



The Heartful Parent PODCAST

— WITH CHRISTY KEATING —

Ep 89 | Is Trick-or-Treating Safe?

[00:00:31] **Christy Keating:** Well, hello there Heartful Parent Podcast listeners, how are you?

We are back. For another episode of the Heartful Parent Podcast, and in fact, back for another solo episode of the Heartful Parent Podcast. Why you might ask? Well, because it's October, which is my very favorite month of the year for a number of different reasons. Mostly the colors, the fact that the weather can still be nice, but it's chilly outside.

I love the leaves. I love the cozy sweaters. I just. I just absolutely love this season of the year. One of the things that of course happens in October, in case you hadn't heard, newsflash, is Halloween. Every year you can expect from me a special Halloween episode where we dig into some things that you need to know heading into this most American of holidays, before the big day hits.

So if you are living outside of the U. S. and sort of wondering what's the big deal about Halloween, depending on where you live, bear with me. I know that Halloween has started to spread to other parts of the world or the trick-or-treating and the way that we do it traditionally here in the U.S. has started to spread to other parts of the world, but if that's not happening where you are, That's okay. That's okay. Just bear with me. And I think there will still be some nuggets of good stuff that you can pick up from today's episode. If you are based in the U. S. or Canada, and trick-or-treating is something that you did as a kid and or that your kids want to do, we're going to talk a little bit about that today.

Now, last year on Halloween itself, I issued or I released a Halloween podcast. episode, like specifically devoted to Halloween and more specifically devoted to busting some of the myths that show up repeatedly during this Halloween season. I'm going to touch on those ever so briefly again today, but we will also drop a link for that episode In the show notes so that you can go back and listen to it.

It is just in case you're looking for it, wherever you listen to your podcasts, it's episode 38. And there are some important nuggets I think in there that are worth sharing. Like I said, I'm going to talk about those ever so briefly today, but I would encourage you to go back and check out last year's episode, just to make sure that you know what you do need to worry about.

And What you don't need to worry about on Halloween, but before we dig into that at all, there's something that has been coming up for me related to this holiday that I would really love to talk about. And it's so interesting because I was actually speaking with my podcast editor, Kim, and sharing with her my frustration over the fact that so few kids are allowed to trick-or-treat anymore. And I think it's tied to all of these myths that we have about Halloween and the risks on Halloween. And like I said, I will dig into those just a little bit, um, because it's directly tied to this, but I would like to invite each and every one of my listeners, so, you know, you, to decide to take back Halloween and with that, to take back childhood for our kids, to let them enjoy this silly, goofy holiday in all of its magic and wondrousness and silliness, just because it's a fun thing to do. And childhood deserves to have a little bit of fun sprinkled in there, right? Some might argue a lot of fun.

And the problem is that adults have gotten all up in the business of Halloween, and frankly, folks, we've ruined it. And we've ruined it in a couple of different ways. One, we're not letting kids have the fun. That kids should be having on a holiday that really is kind of meant for childhood in many, many ways, don't get me wrong.

[00:05:00] I think adults can enjoy it too. And I've actually already been doing that this year, but it is, you know, going trick-or-treating is for many of us who got to do it as a kid. It's one of those sort of memories that we will always cherish. Like I said, we've gotten all up in kids business and now we plan all these other things other than Halloween trick-or-treating.

We plan trunk-or-treats where you go to your school or your church and the parking lot. And kids walk from car to car and they get candy out of the trunk of a car. Snooze, by the way, and we've planned other events around the towns and our cities. Where they go from store to store at a mall or whatever it might be in your neck of the woods, all so that, oh my goodness, our kids won't want to go trick-or-treating on the big day.

Listen, if you don't go trick-or-treating because for religious reasons or philosophical reasons, fine. But if you don't go or don't let your kids go trick-or-treating because you're worried that it's too dangerous, fine. I really want to invite you to let your kids take back childhood. Now, if you live out in the country or maybe, you know, in the city where it's a little bit harder, okay, so drive them to a neighborhood. Drive them to my neighborhood. There are families ready to hand out candy to these kids. So let's do it.

Now, coupled with that means you got to stay home and hand out candy. Somebody's got to stay home and hand out candy. I know a lot of people. Put a little bowl out on the porch and you know, and kids can come by and take a piece of candy and then they get frustrated when some kid comes by and takes all the candy.



Now I know that not every family has the benefit of two parents where one can, you know, take young kids out trick-or-treating and one can stay at home. To the extent that that's possible, hand out candy to kids. Stay home, make it an adventure, make it fun for them and make it something that they have to work for. They've got to go up to the door. They've got to ring the doorbell or knock on the door and they've got to say trick-or-treat. It's a whole experience. That is super fun. Especially when somebody answers the door looks at all their costumes, you know, talks about their awesome costumes. Celebrates the kids, whether they are rambunctious and outgoing, a little more shy and reserved on the spectrum. Teenagers, toddlers, doesn't matter. They're all kids. Let them enjoy the holiday and support them in doing that. So yeah, do I have big feelings about this? Yes, I do. If you need to take your kids around the neighborhood because they're young, great. And you have the ability to do this. Have one parent go out with them, gather a group of parents that can do that while other parents stay at home.

