

Kids Have No Place at Protests

America is awash with protests right now. Thousands are taking to the streets – and it is not uncommon to see children among the crowds.

There is a practical reason for that. The ongoing coronavirus shutdown means it is hard for parents to arrange babysitting. But many parents also believe taking children to protests constitutes good childrearing. *Parents* magazine published an article titled [5 Tips for Protesting with Your Kids](#), which says, “Want to raise engaged citizens? It’s never too early to teach kids what it means to stand up for what’s right.”

I disagree. My children are ages five, three, and six months, and I won’t be taking them to any type of protest until they are much older. In fact, I try to shield them from the world of adult problems as much as possible. They are simply not ready to process certain things.

“As adults, we have ways of prioritizing our concerns, of seeing ‘the times we live in’ in various lights and through various contexts,” write Kim John Payne and Lisa M. Ross in their book [Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids](#). “Children don’t have the mental faculties to process a lot of information that way, especially information about issues and things far beyond their scope of reference. Too much information does not ‘prepare’ a child for a complicated world; it paralyzes them.”

This is not to say parents should shelter their children from anything bad. That would be impossible. From bumping their toes to encountering bullies at the playground, kids learn early on that life is not perfect.

Parents should strive to teach their children to process bad things in a way that is appropriate to their level of development.

In my family, that starts by carefully filtering what the adults tell the children. I had to tell my children a little bit about the coronavirus. I wish didn't have to, but it was the only way to explain why all their usual routines had been disrupted. "Yes, there is a sickness called coronavirus going around and that is why your ballet class is cancelled." But we leave it at that. No discussions of overcrowded hospitals or skyrocketing unemployment.

Exposing one's children to the difficulties of the world can be done in a softer, nurturing way from home. One easy way to do this is through books. In my family, we read together from a children's Bible every day. The Bible is full of stories about terrible events, but they are always presented in the context of a God who is sovereign and working out His plan.

I also read my children classic fairy tales. As [G. K. Chesterton observed](#):

"Fairy tales, then, are not responsible for producing in children fear, or any of the shapes of fear; fairy tales do not give the child the idea of the evil or the ugly; that is in the child already, because it is in the world already. Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon."

Lately, Hans Christian Andersen's story "The Snow Queen" has become a great favorite in our home. The story centers on a brave girl named Gerda who goes on a long, dangerous journey to rescue her best friend, Kai. My own daughter is currently five and I believe this story is resonating with her as we go

through this extended ordeal of the COVID-19 quarantine.

If children learn to process life's hardships in a way that is appropriate to their development, they will grow up to be strong and resilient. That will do far more to prepare them to make a difference in the world than dragging them to a protest.

—

[Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons-Jamelle Bouie, [CC BY 2.0](#)]

Image Credit: [Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons-Jamelle Bouie, CC BY 2.0]