

# When things aren't just things



I think the hardest lessons to teach our kids are the ones we haven't quite learned ourselves.

This became plain to me when I pitched a fit over all the THINGS my kids had and announced that after Christmas we were going to give a painful amount of their things away. They cried at the thought and started to frantically list all the items they didn't want included on the give away list.

Their rooms, closets, drawers, and even pockets are filled with stuff.

Too much clutter makes me anxious and I started to feel guilty that my kids have so much, when so many kids in the world have so little. "They're just things," I assured them. "They don't matter that much."

My husband and I tell our kids all the time, "Some kids don't have anything." And try as they might, this concept is just too hard for our Irvine-raised kids to fully understand.

We sponsor children in Africa and read their letters to our kids. We donate to families in need living in Orange County. And yes, it makes them sad to think of a little girl who doesn't have even one doll, but do they really get it? Charity is a hard concept for a child, it doesn't seem to come to them naturally.

Fueled by the guilt and an urge to tidy up, I started to put my urge to purge into action. When my daughter, Em, was at her grandma's house, I tackle the insane amount of stuff that filled her room. I gleefully tossed broken fast food toys, dried up pens, and books half chewed-up by the dog without a thought. I happily stuffed bags with shoes, pjs, and Polly Pockets for the Goodwill with ease. But then I got to the harder things—the stuffed animals.

My seven-year-old daughter's stuffed animals are like her children. She's grown up with some of them. They have come on vacation with us, comforted her in the ER, and accompanied her on her first day of school. How can I give any of them away? With the exception of Webkinz— which hold zero sentimental value with me—I'm attached to nearly all of my daughter's stuffed animals.

How can I give away Sad Molly, named because of her sad smile? Or Bark Dog? Or Baby Bark Dog? Not Madonna! Certainly not Jewel, named after her favorite musician. Her Aunt Jana gave her Chili, and her Grandma, Bella Bunny. Poodlina just stared at me with those big, black plastic eyes as if pleading me not to pick her and shove her into the bag. How can I?

I remember Em wrapping her in my son's receiving blanket to "practice having a little brother." **\*\*sniff\*\*sniff\*\***  
Should I keep them all? With all the lecturing about kids who are less fortunate than us and about how stuff isn't the most important thing in life, I'm holding on tightly to these things—to stuff. The very thing I just ranted on about right before Christmas I'm clinging on to today.

guess I haven't learned my own lesson because I neatly lined-up her entire crew on her bed and they are now waiting patiently for her to get home. I suppose sometimes things aren't just things.

**Other random things from me:**

- Songs from the 70's rewritten after the artists had kids
- 10 things mommy wishes she could stop doing
- Breaking News: Irvine mom admits she can't afford something