

January 17, 2010

This is the print preview: [Back to normal view »](#)

Tom Matlack

Co-founder of The Good Men Project

Posted: December 23, 2009 12:28 PM

Santa Interventions: Helping Parents Save The Magic

Christmas is upon us, and for many Santa's bag full of surprises includes an assortment of personal dilemmas all having to do with ... Santa. We long for the idyllic experience that the song promises -- "tiny tots with their eyes all aglow," but we fall short of achieving the Hallmark card image.

My friend Arita Trahan, author of *The Santa Story Revisited: How to Give Your Children a Santa They Will Never Outgrow*, is on a mission to revolutionize the way Santa is celebrated. She is offering Santa interventions for parents via free daily teleconferences on her website at www.TheSantaStory.com to heal the wounds of Santas past and present and restore the magic.

Arita says, "I wrote *The Santa Story Revisited* to give parents easy ways to segue from the standard 'believing in' version of Santa into a story that anyone can tell in their own way and a game that everyone can play. By making this shift, Santa is even more magical for the kids -- and the parents are no longer involved with any type of deception. It works for kids of all ages, from tots just being introduced to Santa, to children who have known old Santa for a number of years."

Arita continued, "Because young children live in an imaginal realm through about seven years of age, they move fluidly between fact and fantasy. Their dolls are sometimes real babies and sometimes just dolls. Every character in a book, every Disney hero, is real to them. We don't have to convince them of anything for them to enjoy these stories in this way; it's their default into making life magical and joyful. In the same way, Santa can be presented and explained as a story that's as genuinely magical as we intended him to be when we said he was a real person."

It's my experience that most parents are unsure as to how and when to tell their children the truth. It can be awkward. What initially felt like a magical tale and a romp in innocence suddenly doesn't sound so sweet. As a father, Arita's mission speaks to me. She understands the parent's position and gives them guidelines and tips to segue to the new Santa in graceful and generous terms.

Since the publication of her book, Arita has been sought out as the Santa intervention expert, leading her to offer the free teleconferences. Arita says that, other than psychologists who pick up the pieces -- usually years afterwards, no one gives parents advice on how to address the train wreck that frequently unfolds when the jolly guy is outed.

She told me of one bewildered mother who approached her for a Santa intervention the other day. The story was all too common. The woman was on the verge of tears because her beloved son had "found out" and was now accusing her of lying. He yelled it at her and she didn't know how to respond. Arita pointed her to the sample scripts and advice in her book and explained that discussing the issue with her son now was

imperative in order to restore trust.

Arita believes the Santa stories are an archetypal aspect of the parent/child relationship. She says, "Sometimes parents don't realize how much the Santa deception has impacted their children's trust in them. That's why it's so important to end the deception and deal with the issue as soon as possible. The process of telling the child a new Santa story can be a rite of passage to celebrate--even when it is messy. After all, a trusting relationship between parent and child is worth the effort to reestablish."

But Arita's interventions aren't just for those with young children. Since becoming a "Santa expert" and writing her book, she says she has counseled many adults who still experience the wounding of their youth, which revisits them annually, just like the ghost of Santas past. For these individuals, Arita also offers support so that, going forward, the impact of their personal history can be viewed in a positive way.

Arita will be giving advice on Santa interventions via free teleconferences through her website, www.TheSantaStory.com.

Arita Trahan is the author of *The Santa Story Revisited: How to Give Your Children a Santa They Will Never Outgrow*. The book is also available on Amazon and through other book retailers.

Arita also penned the lyrics for a song that promotes her message that it's more fun when kids join in and everyone plays Santa. The song is I'm Being Santa, with music by Mark Horwitz. A music video of the song, featuring the Agape International Children's Choir from Culver City, California can be seen on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbh45srDylc>.

Follow Tom Matlack on Twitter: www.twitter.com/tmatlack