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## How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Paw Patrol

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## How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Paw Patrol

By Bree Watson  
UCF Forum columnist  
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I always encourage my son's creativity, even if it means watching the same TV episode over and over and over again.



(Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon)

I thought we'd avoid it, but it's simply unavoidable. The animated allure of talking dogs is just too strong for preschoolers to resist.

Yes, I'm talking about Marshall, Rubble, Chase, Rocky, Zuma and Skye — the Paw Patrol. My 2-year-old is hooked on the hijinks of this Nickelodeon cartoon, while I'm stuck with the theme song in my head at all hours of the day and night.

I called it junk food television. Because unlike Sesame Street, Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood and other kids' shows that offer important life lessons, Paw Patrol is a loud and glossy franchise with far-fetched plots (pun intended).

But I was wrong. I mean, yes, it's still a loud and glossy franchise with far-fetched plots. But it also ignites my toddler's imagination.

Some background for the folks not yet indoctrinated by this canine cult: Ryder, a 10-year-old boy with no parent or guardian supervision in sight, has a team of problem-solving pups who save the day in Adventure Bay with gear and gadgets that get more elaborate as the show's seven seasons go on.

As hollow as some kids' shows can feel to an adult, it has been heartwarming to see my son's young imagination spring into action after watching this troop of pooches.

Each dog has career-centric skills. For example, Marshall, a clumsy Dalmatian, is the crew's firefighter and paramedic; Chase, a German shepherd, is a police officer; and Skye, a cockapoo, is an expert aviator who jets around with a winged backpack (or "pup-pack" if you want to get technical).

How does Ryder afford all these pups and James Bond-like devices? My husband jokes that he's funded by the Illuminati. My theory is that the taxes in Adventure Bay are absolutely exorbitant. How else would all the public services — from construction and recycling to underwater rescue missions — be handled by a squad of dogs with high-tech tools?

While stopped in traffic recently, my son asked what the towering object was near our car. "It's a billboard," I said.

"Mommy go up there?" he asked in his cute and curious toddler voice.

"Oh," I replied. "It's very tall, so we'd need a ladder."

I thought that was a sufficient answer, but his silence was actually a pause. It turns out he was devising a solution to this height hindrance, and he knew exactly what we needed to do.

"Mommy, call Marshall?" he asked. You know, Paw Patrol's resident firefighter who has fast access to a ladder.

I was impressed. This show I had chalked up to being a bit mindless is actually educational in its own way. It teaches my son that different skills can help in different situations. In this instance, it was Marshall's ladder that was coming to our aid.

Since then, we've had to call the Paw Patrol countless times to save us from sticky situations. When a toy was perched precariously on a table's edge, only a safety net from a responsible police pup would do — "Chase is on the case!" When there was a pile-up of pillows on the floor, we needed the strength of a bulldozing bulldog to clear a path — "Rubble on the double!" And whenever a bath toy floats out of reach, you better believe we're quick to call Zuma, a chocolate lab with scuba skills and a buoy launcher — "Let's dive in!"

As hollow as some kids' shows can feel to an adult, it has been heartwarming to see my son's young imagination spring into action after watching this troop of pooches. And while I do my best to limit his screen time, I will always encourage his creativity. Even if it means watching the same episode over and over and over again.

Besides, I grew up on a steady diet of Garfield, Muppet Babies and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and I turned out OK — I think. So next time I worry about Ryder and his team of pups occupying our afternoon routine, I'll take a cue from Bart Simpson and tell myself, "Don't have a cow, man."

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