

The (Inter) Generation Game

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Good parenting requires not just energy, but often a generous helping of imagination, too. There is an almost continuous battle of wits taking place between different generations, and that can include parents and children at almost any age and stage of life! The most obvious challenges are those that involve young children; and as most harried parents will tell you, sometimes desperate times call for desperate measures.

A creative imagination can come in remarkably useful at times like this. For example, a friend of a friend recently resorted to some unusual tactics, because he was finding it almost impossible to get anything done in the midst of managing his delightful but highly active three-year-old daughter. Finally, he had an idea...

Father: Now we are going to play a new game. It's the "Mummy Game". Do you want to play?

Daughter (excitedly): Yes, yes! How do you play that?

Father: It's a game from ancient Egypt. Go and fetch me the shawl and I will show you.

He then wraps his daughter up in the shawl and explains that she has to lie on the bed, as part of the game. The three-year-old complies.

Daughter (after 5 minutes): And now what happens?

Father (rushing from one task to the next, in order to fully utilise this window of opportunity): And now you have to see *how long* you can lie like that. The longer you can lie, the more you are winning!

Daughter (after 10 minutes): I'm bored. Now I want to get up!

Father (unwrapping her from the shawl and giving her a hug): You did such a great job - you *won*!

The little girl was absolutely delighted at her victory, but I have to admit, it left me with some questions. Did she win? Did she really?! I think it was her father who won that round of the game!

Of course, older kids can be entertaining too, but more often than not, they tend to decide that they don't particularly want to talk to adults...

After I discussed this with some of my friends on Facebook, I discovered that there are apparently different versions of the scheme currently in circulation all over the world. One of my friends in the US mentioned the same game, except that it was called "Dead Fish" - with of course the fish (child) that lay still for the longest time being the winner. Yet another variant of this game is called "Dead Lions", with - you guessed it! - the "lion" that plays dead most effectively being the winner. I can't help feeling that in the