the PowerPoint presentation you were meant to have in your hand.

No.

This year things are going to be different. This year you're going to start off with a New Year's resolution list.

To help us all get back into the swing of things after the festive period and get things back on track, we've pulled together some New Year's resolution suggestions just for parents!

1

Know when work time stops and family time starts.

Sometimes it can be hard to switch off from work, you know the emails are mounting up, or that it will only take you 5 minutes (but more like an hour and 5 minutes) to finish some quick tweaks to a report, but we need to learn when to switch off. To put everything down and from that set time that you have agreed, it is family time, and the kids and your partner get you and your full attention.

2

Turn off social media, emails, even the TV!

Spend time together without any distractions. Yes I know it's hard, I mean the new series of Game of Thrones is at a crucial stage! But it is true what they say, when you start to turn off the distractions in your life, how much more focused you can be on what is happening right in front of you. To turn to `mindfulness`, you're more present and appreciative of the here and now.

3

The dreaded exercise.

Every year I say this, I must exercise more, cut out chocolate etc. etc., but finding the motivation to keep going is hard! But 2018 is a New Year and this year I'm getting the whole family involved! Making it more fun and doing things that the whole family can get involved in, like playing tag, or "stuck in the mud", rollerblading or going on more bike rides (when I actually think about it, there's probably a lot more I can do than what I originally thought and the kids will love it too!) Of course there's also some handy apps to help us get started such as the 7-minute workout or the couch to 5k (definitely needed after all of the Turkey sandwiches)! Or for those more hard-core athletes what about freeletics or why not join the Nike Training Club?



[7 MINUTE](#)



[COUCH TO 5K](#)



[FREELETICS](#)



[NIKE TRAINING](#)

4

Do more things together. Again sometimes it's hard to just get through the day never mind the week and the month, but it's time to make a conscious effort to do more things together. Like preparing and cooking dinner (and if you're in need of inspiration check our Big Oven or Yummly to help), reading together more and being silly together. Basically all of the things we love which sometimes we don't actively spend enough time doing.



[BIG OVEN](#)

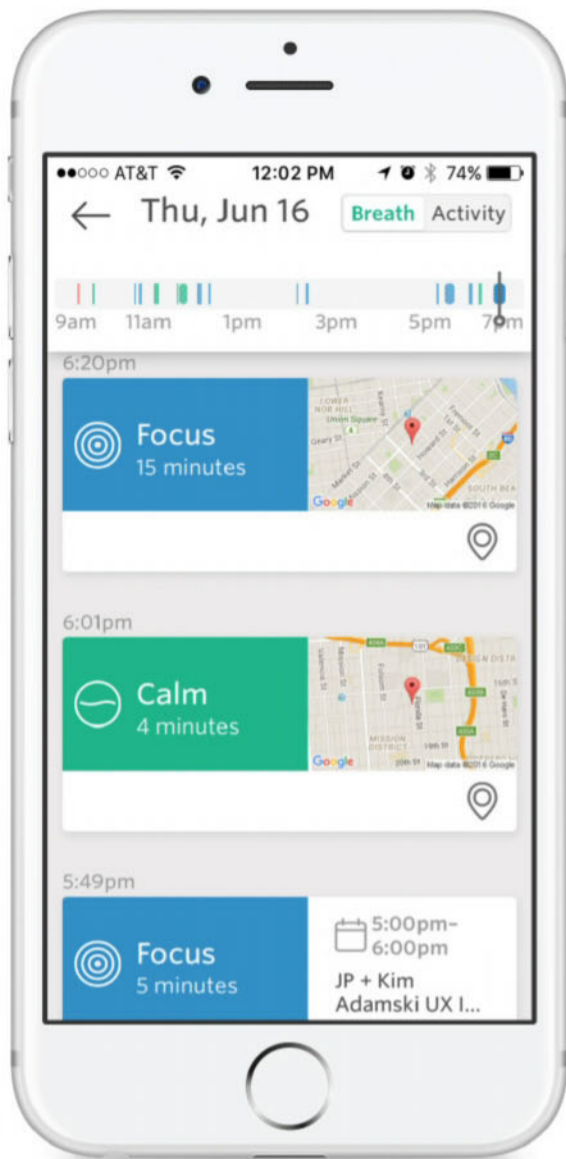


[YUMMLY](#)

