

Wiggly incisor? Here's a little Tooth Fairy trivia

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

Losing baby teeth is a rite of passage for kids all over the world. In my life, it's the last step before the inevitable braces, but that's another story. At the crux of it, it's just another reason for me to have to get out of bed in the middle of the night. For the kids, it's just awesome.

The Tooth Fairy as we know her (or him) is actually quite young, only becoming popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Prior to that, many cultures had traditional stories about mice, beavers, rabbits, or even squirrels taking the teeth. The animal connection had something to do with the fact that rodents' teeth grow throughout their whole lives.

Not all traditions have to do with animals, however. There are a variety of legends that tell what should happen with the teeth when they come out, all in the name of good luck. They may be thrown into the sun or a fire, thrown backwards between the legs, thrown over the roof of a shelter or home, placed in a mouse hole, buried in the ground, put inside a tree or a wall, or even swallowed by a mother, the child, or a pet.

Thankfully, having the modern Tooth Fairy, mostly pictured as a Disney type fairy, visit your home is a lot more innocuous than having to eat your child's teeth. If you're just getting started on this journey, here are some tips.

First, read "The Real Tooth Fairy" by Marilyn Kaye with your child. It explains how the real Tooth Fairy disguises herself as a parent to keep from getting caught. This is extremely helpful information if your child is a light sleeper or hides

the tooth under six pillows, three blankets, and the lower half of his body.

Second, you can hold the tooth/coin hostage if the room is too messy for the Tooth Fairy to make it safely to the bed.

Our Tooth Fairy has left notes stating that unfortunately, her safety rules don't allow her to navigate around piles of dirty clothes and toys.

Third, a fun, easy tradition is to have your Tooth Fairy leave fairy

dust (in the form of small amounts of glitter) on the window-sill and pillow. It's fun for the kids to follow her path by searching the 'dust.'

Fourth, did the Tooth Fairy forget to come? No problem. Let your little one know that the Tooth Fairy was on vacation by leaving a little note on fairy decorated paper or a postcard.

Use the computer or write

in with your non dominant hand to disguise your handwriting.

Finally, be sure to use a Tooth Fairy dish or pillow that is set next to the bed. It's way easier than having to shift your child's head out of the way. Most of them have a little place for the coin.

Speaking of coins, let's talk cash. For the love of Pete, baby teeth payouts should not break the bank. Did you know the average pay for a baby tooth is \$3.70? Please. I learned years (and years) ago from one of those over the top, way better-mother-than-I-type women to use a special coin. All my kids received Sacajawea coins from our Tooth Fairy. Then, they would trade it in to me for a regular dollar (because the stores don't take those coins, honey) and we would hit the dollar store. That way I never ran out, and they thought the coins were super cool.

Consider celebrating teeth with the whole family by watching a movie. Try "Tooth Fairy" starring Dwayne Johnson, or "Tooth Fairy 2" with Larry Guthrie. If you do some searching, you might be able to find the movie "Toothless" (starring Kirstie Alley). It's about a dentist turned Tooth Fairy, in the same vein as Tim Allen in "The Santa Clause."

Regardless of the traditions you choose to uphold in your family, it's fun to see the joy on the children's faces when they race down the hall to tell you that the Tooth Fairy came. Enjoy!

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