

WHO NEEDS MONEY?

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The state of the economy is on everyone's mind at the moment. Well, that and the Presidential election – but let's get back to money! I wish we could transport ourselves back in time when money was scarce and people just had to manage without it. In fact, I wonder what it would be like turning our lives back to front for a moment?

Let's pretend we are back in the 1930's in our grandparents' or great grandparents' time. My grandfather worked in a coal mine in a tiny town in the back blocks of Tasmania, Australia. He and his wife had six children and hardly a bean to rub together. I wonder how those kids managed to have fun? Perhaps the girls had one doll each, one pair of shoes, and one pretty dress if they were lucky. Maybe the boys had a ball or two to play with and one old bicycle to share.

Money never entered their minds as being THE means to having a good time. I wonder who coined the phrase, "Ah, those were the good old days?" Why were they the good old days? It certainly wasn't based on the fact that money made their world go round. After all, they were living through the Great World Depression. Maybe it was because life was so uncomplicated. The day consisted of eating breakfast, going to school or work (if you were lucky enough to have a job), coming home, doing chores, playing outside until it got dark, eating dinner, washing the dishes, using a bowl of water to wash and going to bed. There was no electricity in many areas then, so they would have been up with the larks and gone to bed just after sunset. The Depression was a great leveler when it came to wealth or lack of it. There was no TV or movies. There was no decent public transport in many towns and no shopping malls. There was no spare money for granting wishes.

Kids just made their own fun. What incredible imaginations they must have developed! How they must have valued their friendships and possessions then! Most things were hand made and people were given only one or two special gifts for birthdays and Christmas.

Think of the responsibilities those young kids had! They had to do chores without complaining, do shopping, washing, and child minding. As soon as boys were old enough they left school and helped put food on the table. The kids were expected to help the family get everything done. Everyone had a valued place in the family. They had jobs to do and it was a privilege for them to have time to just run and play.

OK, so how are things different today? Money certainly plays a predominant part in dictating 'happiness' in the form of amusements, fashion, image and self-esteem. Today's indulged kids are often shielded from failure, not

given responsibility or made to experience the consequences of their own actions. They often learn this with a hard jolt when they begin work.

So, we are experiencing a credit squeeze. Let's introduce our kids to some self-help living skills. What a time to learn about the value of money and how to manage it well! What a time to think of fun activities that don't involve spending money! If kids had a great time in the olden days, they can do it again. Encourage your children to dust the cobwebs off their imaginations and create their own fun without ready-made stuff. Camping doesn't cost much money (except for the gas to get there), but oh what memories are created! Making a simple tree hut using wood off-cuts, taking a free tour of a car manufacturing plant, walking in the park, and spending time with friends and family are all great ways to enjoy life without the thought of \$\$\$\$.

Take your kids to the library. Make a kite. Build a cart with old stroller wheels some nuts, bolts, pipe and rope. Take your kids to fun classes where they can learn to knit, sew, carve and be generally creative. You don't need money to have fun. It often gets in the way. Kids want YOU. Their most treasured moments are just being with you, with friends and with family. Don't make a big deal about not having the money to spend this Christmas. We are blessed indeed to be free to enjoy the simple things in life.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.