5

To be more patient with everyone and everything! Yes patience can run thin when you've asked your kids to put their shoes on for the umpteenth time and they are still standing in just their socks, or when the dog eats the fresh batch of cookies you have just made (yes I am sadly talking from personal experience) and you just want to scream from the roof tops. But practicing the art of counting to 10, planning ahead so you have more time and looking to reason and talk things through more than shout and demand. To help us on our, keep calm mission, check out some great gadgets to keep our stress levels to a minimum, meditation devices like Spire or Muse, which look at monitoring your brain activity and then providing solutions on how to stay calm and helping you to set calm and focused goals. Or if you're all about keeping it simple then maybe the Legend of Zelda stress ball, could be just for you!





The Spire Stone can clip onto any item of clothing and monitors your respiratory patterns throughout the day to determine what state of mind you are in.



Muse is a brain sensor headband that tracks your brain activity as you meditate and uses this to determine the best guidance sounds to play e.g. the sound of rain in a rainforest, to better help you relax and lower the chances of distraction.



6

Better time keeping (with kids yeah right) but really! Instead of rushing everywhere, to make more time and more allowances for those unforeseen moments. To keep in control of the situation, and for everyone to feel less stressed when everyone finally arrive at the destination! We all need a helping hand when it comes to time keeping so why not use the organising app Cozi, or there's also nifty gadgets such as the doorganizer, so you can lift out everything ready for the next day, so hopefully you leave the house with everything you need!



7

Control the mess in the house! Living by the phrase “a place for everything and everything in its place”. To take the time to make sure everything has an actual place and not just carefully positioned in the corner of a room or shoved in a cupboard which must never be opened again. To be ruthless when sorting through toys and clothes and everything else we like to hoard! Of course with modern technology there's also help at hand with an AR app like Chaser (recently released by toy giant Toys R Us). Chaser works by scanning signs which have been scattered across each Toys R Us shop, which then unlocks content, like mini-games and other play experiences. AR technology like this allows kids to play games such as virtual basketball, building blocks and can even include a baby's nursery! All with limited mess! Or if you're looking for more traditional games with less mess, then why not consider Quiver, which is a virtual alternative to having toys and crayons everywhere!



[PLAY CHASER](#)



[QUIVER](#)

8

Go on more adventures. To create memories, to get more involved and all around have more fun!

9

Have more “me” time – and not feel completely guilty about this! Having more “me” time helps parents to come back and have more patience, feel less stressed, and more energised and just help us to get our heads back in the game!

10

Stop being so hard on yourself. Why? Because we’re all in the same boat. Parenthood is hard, and we don’t need to be harder on ourselves. We just need to put that hard day behind us and start the next day fresh!

Getting back into the swing of things after Christmas is hard work. Parenting 365 days of the year is hard work! Throw in work commitments, household chores as well as keeping up with family and friends it’s a wonder we’re not all stir crazy!

The start of a New Year is our opportunity to reflect on the past year and to look forward. Noting all of the things we want to do more of and some of the things we’d like to change.

I think if I can stick to maybe half of the things on the list, that’ll be a good start!

What are your New Year’s resolutions going to be this year? And will you actually stick to them? Let us know how you get on by tweeting us @geekparenting or send us a message on Facebook (of course not when its family time and no electronic devices are allowed!) ●

The Parent Guide: Sorting out *MMORPG's* from *FPS's*

BY DAVID LAYZELLE



Once we become attached to a certain type of computer game we tend to get stuck with it. We are generally comfortable with our choice of gaming and don't really want to change. But change is a good thing, and maybe you are missing out on some spectacular gameplay because it doesn't sound like

something you'd enjoy? And you have a gaming duty to allow your kids to evolve into their own genre, but how can you if you never play anything different. Never fear, just read through our breakdown of the main game types - with examples of some of the best in each category - and you'll soon be an armchair expert on gaming genres.



First Person Shooter (FPS).

