

# Great kids' quotes

By Chris Barnardo

Kids can come out with the funniest things, which can seem quite wrong to a grown-up. But think twice before you dismiss their quirkiest comments, because children

approach life with such an open mind, unburdened by an adult's cynicism and education, that there is often a great deal of sense in even the strangest things they say. If you

listen carefully, at the very least it will help you to see the world from a new perspective and give you a much better understanding of what they are thinking.

## "When I grow up I'm going to be a hadrosaur."

When an adult asks the 'what are you going to do when you grow up?' question, they are implicitly asking what career you would like to follow. The question misses the point that a child has dreams and hopes for themselves that extend beyond mere working for a living (a thing which so completely occupies adults). After all, a child might want grow up to be a mummy or a daddy, or a nice person, or lots of peoples' friend, or in fact, like James, a hadrosaur (that's a duck-billed dinosaur, by the way).

What I take from this is that we should stop defining people we meet by what they do for a living, and think of them instead as people, just like us, that might share some of our dreams and hopes for the future.

## "...but nine is just an upside down six."

When asked to look out for a number 6 bus, my daughter, India (5 years old) pointed out a number 9 bus, when I told her that it wasn't a six it

was a nine, she said, "but nine is just an upside down six."

Do you know what? That's just what it is. Of course as we grow up we learn so much about the world that we learn how to see things. In one respect, this is important otherwise we would be overloaded with information, but then on the other hand, it's good to remember that we should occasionally take a step back and try and take a fresh look at things.

We only perceive about 1 billionth of the information our senses receive each day. As dads and grown-ups we could get so much more out of

life if only we could look at things in the way our children do, and see beyond how we have learned to see the world as we have grown up.

## Can I do that again? I wasn't ready.

One day when I was trying out golf for the first time, I was waiting behind a dad and his two kids who were teeing off. The first child swung at the ball, clipped it and it curved off into the trees and he said with dismay, "Can I do that again? I wasn't ready."

It seemed such a funny thing to say at the time. Since then I have had plenty of moments where I've made a mistake and done something wrong and thought - 'Can I do that again? I wasn't ready'. Pause before you do anything important and question if you are ready to do it, and whether doing it will make things better for you in the long run, if it won't stop and think it over. An old friend of mine used to say, "Measure twice, cut once."

## Can we call your flat home now?

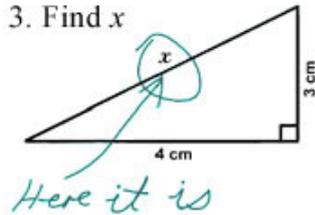
While we were walking home from the shops, one sunny afternoon, about a year after I had moved into my new flat, William (9 years old), apropos nothing in particular, said, "Can we call your flat home now?"

After some discussion we established that it wasn't that he wanted to move in with me, but that when we were out and about, he wanted to be able to be able to ask, when we would be going home [to daddy's house], and for it not to be confused with his other home [mummy's house]. We agreed that when he was staying at my flat (however short the stay) we would call my flat 'Home' and his other home would be called Mummy's House and that it would be ok for him to reverse the convention when he was at his mother's house. In that instant I knew that all that

hard work I had put in to giving the flat a really homely feel, and making sure that my children felt like it was their space, was all worth it.

### Find $x$ . - Here it is

#### 3. Find $x$



This image was taken from a real exam paper answer sheet. Tests at school are always an illuminating experience for teachers. When children are asked

questions in situations where there is no adult to help them or other pupil to hide behind, they reveal a great deal about what they have actually picked up from the term's formal teaching.

Kids are really learning machines, so when they get the wrong end of the stick about something we are actively trying to teach them, as adults we should take a hard look at exactly what we are saying and whether it matches what we actually want to say or mean. Often we are giving mixed messages and helping to confuse the situation more than we think. When anyone is confused and isn't sure about the answer they are supposed to give, they fall back on the most sensible sounding option; that is, the most sensible sounding solution in their eyes. The exam question that asks, 'Find  $x$ ', is asking an ambiguous question, that assumes we understand that the question is really, 'Find the value of  $x$ '. Be clear in what you ask of your children, because they so want to give the right answer and it is very hard for them to do that if the question is confusing.

