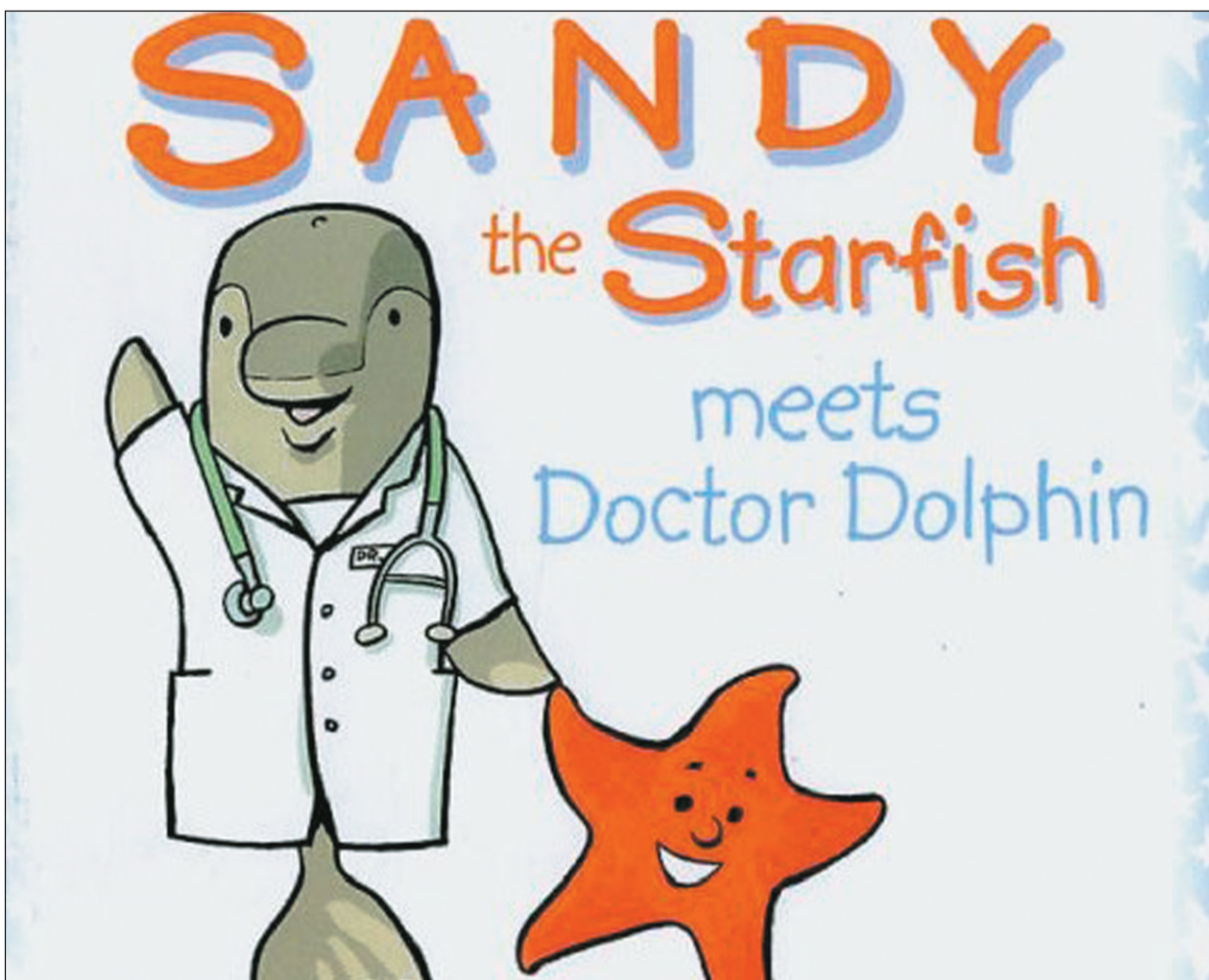


Parenting

The best advice for parents

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HELPING KIDS IN HOSPITAL: The new book from Laura Young tackles the issue of children in hospital, using fun, familiar images to alleviate fears

Mother publishes book to help kids cope in hospital

Spending time in hospital is frightening for children. One mother has written a fun-filled book to help kids cope



the hospital for blood tests became an horrific ordeal for everyone involved. At most appointments it took three people to pin Verity down as she used every ounce of strength to try to throw off her carers.

Searching for help, Laura found several leaflets, but nothing that spoke to the child directly about the experience. She scoured bookshops, and although she did find books aimed at young children which described visits to the doctor, none portrayed the cyclic nature of monitoring, testing or immunising. Instead, they showed the pain and hurt before the visit, and then the doctor magicking it away.

Laura hit upon the idea of a lift-the-flap book, knowing how much young children enjoy a game as part of the reading experience. And, thinking about what Verity enjoyed best – summer holidays spent fishing in rock pools and visiting touch tanks at Portaferry's aquarium – the character of Sandy the Starfish was born.