One of the original genre's in computing, pointing big guns at foe and dropping some lead on them has been of the staples of gaming for decades. The form has its basis in the early space shooter Spasim back in 1974. Blocky and perspective-based, this space shooter paved the way for the computer physics that would drive a whole swage of increasingly exciting and blood-splattered scenarios. Following Wolfenstein 3D (1992 vintage) onward, the list of FPS's grew, with the single person mode being the most likely form of play. From 007 and Halo to Call of Duty, Bioshock and the FarCry series, FPS's are now entrenched in game playing across the whole range of consoles and devices. These games tend to be the ones that get the most bad rep in media outlets, and are generally reserved for older kids and above. However, more than a handful are more than just shooting and do in fact possess stories that make you think, such as the aforementioned Bioshock. If you like doing it on your own in darkened rooms, First Person Shooters are made just for you.



Stealth Shooters

Allied to FPS's but with the extra element of creeping around rather than going in with all guns blazing, Stealth Shooters are need a little more finesse. Some, like the Hitman and Splinter Cell series, have been around from some years and have transitioned from PC's to a range of consoles. One of the most lauded are the Metal Gear Solid games which for some are the pinnacle of the genre. Of late the standard fare has been joined by nerve-shredding experiences curtesy of Alien Isolation (although not technically a shooter, it still lends a lot of stealth mechanics) or The Last of Us which match gameplay with staggering visuals. Stealth shooters need a bit of thought, and planning to complete, which is the draw of them in the first place. If you like to pit your wits against a fairly smart foe, these are for you.



Combat Games

These are much like FPS's but in third person and without the guns, and you have to rely on your virtual fists and martial art moves to destroy your enemy. Big name games in this genre include Tekken and Mortal Combat, but on a more realistic level, there are also a plethora of wrestling games (though are these really part of the sports genre?). Big on controller movements and button combinations for special moves, if anything is going to give you RSI, it's combat games.



Sports Games

Sports are well catered for in the digital world, and regardless of whether you identify with football, snooker or darts, there is a game out that is capable of beating you with one digital hand tied behind its back. FIFA – the official game of the official game body – is an obvious one, but you can experience the thrill of competing from the seat of an F1 car to seemingly endless matches in table tennis. Stateside, there is always NBA 2K18 or if, for you, football means picking it up and running rather than kicking, and have a mid-game break that lasts two weeks at least, how about Madden NFL 18, however, if confusing gameplay and endless rules is your thing, there's a new Ashes game too. While we are on weird, is anyone up for some Backyard Wrestling?



Simulations

Combat games almost merge into Simulations, in which you take the controls of aircraft, racing cars, Tanks, monster trucks etc and make like you are really using them but without the inherent danger. The fun of these is learning the controls and then dealing with increasingly complex situations such as weather, other area users or combat conditions. Modern graphics have made this type of game increasing realistic - particularly with Flight Simulators - right up to replicating the thrill of sitting in a cockpit gazing at instruments as you fly the 23-hour Miami to Shanghai route in real time.



Adventure Games

If you like simulations, then its only a digital whoop and a holla over to Adventure games where you are the adventurer and your mission is to obtain, return, or deal with any number of McGuffins. The two top titles in this genre are TombRaider and the Uncharted series if you own a PlayStation but other titles – such as Prince of Persia – area available too. Adventure games often present you with a range of scenarios including action sequences, investigation of areas, and puzzle solving. Adventure games are fun but you sometimes need your brain engaged to work your way through them, a bit like a gaming version of a jigsaw puzzle. In recent years it is these games which have been begun to resemble Hollywood blockbusters with sweeping cinematic visuals and stories.



Role Playing Games (RPG's)

Since you are now imagining being Lara Croft or Nathan Drake why not go the whole way and take up a new lifestyle. These games let you become a whole new persona and drive a game based in a fantastical world populated with equally outrageous characters. RPG's have a certain geekiness that involve you completing quests (both large and small) in huge worlds. There are the fantasy worlds of Skyrim and Witcher, or the post apocalyptic landscapes of Fallout. These aren't the type of game that you just dip into.

If you like Anime, then you can get a gaming fix with a variation of the RPG, known as a Japanese Role-Playing Game, or JRPG, which has grown in popularity in the West since the 90s. Not so much a game where you pretend to be Japanese – with all the fun that brings – but rather role-playing games with more than an air of Japanese culture and artform. Classic examples include the Final Fantasy series, and the must own Suikoden Tierkries. Release your inner warrior – you know you want to.



