

Epicurean Parenting

Post by “Root304” of October 1, 2023 at 1:57 PM

I just want to preface this thread by saying that I think there are many really great ways to parent children, but it can be a touchy subject. I hope that we can all respect and learn from each other.

I'm sure many of us are all of one mind that we shouldn't present myths as facts about reality, but I think tying mythos to imaginative play is one way to introduce mythical concepts to children. Imagination play is important at the critical young ages of about 2 to 7. ([Here's a Scientific American Article on this.](#)) The inevitability that my kids will at the very least be exposed to religious stories and ideas means I try to be proactive in introducing them to these concepts. Both of my kids are under 8 years old and I use folklore creatures in imaginative play to explore "magic" and "mystery" that they are already exposed to from the broader culture. I bring the kids half-way in on the subterfuge by having them take part in making the magical games playout for their sibling for example. A gnome, brownie or mermaid I feel is more approachable and not so mentally overpowering as Gods; because modern lore about them and the lore we homebrew, doesn't convey "power over" dynamics, but are more mischievous or have "power with" dynamics that models the sorts of social power I'd like my kids to exercise. (referencing [Mary Parker Follet's](#) work here) I see them both often grappling and playing with notions of "infinity" and huge numbers, and attaching an all-knowing, all powerful personality that could be angry with them to that sort of thought seems a bit cruel to me. Another upside to Epicurean theology here. Folklore creatures also tend to be more natural-world oriented which has drawn my kids' attention away from the magical worlds in media like video games and movies towards creating a little magic for them out in the natural world. So in this way I feel like I am teaching them that the magic that exists is what we create for ourselves and other people.

As for the afterlife, that one is a bit trickier as my oldest has a bit of death anxiety. So even though I generally tell them many things leading to the idea that we cease to be after death and the benefits of believing that, they do explore afterlife narratives. I think it's fair for a young one to entertain these idealistic notions in coming to terms with death. Dreams are often a big part of discourse with the kids so I will talk about how the deceased, as well as mythical creatures, can appear in our dreams, but I don't tie these things to anything supernatural. These things are part of the human experience, so I should talk about them as possibilities. Also, that we all change over time and our former selves "die" as we take on new roles or responsibilities in this life; hinting that this may explain some concepts about the afterlife. I suppose in these ways I have the kids entertain the possibility of idealistic myths, but also naturalize these ideas.

Don

That all sounds great! I am doing UU with my two as well right now, and we also try to do nature hikes and museums trips. 😊 Being intentional about meal time seems very Epicurean to me. I try to do something similar though we don't always have the time, schedule or energy to make it happen every night. We do try to make it special when we do eat at the table with less direct, dimmer lighting and have a candle going with some music. I'm reading a book about the Danish notion of 'hygge' (HOO-gah) which (as I understand it) describes the atmosphere of coziness and conviviality with good company that also encompasses ideas about lighting in a living or social space, and I am having fun trying to get the lighting in my house just right for meal time. 😊 Maybe another thread exploring that sometime...

Anyway, this is getting long. I'll leave it at that for some more back and forth before introducing any new ideas. Feel free to jump right in to more decidedly Epicurean parenting discussion. I will be gathering my thoughts on that for another post soon.