

extra fingers

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I enjoy learning.

I have the potential to achieve
and I have faith in my abilities.

I am calm.

I take the time I need.

I don't even know what they mean

ISABELLA, during a clean out: “What should I do with these, Dad?”

DAD: “I don't know. What are they?”

ISABELLA: “Just some cards. A lady came to our school and gave them to everyone.”

DAD, reading from the cards: “‘I enjoy learning.’ ‘I have the potential to achieve and I have faith in my abilities.’ ‘I am calm.’ ‘I take the time I need.’ Right. Okay. So do you do any of those things?”

ISABELLA: “Nuh. I don't even know what the cards mean. I just took them and let her keep going [talking].”

What would they say?

AMELIE: “Dad, you know Jesus?”

DAD: “Hmm.”

AMELIE: “Well, were there any other people that died on the cross apart from him?”

DAD: “Yeah, there were many. Crucifixions were quite popular in Roman times.”

AMELIE: “Well what’s so special about Jesus then?”

DAD: “Well, it’s believed by Christians that Jesus is the son of God. And because in our country Christianity is the main religion we get to hear all about that and how he died. On a cross.”

AMELIE: “No. He was the son of Joseph.”

DAD: “And God. I’m not saying that, Christians are.”

AMELIE: “What? Why do they say that for?”

DAD: “Well—”

AMELIE: “Dad, why does God even have to be in the Bible? What’s it got to do with him?”

DAD: “Well—”

AMELIE: “I wish at the start they explained how he got made. Because they don’t do that.”

DAD: “Hmm.”

AMELIE: “I think that would be hard for them to do, though. Because what would they say? Oh, they might say the stars made him. But then they’d have to say something like the Moon made the stars and it would just go on and on and on and on. Wouldn’t it?”

Amelie’s definitions

Bird: “A bird is a flying creature that thinks that it rules the Earth looking for food.”

Girl: “A girl is a child that can be called cute by big people.”

Jaw: “A jaw is teeth all put together to help you chew.”

Tumble: “Tumble is an old-fashioned word for ‘fall over’.”

Sniff: “Sniff means to suck up snot from a cold.”

Soar: “Soar is a smooth drift across the atmosphere.”

Poor: “Poor is a person who doesn’t have as much as we do.”

What else are you going to miss?

DAD, asking Amelie what she’ll miss about me when I’m in Sydney: “What else? What else are you going to miss?”

AMELIE: “Going to your room. Like, because you always say, ‘Go to your room!’ For being naughty. But Mum just goes, ‘One more warning!’ She always goes, ‘One more warning! One more warning!’. It’s just always ‘One more warning!’ and it’s so cool! I just never need to go to my room. Only if she gets really angry. Then that’s scary.”

DAD: “Is it? So she can scare you?”

AMELIE: “She has this wooden spoon and she goes (claps her hands and laughs). It’s so weird!”

DAD: “It’s so weird?”

AMELIE: “Yeah. I just laugh. I’m not even scared.”

Can you get your hopes down?

ISABELLA: “Dad, you know how you can get your hopes up?”

DAD: “Hmm-hmm.”

ISABELLA: “Well, what about down? Can you get your hopes down?”

She could end up being homeless

AMELIE, talking about school: “Erin gets three dollars just for doing her homework. Like, a lot of the times she doesn’t like doing her homework so she gets money for it. And then she goes and buys some food at the canteen with it. Like slushies [a water ice-block] and stuff. But Elisabeth only gets fifty cents. Fifty cents! For washing her parents’ car. Or five cents for raking leaves. She’s only got seventeen dollars for her whole future. That’s all! She could end up being homeless.”

I spy . . .

AMELIE to Isabella, as she was walking back to the car one evening: “I spy with my little eye something beginning with . . . ‘S’.”

ISABELLA: “‘S’. Okay. Um . . . ‘Street?’”

AMELIE: “No.”

ISABELLA: “Um, ‘sign?’”

AMELIE: “No.”

ISABELLA: “‘Shop?’”

AMELIE: “No. Come on, Issy. Quick! We’re nearly past it.”

ISABELLA: “Alright. Alright.”

AMELIE: “Hurry up, Issy. Quick! Quick!”

ISABELLA, very hastily: “Oh, ‘step?’”

