



Christmas Magic

Channel your inner child this holiday and catch the wonder

By Kelli Wheeler

Love Christmas. Love my kids. Loved Christmas way before I had kids. Love Christmas even more now that I have kids. Those who know me wonder if that is even possible. Yes, it's been hinted that I might need to look into a Christmas Overdecorators Anonymous meeting.

It started simply enough—but don't all addictions? First, I saved my favorite Christmas decorations from when I was a kid to one day delight my own children with. Then, when I first generated disposable income of probably about \$20, I started spending it at craft fairs, buying Christmas decorations that my future family would come to cherish. Now, come drive up to my house and dare to walk in my front door and you'll bear witness to how I have spun out of Christmas decorating control. I swear: I do it for the children.

But it's not just the decorating. I love the whole feel of Christmas—everything from seeing nature decorating itself for the holidays with ripe red holly berries and snow-flocked pine trees to the comforting rituals of walking into any store and hearing Christmas music wafting through the air or seeing whole neighborhoods come aglow in festive lights. But most of all I love absorbing Christmas through the giddy, wondrous excitement and squealing anticipation of children.

When you view Christmas from under 5 feet and through eyes that

still find wonder in an ant crawling across your path, something magical takes hold. Christmas takes children to a place where the abstract concept of God and Jesus makes sense and becomes tangible, where believing in Santa is as natural as breathing, and the commercialization of the holidays isn't exasperating but glorious.

I think Christmas for me has become about retaining the magic I felt for it as a kid. If for only one month of the year I can make responsibility loosen its grip, worries roll off my back, and pure joy for the simple things in life blossom again, then I'm diving in from the high dive.

I love Christmas. I love passing on my love of Christmas to my kids. I love hearing them screech with delight when I unpack their own personal Christmas trees for their rooms.

And you know what? I'm taking my family with me. I want my children to see that being an adult doesn't mean you lose your wonder at the world: It means you share your wonder. I want to remind my husband that life isn't just about paying the bills, but paying attention to precious moments

that in an instant slip into the past. And Christmastime is when I'm in my element—when I remind myself that being a kid again, and all the fascination that goes with it, is just a state of mind.

If I could be a kid again and make a wish like I used to on fluffy dandelions, blowing with everything I had in me to make sure every seedpod would fly off so that my wish may come true, I would wish for adults to not lose the magic of Christmas. To see it through not just the eyes of a child, but their own eyes as if they were still a child.

It is so easy to get caught up and lost in the grown-up world of Christmas. Trying to hold to a budget for gifts, forgoing outdoor lights because it's too much of a pain, cursing the crowds and long lines at the mall, you may catch yourself saying, "I'm ready for it to be over."

Just remember that, as parents, we have impressionable little charges following our cues, both intended and implicit. Don't you think the best gift you could give your child is the belief that even as adults Christmas will still be magical and exciting—that its eager anticipation will not be lost as they grow up?

So if you haven't already done so, I urge you to channel your inner child and re-create what made the holidays special for you as a kid. Maybe it's baking cookies together as a family. Or playing holiday music from December 1 through the 31st. Maybe it's taking the kids Christmas shopping for the rest of the family. Or decorating every room in your house so there's not an empty tabletop,

a barren wall or a cute craft-fair decoration left to buy—oh wait, that's me.

I love Christmas. I love passing on my love of Christmas to my kids. I love hearing them screech with delight when I unpack their own personal Christmas trees for their rooms. I love seeing them race around the house trying to find that perfect spot for the musical Santa. I have died and gone to heaven when I hear my kids sharing their favorite memories from last Christmas and new ones being made this Christmas. And I could draw my last breath joyous and content when my babies say, "Mommy, when I get big I'm going to decorate my house just like you do for Christmas."

I'll save some chairs for them at the meeting.

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