

What About Halloween?

by P. Donohue Shortridge

When you recall the Halloweens of your childhood, perhaps you conjure up images of:

- running around your neighborhood after dark
- scaring your friends by jumping out of the bushes
- planning for weeks what your costume would be
- planning for weeks your trick-or-treat route
- and of course dumping out your bag of candy on the living room floor

Fond memories for sure.

How old were you in those memories? 8? 10? Or some unknown age with the memories conflated into a single memory cherished as “my childhood Halloween”.

Now think about your child. What is your child’s age right now?

Look at me if your child is under six years old. Halloween can wait.

Young children do not really understand Halloween. But the images and anticipation created by you and our culture bombard your child none-the-less.

- the scary masks dominating retail shelves
- black capes and blood and vampire’s teeth shown everywhere
- jack-o-lanterns that could scare even an adult
- video and tv images of costumed people scaring your child
- shopping for or putting on a costume because you think it’s cute
- subtle or overt pressure from you or others to do Halloween without understanding it’s meaning and context

*“Halloween
can wait.”*

Here are some tips if your child is under six years old.

- carve a pumpkin together but keep it simple and happy-faced
- put out apples, caramels and small pumpkins honoring the season
- rake leaves into piles for jumping on and bring some inside too
- watch for geese and other creatures prepare for winter
- sing songs and read stories about the leaves changing color
- under no circumstances put a mask on your young child’s face
- most of all, work on your patience - the time will come soon enough when your child will fully embrace Halloween and make memories to match yours. But not yet. Now is the time for simple reality. Halloween can wait.

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fostering the authentic life of children and their families in the American culture

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