

# *The Pinocchio Principle*

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*"When children who were naughty become good it gives a new smiling appearance to the whole family." Collodi, Carlo. The Adventures of Pinocchio, illus. Roberto Innocente. Knopf NY 1988*

That quote from Pinocchio is what I wish for all families parenting hurt children. And since every cause needs a mascot, after rereading the tale of Pinocchio and watching Disney's version, I wholeheartedly nominate Pinocchio. Although most of us remember his nose growing as he lies, it was not until I reviewed the movie that the striking similarities between the tale and parenting a child with attachment disorder jumped out at me.

First there is Geppetto, a kindly, lonely, single father whose only wish is to have Pinocchio be a "real boy", to fill his life with joy. The fairy (social worker) brings Pinocchio and says "to make Geppetto's wish come true will be entirely up to you... Prove yourself brave, truthful, and unselfish, and you will be a real boy." It's not exactly the respectful, responsible, and fun to be with quoted in attachment therapy, but close. But does Pinocchio listen? No. Pinocchio, although not a real boy, becomes mobile, and in his first dance (that honeymoon ended quickly) kicks Figaro, the cat (cruelty to animals), sets a fire, burns his finger (self injurious), and pollutes the fish's bowl (destructive to property). As they try to sleep, Pinocchio asks questions about sleep, school, why? (persistent nonsense questions).

Undaunted poor Geppetto continues to work hard, hope for the best, and parent Pinocchio. Poor Geppetto. He needs to form a support group fast. Pinocchio, having no conscience, is given one by the fairy, in the person of Jimmy Cricket. He is a great guide, but unfortunately not integrated by Pinocchio, who continues to plague Geppetto with truancy, running away, and poor peer relations. He lies to the fairy, and his nose grows and grows with each obvious untruth. Even though that is a vivid memory for most of us, it only happens once. The social worker (oh I mean fairy) bails him out once again, but the young puppet doesn't learn from past mistakes, and continues to choose bad peers, indulge in abnormal eating patterns at Pleasure Island, and adds fighting and destruction of property to his crimes.

Even his conscience, Jimmy Cricket, in a moment of despair laments "After all I've done for him". His father, even about to face death, continues to feel guilty, and laments in the whale's belly about poor Pinocchio, who was such a good boy. Well, as we all know, the story has a happy ending. After he receives the help he needs (containment in the belly of a whale), his fairy does turn him into a real boy. A very happy ending for all.....

Pinocchio is a delightful way for parents and children to discuss some attachment issues in a fun, nonthreatening way. Rent it, buy it, enjoy it, and put some laughter in your life. I give it two thumbs up!

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