

Pass It On®...

Taking the Fear Out of Surgery.

How one doctor helps children face their hospital fears by dressing them up as superheroes.

Surgery is scary enough for any of us, but when you are a child, and everyone is bigger than you, it can feel like a nightmare. That's why it matters so very much what happens before, during and after treatment — especially when what happens includes a bit of humor.

Modern medicine alleviates more pain and suffering for children than ever in world history — everything from removing an appendix, to hernias, to fixing broken bones and orthopedic problems, to cancer. Without these fixes, children can suffer socially and emotionally as well as physically. But it's hard for a child to grasp the long-term benefits of surgery when confronted with bright lights and unfamiliar faces.

To help children find the courage to face these fears, a doctor in Colombia has special scrubs made for his little patients that change them from vulnerable humans to brave superheroes. He carries the patients through the hallway on his shoulder as they thrust their hands forward, parting the clouds of anxiety and soaring toward a better life, one that gives them confidence that they can overcome challenges.

Not surprisingly, the little superheroes also give their parents the courage to endure the wait while they are in the operating room. Patiently explaining a complicated surgery in medical terms does not always allay the fears. The doctor's empathy may be felt, but building trust in the process needs more than a quick medical education. Seeing that their children trust the doctor allows parents the chance to take a deep breath, and knowing a doctor cares enough to address those fears in such a wonderful way is also a confidence-builder.

Even as modern medicine improves in dramatic ways, we humans will always need each other. Laughter is the best medicine. As Patch Adams, the real-life doctor immortalized on film by Robin Williams, says: "Laughter boosts the immune system and helps the body fight off disease, cancer cells as well as viral, bacterial and other infections. Being happy is the best cure of all diseases!"

One person, the right person, can lead a child to victory. That person doesn't have to be a doctor or even a superhero. All one has to do is make a child feel courageous. We ensure the happiness of the world when we do so. So, let's make superheroes of children, and heed the words of Patch Adams: "The reason adults should look as though they are having fun is to give kids a reason to want to grow up."

Be Super... PassItOn.com

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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