

Bedtime bliss

Kamloops pair add positive twist to childrens' nighttime rituals

By Jennifer Muir

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Inventive yet simple, playful yet peaceful, Little Stars Bedtime Cards are optimal tools for creating a stress free nighttime routine between parents and young children.

Developed by mothers Shannon McQuillan and Linda Komori, both of Kamloops, this special deck can actually replace whiney excuses and heal dragging with anticipation of crawling happily between the sheets.

"We all have those nights as parents where everyone is tired," says Komori, a graphic artist who has two daughters, now 10 and 13. "This is a low stress and easy way to ease a child into bed."

And more than just a peacemaker, the cards have been created to spark discussion that affirms the good qualities a child possesses.

"A lot of the time we, as parents, are in 'tell mode' and it's not so much about asking what our children think," said McQuillan, who is a human resources consultant and has two boys aged seven and nine.

But the benefits of asking can have a tremendous impact on their self-importance, she adds.

A handful of years in the making, the cards incorporate 28 themes such as bravery, love, sharing, listening, movement and dreaming. Each card is designed with an "I statement" on the front: "I like to feel peaceful," or "I like to help," which helps get the conversation going. On the flip side are a series of three to five questions that allow the child to express their feelings on a topic and incorporate it with their own experiences.

Komori and McQuillan note the questions related to the "I statement" are a means of starting conversation and not as items to be checked off a list. The cards, which cater to a three-to-six age group, can be used to help qualify a situation based on a child's experiences from earlier in the day or based their mood.

The concept came to McQuillan several years ago when she was using affirmation cards as part of her own bedtime ritual.

"At around the same time, my husband was putting little slips of paper under our boys' pillows at night with things on them like 'life is good, and 'laugh a lot,'" says McQuillan. "They looked forward to finding them every night and it was good to end the day on a positive note."

Taking both those ideas – positive affirmation and a child’s anticipation for finding things – McQuillan approached her friend Komori about developing a product that turned an often tense time of day into a happy one for children and parents.

“We are like-minded thinkers,” says McQuillan. “I know Linda is always up for new things. When I approached her about doing this project, she went on to create these three characters – Shiner, Sparky and Blaze.”

That personalized touch took the plan from words on a page to characters, which children could identify with. The brewing idea went to first design stage with illustrations and layout by Komori, and then to focus testing with parents and children in the community. Feedback was positive and many of the test subjects came to look forward to the routine that can take as long or as little time as a child and parent needs.

“We heard things like ‘Mommy, it’s time to do the cards,’” says Komori. “The children were looking forward to the ritual.

“It’s very low stress and easy. There is no wrong way to do it,” she adds.

The women recommend tucking a card under a youngster’s pillow each night so that they can “discover it,” which becomes part of the positive anticipation for conversation.

At the bottom of each card is a poem, penned by Komori, which offers a simple and easy closing to the routine.

She says the concept is not intended as an educational tool, but to affirm positive qualities and enhance the special connections that exist between families. As children grow, the cards can be adapted so questions fit a more maturely developed mind.

Little Stars Bedtime Cards retail for \$18.95 and are available at the Kamloops Art Gallery store, the Kids Room in the Columbia Shopping Centre and online at [www.bedtimecards.com](http://www.bedtimecards.com)