Real Time Strategy (RTS)

Real Time Strategy games involve commanding entire armies as they besiege other armies and build whole civilisations in a highly compressed and relatively fact-free timeline. RTS's involve both creation and destruction in as many breaths as you build cities up only to have another army knock them down again, and have spawned many titles including Dawn of War and Age of Empires.



Finally...Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG)

If RPG's or RTS's sound like something you might like but aren't massive enough for you, why not take a step further into Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games experiences and really immerse yourself in a new life online. Involving massive armies of like-minded individuals, the biggest battle here is working out who is going to be Gandolf the Grey rather than a plain old Orc with a limited lifespan. Have you heard of World of Warcraft? Then you know what an MMORPG is.



In Summary

We all have a gaming comfort zone, but with a whole world of different types and titles out there, treat yourself and try something a little different, if only for the sake of your kids. ●

W

elcome to a New Year. If you are like my family, you have probably just entertained a handful of New Year traditions that you've done your entire life. Growing up, my Mom would always cook black eyed peas and spinach for dinner of New Year. The peas were supposed to usher in good luck and the spinach was to welcome good fortune all year long. If you've ever been in love, you've probably counted down the New Year with that special someone just so that you can share a kiss at midnight. I'm sure there are enough traditions to fill this entire magazine. In light of that, to kick off Level Up for 2018, I thought I share one of my favorite, geeky New Year's tradition: The New Year Time Capsule.

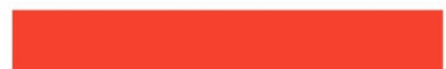
This geeky tradition revolves around a family time capsule. If you are unfamiliar, a time capsule is a collection of items of the time, like pictures, letters, and newspaper clippings, just to name a few. That collection is then buried for a set time and then one day resurrected to shock and amaze the people at what life used to be like. With this in mind, there is a great way to incorporate this into your family's life and add a new tradition to share each year. What I'm suggesting is that every year, you create a time capsule with your family to be opened and shared at the beginning of each new year. Taking inspiration from the classic Charles Dickens' novel, I'm calling this "The New Year Carol".

"THE NEW YEAR CAROL"

BY CHRIS WHITE



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“...THERE IS A GREAT WAY TO INCORPORATE THIS INTO YOUR FAMILY’S LIFE AND ADD A NEW TRADITION TO SHARE EACH YEAR.”

The Ghost of New Year Past

Most traditions that I’ve ever been a part of are all focused on what is coming in the new year. There is little reflection on what has just passed. A time capsule at its core is a reflection of what has passed. Some of the things that you might use here are current photos of the family, newspaper clippings, prices of gas or eggs or milk, or your family’s Christmas card. Another thing you should include is a family questionnaire. You can create this however you’d like, but a good example would be the person’s name, favorite color, favorite movie, dream job, etc. This turns into so much fun to look over what you put and how it’s changed in just year.

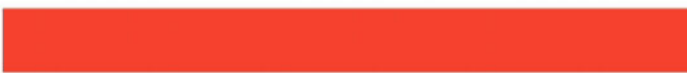
The Ghost of New Year Present

Presents are mostly synonymous with Christmas. Big lighted trees with packages knee high. Presents are not widely included in New Year’s celebrations, however a great addition to your time capsule would be small gifts for each family member. Each member of the family might buy one gift for another person in the family. If you have odd numbers, a parent can buy two or if you have a large family you could also do a “Secret Santa” idea and draw random names names. Either way, buy a gift for another family member and have it wrapped and prepared for the time capsule. It’s not about extravagance, just a simple \$5 or \$10 gift is perfect. It’s the fun of getting something a year later and seeing what it is.

The Ghost of New Year Yet to Come

This brings us to our last Ghost, the Ghost of New Year Yet to Come. We talked about collecting what has happened this year, the good and the bad. We’ve talked about sharing time in the present as a family and enjoying one another. However, you can’t truly celebrate a new year without the anticipation and excited for what’s to come. We live in a cynical and challenging world. Negativity owns the social media feeds and the local news isn’t much better. A great way to finish this New Year tradition is by writing a letter to yourself. You are going to seal this in an envelope only to be opened by you, so be honest. What are your aspirations for yourself in the new year? What goals do you have? What do you hope to overcome? Encourage yourself and challenge yourself to enjoy each day you get. No one person can control what is yet to come, so embrace the mystery and look forward to what your next year is going to bring.





