

(<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/>)



My 7-Year-Old Fashion Designer

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For her seventh birthday, my daughter Elizabeth got an excellent present from her aunt.

Responding to her interest in fashion, made obvious through her tendency to wear skirts as shirts and T-shirts as head-scarves, aunt Seema gave her a binder. It contained rough forms of human bodies that Elizabeth could clothe in whatever she could imagine by drawing clothes with an included set of coloured pencils. After she coloured her creations, she chose one of the dozens of included fabric samples and glued it onto the pages as a guide for pattern and texture.

My daughter was smitten with her ability to create and would have been satisfied just drawing and gluing until the sketchbook was bulging. But there was one last step to her gift. After Elizabeth finished her creations, she would send the sketches to aunt Seema so she could actually make them. When aunt Seema explained this to Elizabeth

the first time, we didn't comprehend what she was saying. Elizabeth smiled and nodded like she always does when she doesn't exactly understand. My wife and I smiled and nodded too.

Not all crafts can be kept for as long as a new dress. Here's how Joseph Wilson disposes of some of the crafts that have amassed in his home. Read that here (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/how-to-dispose-of-childrens-crafts-without-crushing-their-souls>).

"Wait, you're going to make the clothes for her dolls?" I asked.

"No," answered Seema, "I'm going to make them for her."

"Like, full-size?"

"Yes. Out of the fabrics she picks from the samples."



Our smiles turned to wide-open mouths. Seema has two very energetic daughters of her own and, as is the case with most parents of toddlers, has not really slept in the last five years.

Instead of saying thank you, I blurted out, "but that's soooooo much work!"

"I don't mind," she said, "I like doing it."

Did I mention that in addition to having two young daughters she has a full-time job and is working on her PhD in the evenings? Crafts and sewing are her one respite from that grueling schedule, something that gives her brain a break. Still, this was a lot to ask.

"She had scribbled her way through the book, all 54 pages, an entire Eaton's catalogue worth of clothing."

We turned our gaze towards Elizabeth and she thanked her aunt profusely. She scurried away to start drawing.

"You know," my wife said when Elizabeth was out of earshot, "you don't have to make them all ..." to try and give her an easy way out from the commitment she was making. "We'll see," she said with a grin. You could tell she was looking forward to actually making the clothes.

Roughly 20 minutes later Elizabeth was done. She had scribbled her way through the book, all 54 pages, an entire Eaton's catalogue worth of clothing.



"OK, I'm done," she said, breathlessly.

"Are you satisfied you did a good job?" I asked, trying to prompt her to reflect a little.

"Yup."

"Well, spend some more time on them. We can't give aunt Seema all of this at once."



So she went back to work and spent some more time choosing colours and fabrics. In the end we chose three of her favorites for aunt Seema to make. A couple months later, Seema showed up at our front door with three outfits ready for Elizabeth to try on. She couldn't believe that her ideas on paper turned into something real. She was thrilled. A little later I reminded her that it was a lot of work to make a dress.

Ever wish you had some extra hands to help with home projects? Here's how this dad includes his girls

(<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/drywall-projects-with-daughters>).

“It doesn't just magically turn into a dress. Seema worked really hard on those,” I said. “Uh-huh,” she said.

Since then she has been making clothes for her Barbies out of scraps of fabric, including a mermaid's tale and a dress out of an old handkerchief. One day we'll show her how to use the sewing machine so she can see how much work it is to make a full-size piece of clothing. Hopefully she will come to see how rewarding it is, too, to see an idea from a sketch on a piece of paper turn into a piece of art you wear on your body.

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