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Hecht: All is not lost. Until sometimes it is.

Pam J. Hecht, Special to WNC Parent Published 6:00 a.m. ET April 22, 2019

4-5 minutes

I try not to get too attached to things. The reason is not based on any spiritual belief. It's because, most of the time, I'll lose them.

So, when kids tell me they've lost their backpacks, their water bottles, their homework, their friends and everything else they once had but for some reason is now gone, I can relate.

At school recently, I lost two pairs of sunglasses, three pens, a ring and my keys (twice.) And that was all in one day — please don't ask me about the other days.

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As I was searching the ballfield for my second pair of sunglasses (and squinting), I noticed a small child also walking in circles, scanning the ground. “Are you looking for something?” I asked.

“I lost my pet worm,” she answered. She was my new best friend.

When a child runs to me, panting, teary-eyed and confused, half the time it’s because they’ve lost their blankety blank and I, of course, should know where it is. Check lost and found, I advise, knowing they’ll be back to see me.

“It’s not there.” Of course it’s not. Say goodbye forever, I think to myself. I do have a mean streak.

“We’ll look somewhere else, let’s all help,” I might say instead.

Looking for the lost

Helping kids hunt for their belongings and consoling those who are mourning stuff gone astray is part of my job. Sometimes, it’s a person they lost.

“It’s strange that he’s not here,” a child suddenly said the other day. She was talking about my co-instructor, William, a man in his early 70s, who had unexpectedly passed away.

“His voice sure could carry across the field,” I said, with a smile. “Our human megaphone.”

“He knew everything about music; he was smart and nice,” another child added. We were sad, but it felt better to talk about him.

From time to time, we have to do without on a more basic level. A boy moaned, “We don’t have the soft bouncy ball.”

“Well, if someone hadn’t hurled it onto the roof, perhaps it would be here with us today,” I said. We hung our heads low for a

moment in honor of yet another brave ball gone MIA.

Losing things, like your temper. Or a kid

Certain children have enjoyed playing a rather sadistic game in which they steal my things and run away with them, sometimes without me realizing it. In the past, I'd chase these little pickpockets until my old lady lungs gave out (about a minute.) Or, I'd spend time rifling through my things to find the missing object until I realized that a smirking little imp had it. I banned this game after one of my shoelaces ended up 20 feet up a tree. Also, it was too much exercise. I do have my limits.

Yes, losing things does occur when one is around children, things like your temper, your sanity and, on particularly difficult days, your faith in humanity.

Occasionally, I even lose a kid. Not for long, but still. Enough so that my thoughts might jump to a scenario in which I have to tell the parent, "Well, I checked the lost and found box, but he wasn't in there. I'm sure he'll turn up eventually." Needless to say, when a child has run behind a storage shed, down a hill or somewhere else she/he/they're not supposed to be, it can be quite trying.

A person can also lose a kite.

The other day, a couple of kids were flying a small kite when a sudden gust of wind blew through the field. The boy holding the string lost his grip and the kite broke free, rising higher and higher. Everyone stopped what they were doing to watch the colorful kite floating upward.

“Look, look, it’s not coming back,” a child yelled to the crowd.

“Wow, this is so awesome,” another said.

“Where is it going?”

“It’s so beautiful.”

“Can we get another one?”

Yes, kites break, get stuck in trees and eventually, fly away, free. That’s when it’s particularly hard, being attached to a kite. Or to a kid.

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