AMELIE: “No. Quickly!”

ISABELLA: “Oh I give up. Tell me what it is, Amie, I’m never going to get it.”

AMELIE: “Oh, okay. ‘Shape’. It’s ‘shape’.”

ISABELLA: “‘Shape?’”

AMELIE: “Hmm.”

ISABELLA: “But everything’s got a shape. It has to.”

DAD: “She’s right, Ams. In ‘I spy with my little eye’ obviously everything’s got to have a shape. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be able to see it.”

AMELIE: “Yes, but I meant a particular kind of shape, Dad. I had a particular kind of shape in my mind.”

They really give themselves away

ISABELLA: “I wonder why sharks have fins for. Because they just give themselves away. It’s so obvious, Dad! Haven’t they evolved yet to not have fins?”

DAD: “Well—”

ISABELLA: “I mean, dolphins have fins. But that’s good. Because they like us and want people to see them. Sharks don’t. It’d be different if their fins had two little eyes on them but they don’t. Their fins just stick out and that really gives them away.”

Because then I'll have some money

AUNTY JEN: “So, Amelie, what are you going to do with the money I sent you for Christmas?”

AMELIE: “Well, I think I’m going to put it in the bank so that when I’m older I won’t be homeless because then I’ll have some money.”

Always interrupting

AMELIE: “Dad, I’ve never actually seen, you know, the sea that you go in at the beach?”

DAD: “Yes, I do know that sea.”

AMELIE: “It’s all blurry when you go under there. But actually, is it true that when you go out further enough it’s actually not blurry anymore? Like, it’s actually quite clear and blue. Is that actually true?”

DAD: “Well . . .

AMELIE: “Because, like, in, um . . .”

DAD: “It would make some sense because what happens is that once it gets—”

AMELIE: “Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, can I say something?”

DAD, frustrated: “Oh, don’t worry. Yeah, of course you can.”

AMELIE: “I’m always interrupting you.”

DAD: “I know. What’s the point? You ask a question and I’ve got to be so quick to get an answer in because you just hit me.”

AMELIE: “I just get bored of it [the subject].”

DAD: “But I didn’t even start. I just didn’t even start an answer.”

AMELIE, merrily continuing on: “Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, anyway. Um, because there was this girl and she came in [to my class] and she was talking about the sea animals and how she saves all the, like, stuff and . . .”

Some excerpts from tasks students in Isabella’s class were set to reflect on life

Isabella’s Most Beautiful Things in the World

Pets that are cute

Family that love me

My friends that are helpful

Animals that are free

Trees that have different colours

Nature

My best friend who cares for me and thinks about how I feel

People who care for people who are not as fortunate as us

Teachers who help me learn

The Sun that keeps me happy

Freedom

Happiness

Joy

Singing

Children playing

Isabella's My Favourite Memory

"My favourite memory was when me and my friends were at Sophie's house and we stayed for a sleepover. We watched movies and played. I remember how happy I was to be with my friends. I felt safe, cheerful, happy and like nothing could go wrong. This memory is so special to me. I know that I will never forget that time and how excited I was the night before. I could hardly sleep! So that is my favourite memory. I can never remember a time where I laughed so much and felt so safe. I hope my friends Alexia, Olivia and Sophie never forget this either. This will always be my happiest memory!"

Isabella's Sometimes I Wonder . . .

Are there any other living creatures in the universe?

Are aliens real?

Do dogs or animals understand what we say?

How do other people see the world?

What do people think?

Who made up the words?

Who will be my friends?

What will I do in the future?

What do my friends think of me?

Will I be famous?

The colours I see, do other people see that?

Who lives under the sea?

What happens in the future?

What does my dog do when I'm not looking?"

Taking Isabella's teacher's lead, I wondered what Amelie thought, say about friendship.

Amelie's Friends Are Important to Me Because . . .

I can count on them

You can tell them a secret

They give you company

They are helpful

They make me laugh

They look after me

They include me

They include my ideas

They make me feel happy

They comfort me when I am sad

They're always there for me

They respect me

They forgive me.

THE LAST WORD

I think it has been a success

AMELIE, regarding some words she wanted to write on a card for her teacher: "Mum, can I write, 'Thank you for teaching me. I think it has been a success'? Is that okay?"