



So you wanna meet a clown?

Written by Carol Crooks aka CLarol the CLown 2011

Here are some tips to help create a First Time positive costumed character experience for your child.

- 1) Don't rush over to see "the Giant Purple Dinosaur" as soon as **you** see him. Stand back and take some time to let your child digest and register what it is they are seeing. Talk them through this experience.
- 2) Avoid pointing out the scary features. Highlight similarities between the child and the character. "Oh look at the clown's big feet, they are just like daddy's!"
- 3) Put on a positive face, but avoid getting too excited yourself. An excited reaction can mimic a fear reaction and it can be difficult for a toddler to tell the difference .
- 4) Avoid pushing your child up to any costumed character while they are strapped in their stroller. You the child's protector is out of sight and unable to protect him. Children have no defense or way out when they are strapped into a stroller. Likewise, when you are pushing a child in a stroller you cannot see their fearful or happy facial expression or reactions and can't respond accordingly. Stop, crouch down beside the stroller where your child can see you and repeat steps 1 & 2.
- 5) During playtime or at anytime with your child avoid saying things such as:

The clowns gonna get you.

Clowns scare me.

Bad Mickey etc.

This only perpetuates negative memories or feeling in the child. Plus you're just being nasty. Shame on you!

- 6) Avoid holding your child right up to the face of a costumed character. Well intentioned parents and grandparents often shove their child face to face with a costumed character, because "they" think it is cute or cuddly. Remember put yourself in the child's shoes/perspective/frame of mind.
- 7) Don't let a well intentioned but misinformed costume character run up to your child. Well intentioned professionals and non professionals do this because "they" think it is what they are supposed to do and what the children want. It is not. It is an invasion of personal space. Shame on them they are not being respectful.
- 8) If you want a picture of your child and a costumed character avoid placing the child alone with the character. Have an adult stand in the picture between the child and the character. The young child will feel safer, and will have a happier face in the picture.

