

# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



## Thank goodness for Christmas

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**Kids today need Christmas more than ever. Not for the gifts and presents – most children get their fair share throughout the year. They need Christmas for the escape, and for the mystery and magic that is associated with childhood.**

There are few secrets left for kids these days. In this information- age they are bombarded with news and views of all sorts. Childhood was once a type of secret garden that was full of mysteries. The wider world was there to be discovered by children, rather than something that was thrust upon them. Kids are now more knowing, more street-wise and in many ways, more cynical than in the past.

Christmas for all its commercialism still has its mystery and magic. I liked the way my children would, dispensing with logic, keep the secrets of Christmas alive for as long as possible.

I remember how, my eldest as a young teen and his eleven year old sister, knew that the idea of Santa sliding down a chimney in a red suit was a tad nonsensical. Yet they didn't let on for the sake of their younger sister. Perhaps, once a year they still wanted to believe in the magic. Teenagers, like adults, are always on the lookout for activities that anchor

them back to their childhoods.

The real strength of Christmas lies in its use of rituals. Most families develop a strong sense of ritual at Christmas. My own family's rituals that evolved over two decades, are now entrenched in my children's psyches as they move into adulthood. One, in particular, is so insistent that we keep certain Christmas traditions in place that she has become the family Christmas organiser. She's not leaving anything to chance!

Christmas for kids is all about anticipation. From a commercial sense, Christmas starts in November and slowly builds up toward the Big Day. Much of the anticipation is built around the receiving of presents.

As a parent you can build a sense of anticipation and broaden kids' focus away from the notion of receiving presents and gifts. Christmas gives you a chance to build a sense of generosity in your kids and also to develop their appreciation for family traditions and rituals. You don't have to wait until Christmas Eve for the rituals to kick in. You can start earlier by involving kids in the whole build-up to Christmas.

**Here are five simple ideas you can use right now to switch your kids on to Christmas:**

1. Put up your own advent calendar at the start of December. Even better, get kids to make their own.
2. Get kids to clear out their cupboards of toys, clothing and items they don't need. They can pass them on to someone who can use them.
3. Go with your children to choose a gift to donate to the local 'giving tree'.
4. Ask your kids to help you send your Christmas cards to your family and friends.
5. Adopt a Christmas tradition from another country. Do some research online or ask around for different traditions.

**Have a wonderful Christmas with your family!**

