

## NEWSLETTER

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### WAR AND PEACE

Many of the Christmas cards we send and receive this year will have that familiar message, "Peace on Earth." Unfortunately wishing for peace doesn't make it happen.

We are a nation at war, a war that has lasted longer than our involvement in World War II. Even if the word "war" never crossed your lips at home your children will hear about it at school, on TV, perhaps from a playmate whose parent is in Iraq.

This is a peculiar war because the overwhelming majority of us are not personally involved. There are no shortages, no rationing, no sacrifices our president asks us to make. We are asked to make. Our lives go merrily on as if there is nothing happening, nothing to worry about, nothing to talk to our children about.

But tragic things are happening to our troops and their families and our country. And we have an obligation to talk to our children about the war and about these tragedies. Parents vacillate between wanting to protect their children from hearing about bad things and wanting to be the ones that help their children understand.

We must be the ones that help our children understand the world. It's our job. But parents today have a tough job as this war is hard for grownups to understand. Without getting bogged down in partisan politics, let me suggest some things parents can say.

Start with the fact that ALL war is bad.. It's not healthy for children or any other living things. But sometimes a country has to go to war to defend itself. I fantasize about an International Guard under the auspices of the UN made up of troops from many nations who would train together like our National Guard. The International Guard would provide military action if needed to prevent a country from threatening another country or the world. Then no nation on its own would have to undertake what is called a preemptive strike although every nation would have the capability of defending itself if attacked.

Second, this war in Iraq is especially bad because we are involved in a political quagmire in a foreign nation and there seems to be no diplomatic solution or exit strategy on the horizon.

Third, no matter how we feel about this war, we must support our military and their families. Help your children empathize with how awful it must be to lose a Mommy or a Daddy at war. Empower your children to write to wounded veterans or organize a class project to write to our troops.

Encourage discussions and questions, watch selected news programs together. I know one family that occasionally watches the news on both CNN and Fox so they can discuss with the children how and why the same event can be covered differently. If you come across an interesting or provocative blog about the war print it out so you can have a family discussion. Try a current events dinner once a week when everybody brings in a topic to discuss.

It's OK to tell your children ambiguous things and to teach your children how to deal with ambiguity. This will help them deal with the realities of the complicated world they will inherit.

Enough of war, let's think of the joys world peace could bring, how we could use resources spent on war to improve people's lives and protect our environment.

Let me wish my readers and their families—and all the families in the world—a HAPPY AND PEACEFUL HOLIDAY SEASON. Let's do all we can as individuals to bring about PEACE ON EARTH. Maybe it won't happen today or tomorrow or even in our lifetime but it is a goal worth reaching for and talking to our children about.