



Stork Health Tips

Imaginary Friends

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to four very special people: Souta, Mouta, Frieta, and Hajagahgah. The first three were special friends of my daughter, Hannah, and the fourth was a regular playmate of my younger sister, Rebecca. Yes, imaginary friends are a common and healthy part of early childhood. With apologies to my daughter and sister for calling their friends imaginary, I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate their existence. The number of times that Hajagahgah played with my sister, when no one else

would and the numerous times my daughter was able to summon the courage to tell us what item her friends broke in the house are innumerable.

Parents first introduced to their child's new playmate are sometimes concerned that this may be the presenting sign of mental illness or evidence of bad parenting. On the contrary, the child with imaginary friends is demonstrating a fertile imagination and innate cleverness. It should be refreshing to parents that their children are developing their minds through exercises of imagination. A strong

imagination is a wonderful character trait. It should be encouraged and developed.

Imaginary friends tend to appear suddenly and fade gradually. They offer emotional comfort in uncertain situations, and unconditional friendship. They allow a child to express an idea or question without having to take ownership. They help to pass time when bored, and are always available for a tea party! In some ways, it seems a shame we do not keep these imaginary comrades into adulthood.

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Friendly Tips

- When your child tells you about his/her imaginary friend, take the time to ask questions about this friend's appearance, habits, hobbies, and family. Doing so, is enjoyable; provides quality time with your child, and allows for even more creativity.
- Did you have an imaginary friend? If so, tell your child. Describe those things that made your friend special. In turn, your child will tell you what makes his/her friend special.
- If your child's friend breaks something, don't punish your child for "lying", explain to your child that he/she is responsible for keeping these friends under control and obeying house rules.

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