

SOCIAL STUDIES

A DAILY MISCELLANY OF INFORMATION BY MICHAEL KESTERTON

Disappointed kids

Some parents will be dealing with children who did not get exactly what they wanted this season, writes Stephanie Dunnewind of the Seattle Times. Experts, she says, offer this advice:

First, acknowledge a child's feelings. Say "That's really disappointing, isn't it? You really wanted that toy." Period. "It's not necessary to make it okay," adds Bonnie Harris, author of *When Your Kids Push Your Buttons: And What You Can Do About It*."

Next, offer coping skills to deal with the strong emotion. This can range from taking a deep breath, going for a walk or reading a story, suggests Elizabeth Crary, author of *Dealing With Disappointment: Helping Kids Cope When Things Don't Go Their Way*.

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Finally, when kids are calm, discuss the big picture. Parents can help children understand that "nobody has to give them a gift," says Corinne Gregory, president of The Polite Child. That a gift-giver took the time to think of the person and pick out a present is worth gratitude.

Nerds at yuletide

On the topic of men as holiday shoppers, The Sunday Times of London offers these cautionary anecdotes:

"For Neil Fiore, it was the perfect Christmas gift for the lady who loved scented candles: a bright red fire extinguisher wrapped in a white bow. Perhaps, as a psychology at Berkeley University in California, he should have been prepared for the muted wail of outrage. 'But I wanted her to know I was practical and looking out for her safety. Sadly, the relationship did not survive long after that,' he confessed."

"Misguided gifts can crystallize underlying tensions. 'I once bought a girlfriend a T-shirt with a picture of me on it and the words My Boyfriend,' said David Parker, 33, a project manager from Windsor. 'She washed her car with it.' "

Walking on ice

It's a myth that extremely cold temperatures create safe, thick ice you can walk on, says Owl magazine. "Don't think that an attack of cold weather means ice is solid and safe . . . For starters, no matter what the temperature is outside, other conditions such as wind, snow lying on top of ice and changing water currents can weaken ice so it can't bear weight. What's more, a sudden drop in temperature can actually *weaken* ice, creating large cracks in less than a day. So a cold snap may mean an 'ice snap.' "

arfarfarfarf

"Brandy the Chihuahua [of Largo, Fla.] is 6 inches long and weighs less than 2 pounds," says The Associated Press. "She's not allowed on the furniture because if she jumped off, she'd break. She's also, according to the *Guinness World Records* book, officially the Smallest Dog in the World."

Modern adventure

This month, two rookie rowers set off on a 3,000-mile voyage across the Atlantic in a rowing boat, reports The London Observer. Stu Turnbull and Ed Baylis, both 26, planned to spend 40 days and nights at sea in a 24-foot plywood skiff. Before they set off, they underwent couples counselling to ensure they did not fall out with each other.

Silent night?

Millions of British adults have such poor reading skills that they will struggle to keep up with karaoke lyrics at Christmas parties this year, a government study has found. Research for the Department of Education's Get On campaign found classic songs such as Frank Sinatra's *New York, New York* require the reading skills expected of an 11-year-old, lacked by more than 5.2 million British adults.

Source: The Independent on Sunday

Beard lengths

Different lengths of facial hair have different names, writes Thomas Fink in *The Man Book*. They are: Shadow (less than a day's growth); whiskers not noticeable. Umbra (1-2 days); worn with impunity: "I've been very busy." Stubble (3-4 days); ambiguous: "Did he forget to shave?" Designer stubble (5-8 days); stubble with intent -- no longer negligence. Bristle (9-16 days); most awkward stage of growing a beard. Beard (17 days and longer); will continue to grow at five inches a year.

Thought du jour

"Astrology proves just one scientific fact: there's one born every minute." -- Patrick Moore

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