**Telling stories with children**

*In this video, storyteller Anne E. Stewart talks about telling stories with children. She says storytelling promotes literacy and language and gets children ready to start reading. Stories about family and culture also give children a sense of their place in the world. You can use actions and rhymes to get children involved in the story.*

Anne E. Stewart [Storyteller]: Storytelling plays a really crucial role in children’s upbringing; because it’s here they’re introduced to language and literature, the rhythm of words, the pattern. They’re all starting to get it in their little heads and when they come to reading they’re at a great advantage because they’ve understood it.

Mum 1: Once upon a time there was a princess; she lived in a big pink house.

Anne E. Stewart: Telling stories to your children also sort of fosters imagination, where they start to come to some understandings of the world they’re living in. Well, I’ve been telling stories for a long time in libraries over the years and I’ve found that children will believe anything you tell them and you can use anything to tell them. I think I’ve used toilet roll holders with pipe cleaners stuck to them to make a whole little family. I’ll tell a story with an apple, where I’ll cut it in half and reveal a beautiful star. I have all sorts of things I’ll pull out of a bag. So, maybe when parents were starting to think about storytelling, maybe an item that was a treasured thing they’d had from their childhood, maybe a photo that was taken years and years ago. All these things are to prompt language.

Mum 2: And then the mum came, ‘Hello my dear kitty.’

Boy: Then you don’t see him.

Anne E. Stewart: One of the ways to really involve your children in storytelling is perhaps put a bit of action in it. Sometimes I have little rhymes and I’ll make children be Mook Mook the Owl and the trees in it, so I’m just trying to engage them by getting them to take part in the story, so having those actions really helps. Every opportunity has a story behind it and what you’re really doing as a parent is trying to get them to listen to language and be ready for when they get to school. But, one of the other things that I think’s really important about storytelling and for me it was always crucial, is I think your family, your kids should have an understanding of family and who you are and what your stories are. So, that’s such a wonderfully rich opportunity for storytelling. Who are you and where are your people from? When did they come to Australia? What was your favourite story as a child? All those things are stories that you could be telling your children.

Mum 3: The hunter returned and said, ‘I know where Leila is!’ They opened the door and saw the wolf! His belly was big and bulging.

Anne E. Stewart: One of the things that children really love is to hear them in stories, so what is something you remember as a little child, a story you’ve read or heard, maybe you could put your child in a situation. Maybe they’re scared about their first day of school and you’re going to tell a little story about how brave they are and how they got through the day. If you put your child in the story, it really sort of brings them into the whole notion of words and music in words and being part of that event of a story.

If you’re heading off somewhere with your kids, take a bit of time, do a bit of research and find out what you can about where you’re going, the locations and make a real story out of it. And that’ll bring enjoyment to the kids, they’ll want to really be part of it because they’ll feel they’re in the story and this is just another way of introducing them to their country, their land, their stories and their people.

Everything has a story to it and it’s that language development that you’re wanting your kids to take on. So, everywhere is a chance for a story. When they’re having a bath, maybe if they’re anxious about something coming up the next day, you’ve got a little story that you’re going to just tell them to put them a little bit at ease.

Of course bedtime is a favourite time for stories, having tea, sitting around the table, there’s so many different occasions where just informally you should be talking to your children.