How to Be a Kid Forever

By: Raniya Chowdhury
Adapted by Fishtank Staff

This essay, by Raniya Chowdhury, 17, of Mississauga, Ontario, is one of the Top 11 winners of The Learning Network's new "How To" Informational Writing Contest for Teenagers.

1 "The best part of being a kid is getting candy when you're sad," says eight-year-old Lolia Almasri, who is a Mickey Mouse-loving third grader living in the sleepy suburbs of southern Ontario, and a leading expert on all things kid-related. For many teenagers like myself who dance on the cusp of "adulthood" — in the legal sense, anyway — grappling with growing up has felt like an impending apocalypse of responsibilities. To those counting down the doomsday clock of turning 18, you might be hoping to hold onto the feeling of youth and postpone the inevitable. Or maybe you've already been a grown-up for some time and long to reclaim that balmy, magical, wide-eyed wonder of childhood.

2 Well, according to Lolia, it's not hard to keep being a kid, as it revolves around the core tenets of remembering the value of kindness and having fun. Empathy is the bedrock of her ethos and she expresses its importance through a personal anecdote: "When my friend needed scissors, I gave him mine and got another one." The economy of kids is barter-based (e.g. if you give me your Pokémon card, I'll give you my strawberry-scented eraser). Their transactions are exchanges of happiness, so a good place for you to start is by sharing things with others, even though that grows difficult with age.

3 Once you've mastered this, it's time for the fun part. "Kids have to behave nice and also play," Lolia says, which is a facet of childhood that I wonder why we ever let go of. A return to playing outdoors is imperative. Suspend your disbelief. Instead, make-believe! Don your light-up sneakers and search the woods for fairies, play hopscotch in the backyard, kick a ball around — allow yourself to sincerely enjoy it, the little things.

4 But, truly, what strikes me most about Lolia's philosophy on living life like you're in Neverland is her final step: a gentle reminder that "even if you're a grown-up, if you're scared at night you can still snuggle your parents." After all, in Lolia's world, there is no reality in which there won't be someone to console her after a nightmare. To her, unicorns and dragons exist, and so does love, always. Ultimately, the best advice Lolia gives on being a kid forever is to have faith that you aren't alone in life and to turn to someone when you're afraid of the dark.

Chowdhury, R. (2024, April 4). How to be a kid forever. *The New York Times*.
https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/04/learning/how-to-be-a-kid-forever.html