



Are you going to eat me? A real question posed to CLarol that you may need to answer.

Written by Carol Crooks aka CLarol the CLown. 2011

The October 2002 Parents magazine had a wonderful article explaining developmental stages of children based on age. In it they spoke with Norbet Herschkowitz, MD and Nancy Krogseng, Psy.D Cedars-Sinai in California co-authors of A good start in life: "Understanding your child's brain and behavior. Dr. Herschkowitz says

"that the rapid growth of your child's brain around the age of two directly relates to how they imagine and interpret situations. Coinciding with this is the growth, is a growing ability to attach emotions to events. Different regions of the brain are growing and shaping your child's ability to; remember and create memories, produce hormones which kick into high gear when they are frightened. All of these new brain functions will peak around age three and slowly lessen over the next 20 years. Dr. Krogseng says, that "the lines between reality and fantasy are blurry for toddlers- they can't always distinguish between the two."

OK, go back and read that paragraph over again. I can wait, I've got time. Finished? Ok.

Knowing what you now know about your young child's development at this stage of life i.e. 2-3ish indulge me a bit by putting yourself in their shoes.

Santa - we know is a fictitious character brought to life by well intentioned marketing types. A clown, costumed character of Toopy and Binou, Dora the explorer or any other fictitious characters all have a few things in common. They all look somewhat yet appear unlike any other "person" in the world. They all speak somewhat and yet sound unlike any other "person" in the world. They -as we know as adults- are supposed to be harbingers of fun, festivities, innocence and good will yet often instill terror and nightmares that can last until adulthood.

Being your two year old daughter or son these fictitious characters are real to you and when met in real life they are completely unlike anything they have ever EVER experienced before.

So here is the scenario: You and your child approach a clown at an event or party. Your child is beginning to be able to think thoughts such as; "Hmm what is this thing?" "What is this thing going to do to me?" Your child recoils in horror hides behind you, starts contorting with noodle like twists to get unstrapped out of their stroller and climb back over the seat, screams blood curdling screams "Are you going to eat me?" Yes sadly that is an actual quote from an actual child I've met as CLarol.

Unfortunately, at a very young age say 1-3years children are often unable to verbalize their fears so they react by crying, turning away or clinging to the closest parent. When I experience this as CLarol I often ask the parent to back up and away with their child. Proximity to the character i.e. the farther away alleviates some of the fear and anxiety. I often back away from the child myself and say bye bye (most kids understand bye-bye) so they know I'm going to be leaving them alone.

So now that you understand the physiology and psychology behind your toddler, it stands to reason that their imagination and emotions can run wild at the sight of a stranger or costume character or a clown.

Lots of other people know this. It's just as parents we get Parent Brain. We want to expose our children to all sorts of new and fun things. As parents we remember with our parental nostalgic memory not our visceral (oh yea I just used that word - I've got two university degrees you know let me repeat) visceral children's memory. If as parents we do have a really good memory of Santa or Mickey Mouse or a clown it is because we were old enough to understand they are a character and therefore keep a positive memory of a positive experience.

Want to read more about my personal three year old experience with a clown? Read CLarol BLog "[He is so little on tv why is he so big and scary in real life?](#)"

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