

Keeping it in Perspective

Here's my post featured in this month's issue of OC Family Magazine:



There are a few sure signs that you have entered the land of grown-ups— paying taxes; treating your parents' to an expensive, swanky dinner; or even listening to Neil Diamond without shame. But, you know what really makes you feel like you're firmly an adult? Speaking to your kid's class about what you do for a living. So when my daughter's third grade teacher asked me to talk to her class about being a professional writer and blogger, let's just say I felt my age—in a good way.

It was 10:00 am on a Wednesday morning. I stood in front of about 50 eight- and nine-year olds in a darkened room with my blog "Alive in Wonderland" projected behind me. I kicked off the talk with one word: perspective.

"Who knows what the word 'perspective' means?" I asked, and a smattering of hands went up. (Point to the first kid.) "Um....," no answer. (All other kids put their hands down.) "Perspective is the way you see something," I tell them. "No one else in the world has your same perspective. It's like your own creative fingerprint, and that is what you should focus on in your blog."

I could tell by their bewildered faces they needed an example. "Let's say, Sam and Matthew—you both play a game of baseball and Sam, you lose, and Matthew, you win." At this, Sam immediately gives me the never-gonna-happen look. "Sam, your perspective when you write about the game would be different than Matthew's, right?" He nods his head yes and his Yankee's cap goes up and down. "That's your perspective. It's how you saw things go down in the game."

Think of perspective as your secret super power, I tell them. "Showing your perspective is a powerful tool in photography, videos, writing, and even in your daily life." I drive the point home by showing them my other blog, "Orange County Daily Photo," which harnesses the talents of seven photographers all sharing their perspective of our great county.

I pull up a photo of a roller coaster at Knott's Berry Farm. "Here is this photographer's perspective of a roller coaster—bet you've never seen it like this before," they all laugh, nod their heads and I'm pretty sure I hear a couple of them say "awesome!"

It's starting to sink in. Perspective is a powerful tool in parenting as well. Sometimes I get wrapped up in the day-to-day fracas of being a mom—all the little battles lost or won. The endless details and logistics of running my kids' lives haze the goal and I can lose perspective of my main job as a parent: to raise responsible adults who contribute to society in a positive way.

But, it's hard to remember that when I'm locked in a heated argument with my son about the importance of wearing socks or frantically searching Michael's for a bag of green marbles or scraping dried macaroni and cheese off the kitchen chairs. All of my efforts, big and small, are all going toward the larger goal, and keeping it all in perspective is a daily endeavor.

After I wrapped up my talk and each kid assured me they wanted

to start their own blog (which I strongly urge every kid over the age of seven to do), and as I was saying goodbye one of the boys said to my daughter, "Emily, you have the coolest mom EVER!" My daughter rolled her eyes and turned a nice shade of pink. "Carter," I said to him, "I like your perspective."

Photo by Gregg Gallagher

Some of my past columns, just in case you got some time to kill:

Lessons in parenting: lying to your kids

A curious pear

Girls in glasses