



imaginary friends

there is no harm in having an imaginary friend. in fact, research shows that having an imaginary friend is linked to heightened creativity later in life, as well as strong verbal skills and a good understanding of social interactions. pretend play gives children an opportunity to explore the complexities of the world in a safe, imaginary environment.

imaginary friends serve many important functions.

- they serve as confidants. all children have secrets and want some privacy at times. imaginary friends can be wonderful secret keepers!
- they serve as companions. imaginary friends are great playmates.
- they are great for moral development. your child can blame her misbehavior on her imaginary friend (e.g., "i didn't eat the ice cream mommy, suzie did!"). your child is beginning to distinguish between "right" and "wrong", but isn't ready yet to assume full responsibility, so she blames her imaginary friend.
- they can give you a glimpse into your child's internal, emotional world. you might even hear advice that you've given to your child and past efforts to comfort her repeated in her imaginary play (e.g., "it's ok suzie, don't be scared, i'm sure everybody will be very nice").

tips for parents:

- treat your child's imaginary friends with respect. if your child asks you to move out of the way to make room for his friend, comply if you can.
- follow your child's lead when joining in on his pretend play. be careful not to take over or add too much. this is an opportunity for your child to make up stories and to learn by exploring his own thoughts and feelings.
- if your child blames his imaginary friend for his misbehavior or mistake, use it as a teaching opportunity. for example, if your son's imaginary superhero, dynamo, spilled the juice, you can say "that's ok, mistakes



happen, but let's help dynamo clean up the mess."

interestingly, children hold onto their imaginary friends longer than you might think. some research has even shown children as old as seven, having at least one imaginary friend. don't worry though, as children mature, and gain the social, cognitive and emotional skills to navigate their complex worlds, all of them eventually come to realize that their friends are "just pretend".

seedlingsgroup is a team of child development experts and psychologists that helps you navigate the challenges of raising a happy, healthy child.

simply put, we help nurture nature.

call. 212 966 7273

write. info@seedlingsgroup.com

visit. www.seedlingsgroup.com