### Cor! She must have been really thirsty.

After hearing on the TV News one night that a famous female soap opera star had spent £250,000 on coke, Andrew (8 years old) said, "Cor! She must have been really thirsty."

The world is such a hard place, full of harsh realities, but even today children deserve some space to be children. There is a time and place to explain about some of the things that grown-ups do to themselves. The level of knowledge a child has about the adult world will vary from community to community and to a large extent depend on whether or not the child has older brothers or sisters. But don't make it a rush to grow up, think seriously about the ratings on a film for example, and don't expose your children to things for which they are not ready. Remember that younger children are not necessarily ready to take on-board the whole range of adult concepts

and below a certain age can not distinguish between make believe and reality. Do not wrap your children in cotton wool, but on the other hand, let them enjoy being children.

### Which came first, the kitchen or the egg?

I like this question much better than the more traditional one about chickens and eggs. For a start it is much easier to answer. Clearly the egg came first and the kitchen was invented to cook it. This actually suits me fine, I never liked the chicken and egg question because it is one of those questions people ask when they want to sound clever but don't expect an answer.

Kids need to be able to arrange things in a nice order so that they can understand them based on their limited experience, and questions that have no answers are always troubling to them. There are so many difficult questions about real things in life, that are really hard to answer, that it has always seemed odd to me that anyone should ask questions that really have no answer, just for the sake of it.

In any case all chicken and egg type questions actually do have an answer, if you are prepared to look hard enough for it. In the case of the chicken and egg, obviously the Egg came first, because everything living thing starts as an egg and chickens are just one type of animal that evolved to lay them; but then I was about 25 years old before this obvious answer dawned on me.

### A Knight's Tale

During a special evening meal, on one of the rare occasions that my parents had invited guests over for supper, about half way through the main course, in a lull in the conversation, I (about 8 years old at the time) said to the guests, "You're not half as bad as my mother said you were."

An embarrassed silence followed, broken eventually by some nervous laughter. I was only a kid, and it was years before I realised how awkward that comment was. At that age, the thought that I was saying something bad never crossed my mind. In fact, I distinctly remember, that I was trying make polite conversation and thought that I was paying my parents' guests a huge compliment by saying (in a roundabout way) how nice I thought they were.

Kids pick up on the smallest things that the people around them say, and because they see the world in a more simplified and less inhibited way than adults, they seem to have the habit of saying what everyone else is actually thinking. Be careful what you say about your ex-partner in front of your children, even if you are not directly talking

to them, and never tell them to keep secrets. If you want to keep something secret, don't tell them in the first place, the last thing they need to learn is how to be guarded about what they say to each parent as they go between homes. There will be plenty of time for them to learn how to control their right to freedom of speech as they grow up.

### Now that was dishwasher!

When I was about 11 years old, I made my mother and her friend a cup of tea to be helpful. The friend took one sip and said that her tea tasted just like dishwasher. I said I was sorry and said I would make another one. The second time I made it by boiling some water from the washing-up bowl. I waited till they were drinking the tea before saying, "Now that was dishwasher!"

I don't have any excuses for this one. I was just being naughty and getting my own back. It was probably my first attempt at irony. Appreciate your children and the efforts they make to help, even if they don't always turn out exactly as you might want. The way to get things running smoothly is to use encouragement, not

cynical irony, kids are quick learners and all they will do is learn how to be cynical themselves.

### Dad's the Best – so is Mum.

Blu-Tacked up on my fridge is a picture my youngest son drew for me one afternoon with the title, "Dad's the Best – so is Mum."

Kids love both their parents. Whatever has happened in your life and regardless of what has happened between you and your children's mother, your children still love both of you. If you have more than one child, you will know how it is possible to love two people at the same time, with all your heart. Your children can't choose between their parents. If they live with their mother (and that is likely to be the case), it doesn't follow that you mean less to them. As a dad you offer them something different; something vital to them. Never ask them to choose between you and their mother, or rank their affections.

As they go between your house and their mother's house they will learn to be slightly different in each place. But always respect their right to love their mother, anything you

