

PSYCHOLOGY AT THE MOVIES

Finding Nemo

A Family Discussion Guide



Finding Nemo is more than an adventure. Underneath, it is a story about an anxious parent learning to let a child grow. Marlin's fear, born of a real loss, slowly becomes overprotection. The heart of the film is that children need a secure base, protection they can return to, and the freedom to venture out. Be a base, not a cage. Watch it together, then use these questions and activities to talk about trust and independence.

Talk about it together

Little ones (4 to 7): When does a grown-up keep you safe? When do you want to try something all by yourself? How does Nemo feel when his dad keeps saying no?

Big kids (8 to 12): Why is Marlin so worried? When is being careful helpful, and when does it get in the way? What is something you wish you were trusted to do on your own?

Teens and up: Marlin's fear came from a real loss. How can fear sometimes disguise itself as love or control? Where would you like more trust, and how could you build it together?

Try this at home

One brave thing. Each week, let your child try one slightly-too-big thing with you nearby but not stepping in. Notice what they discover they can do.

Name the worry. When you feel the urge to swoop in, say it out loud, I am feeling worried so I want to help, then pause and let them try.

About Dr. Michael Zakalik

A licensed clinical psychologist (Illinois and Washington, PSYPACT provider) with 20+ years helping children, parents, and families. He shares psychology-backed guides, tools, and stories for parents.

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