Frankly, where I live in Seattle, it's often raining. So I'm perfectly happy to be the parent that's at home in the dry weather, handing out candy and seeing all the cute kids as they come to my door. And my husband is thankfully more than willing to be the one who over the years has taken our young kids out to go trick-or-treating.

Let's bring back the Halloween and Halloween. Let's do it on Halloween. Let's do it in our neighborhoods. It's a lovely way to connect with our neighbors. to meet our neighbors. And there are so many places where we don't do that anymore, where we don't know the names of the people that live next door to us or what they look like.

And I think Halloween is a great opportunity for community building and for saying hi to people that maybe we don't see a lot of. So. My first invitation, I've already said it several times, but my first invitation today is to take back childhood. Coupled with that, let's also say that the entire month doesn't have to be about our kids.

Parenting, believe it or not, does not require you to give up everything you are or were in sacrifice of your children. And in fact, if you do that, I would wager. You will end up with some resentment or your kids will become teens and want to do their own thing and you'll be kind of lost. What do I do?

I'm not, you know, they don't need me in the same way that they once did. If you are in a relationship, your relationship can suffer because you're not investing in that. You're only investing in your kids. And so, you know, that's a side conversation that we can have, but I just want to reiterate the fact that you are a parent.



[00:10:03] And I know you would do anything for your kids. And I would too. Except completely lose myself. I won't do that for my children. Why it's not good for them. And it's not good for me. And in this month of October, we tend to go overboard with everything being about the kids. Like I said, and I, you know, I was talking with, as I already mentioned, I was talking with my podcast editor, Kim, and she was expressing her frustration.

You know, not only that kids aren't trick-or-treating as much on Halloween, but that there's all these other events on different days, and you're expected to go to the mall, right? You're expected to go to the trunk-or-treat at your school. You're expected to go to the trunk-or-treat at your church, if you belong to a church.

You're expected to go to the mall, right? And kids hear about these events and they want to go to the mall. And so now here we are having to drag our kids to all these things, all these events. Oh, and by the way, you're supposed to go to the pumpkin patch and carve pumpkins, and look, those are super fun things, and I love them, and I recommend them.

But it quickly can become all about our children. And it's okay to say, look, Halloween's about you. That's great. Let's trick-or-treat. But mom and dad, or mom and mom, or dad and dad, or whoever, whatever your family makeup is, right? We're going to do something different on a different night. We're gonna enjoy the season.

And maybe that's not Halloween related. Maybe it's just a date night. Or a night out with your girlfriends. You know, or a night out with your guy friends. Whatever. But we can keep doing those things right up through this month. And, believe it or not, all the way through Christmas. As well. Right, all the way through the big holiday season. Christmas, Hanukkah, and all of those things that tend to happen in December. You know, we've got a lot of neighbors who are of Indian descent. So Diwali is a big thing, right? This is a period of holidays, Thanksgiving, right? All of it is sort of coming. And if we make all of these events exclusively focused on our kids, we are going to get lost in the mix. And I don't want that to happen to you. So don't start this month. And if you have a PTA that wants to do a trunk-or-treat and you're on the PTA, say, hey, you know, lovely idea. My kids don't need candy multiple nights of the week. And I think the kids should be given the freedom to go out trick-or-treating, not trunk-or-treating.

We don't need more events. Instead, maybe send out a newsletter with neighborhoods who are willing to have kids come into them. If they live in an apartment building and it's harder for them to go trick-or-treating, I would happily welcome children who don't live in an area where they can really do this.



I would happily welcome them in our neighborhood. Let's let kids have fun. Okay, so, take back childhood, and also, it's not all about the kids. Now, let's talk quickly about the things that led to the place that we are in. Why have we stopped trick-or-treating? Why have we created all of these other Halloween events?

I'll tell you why. It's because of the fear mongering that is so prevalent in our culture right now. I was just reading an article the other day. It was talking about this QAnon theory that the global elites, quote unquote, are kidnapping and torturing children to harvest the chemical compound called adenosine from their blood that they believe is needed to keep them young, healthy. It's like the elixir of youth.

Okay. I hope you're laughing right now. I hope you're laughing right now, or you're horrified at the fact that people actually believe this. This is absolute crazy talk. It is crazy talk. And I know most of us are not subscribers to QAnon conspiracy theories. But this is the kind of fear mongering that then sort of trickles down and spreads out into our culture.

And we go, well, okay, yeah, the global elites aren't kidnapping children and drinking their blood. Yeah. But kidnapping is super common and I need to make sure that I'm protecting my children from that. If that is sort of your mindset or your fear, I will invite you again to go back to my podcast episode from Halloween last year and also to my podcast episode about Stranger Danger that will debunk that from the beginning.

Stranger danger isn't a thing. It's not happening on every street corner. It's not common. It's not likely. It's not even a substantial risk. It's so minimally risky as to almost be worth not mentioning.

Now, do we still mention it? Do we still talk to kids about how to be safe out in the world? Yes, of course we do.

