

Children's Bare Feet Outside is Forbidden: Stephanie Helich

(A True Story)

I always wanted to be outside playing as a child. My Mum, Dad, Sister and I lived amongst tall trees, parks and also very close to the beach. My sister, Allie, and I were always running, jumping or walking out in the elements as children. Ally and I loved the outdoors especially in daylight saving where we could remain outside until 7pm when there was still sunlight. We would love being outside, spending time in nature.

There was a tight rule I recall as a child in our household. It seemed, when I was going somewhere it was forbidden to leave the home without shoes on. It was a rule for both my sister and I. It was seen as dangerous and unsafe to not have footwear on everytime we left the house.

One year I went to the Easter show when I was about thirteen or fourteen with three of my friends from school and we had decided we were at an age we could go on our own, without a parent. We had been walking around the Easter show for over four hours and our feet were hot, sore and tired. My friend decided to take her shoes off and give her feet a breather. I decided it was a good idea so I took my shoes off too. My Mother was due to pick us all up at the end of the day. We walked to meet my Mum then suddenly we heard her yell, "put your shoes on, all of you, you're likely to step on glass and hurt yourselves, put them on now." One of my friends laughed. I said to Mum, "our feet are sore Mum." She said, "I don't care, put your shoes on now." So we all had to put our shoes back on unwillingly.

On the occasional Sunday night we would buy Kentucky Fried Chicken for dinner as a treat. Allie and I had our showers and dressed in our nighties and dressing gowns. If we were going with Dad in the car to get the Kentucky Fried Chicken, our slippers always needed to be on our feet.

At Christmas time we would holiday very close to the Beach at Noosa. If we were going to the Ocean, at about thirty metres from the Ocean we were always told to "put your thongs on." I recall our family deciding to walk along the beach North bound. Mum said to Allie and I, "You better wear shoes just in case there is a needle in the sand that you might step on."

We lived beside a small park with a creek and a pipeline that carried water surrounded by bushland. When the neighbours and I decided we would play there and build cubby-houses I was always reminded by Mum to "put your shoe's on." Two

of our neighbour's had swimming pools and I was always told to wear thongs to and from them.

Our friends, Allie and I would often ride our bikes to and from our local swimming centre and Mum and Dad banned us from having bare feet whilst travelling there. If we visited a neighbour to play, bare feet weren't allowed. When Mum, Allie and I needed to go for the weekly grocery shop, Mum would drive and always remind us to "put your shoes on." When our family invited us to their homes while on holidays or their family were invited to our home, shoes were compulsory. Going to the local park to play with our cousins, shoes were always on our feet.

As an adult and on reflection, I am grateful to my Mum and Dad that I didn't recall hurting my feet with shoes on and my feet remained safer with footwear.

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