

AHHHH... Togetherness

Today being Father's Day, the family took the three dads to dinner. Then... two of my siblings and I took a horde of crazies to see *Toy Story 3*! Definitely worth seeing although not sure the 3D was worth it... not much there that would not have been just as enjoyable on a decent 2D screen.

Getting to dinner was an adventure, the parents were not interested in seeing the movie, so my sis and I followed them. We quickly got left in the dust! Thank goodness for cell phones. If someone had told me where we were headed, I could have easily gotten us there, but always interesting!

I found the latest installment in the adventures of Woody, Buzz, and the gang to be as enjoyable as the original and better than the sequel. This time, Andy is packing for college. He still sleeps in the same room but his toy box has been long forgotten until a week before he is ready to head out. His mother gives him a cardboard box in which to put everything he is taking with him and a garbage bag in which to put everything he wants to be put in the attic. Fortunately, the bag headed for the attic gets mistaken for garbage and the adventure begins.

Several themes run rampant through the movie: the power of friendship and sticking together; growing up; saying goodbye.

All of the favorite toys are here along with a gaggle of new toys many of whom have interesting backstories of their own.

And as always, the end credits are worth a look as the story doesn't end as they start to roll. Highly recommended! You are never too old for a Disney/Pixar movie!

Secrets Of Traveling With Kids

I'm smack dab in the middle (of the beginning) of raising 4 kids of all different (under 10) ages, and also their friends are around a lot, so we are constantly surrounded by young-uns! Of my many observations and trials and errors in trying to keep them all simultaneously calm and content, I have discovered a few secrets, *golden* secrets – so considered because of their miraculous success rates, at least in the under 10 set. Give me a few years (especially when the kids reach their teens), and I may have enough golden kid-contenting secrets to write a book, let's hope I learn some more anyway...

1. If you trace the roots of every kid tantrum and meltdown, you will find that most are derived from feelings of hunger, followed closely by fatigue and thirst; the latter two can be interchanged, it depends upon the kid. But the #1 reason is usually hunger. Keeping small, energy-boosting (and likable!) snacks on hand at all times can do wonders for the mood of the group.

2. Never underestimate the power of blankie. I keep those really thin blankies in my car – the ones they give you at the hospital when you're having a baby. They fold up so small, it's really not a big deal for me to keep a bag with 4 of them (1 per kid is important!) folded up and stashed under the front passenger seat. When we are returning home on a long drive or even when we're in the middle of a long day out, a sleepy (and full-stomached, see hint #1) kid can often be comforted and most often put to sleep by a blankie. Even the thin ones work like a miracle; I've seen it work for multiple ages, genders, and personalities. It's difficult for me to get used to, but I keep offering my son little stuffed animals to play with. I had 3 girl babies before him, and they all

loved stuffed animals. My son could care less, unless the stuffed animal still has its tag for him to rip off. But the blankie secret is effective even with him – he'll pull it up against his cheek and instantly get sleepy! If you don't have enough of the hospital blankies for each kid (and it's important they each have their own), I highly suggest you purchase other thin blankies for the car since they're inexpensive, especially when you consider how helpful they are. They come in packs of 4 or 5 for under \$10, I think... A key to helping this secret be effective is to make sure **you** retain control of the blankies – don't let the kids keep them in the back of the van or like anything else, the novelty will wear off, rendering the blankie ineffective. My kids know that the car blankies are just for "blankie emergencies", and that policy helps to make sure I can keep them somewhat clean and stashed and ready for use.

So just remember, snacks and blankies can usually get you out of most kid-pinches, sometimes even calming kids who pinch, ha. At the very least, if you find yourself in charge of some crazy kids, plan ahead and do some light packing – these hints will buy you some time to think of a better plan!