



THE TOY BOX FUTURE...
DESIGNING A LIFE THE
KID IN YOU WANTED

Purpose

- To design a future based on symbolic meaning of toys/hobbies that made you happy when you were younger.
- The design will be based on activities participated by both parent and child (with parent serving as mediator and child as passive participant)
 - A script will provide parents with the steps to complete phases
 - Parents are vital to record the findings for the child to reflect on when their older
- The outcome is intended to allow a child once they turn 18 to reflect on the things that made them happy in their youth and connect that with options in their future, whether it's decisions about career, college, or smaller life choices.

Why

- When we are young, we surround ourselves with things that we enjoy but don't often know or understand why; the toys we play with make us happy and begin to help us develop skills, character traits, and values.
- Our toys have no conditions attached to them; they exist in the moment without requiring us to worry about their acceptance or if they are useful.
- When we grow up, we often lose this innocence and forget about the “things” that once we so important to us.

Set-Up

- Activities should occur naturally and when parents are ready to introduce toys and playing to their children; most activities should occur between ages 6-12.
- All successful activities and toys (once child is done playing with it) will be placed, either physically or metaphorically, in a toy chest and kept away until child is 18.
- Activities can be skipped or substituted based on parental decisions, cultural differences, or financial burdens.
- This guide will not be a source for child development or parenting but as a set of guidelines to assist parents in acknowledging important, symbolic toys and to keep a physical scrapbook on what to keep from childhood that will allow the child to reflect on what was once important to them and how they can use those memories to design their future.

First Toy

- Parent will identify the first toy their child is attached to.
- Script will guide parent and child on their first trip to the toy store (or sadly, Amazon)
 - Parent will allow child to chose their own toy (as finances will allow)
 - The child will then be monitored during play/metacognition
- If the child is happy playing with the toy, it will eventually go into the keepsake toy chest. If child is not happy, return to the toy store.
- Purpose is to allow the child to be able to connect to a toy and develop what could possibly be their first experience with unconditional fun and a memory that could be useful one day.

Bedtime Stories/Films

- When appropriate, parents will begin to introduce bedtime stories and appropriate children films.
- Script will include questions to ask the child:
 - What character was your favorite? Why?
 - How would you have done things different?
- Books that are identified as meaningful, either as favorites or least favorites, will be placed in the toy chest

LEGOs

- How does your child build LEGOS?
 - LEGOS can be substituted with other toys/hobbies that require construction/design
- Parent will observe if the child built the LEGO following instructions or if they created their own.
- A “finished” LEGO product is placed in the toy chest with the original package/instructions for comparison later on.

“Andy’s Toy Chest”

- For an on-going activity, the parent and child will watch “Toy Story,” “Toy Story 2,” and “Toy Story 3” when the child is age 6, 10, and 17 (to correspond with Andy’s age in the films)
- “Toy Story”-the parent will have a short discussion involved around the characters, specifically having the child identify characters that they like.
 - Parents can then buy the toy for the child to see how they play with it
- “Toy Story 2”-when the child is 10, a similar discussion occurs but more focus on the symbolism of the characters and if anything has changed.
- “Toy Story 3” will be a greater discussion during the opening of the Toybox.

Woody- leader, sensitive, intelligent, brave, emotional, creative thinker

Buzz lightyear- loyal, ambition, proud, impulsive, critical thinker

Rex- excitable, anxious, inferiority complex, sensitive

Hamm- knowledgeable, wise guy, technologically intelligent

Mr. Potato Head- outspoken, sarcastic, jealous, controlling

Aliens- loyal, grateful, live for the moment

Little Bo Peep- caring, sweet-natured,

Slinky Dog- loyal, durable

Sergeant (Army Man)- leadership, discipline, loyalty, pride, work ethic

Rocky Gibraltar-strength

Mr. Spell-verbal skills, intelligent

Lenny the Binoculars-vision

“Toy Box Leadership”

- To identify leadership skills based on the symbols of toys in “Toy Box Leadership” by Ron Hunter Jr. and Michael Waddell
 - Parents will identify over the years which toys the child plays with and have discussions regarding why they enjoyed playing with.
- Legos- Relationships
 - Slinky Dog-Vision
 - Play Doh-Mentoring
 - Yo-Yo-Creativity
 - Mr. Potato Head-Communication
 - Rubik’s Cube-Ethics
 - Rocking Horse-Efficiency
 - Light Brite-Illuminate to communicate
 - Weebles- Endurance
 - Green Army Men-Strategy

“Jabberwocky”

- Closer to age 12, a parent will introduce the Lewis Carrol poem “The Jabberwocky,” a nonsense poem about the killing of a monster.
- Parent will follow guidelines of an exercise developed by my former professor, Allan Hunter at Curry College, found in “The Sanity Manuel: Therapeutic Uses of Writing.”
- The exercise will result in the child drawing what they think the “Jabberwocky” is which can represent their fears or an obstacle in their life.

Other Toys/Hobbies...

- Board Games- developing strategy and “competitive communication”
- Family Trips- connectiveness
- Holidays- generosity of others, learning about giving, spirit
- Youth Sports- teamwork, individualism
- Superheroes- helping others, good vs evil

Using the past to design a future

Once the child has turned 18 and in need to make an important life decision, they will open their toy chest

The items in the chest will serve as a reminder of their past and childhood

They reflect on what all of these toys, interests, and activities once meant for them...

A more complete vision of what they want to do with their life will form...

If I Had This...

- In my toy chest would be...
- First Toy- Power Ranger action figures
- Bedtime Book- “Where the Wild Things Are”
- Movie- “The Land Before Time”
- “Toy Story”/ “Toy Box Leadership”-Green Army Men
- Holiday- Christmas lights I used to help my dad hang off our house
- Road Trip- a bag from apple picking up New Hampshire
- Board Game- Risk
- Jabberwocky- an elephant (unnecessary burden, my depression)

I Would Have Designed This Life...

- Green Army Men, Power Rangers, Risk seem to all connect with strategy, critical thinking, helping others
- Holiday, Roadtrip, “The Land Before Time” and “Where The Wild Things Are” seem to connect with community and connectiveness.
- My Jabberwocky represents my battle against depression and I see my fight as a sacrifice. I will battle the Jabberwocky so other’s don’t have to.
- I should have designed a life around public services or community involvement, such as the Peace Corps or a social worker.

Principles

- Designing a life
 - Listening to the kid in us can have incredible value for our future self
 - The things in our life have meaning even if we aren't aware of it
 - Find a balance between the curiosity of our childhood and the feasibility of adulthood
 - I can't get paid to play with Green Army Men but I can design a life around strategizing
- Scaffolding
 - The toys/activities serve a larger purpose-to design a life
- Everyone can be a creative thinker
 - Constraints in the form of only keeping toys/activities that will help design a life
 - Everyone can find something from their childhood that will guide their future