Believe in Santa

Mother and Westonbirt head NATASHA DANGERFIELD writes about the importance of Father Christmas and the imagination

J. M. Barrie once wrote that “The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it.” For a group of children in Derbyshire that moment almost early when the local priest was a bit too fulsome in his explanation about the man in the red suit. So much so that the headmaster reassured the year three pupils that he had “personally spoken to Father Christmas.” If you still have children under eight, there is every possibility that you, as an adult, still have access to this world of magic. From how Father Christmas manages to get round the world in 24 hours (1,124km/sec – more than 3,900 times the speed of sound), to just how does he fit so many presents on his sleigh; their questions make for some fun conversations. You are still living in that lovely world in which fairies and pixies reside and where the children feel safe and valued by the world in which they live. It allows children, who become young adults, a time to have developed a curious and questioning mind. It creates story, play and allows a break from the mundane. The skills one learn as a child never go away. Everyone knows adults who can tell stories for hours, ones with an imagination, ones who have those sorts of jobs we dream of. Wait, are you dreaming, or just day dreaming – you see the magic is still there!

The great German writer Goethe said: “Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.” We should never forget we once believed in Father Christmas, believe... that this gives us.

As parents mandantly prepare for December 25 with last-minute shopping, the inevitable forgetting of the sprouts and then the work through the night to wrap the stocking gifts and throw some semblance of a ‘Nigella’ turkey in the oven, take a moment to remember that magic of Father Christmas.

As a headmistress, I remind the students at Westonbirt as often as I can that they should think that the impossible is possible. Had they not had a chance to do that as children, my job would be much harder. As a mother I know how important it is to have that belief in the impossible.

Sometimes it is the adults who need to be reminded and so this Christmas, believe... you never know what might happen.

Family Matters

SASHA BROWN, of Community Family Care, talks ‘time out’

‘Time out’ needs to be predictable and consistent. It needs to follow on from misbehaviour in order for your child to link them. Your child should know if they misbehave and you say ‘time out’, it will happen.

Be positive

When ‘time out’ is over, it’s over. Move on to focus on the positive behaviour your child displays and give praise as soon as possible after time out.

Community Family Care, based at Stauton, Gloucestershire helps families, children and young people in need of additional support. It seeks to improve parents’ confidence, help with routines to get children to school, or more complex support dealing with challenging behaviours at home. The work it’s staff carry out includes peer mentoring and life coaches for young people, and family support programmes.

www.communityfamilycare.co.uk

Ask Audrey

Have you got a question for Audrey James? Email(at)audijames.co.uk

Why am I still free and single?

Q I’m about to turn 30 but find myself single. It seems every time I meet someone, I end up pushing them away. I don’t think this is a problem but I increasingly feel there’s something wrong with me. Is my desperation to find a partner driving people away?

Thank you for being so open about your desire to have a partner in your life. You are not alone in this wanting to be in a relationship.

I hear you feel there’s a void in your life because you’re single. When you are experiencing a gap in our lives we try to fill it with something else. Some people turn to work, food, sex, buying things, drink and drugs and other things.

From what you say, it appears that you are aware of what you are doing – “I end up pushing them away.” You have briefly described a cycle you find yourself in. I wonder what might have happened in your life, in early childhood or later on, that might be causing you to sabotage a potential relationship.

Any potential relationship is an opportunity to connect with someone in a healthy way. “I increasingly feel like there’s something wrong with me.” To hear this makes me feel quite sad.

Whose voice do you hear telling you this?

I ask because of the damaging effect, whether implicit or explicit, some parents or primary care-givers can leave on the children in their care.

Maybe it’s not your desperation to find a partner, but rather your fear of rejection that pushes them away before they can do it to you. My heart goes out to you and I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you.

Twenty years ago, I came across a book, Knight in Shining Armour. The title might sound a bit gimmicky but I learnt some really valuable lessons that I continue to share with individuals who find themselves single though they have a strong desire to be in a committed relationship.

Your dilemma has reminded me of this book. One of the metaphors the author uses is that of a building site under construction.

We pass boarded-up building sites daily, not knowing exactly what is going on but we do know workmen are behind the boards, working hard. After six months, there’s a big reveal as the work is finished.

Before you start to look for a meaningful relationship I encourage you to be under construction. Prepare yourself for a relationship by taking some time – six months if needed – to work on you.

Engage the help of a professional to help explore your fears of what might be causing you to push a potential partner away.

Audrey James is a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling and the founder of Restore Counselling Service, a private practice based in Barton Street, Gloucester. Visit restorecounsellingservice.co.uk or call 07717 633846.