With the help of her husband's rhyming skills, and illustrator Jeff Appleton, Laura set out to create and publish her book, and developed an accompanying website to offer parents and professionals useful information, tips and links. The website also provides fun activities for children and further interaction with the characters, including colouring-in pages and a game.

Sandy the Starfish meets Doctor Dolphin, with its charming illustrations and simple rhymes, is designed to generate discussion between the child and the parent or carer, to better prepare them for the experience of visiting the doctor, nurse or health visitor. As well as making the common experience of blood tests less traumatic, the book will be also invaluable for coping with the five standard injections children should receive between the ages 0-5, including the MMR and booster jobs.

More information about Lupus may be found at the website lupusuk.com.

WHEN Laura Young's three year-old daughter was diagnosed with a rare auto-immune disease, Lupus, her treatment required a long-term management programme including drugs and monthly blood tests. While the daily administration of drugs became routine, the monthly visits to

The trouble with kids

3 Ways to...

Get him off his computer games

Chat to him about alternatives to his computer games – playing football, bikes, swimming etc. Make sure he does one of these a day

Persuade him to have one or two days a week when he doesn't go near the computer. Ask him to plan his activities in advance, help him plan something good

Sit with him during non-computer activities and encourage him not to give up on these

Milky Way restores balance of universe

DANIEL has inherited the straight-talking gene from my side of the family. Some would call this an affliction, some would say pure cheekiness. Nevertheless it has been handed down from generations of Breslins and Sweeneys since time began and therefore must be held sacred, although obviously I escaped getting the faulty gene. Members of my family tell it like it is, of that there is no doubt. For example my Grandmother, who is 96 years old, once told me that I was the spitting image of my sister except "I was far fatter". Said sister, when she was a small child, once told a glamorous 40-something visitor to our house that her hair was turning very grey and that she was getting really old. My father could start a "debate" in an empty house and regularly has telesales people hang up on him rather than the other way around. He is also the best angry letter writer in town. And so it has come to pass that Daniel is showing signs of this argumentative streak the rest of them possess.

When he was younger he regularly galled people in the street for having bad hair or hideous clothes. He and his brother often have ridiculous arguments which escalate into shouting matches with Daniel hollering 'NO' and Caolan hitting back with an angry 'YES!' that lasts for hours and results in neither remembering what they were fighting about in the first place. I find those particular incidents are most entertaining in supermarkets when they are sharing a double seat in the basket and trying to out roar each other.

Daniel has told three different, usually adored, members of the family he 'don't like' them this week. He told Granny, who is usually on par with 50 Cent and Bob the Builder with regards idolising, that she must 'GET OUT OF DANIEL'S HOUSE AND GO BLOODY HOME!' after she chastised him for feeding his brother pot pourri. He told his father he wished he'd fly up to the moon and not come back and he said he 'don't like me that much'. The others shrugged their jibes off and got on with things but I was hurt and horrified and I set about changing his mind.

I followed him around quizzing him on this sudden change of heart and offering up 100 reasons why I'm a person that is much to be liked. But still he wouldn't budge. He was in a foul mood even drop-kicking his beloved Bo out into the rain soaked garden. In the end I went against every piece of advice in every parenting manual in the world and bribed him into liking me. I offered him chocolate for an 'I love you'. And it worked. One simple Milky Way restored the balance of the universe and turned a surly little boy into an angel again. I'm writing to Cadburys as we speak to arrange stockpiles for his teenage years.

Eco-friendly mums hail new reusable nappies

MODERN Baby, voted 'best ethical cloth nappy' by The Guardian newspaper and Ethiscore.org, has launched two gorgeous new nappy designs for 2007.

Following on from the success of the introduction of Modern Baby's fitted cotton nappies in 2006, the latest unisex mint and lemon designs, in the company's signature gingham print, will be this year's 'must have' nappy for fashion and

environmentally-conscious parents. Shaped to fit baby's bottom snugly, Modern Baby nappies are made from super-breathable terry towelling, enveloped in soft brushed cotton, with gently elasticated legs and waistbands, and adjustable Velcro fastenings. Less bulky than prefold nappies, Modern Baby nappies are every bit as absorbent thanks to the sewn-in booster pad that opens

out for washing and drying. Practical and great value for money, Modern Baby nappies are easy to use with no folding required and the coordinating waterproof covers have an extra layer of soft, velvety cotton. Designer and mum of three, Martine Carroll, comments on the launch, "Mums adore the beautiful tactile fabrics that make up Modern Baby nappies. Our trademark gingham designs in white, pink, blue, lime,

raspberry and now lemon and mint are not only trendy but also 100% effective at keeping babies' bottoms dry. The added bonus is that they are kind to the environment too!" Priced at £8.99 for a shaped nappy and £7.50 for the cotton waterproof nappy cover, Modern Baby nappies are available online (www.modernbaby.co.uk) and also many leading independent nursery outlets across the UK.