[00:15:07] But you can send your kids out trick-or-treating without worrying about them being snatched off the street. But the fear of that, that has been just taken over our psyches. Is one of the many reasons that, you know, to go back to the beginning of this episode that we don't have. And then we have all these other events where they can be hawked over by parents at every step of the way. Because this kind of prevalent belief that there's bad people everywhere ready to snatch our children. And in fact that idea that there's bad people everywhere ready to harm our kids is exactly what plays into some of the other myths from Halloween. Right?



The myth that candy isn't safe and that it might have needles or razor blades or anything. That was super common, that myth or that belief when I was a kid. My dad used to check my Halloween candy before I could eat even a single piece. And it has been thoroughly and repeatedly debunked. Thoroughly and repeatedly debunked. There is no commercial candy. That has ever been found to have anything of that nature in it that would hurt a kid, and certainly nothing intentional. So, you can let that one go. And that also ties into the myth that there are people ready and willing to deal fentanyl to our young children to get them out of jail. Addicted.

In fact I recently heard another spin on this one, cause last year we were talking about Rainbow Fentanyl that they were making to look like candy for kids. Well now the myth that I've been hearing, and I've heard it from actually several of my adult friends, was you should never pick money up off the ground. Like dollars, you know, bills, because it's, covered in fentanyl and it could kill you. Okay. That's not true. Okay. That's simply not true. If you find a dollar or a hundred dollars on the ground, pick that puppy up and put it in your wallet or give it to your kid. People aren't out there trying to get your toddlers addicted to fentanyl.

That is not how this system works. I'm not saying fentanyl is not a risk. I'm saying they're not handing it out as Halloween candy and it's not on the dollar bills that you might find on the ground in a way that you need to worry about. But you see like all this fear swirled around us with respect to Halloween and now our kids don't get to go door to door asking for candy.

And dressing up in their awesome cute costumes. It's like maybe they get to dress up for an hour at school. Maybe. Maybe they go to a trunk-or-treat. Or 17 trunk-or-treats. But they're missing out on the way this all started. There's a lot of things that I've briefly mentioned here because I am encouraging you to go back and listen to the episode from last year that will be linked below in the show notes to really dive into, you know, deeper information about why those myths have been debunked.

But just suffice it to say, your kids are safe to go trick-or-treating. Now, what are the biggest risks? What are the biggest things you do need to talk to them about and be aware of? Here's my list. One, cars. Cars can still pose a risk to our kids, just as they do on a non Halloween day. Right? We need to be talking to our kids.

And it's so easy to get ramped up in the fun and the excitement of Halloween that if you've got younger children or, you know, kids who are more likely to be impulsive, yeah, go out and go trick-or-treating with them. Sort of usher them from house to house. You can stay down by the curb while they go ring the doorbell, but like You know, keep an eye on them. Great. That's totally fine.



Now, my teenager who will be going out trick-or-treating with her best friend and maybe some other kids, I will not be supervising that I trust these kids. I know these kids, they will be fine and they will safely trick-or-treat and they will be respectful to people. You don't supervise past when you need to supervise, but make sure that regardless of the age of your kids, You're talking to them about cars and reminding them not to get super caught up in the fun and excitement of Halloween so that they're not paying attention before they cross the street, okay?

Similarly, along those same lines, make sure that they've got some level of visibility with their costume, right? If you've got a little witch who's dressed up in all black or, you know, some other costume that's largely dark, like, put a few strips of reflective tape on the back of them. Put it on their shoes.

Put it on their trick-or-treat bag. Make it so that they can be seen easily. And then what else do we need to talk to them about? Manners. Don't take all the candy in a bowl. Don't steal all the candy if it's left out. Hopefully there's someone handing that candy out, but if there isn't, don't take it all.

[00:20:07] Don't demand a different kind of candy than the one that you are handed. We can teach them some politeness and manners, and I know there are kids for whom this is harder, and that's okay. If you're the person handing out the candy, also be understanding, empathetic, tolerant of those kids who are not yet up to speed on their manners, or who are struggling for whatever reason, right, who that's a bigger challenge for.

But if you have a kid who's perfectly capable of saying please and thank you and happy Halloween and all of those things, teach them to do that. Teach them to be appreciative of whatever candy they are handed. If it's one piece or five pieces or it has nuts and they don't like nuts, thank you very much.

Your kids can trade it later. That's what they love to do. Let them take all that candy, spread it out with their friends on the floor and trade. So don't worry about all the scary stuff. Accept, talk to them about cars, make sure they're visible, talk to them about manners, let your teens trick-or-treat, let teens come to your door, and let's take back childhood on Halloween and make it something all of our kids can enjoy.

All of our kids. I'm gonna get off my little Halloween soapbox for the day and just sort of leave you with those thoughts and maybe think about the ways that we've let fear ooze and wheedle its way in. and kind of ruin what is meant to be a super fun, super silly, super joyous occasion for our kids. All right.



[00:21:47] Happy Halloween. Happy October. Drop a note. Let me know what you think about all this and let me know what your favorite candy is. I always love hearing what everybody thinks is the best thing to get on the big night. Take care, folks. I'll see you next week. Cheers.