I know this is a funny way of looking at a New Year's tradition but I hope you don't miss the point. Eating specific food or sharing a kiss doesn't change anything. What's important, especially raising a family, is that you share moments together that will resonate through the year. If you are looking for something new to do with your family this year, I encourage that you give it a shot. You might just find that it changes everything. Dickens ends *The Christmas Carol* with Scrooge proclaiming, "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me." I hope that you and your family have a fantastic new year and that you find a way to live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. ●

LumiKids Snow, Early Learning Play for Kids

Lumos Labs, Inc., iOS, 4+, Free

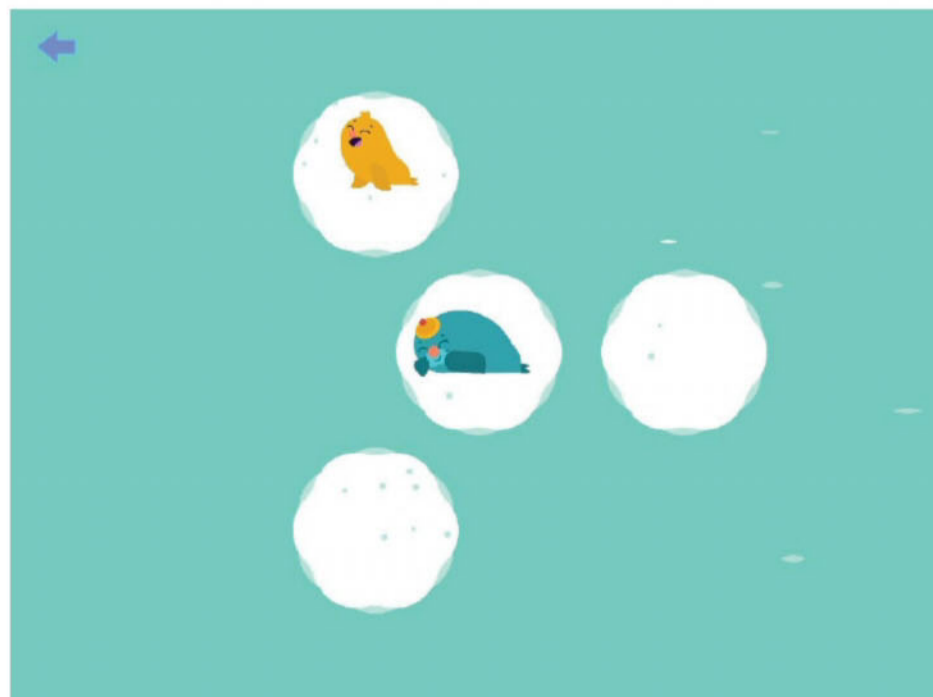
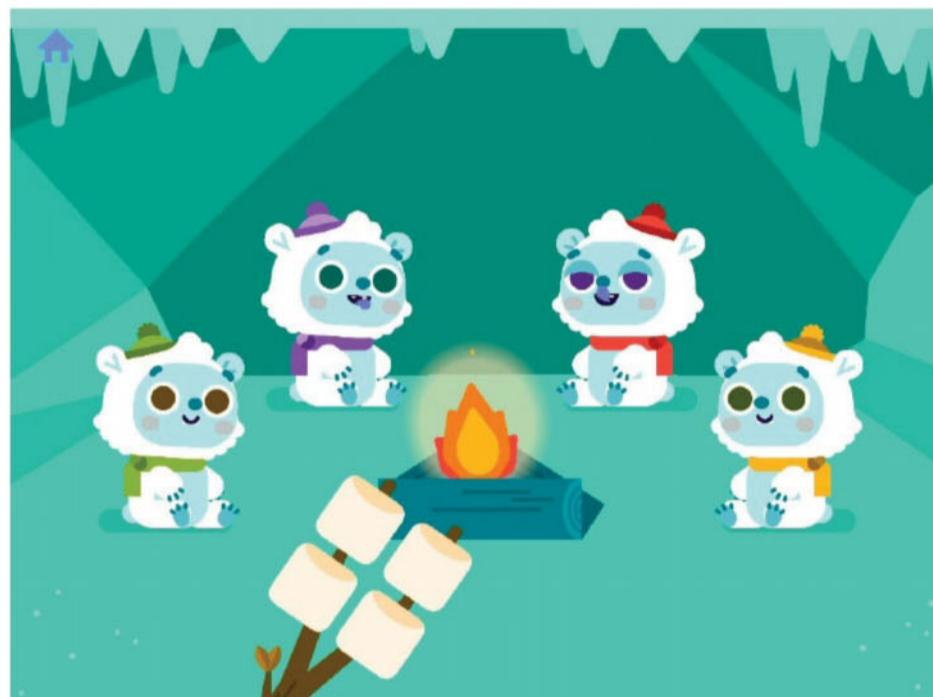
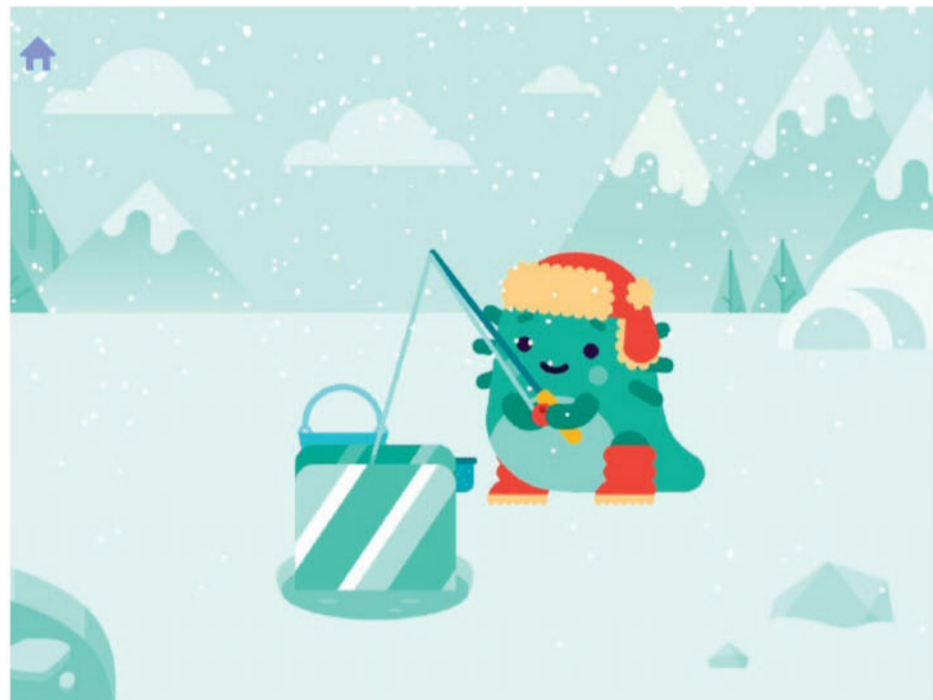
Digital Winter Wonderland!

LumiKids Snow is one of four games in the LumiKids range, all designed to be digital play grounds with intuitive activities to help kids develop skills from the alphabet to memory and problem solving.

Initially you need to create your parent account. This is used to send you information about your little one's progress each time they play the game. Next you set up their profile which is simply a nickname, gender, and month/year of birth.

There are some activities which are just for fun such as fishing for random objects, throwing snowballs or roasting marshmallows to feed adorable yetis. You can practice letter shapes by tracing paths for characters to sled their way through the alphabet, hearing the letter sound as they go. There's a game that involves helping a penguin get the balloon by, for example, placing a slope or bouncy castle in the right place.

Each game gets progressively harder in a manageable way for early learners. There are no IAPs to worry about and there is a useful 'parent zone' that gives you more information on the app.



VERDICT

Fun, cute game for basic cognitive learning. We just wish there were more games!

[DOWNLOAD FREE](#)



WE LISTEN!

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info@geekparenting.tv



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